

THE
GOVERNMENT
OF GOD

UNDERSTANDING
OFFICES AND DUTIES

by David C. Pack

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The Church of God—the biblical Body of Christ—is not divided, and is the only place where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is present, the only organization Christ leads. He has placed *offices* and assigned special *duties* within His Church. All of the splinters have rejected God’s government! This has led to mass confusion about these God-ordained offices and duties.

What *exactly* is a deacon?—a local elder?—a preaching elder?—a pastor?—an evangelist?—a prophet?—an apostle? What about “teachers”? Who are the “messengers” to the seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3? What do they do? Where will the Two Witnesses come from? How does the “watchman” of Ezekiel 33:7 function in *this age*? How do all these work and serve, and in UNITY?

Who holds AUTHORITY to ordain today? Are splinter ordinations valid? Which office(s) can “bind and loose”? Can anyone add truth or traditions to the Church? Who is authorized to make Church-wide administrative judgments? Who supervises all congregations?

This vital book answers all of these questions—and many more!

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PREFACE

Twenty years ago, *destroyers* rose up within the Church of God (John 10:10). While many have at least understood this much, they seem oblivious to what these men hated most. The majority have focused on the other doctrines thrown away by the apostates. Of course, every doctrine of God is important.

But the very biggest receives almost no attention.

The GOVERNMENT OF GOD is central, and *essential*, to the Church of God. It simply cannot function without it. Think of all that is at stake within this colossal *doctrine*: how Christ structured His ministry—how to distinguish true ministers from false—the functions and duties of each office—through whom Christ does and does not lead His Church and Work—through whom He announces the kingdom of God to the world and warns the modern nations of Israel—what *is* the Church—unity in the Church—how Christ protects it, gives it truth and traditions, and feeds it—and so much more!

This fascinating book presents a truly compelling story and offers facts more interesting than could be imagined. You will find it to be among the most crucial you will read for the rest of your life, outside the Bible—and you will not be able to put it down. Mr. Armstrong repeated time and again that “Government is everything,” and this book explains *why*! At 339 pages, it is the most comprehensive volume on God’s government *ever* written. Only those who read it cover-to-cover will appreciate this statement.

This large book to the splinters is SUPREMELY IMPORTANT to all of God's people! Every person with God's Spirit should read it. However, every deacon, deaconess, local elder, preaching elder, pastor and evangelist in every Worldwide Church of God offshoot should read it *twice*. The first read will tell them why.

If you *anoint your eyes*, with vision restored, you will be able to seek—and find!—the GOVERNMENT OF GOD!

INTRODUCTION

Until 1986, and for some years after, the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) operated under what was commonly referred to as the “government of God.” This was a term that carried special meaning in the minds of every member of the Church—over 150,000 people—across the world. This government looked and worked a certain way. The ministry and membership were in accord under it, all understanding their role. Dissent was uncommon and dissidents relatively few. Seemingly everyone understood that God’s government was intrinsic to His Church and that its correct and orderly function, in all its working parts, enabled the Church and Work of God to grow immense in size and to be able to remain wonderfully productive.

This volume is about that government, how the New Testament describes it and how the Church once experienced it in effective operation. Other parts of the *Splinter Explanation Packet* have referenced and discussed God’s government and how Christ leads His Church. This book, however, is different.

The sections of the other books devoted to government generally discussed the overall fact that Jesus Christ *has* a government that is undivided, and that He is leading one, unified, organized Church and Body from the top down, and always beginning with one man. This takes a different and more in-depth look at *how* that government FUNCTIONS—and always functioned in the past—including how it was carefully structured by God to work “decently and in order” in every matter. It will necessar-

ily refer to some of the same elements covered elsewhere, but it is intended primarily as a kind of “textbook” explaining the working machinery of that government when all parts are in place and operating correctly. It is much more than a basic primer.

Recognize at the outset then that *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties* has not been specifically written to prove that God’s government is, and has always been, from the top down, under one man. Other sermons I have given carefully cover and prove the hierarchical nature of God’s government—Old Testament and New—straight from the Bible. Of course, the fact that God’s government is hierarchical cannot be avoided in any description of it.

Must Be Practiced

God’s people were told over and over by Herbert W. Armstrong that they must be *practicing* the GOVERNMENT OF GOD in the Church if they—you!—hope to be part of it in the kingdom of God. Further, we were told time and again the Church was the kingdom of God in embryo, meaning members were God’s government being formed—daily *prepared*—in the womb of the Church, begotten but not yet born into God’s kingdom. All of this instruction was always personalized to include how the *individual Church member* had his or her responsibility.

Here is but one statement from Mr. Armstrong saying this in his own words. Because of its thoroughness and strength of language, one quote is enough to pound this point home. Read carefully—remember!—and do not miss how Mr. Armstrong ties vital principles together regarding God’s government, its role in the Church, His Work—and you. It speaks without ambiguity—he leaves no room for confusion (all emphasis his):

“God’s people are in the time of final trying and testing—like taking final exams to determine whether we graduate.”

“Brethren, CAN YOUR MIND COMPREHEND THE TRANSCENDENT MAGNITUDE OF [GOD’S] SUPREME PURPOSE? The entire UNIVERSE to be put under subjection to you? That means you are to RULE over it all—IF you are submissive, obedient to God and His government over you NOW!”

“Do you want to let resentment against God’s government over you NOW disqualify you—snatch you from God’s GRACE and PURPOSE for you, and cast you into a lake of fire? God’s PURPOSE for us is SO GREAT, we need to FEAR lest SATAN divert our minds from that GOAL! Satan is subtle!”

“Just WHAT IS GOD? He is CREATOR! But He maintains—preserves—what He creates. HOW? By His GOVERNMENT—the GOVERNMENT OF GOD!”

“God’s overall PURPOSE in creating and putting man on earth, therefore, was DUAL:

1) The RESTORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD upon earth.

2) To REPRODUCE HIMSELF, and thus produce an unlimited number of beings, begotten and BORN of God into GOD’S OWN DIVINE FAMILY having developed PERFECT HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER, that WILL NOT, and shall have so SET THEMSELVES that they CANNOT SIN (I John 3:9). That is the only guarantee that the Creator GOD may perfectly PRESERVE that which He designs and creates.”

“Brethren, we in God’s Church are being trained and prepared, NOW, to RULE in the Kingdom of God during the millennium. What KIND (principle) of government are we being trained to administer?

“At that time, beginning with Christ’s coming and the resurrection, Christ will be KING of kings over ALL NATIONS (Rev. 19:16). Directly under Christ, over Israel—that is all the nations springing from the twelve tribes of Israel—will be the resurrected David...(Jeremiah 30:8-9)...(Ezekiel 37:22, 24-25)...(Ezekiel 34:23).

“Of course, also under Christ will be others over the Gentile nations, but God has not revealed who specifically. But, UNDER DAVID, God does tell us who shall rule those of each of the twelve tribes...(Matthew 19:28).”

“Turn to Luke 19, beginning with verse 11. Jesus gave a parable to His disciples [which showed that His servants would receive authority over cities at the]...second coming of Christ to RULE all nations...”

“Later, from heaven Jesus said: ‘He that overcometh, and keepeth my WORKS unto the end, to him will I give POWER over the nations, and he shall RULE THEM with a rod of iron’ (Rev. 2:26-27). And, again, ‘To him that overcometh (grows in SPIRITUAL CHARACTER) will I grant to sit with me in my throne (in Jerusalem), even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in my Father’s throne’ (Rev. 3:21).

“Brethren, we are IN TRAINING, NOW, for...RULE in the KINGDOM OF GOD.

“And what PRINCIPLE of government? From the TOP DOWN. From GOD—it is HIS Government—the GOVERNMENT of God the Father. Under Him is Christ. Under Christ, over ISRAEL will be the resurrected

DAVID. Under David, each over one of the twelve tribes, the TWELVE ORIGINAL APOSTLES. Under each of them, rulers over CITIES.

“DEMOCRACY, from the bottom up—every man doing what seems right IN HIS OWN EYES, would never prepare you to REIGN with Christ then. THINK, brethren, what it would mean if you should REBEL against God’s Government as HE has placed it in HIS CHURCH NOW, and follow the dissenters OUT of God’s Church, into what unauthorized humans have ASSOCIATED THEMSELVES into—an ‘ASSOCIATED CHURCH.’ I should demand PROOF that such is of GOD. There is NO EVIDENCE. It is of MEN—disloyal, selfish men—swayed and deceived by Satan!”

“Dear Brethren, I feel like writing to you as the Apostle John did, as ‘my little children,’ (I John 2:1)—for, directly or indirectly, you are my sons and daughters in the Lord—or of the Work which Christ raised up through me. We are right now in the time of FINAL EXAMS—of severe trying and testing—to determine whether we shall make it into God’s Kingdom and eternal life—to be a priest or king, ruling under Christ for a thousand years—and after that, the WHOLE UNIVERSE under our feet! The future before us is so transcendently ENORMOUS we cannot now fully conceive of it.”

“Let’s not fail in these final exams.”

Brethren Letter, May 2, 1974

Could Mr. Armstrong have been stronger—more emphatic? Could he have found more pointed language in his description of democratic government or other forms of government outside *God’s pattern*—and outside His Church? How long has it been since you have thought about the fact that you are in FINAL TRAINING—“final exams”—qualifying—or disqualifying!—for rulership under Jesus Christ with the glorified saints? How long since you concerned yourself with rebellion against God’s government?—or even what *is* that government?

These are all serious questions, and you must be prepared to give them SERIOUS ANSWERS!

Government Re-established

The entire Church once knew that the government of God had been revealed again to the Church in the Philadelphian age. Mr. Armstrong made certain that no one was permitted to forget this, at least not while he was alive. Here are just two sermon references from him about God’s government, its supreme importance and its RESTORATION to the Church in

the Philadelphian age by God through Mr. Armstrong. The first speaks of *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* coming. (Of course, all emphasis is mine.):

“But when I was challenged, before I learned about the Holy Days or anything, I was challenged on the point of God’s law and of God’s GOVERNMENT! The whole thing was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Satan took away [in the Garden] was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Christ is coming to *restore* is GOVERNMENT. And what He raised me up for was to *restore* GOVERNMENT in His Church! And the WHOLE TEST of the challenge in the first place after God had softened me by other things that will be recorded in this book was the point of GOVERNMENT.”

“Rely on God,” April 6, 1985

“What has been *restored*? The gospel of the kingdom of God has been *restored*. The GOVERNMENT OF GOD has been *restored* in this Church! And something has been *restored* brethren! And Christ is coming to *restore* everything and WORLD GOVERNMENT, not just the Church, but the whole world! And we are to reign and rule with him.”

Feast of Tabernacles, Sep. 21, 1983

These statements are also emphatic. They could scarcely have been more ironclad. But they were also exciting—even thrilling—to hear in the past! They form the premise of this book—that God’s government was revealed again to the Church of God in the twentieth century. Mr. Armstrong made no bones about the fact that he was raised up to restore that government—and to explain it. Later, we will learn in detail what this government *looked like*—how it appeared when it was in place, in both its initial and final stages of development.

Limited View of Most

One of the tragedies visible after the apostasy is that very, very few brethren appear to have understood the government of the Church. Most held a view little more than this: “Mr. Armstrong is in charge of the Church. My pastor is in charge of our congregation. And I guess there are deacons and elders, and maybe some others. Don’t evangelists fit in there, too?”

Like Mr. Armstrong’s statements, and as with other of the splinter books, this one will not spare. It is probably an *understatement* to say it will be one of the strongest books you will *ever* read. It addresses tough topics and sometimes presents the “tough”—*really* tough!—answers.

You have heard it said that “the truth hurts.” This is perhaps nowhere more true than with the subject of government, and specifically some of the elements *within* this subject.

Religious hobbyists enjoy reading—dabbling really—in lots of different religious material, usually reading very few publications in their entirety. Such people are motivated by curiosity, not the pursuit of truth. As with the other books to the splinters, this one cannot be appreciated or understood without reading it all. If you stop at some point, this will possibly be because you have disagreed with a point without hearing all the facts. You have “answered the matter before you heard it,” and you know how Proverbs 18:13 ends.

If you are not prepared to read all 20 chapters (including all insets), to continue for even one more sentence is to waste your time. You will want to find other ways to satisfy your intellectual curiosity. But those determined to finish will find themselves engrossed in a most compelling story from recent Church history, and one of almost epic proportions within the Church of God. You will find this subject fascinating beyond expectation.

Every reader who chooses to proceed is urged to fasten his seat belt *now*!

Similar to the supreme importance of *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* and “*Anoint Your Eyes*” – *Christ’s Warning to His People*, once you have completed *The Government of God*, you are urged to turn and read it again from the beginning. After one reading, if you have understood the message contained here, you will see the need to read it a second time more slowly and seriously.

One further point. The book contains numerous illustrations and insets. There are pictures, graphs, charts, maps and a number of different vital elements of government covered within them. While helpful and important—they will assist in expanding your mind—having many insets can sometimes break the flow of the text. If you are prepared to read the book twice, perhaps skip over them on the second reading (rereading them before or after you are done). This will help to bring punch—the full impact!—of the book as it is intended to flow.

Two Pivotal Years

Many seem unaware that the hierarchical form and pattern of *how* God’s government worked in the Church first began to be revealed to Mr. Armstrong in late 1952, after he had already been the leader of the Philadelphian era for about 19 years, from October 1933.

But Mr. Armstrong explained that this doctrinal understanding—and no true member of the Church ever doubted that the matter of God’s government was anything less than established Church DOCTRINE—did not all come to him at once. Fuller understanding came over a period of time, actually years, as Mr. Armstrong learned the critical differences between the various offices and duties in the New Testament ministry, and how these were to function and interrelate smoothly. Coming to a fuller, grander picture of what this RESTORED GOVERNMENT meant in practical fact actually took several years—until early 1955—for Mr. Armstrong to see it in its final form, when the government of God had finally become *complete* in the Church.

Of course, for the remaining nearly 30 years of his life, Mr. Armstrong continued to learn more about government in the Body of Christ, and its correlation to the expanding Church and the two commissions of the Work. However, January 22, 1955 was an extraordinary moment in Church history, and virtually no one knows or remembers this, let alone *why* this date was such a milestone and turning point. This will be brought to light in Chapter Five.

Let’s return to the point above—that God’s people are being prepared in His Church to rule in His kingdom. Again, this was to be learned by practicing the government of God within the Church. This is a pattern of behavior that automatically disappears—a purpose and application that is completely lost to further development and training today—if God’s government no longer exists in its original form!

Do you see this? Then, do you—can you?—understand what is at stake in being able to correctly identify and locate the very same government today, which would still be found only in a single, unified organization?

Teamwork Lost

Consider further. This was a government that emphasized all-important TEAMWORK in doing—and completing!—the Work of God for the rest of the age. If that government no longer exists, such teamwork—and the *true* Work of God, which flowed from it—also ceases to exist. Many crucial lessons of Christian development and growth are then forced to fall by the wayside.

You must ask God for guidance to help you comprehend all that you are about to read—and what you must decide after you do. The reader will find himself *forced* to confront a whole series of questions. In fact, the first chapter is entirely about recognizing and framing the *great gov-*

ernment questions that so many now seem unwilling or unable to face. These must be carefully culled from the blurred images of today and spelled out in advance of the pursuit to find God's government somewhere on earth.

If you periodically find yourself angry at what is written, try to discern if you are reacting to what God says or Mr. Armstrong said, rather than my words re-explaining or confirming them.

The Purpose and Value of Repetition

Like other splinter books, there are a few sections of similarity or partial repetition from the other books to the splinters. When this has been done, it is because such material enhances the meaning of more than one subject. (Also, in a very few cases, parts of certain quotes from Mr. Armstrong are repeated in different places within this book because they apply to more than one section. The reader must carefully read them again in their new context to appreciate the fuller picture being painted along the way.)

I have also used repetition because, however much I stress the importance of reading all of the splinter material to get the complete picture of the apostasy and all that one must do to recover from and survive it, some seem only willing to read one or possibly a few of these books. Therefore, each must be "self-contained" as much as possible. This approach also eliminates more questions within a subject—and God's government is certainly an enormous subject—but it also may spur some readers who might not otherwise do so to pursue other books written to the splinters.

Special Appeal

Before concluding, it is necessary to speak directly—and bluntly—to all deacons, elders and ministers who served in the Worldwide Church of God when it was on track under Mr. Armstrong. One purpose of this book is to try to awaken in you a remembrance of God's government at work in His Church. If you are in the process of anointing your eyes (Rev. 3:18), you will understand that what you will read is, in part, an appeal designed to get your attention and return you to your true role and calling to service. You once firmly believed that Jesus Christ had installed you into the office you held within His Body. Perhaps you still think this way. If so, this book is truly FOR YOU!

Ordained people within the splinters, think hard—very, very hard!—about your original calling to serve in one or more offices under the sure

guidance and direction of Christ as Head of His Church. Throughout your reading, ask yourself every one of the difficult, but necessary, questions that circumstances today require you to face. Do not permit yourself to look away from the hard realities now facing every one of God's people.

In every age of His Church, Christ's sheep have needed shepherds. Those with special leadership training and experience from the past will be held accountable in a greater way than all others (Jms. 3:1-2). Dereliction of duty by those "to whom much was given" will mean that "much will be required" of them some day (Luke 12:48). Take a deep breath and think. If you do not ask these questions of yourself, Christ may one day do this for you before His "judgment seat" (II Cor. 5:10). You will be FORCED to give answers to Him *then* that you were not willing to demand of yourself *now*.

Is that what you want?

The Wonderful Possibility

Leaders are only part of the story. *The Government of God—Understanding Offices and Duties* presents an equally direct appeal to *everyone* who reads it. It offers an opportunity to those who so desire to once again reside under and enjoy the marvelous *blessings* and *peace* that the government of God brought to those who in faith submitted themselves to it. These came from the certain knowledge that brethren were actually submitting themselves to *Christ's* leadership over His one, undivided Church!

Joy *can* be recaptured, as can TRUE PEACE and REAL FAITH that the all-powerful, living Jesus Christ still has as firm a grip as ever on the reins of a Church that He built almost 2,000 years ago. This is seen every day at our Headquarters in the people contacting us who are re-awakening to the reality that they can have *again* what they thought was lost forever in this age.

These have been the brethren who wished no further involvement in all that Chapter Three describes. But first they learned which were the *biggest questions...*

IDENTIFYING THE GREAT QUESTIONS

In pursuit of the truth, some people never seem able to correctly identify the questions that must be answered to get to it. They cannot create a road map to their destination. To coin a familiar scripture, they seemingly stumble around “ever learning but never able to come to the truth” of a matter. If we are to answer the great questions about the government of God, we must first correctly identify them—carefully spell them out. Then we must understand *why* they are important, and be unwilling to accept any but *proven facts*, whether from God’s Word or from history.

All that is written in the chapters ahead is the truth about the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. It presents numerous *facts*, much *evidence* and *real proof* in answering the many questions presented here.

Realize that every explanation of a biblical doctrine has a reasonable and natural limit, or it could almost go on without end. This is true of government. But this subject cannot be shortchanged. Its explanation must be conclusive. Therefore, this book has been written in thorough fashion. I have tried as hard as humanly possible with God’s guidance to leave you, the reader, with inescapable conclusions—ANSWERS!—to the questions now presented.

The Most Basic Question

In the wake of the apostasy, various fundamental questions have arisen. No one having left the apostasy who is sincerely seeking the full truth

about God's government can possibly avoid them. They must be identified and hit HEAD ON!

It all begins here...

Could Satan's agents destroy the government of God in His Church? Have you considered whether this is possible? In other words, can *men* do this? Do human beings hold such power?

Let's look at this from a different perspective. Do you believe that God's *enemies* can enter the Church that the living Christ built and actively heads, and alter the way He must lead its continuation from that point forward? In other words again, following an apostasy, do you believe that Christ is, in effect, *hostage* to however the emerging *new* leaders (in today's case, of *many* competing organizations) wish to re-engineer and reconstruct His government? Now put yet another way, if men believe that another method of Church governance is suitable to them at any given time in Church history, or when they have had to flee false leaders, are they permitted—do they now carry *authority*—to sort of “start fresh” and “take another look” at finding a “better way”?

Even Clearer!

But let's make the question even more clear. Suppose the range of many new leaders wish to invent *several entirely new* forms of government, with numerous internal variations that they have installed—stylized—as they see fit, and *substitute* this *completely new machinery* in place of God's pattern. Does this mean that Christ is somehow “duty bound” to accept and work through what they have instituted? Does He have to just “live with it”?—and then this huge question: Does He settle on only *one* group, or must He accept and lead *all* of these organizations?

You will find that this series of questions summarizes the very greatest question you will be required to answer. Do not lose sight of it throughout the remainder of the book.

If you believe—if you recognize—that men could not possibly hold such authority—and the book builds on this basic recognition—the following greatest questions automatically and *immediately* slam into the reader: Does the *exact same* government still exist—somewhere? Does the government that was re-established in the Philadelphian era still lead the Church and Body of Christ—somewhere? Is that government still directing God's one Work—somewhere?

Inseparable from these questions, and of absolute paramount importance to the reader, does this government exist in one of the splinters? If so, which one, and how would you know?

More Specific!

Let's carry this further. If Mr. Armstrong said that God's government was re-established, what did he mean—what exactly was he referring to?

This question, in turn, introduces many more, and they are specific. Let's briefly overview these crucial additional questions before allowing the book to answer them in detail in later chapters. Many are asking these questions, and you may recognize some of them because you have shared them.

Christ established certain offices within the ministry of His Church in the New Testament. What are these offices?

- (1) What *exactly* is an apostle?
- (2) What *exactly* is a prophet?
- (3) What *exactly* is an evangelist?
- (4) What *exactly* is a pastor?
- (5) What *exactly* is a preaching elder?
- (6) What *exactly* is a local elder?
- (7) What *exactly* is a deacon?
- (8) What are "teachers"?

Are you certain that you understand what the Bible teaches—and Mr. Armstrong taught—about each of these, and the functions and responsibilities that they carried? Do you understand the parameters and limits of each New Testament office—and how to recognize the true from the false of those claiming to hold any of them?

In a sense, the later chapters will test both your understanding *and* your memory on all of these questions.

Which Office?

But there are other questions, and they are big ones:

- How many ranks (of office) may lead the Church and/or Work?
- Which rank or ranks does Christ use to bring doctrine—truth—into His Church?
- Which office(s) may establish tradition?
- What office or offices are authorized to ANNOUNCE the kingdom of God in all nations?
- Which may WARN the nations of Israel of coming punishment?
- Who, if any, is authorized to warn *spiritual* Israel—Laodicea—of this same punishment?
- Who is authorized to make Church-wide administrative judgments?

- How many ranks may “bind and loose” within the Church?
- Who may approve ordinations?—in other words, who holds AUTHORITY to ordain *today*?
- This automatically leads to the question: Are splinter ordinations valid?
- And this, in turn, leads to another: Who is authorized to supervise all congregations worldwide?

In this context, we should ask, why did Mr. Armstrong establish an Advisory Council of Elders, and is there significance to the fact that those splinters that have established a council do not use or connect the word “advisory” to it?

Even More Questions

Yet, there are still other important questions pertaining to special duties—special functions—within the New Testament Church:

- Who are the seven “messengers” to the seven Churches referred to in Revelation 2 and 3? What do they do? What is their exact purpose?
- The book of Revelation also describes the Two Witnesses in chapter 11. Where will these two men—both “prophets”—come from? Can we know the organization?
- Also, how does the “watchman” of Ezekiel 33:7 function in *this age*?

Finally, how do all of these offices, roles and duties serve and work *in unity* within the Church and Work of God?

What Are We Looking For?

Now for another important question: What would the government of God look like? The answer lies in what *did* it look like prior to 1986? If one is to find it, he must know what to look for, and this means more than simply finding a hierarchical government, one that operates from the top down.

When Mr. Armstrong said—and you will further see that he stated this most clearly—that “the government of God was restored to the Church,” he meant much more than merely having one man at the top. After all, if Mr. Armstrong was correct, and God *always begins* His government with one man, then always means always, and this particular single feature could not have been something that reappeared in the Philadelphian age after a many-centuries-long absence. It must have been something else that was restored. What was it?

The question surrounding the above issue—one man in charge—cannot be left dangling in your mind. It must be perfectly clear to you that what was restored and all other government-related questions and issues do not come into view until this is established!

If you still insist that Mr. Armstrong simply meant the restoration was that one man was now in charge, I repeat, God’s Word demonstrates that this has always been the case—Old Testament and New.

If you have not already established this colossal biblical truth in your mind—the *only* place to start when studying the subject of God’s government—then you are simply not ready to go on to the subsequent questions presented in this book. However time-consuming, do not see researching this first order of importance as an inconvenience. It is much more than just a preliminary exercise. Do not permit yourself to put the cart before the horse, meaning to put the wrong questions first—those asked and answered in this book—and the greatest question last—that of how God’s government looks at the top of the human part of the structure.

Make yourself begin at the beginning!

Of course, the book will at times ask other questions—some will be big—and they will all be answered, but the central ones must always be kept in view. This chapter has identified them, and you may from time to time want to come back to the lists in it to review the foundation of your pursuit of the truth and the whereabouts of God’s government.

But a distinction needs to be made. If this chapter establishes the *great questions* about government facing God’s people today, then the last chapter presents the *hard* questions. The next 18 chapters prepare you for them.

Now Only Confusion

The splinters are in confusion about a great many of God’s doctrines. Government has not been excluded. You will soon learn that they have fallen into incredible confusion about virtually every one of the questions listed here—and beyond what would seem possible. What was once so clear has become a subject of opinion, endless speculation and terrible disagreement. This has brought no end of charge and counter-charge, and accusation and counter-accusation—not to mention division both among the splinters and among God’s people on perhaps the grandest possible scale. Yet, God is not the “author of confusion, but of peace” in the Church (I Cor. 14:33), desiring that everything be done “decently and in order.”

The tragedy today is that so many seem to *assume* that they are right, and to *know* that everyone else is wrong. But few seem to know that they

should carefully *investigate* what the government of God looked like, and only *then* could all opinion—their own and others—be set aside as to what and where it is.

The book does this. But other questions remain.

The “Other” Questions

In this chapter of great questions, those that the reader must consider would not be complete without raising one more series of questions.

First, recognize that government is central to everything in life. Families cannot exist without it. Neither can nations, armies, institutions, companies, churches, schools, teams, organizations or clubs—nor can virtually any entity of more than one person. Also, God preserves His entire creation through government and law—and both the earth and the universe reflect this. Government, in the *right form*, brings structure, order, organization, stability, peace, protection, and a host of other benefits to groups of every kind!

Yet, more than ever, every corner of civilization is now driven by the spirit of rebellion, accompanied by the pursuit of “personal freedoms” and “individual rights.” Many in society are actively and systematically tearing down institutions one by one, in a visible and growing trend toward anarchy on *every* level—social, political, civil, moral, economic, religious and domestic.

Why? Because human nature *hates* submission to government—AUTHORITY!—in *every* form! Think about government from the perspective of human nature. The apostle Paul recorded, “The carnal mind is *enmity* against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Some translations render the beginning of this verse, “The carnal mind is the ENEMY OF GOD” (Rom. 8:7). Naturally, this would center on government.

Tragically, but predictably, and this has happened in every age, the attitude among those brethren who survived the apostasy has largely come to *mirror society*. The result in our time has been that most of God’s people have *forgotten* or *rejected* the many elemental truths inseparable from the doctrine of government.

What is happening in the splinters today is not a new thing, because human nature has existed in every age. In fact, at first subtle, but then blatant, rejection of God’s government happened in His Church in the 1970s. This early chapter would be unfinished without the reader having in mind what happened, and what Mr. Armstrong said about this as the prime cause driving what were called the “liberal years” of that time.

His quote raises the final series of questions to ponder. But the book will not answer the list that follows. *You* will, as you read—because all are personal.

God's people today have no excuse. Not only should they have known better—had they been properly *internalizing* the truth of God's government—many in the splinters lived through the 1970s. They would have read Mr. Armstrong's final warning. He constantly taught the Church about *cause* and *effect* in all aspects of life. They also would have seen his other warnings identified most problems in the Church as rooted in government. Here is what he wrote about the CAUSE of the liberal years. It applied then, and applies now (all emphasis his):

"I want you, brethren, to think about and *understand* what happened to God's Church in the 1970s *lest history repeat itself!* I want you to see the 'fruits' of rebelling against God's way and God's government."

"*After all, the basic issue all along was that of God's government in the Church.* One who followed one liberal who, as the apostle Paul predicted, sought to draw away followers after himself (Acts 20:30), said, 'We are liberated from that church government and now have a loosely knit organization, and that's the way we like it.'"

"The Church is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord' (Ephesians 2:20-21). Note, the Church is organized and fitly framed together, not organized with competing and differing *branches*."

"Notice Ephesians 4, there is only one organized church 'fitly joined together and compacted' (verse 16)—compacted as if welded together into one well-organized body. And how did He organize this body? How was it governed? 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith...' (Ephesians 4:11-13). It is not DISunity or some other type of organization and government. Paul also said 'that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment' (I Corinthians 1:10)."

"To make clear one of the reasons—if not the primary reason—for the conflict caused by the liberal element, I quote from a Western newspaper. In an interview with a former minister, who had sought to draw away a following of members after himself, it was stated concerning this split-off church that they have 'a *completely different administrative structure*.'

“Most...dissension of the past in the Church has been over...government. The dissenters believe in a very liberal government—the way of Satan and his world.”

“We who remain in the one and only true Church grieve over the loss of those who are so far *failing in their final exams*.”

“Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the WCG,”
WN, June 24, 1985

History *has* repeated itself. The liberal mindset *has* returned—for the same reasons, and with a vengeance. Sadly, the majority today *are* failing in their final exams. Now for the *other* questions—those only you can answer:

- How often do you think about Romans 8:7 at work in *your* nature?
- When you read or hear about “government” in the Church, do you tend to recoil—knee-jerk—at the very word?
- Are you inclined to see government as so much unnecessary “intrusion” and “control”?
- How do you view and receive personal correction? Have you recognized that all forms of correction require someone having the authority to administer it?
- Will you read this book striving to receive correction?
- Will you read it striving to understand God’s government, and then to look for it—or will you explain everything away?

These are also great questions. In fact, in a sense, your ANSWERS elevate them to the *greatest* ones in the book. As you read, will you keep them in mind? We will offer proof, not just “what Mr. Armstrong said.”

Where to Start

Again I ask: *What* are the God-ordained OFFICES and DUTIES of the New Testament Church—and *how* do they work? The DOCTRINE of ministerial offices and functions, including special duties, within the New Testament ministry and Church of God must be made clear once again. This book will leave no doubt about them.

Once these questions are answered, we will automatically land at the feet of the next question—*where* are these at work *today*? But before moving ahead, we must first look back...

A TIME WITHOUT PARALLEL

Before going forward to examine the questions of Chapter One, it is instructive to revisit the past. Let's recall the Worldwide Church of God under Mr. Armstrong's leadership for over half a century. Let's examine its governance through means of an overview for the purpose of establishing a picture from history for contrast with all that has replaced it in the splinters.

First an admission so no one thinks Pollyanna wrote this. Obviously, there were abuses, excesses and injustices within the Church's administration. These could never completely disappear because human beings, not yet Christ and the resurrected saints, were administering God's government. Since I could describe how I was the recipient of abuse and injustice with the best of them—as well as made mistakes myself—I bring the voice of experience that these things must be set aside in your thinking if you are to find the system of government where Christ is Head. Brethren once could do this, so they can again. Therefore, as you read, make yourself focus away from the various human foibles, failures and imperfections that you saw or experienced. This is the only way that the potent message in these pages will not be missed.

Credit, Not Blame

Finally, remember that we now know the great majority of brethren *and ministers* in the WCG were never converted. This includes many admin-

istrators in Pasadena and elsewhere. Rather than *blaming* the system of government for this, instead *credit* it for its remarkable ability to achieve all that it did while dragging with it so much dead weight!

The government of God in action through the twentieth century produced simply amazing results, and in a host of ways. In truth, the world has never seen anything like it. Every working part was well-oiled, and there is value in seeing how it worked in practical fact. Following are just some of the areas where God's wonderful form of government served His Church so well, and for so long.

As you finish each section, take at least a moment to roll the description through your mind. Try to get the BIG PICTURE—see the WHOLE CANVAS!—of what you are reading.

Headquarters and Regional Offices

Everything about God's government began in Pasadena, California. The employees, the campus, the buildings and the activities they contained were a study in precision and effective performance.

This began with Headquarters directing smaller but similarly functioning regional offices around the world, including two other colleges. Many hundreds of employees, serving in a wide array of departments, handled matters of every kind common to a large and constantly growing worldwide organization. Policy, process, procedure and protocol governed almost every conceivable matter or decision the Church faced. And these were modified as needed and always best for the Church.

Intrinsic to the regional offices was a field supervisory structure that was used in both the United States and every major country or group of countries that was better directed by a regional office. Of course, Church Administration at Headquarters, later called Ministerial Services, carried authority over all the international offices. Transfers of ministers—regional directors, pastors, associate and assistant pastors, and ministerial assistants—occurred generally every seven to nine years for each man, and everyone understood this “rhythm” governed the smooth functioning of these offices. Rocky transitions were rare.

An extraordinary level of communication kept every part of the Church always enjoying “the left hand knowing what the right hand was doing.” There was careful, thoughtful communication about everything—from plans for summer camps to Feast sites to expense reports to trips by ministers to transfers, with an almost endless array of matters that were covered by phone or letter across and around the world, day after day after day. Headquarters and the international offices worked

closely together, always in harmony, to be sure that the flock was properly fed—that the “Second Commission” was fulfilled in a way that was pleasing to Christ (John 21:15-17).

It must be stated again that all of this involved an extensive and systematic reporting system. Seemingly, there were forms and cards for everything, so that Headquarters and the field ministry could be kept apprised of all that was happening “at the other end”—with this applying in both directions.

Conferences, Refreshers and Sabbaticals

Through the decades, beginning in the mid-1950s, the Church began to hold annual conferences in Pasadena for the entire ministry. These constantly grew larger until every minister could not always attend every conference.

A vast “Refresher Program” was instituted in the early 1980s, so that every pastor and wife could periodically be brought to Headquarters for a more intensive two- or three-week “coursework” of sorts. At least in the beginning, these special times involved updating, informing and inspiring—refreshing!—the entire WCG ministry. Those of different language were accommodated with a special session, and another was designed for local church elders who could attend.

There were also some pastors who were rotated into Headquarters for a full year of classes under a “sabbatical program” designed to give, particularly to the older men, an important “breather” and helpful re-orientation when necessary.

All of this involved extensive planning, unity of effort, effective communication and an astonishing amount of labor to bring together. And yet, the immense machinery that came to be in place permitted such programs and activities for the ministry to be accomplished almost by routine.

Many Departments

Headquarters consisted of numerous departments, each having a special, well-defined purpose within the overall Church and Work of God. These were generally led by ministers, and of various ranks, usually higher offices, but sometimes by unordained senior administrators. They generally interrelated smoothly with one another. Things ran like clockwork, more like a Swiss watch.

There was also a relentless attention to detail given to everything. Almost every matter was viewed taking a comprehensive approach.

Through the years, the Headquarters administration seemed to learn to think of all the details that other organizations in the world would probably overlook. It was as though nothing was left to chance. The person who visited Headquarters for any reason or duration was made to feel special by the thoughtfulness of the lower-level employees, who seemed to try hardest to foster this environment.

There were departments, and sometimes several sections within them, for everything—landscaping, custodial, maintenance, carpentry, transportation and fleet, legal, business and accounting, insurance, festival, youth, editorial, news bureau, Church administration, shipping and receiving, media production, data processing, mail processing (with many sections), security, purchasing, food service (at the colleges), public relations, a travel agency—and even a paint crew. Collectively, these departments could have run an entire small city, and in a sense they did.

The city was called “Headquarters.”

But most important, God’s people were taught to look to and trust that the living Christ was directing *His* Headquarters, and they practiced what it taught them.

The Vast Reach of Media

This immense administrative superstructure—the part in Pasadena—produced an incredible number of quality media programs. Beginning for over 35 years with *The World Tomorrow* radio program, Mr. Armstrong later permanently moved into television under the same name, and this program grew in viewership until it was number one in the *Arbitron* ratings for all religious programs in America. (These programs served double duty as radio broadcasts in some areas of the world.)

Just think! Try to imagine the incredible organization and support structure necessary for just this to occur. I was in awe of the television production department and, looking back, at how far advanced it was for that time.

Then think of the colossal publishing operation that distributed three monthly, four-color magazines (*The Plain Truth*, *The Good News*, *Youth* 81, 82, 83...) and a tabloid, bi-weekly newspaper called *The Worldwide News*. The ministry also received a regular *Pastor General’s Report* at one- or two-week intervals. These kept the entire ministry around the world “on the same page” at all times.

But there was *much more* that the Church published in the form of many books, booklets, brochures, reprint articles, Bible story books, youth Bible lessons in seven levels, an extensive Bible correspondence

course and hundreds of form letters, all sent from Headquarters and the regional offices by the millions annually. *The Plain Truth* alone had a circulation of considerably above eight million at the time of Mr. Armstrong's death, and *The Good News* circulation hovered in the range of one-half to one million.

The production of these quality magazines was itself truly something to behold. Most have forgotten, and many in the splinters have *never* experienced, the sheer magnitude of what took place with just these two publications—published month after month! I will never forget binding and sacking them for mailing in 1969, during the summer between my sophomore and junior years of college.

Inseparable from the publishing operation, and directed from Headquarters, was the *Plain Truth Newsstand Distribution Program*. Under the umbrella of this highly-structured program and regular close communication, local churches around the world achieved what could only be called spectacular success in distributing countless millions of magazines in multiple languages so that God's truth could be accessed everywhere on earth. The stories of how this program was blessed and what it achieved are legion, and the readers here could tell some of their own.

Of course, there was also the zeal—the amazing dedication and incredible ZEAL! For instance, in just 13 months, a relative handful of people distributed over three million magazines in Manhattan and the Bronx, New York—and with just *six* automobiles, since this was the total number that brethren in these areas owned. Most were taxis. What I witnessed in service among God's people—taking single boxes of magazines onto subway cars to service countless outlets (always paying their own fare)—is also a testimony to the organization under supervision and government that cannot be forgotten.

This kind of effort played out over and over in every endeavor throughout the Church and Work, throughout the world and through the decades when God's government was in place.

Feast of Tabernacles

Also directed from Headquarters, and to a lesser degree from the international regional offices, the Feast of Tabernacles was perhaps the greatest single event that demonstrated the efficiency and strength of God's government in action across the globe. A whole department was necessary to plan the Feast, and it spent the entire calendar year doing nothing else. Over time, this commanded eight-day assembly took on the title of "largest multi-site convention of any kind in the world."

Obviously, that is saying a mouthful in itself, but it does not tell the most important story.

The smooth functioning of what came to be over 120 sites, attended by anywhere from less than 100 people up to 15,000, was a thing of legend. Local Chambers of Commerce were invariably left in incredulous wonderment at “those funny people from the Worldwide Church of God.” They saw respectful, well-behaved children (another part of God’s government in action), minimal noise in hotels, cleanliness on site, happy faces in restaurants—and sometimes in massive traffic snarls entering or leaving parking lots—and more.

The statement of one Chamber leader in Canada told it all, and went on to become an oft-mentioned quote in the Church for years: “How come such wonderful people have to believe such crazy doctrines?” The Church could not make local communities appreciate our teachings, but the example that was produced—what they could *observe*—was extraordinary and truly appreciated, and attributable to the government of God at work in every Feast site.

Of course, all of the things that occurred at the Feasts—singles and seniors activities, family day, choir practices, department meetings, services, sightseeing trips, etc.—reflected the same things internally that local officials and citizens saw looking from the outside in. All of this was a direct by-product of a Church that practiced a very specific form—a REVEALED PATTERN!—of government, one that seemingly never ran into obstacles, hurdles or difficulties that could not be overcome, no matter the challenge and no matter how many hundreds or thousands of people were involved.

Three Ambassador Colleges and Imperial Schools

Also inseparable from Headquarters and one international regional office were three liberal arts colleges (Pasadena, California, Bricketwood, outside London, England and Big Sandy, Texas) that gave many thousands of students over the years an education unlike any other available on earth.

While each campus had its own distinct look and feel, its own “personality,” what they all produced was the same—people of strong, godly character and right purpose who had learned to put God’s way of life into action. I know. I attended one campus, my late wife attended another (actually two), and numerous family members attended the third. From deputy chancellors (under Chancellor Mr. Armstrong), to deans, to registrars, to department heads, to professors, to student officers and dorm

monitors, and to all related employees, these magnificently landscaped and meticulously manicured, extraordinary colleges were pictures of harmony, peace, unity—and learning!

The college motto was, “We teach students how to live, not just how to earn a living.” They lived up to their motto.

Campus life was very busy. Basic structure and various important routines governed the student’s life. Everyone understood there were rules that had to be observed, and the large majority of students did not try to circumvent them.

Part of the “pressure cooker” environment (as it was called) that had been designed to build strong leaders—for this reason the colleges were also referred to as “the West Point of God’s Work”—meant that nearly every student worked 20 hours per week in addition to classes and regular clubs. There were speaking clubs, leadership clubs and language clubs, chorale and band, as well as a host of different kinds of intramural sporting activities and events. But there was also plenty of time for social activities, and these included annual student outings to the beach, desert and other places, four annual dances, as well as regular dating. Students were taught that “true fun is anything that is still fun the day after.”

One of the entrances to Ambassador Hall carried these words cut in stone above the door: “THE WORD OF GOD IS THE FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE.” While the Ambassador colleges were never “Bible colleges,” but rather offered liberal arts, God’s Word governed campus life and the all-important curriculum of study. Every student understood this meant that God’s government ruled every aspect of the colleges.

There were also the “Imperial Schools”—kindergarten through high school—that were adjacent to the campuses. These served the purpose of specially educating the children of faculty, employees and other local brethren who could attend from nearby. It could be said these were similar to smaller versions of the colleges, except that the students were younger and not yet converted.

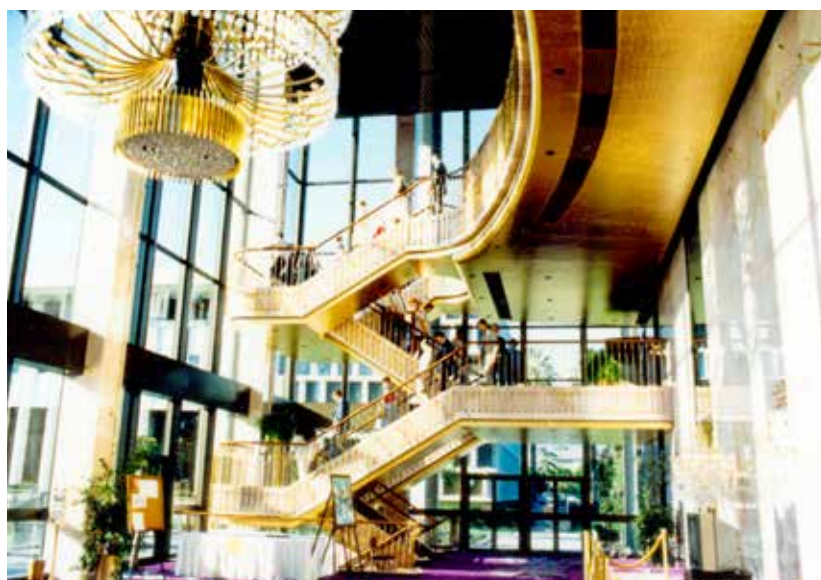
Of course, nothing is perfect in this life, and neither were these institutions—the colleges or Imperial Schools—but they were successful in the truest sense. The Ambassador campuses, especially in Pasadena, but also in Texas, were consistently selected as the most beautiful campuses in America (some might say that Bricketwood was the most beautiful of all), winning a special national award so often that the rules had to be changed by the judging committee to no longer permit “Ambassador College to win every year.”

Alongside the way of life that they taught, the Church once understood that these three beautiful college campuses were their own state-



Ambassador Auditorium:

Beloved by the Church as “God’s House,” and home to the headquarters congregation, this state-of-the-art concert hall represented the resplendent quality and scope of the Work at the pinnacle of the Philadelphian era.





Hall of Administration: From these offices, God's government was administered around the world. (Middle-right and bottom is the magnificent Ambassador Hall.)





Stately Campus: Award-winning buildings, pools, gardens and grounds reflected the breathtaking, awe-inspiring beauty and order of God's Way.









“And the gospel must...be published”: The sixth era of God’s Work reached virtually every country in the world on a scale unmatched in history. A special pattern of government made this possible.



Infrastructure: As God's Work moved forward and grew, it required massive and constantly expanding infrastructure to meet logistical challenges. No task was too great for teams who understood their role of support. What took place quietly in the background was beyond imagination.



Operations: Cutting-edge technology was used in departments such as Media and Mail Processing.



Non-stop Construction: As God's Church grew and expanded, so did His headquarters.



Developing Leaders: Students were taught to strive for excellence and build on the proper foundation. That foundation governed every element of campus life.



Imperial Schools: Knowledge taught in a wholesome environment provided a well-rounded education for children and teens of staff and local members.



The Feast of Tabernacles: Excited thousands enjoyed harmony and peace at the world's largest multi-site convention.



ment of God's marvelous form of government in action. It is not a stretch to say the whole Church thought of them as miniature reflections of the millennial rule of Christ and the saints. A glance at any college *Envoy* (the beautiful annual yearbook) trumpets this message.

Pastoral Unity Around the World

Smooth precision was seen in the Church around the world. "Decency and order" in local congregations began with Sabbath services, which were conducted in the exact same fashion everywhere. From song leader and singing to sermons and sermonettes, from announcements to special music, from opening prayer to closing prayer, the two-hour service was entirely a function of government in action. This pattern did not vary until the apostasy.

With the Bible not stating a specific format for any of these things, it was *government* that gave the Church a wide variety of *traditions* (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6) that governed all 868 congregations (the number at the Church's zenith) in complete harmony. One could attend in Des Moines, Iowa, Sydney, Australia, London, England, Manila, Philippines, Johannesburg, South Africa, Santiago, Chile, Paris, France or Bonn, Germany—with language the only difference depending upon the country—and have found the same pattern—and Spirit!—present. (Of course, Bible studies around the world also followed a generally-prescribed, 90-minute format.)

There were 1,855 ministers and elders in the Church when I was terminated in March 1993. Coupled with thousands of deacons and deaconesses, this well-organized administrative hierarchy served local congregations across the world in ways that every member and certainly every ordained person from that period would recall. Generally speaking, each minister, elder and deacon(ess) knew his place and service, including all specific duties for which he had been trained and appointed. For instance, the offering taken up on every Holy Day was mailed on instructions at a specific time the same way the world over.

Such obedience and follow-through applied to everything.

So Much...

This unity of purpose and practice translated into a number of other regular programs and activities within each local congregation and pastorate. Let's detail the most important.

In the mid- and late-1950s, local Spokesman Clubs began to appear in every congregation of any size. These were highly-structured speaking

and leadership development clubs that eventually produced a great many deacons, elders and even some few who were able to go on to become Church Pastors after one year at Ambassador College. Five officers under a director and sometimes an assistant director led each club of up to 30 members. The entire routine, from topicsmaster to toastmaster to speakers and evaluators, and the overall evaluation, was a picture of precision and order in the truest sense. One of the very purposes of the club was stated in the manual—"The THIRD main purpose of the speech clubs is to show the members God's government *in action*." How many men learned this, and how many remember it? (Of course, some areas were able to have Women's Clubs of varying formats, always directed by the ministry, but these were not as common.)

Every congregation held periodic socials across a broad range of types. Each of these required planning, organization, communication and structure—and details were usually not left to accident. There were picnics, formal dances, snow parties, trips to interesting places, singles and seniors activities. There were also all kinds of sports teams and sporting events—softball, basketball, volleyball, golf, hockey and track meets—and some of the larger pastorates were able to sponsor tournaments that were always wonderful occasions in the calendar year—at least this was the case before conduct throughout the Church degenerated into a picture that came to mirror what would be found in churches of the world. Certain people were always in charge under the ministry, others assisted. Everyone involved in bringing about the activity recognized that all had an assigned responsibility to properly carry out if the social were to be a success in serving God's people, and in giving them happy, wholesome fellowship.

Beginning in the 1970s and expanding in the early 1980s, teenage (Youth Opportunities United or Y.O.U.) and grade school age (Youth Educational Services or Y.E.S.) classes and activities were established around the world. While these also degenerated in later years into little more than glorified daycare and baby-sitting services, at their inception and for some years after, they were expansive programs, and contained many elements designed to teach God's youth His way of life. Where parents and pastors took them seriously (and this did wane through the apostasy), the fruit was good.

Then there were the summer camps—the happy, wonderful summer camps (Summer Education Program or "S.E.P.") in which memories like no others were made. These were also a vital part of the development and training of God's youth, and they were found throughout the world. I taught swimming in several of these camps, beginning in 1968 (Orr,

Minnesota), and continuing into the 1980s, and even into the 1990s within one of the splinters.

I saw their fruit firsthand—and saw that where the government of God began to change, so did conduct.

Still More...

Many pastorates had choirs, sometimes several when there was a Y.O.U. and/or Y.E.S. choir (we actually had 99 children on stage at one time in our Buffalo, New York Y.E.S. choir). All these choirs, but especially the adult choirs, were wonderful blessings that God's government brought to local congregations in a way that had to have been seen to be appreciated.

All of the local activities and programs described here, plus others (except, of course, S.E.P.), had to be paid for almost exclusively at the local level. This meant extensive and highly-organized fundraising activities that were common to every pastorate. Ideas were discussed, plans were made, people carried out the labor, funds were raised, budgets were established and a host of wonderful, positive activities were the result. These sometimes included generous contributions sent to Headquarters so God's Work could expand. Also, the most creative and fruitful ideas were often shared throughout the Church, and this helped to promote a feeling of harmony and unity.

The "congregations" sections would not be complete without at least mentioning that within the Church the very family unit itself—as pictured by thousands of miniature representations of God's government—became the greatest testimonial to how this government was to look. Before "women's lib" came among God's people, everyone recognized the unmistakable clarity of Ephesians 5:22-28, particularly verses 22 to 24 about Christ, the Church, husbands and wives—and that this was its own towering statement picturing how God's government worked from the top down, and began *in families*. No marriage and no family was perfect. But that was the point. They were all learning to *practice* God's government within the home.

Obviously, not every pastor was as effective at organization and planning. Therefore, not every pastorate demonstrated fruit to the exact same degree. Natural differences existed, including size. But in the broad main, there was symmetry, precision and organizational beauty like nowhere else on earth. No church of this world, those built by men and led by their governments, remotely rivaled what was experienced in the Worldwide Church of God before Mr. Armstrong died.

But the Worldwide Church of God was not built by a man or group of men, and it was not led by a government of men. It was the Church CHRIST BUILT (Matt. 16:18)—is STILL BUILDING (Eph. 2:20-21; 4:16; I Cor. 3:9; 12:13; I Pet. 2:5)—and is STILL LEADING (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18)!

How It Grew

The systematic *growth* and internal *development* of the Worldwide Church of God through the years was another story in itself. The special pictorial you saw presents a powerful visual of a Headquarters that had to be seen to be truly appreciated. But the even greater overall picture of the Church is still not complete until the *process* of growth and development is at least briefly referenced.

Departments appeared regularly, followed by sections within them. The departments split, with sections appearing again. This then required the creation of divisions over several departments. This pattern of expansion replicated itself time and again as the Church and Work of God took on a size that had never before been witnessed in Church history.

An apostle was in place. There were evangelists, pastors, preaching elders, local elders, deacons, deaconesses, administrators at every level, an Advisory Council of Elders for the last several years, and even a Headquarters visiting program for its five congregations, with eventually 5,500 brethren (including students) just in the Los Angeles basin. There were boards of directors for the Church, the college(s) and the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation (A.I.C.F.).

While there were the usual bumps in the road—I repeat, Pollyanna did not write this description—the constant state of transition in the Church and Work never brought “upset” beyond what could be handled, and almost with ease.

All flowing from the greatest point of doctrine...

Extraordinary Mechanism Seized by God's Enemies

All that you have read and so much more originated from, and was made possible by, a *centralized* world Headquarters that operated as wonderfully and efficiently as it did because it did not deviate from the *pattern* of GOVERNMENT revealed by God in His Word. The fact that, through the apostasy and after, God's enemies were able to capture and use this marvelous mechanism to terrify, brutalize, confuse and deceive the members and ministers of the Church who trusted in it is not a fault or indictment of the system, or of Mr. Armstrong who was used to teach it. It was the fault

of those false leaders, and to a great degree the many other senior ministers who largely seemed to disagree with the new leaders, but who offered almost no resistance because they were afraid to confront those who signed their paychecks, until those paychecks were threatened—and it was too late.

No one seems to believe that the Sabbath is at fault because people abuse and break it. No one blames the biblical tithing laws because some misapply them. No one blames God's Holy Days because some get drunk at the Feast or are negligent in their offerings. In each case, the problem is people, not doctrine. Why then does "government" get blamed instead of the wolves who seized it?

The Greatest Fault

Understand this, however. The very greatest problem in this takeover lay with the tens of thousands of brethren who, little different from Catholics, had come to unconsciously focus almost solely on obeying "government," in other words, on what they had *unconsciously come to assume* was still the government of God. Vast numbers forgot to stay focused on *all* of the OTHER *many* doctrinal truths that *true* government was supposed to uphold—actually in large part existed to protect—for the administration in Pasadena to remain *the government of God*. Instead, they focused on what came to be a human structure—an outward hollow shell of that government, and one that Christ could no longer direct because the agents running it had rebelled! Most people had no comprehension and little interest that He had been ejected as Head.

With the *true* Jesus Christ out of the picture, having been replaced by "another Jesus" (II Cor. 11:3-4) and this "Jesus'" doctrines, all of the astonishing peace, harmony, unity, agreement, productivity and wonderful FRUIT of God's government eventually disappeared—COMPLETELY DESTROYED. What came to replace this government—as well as all of its extraordinary fruit—throughout the splinters (in all of their forms) was something entirely different...

SPLINTERS IN CHAOS

The INTRODUCTION warned that no punches would be pulled. That promise begins in earnest now, and means this must be the largest—and most blunt—chapter in the book. If written in “soft tones,” it could never do justice to the awful confusion that is the state of affairs within what many still think—actually assume—is Christ’s true but divided church today.

The picture in the splinters is stark and ugly, so its “reflection” must be graphic. It will also be accurate. Therefore, you are warned again that what follows will not spare. And recognize that there is simply no way to address “government” in the splinters and slivers without discussing and focusing on their leaders. This will happen in this chapter and the next, and also in a later one. And it will occur in an entirely different and unexpected context.

This does not mean that the book must engage in character assassination or smearing of various leaders or other ministers in a *personal* way, in the manner that politicians try to discredit opponents through name-calling. You will see that this would not be necessary, anyway, because these men have done enough damage to themselves—and in public—that their records will be seen in a new light to speak eloquently for themselves.

What will occasionally seem like mockery is sometimes used for important and proper emphasis in parts of the book. Recall the prophet Elijah, and how he knew the prophets of Baal were *worthy* of mockery.

If you resent an occasional tone in this chapter or elsewhere, recognize it is these organizations that have effectively *mocked themselves*, again, in public.

Spiritual Fraud

Most people are, and certainly every student of law is, familiar with the crime known as *fraud*. In short, this is an act in which some form of deception is deliberately perpetrated on an unsuspecting victim for the purpose of embezzling or stealing something. In the world, fraud involves a high stakes game of confidence. Often incredibly audacious, scam artists—“con”(fidence) men—devise a scheme usually involving extreme complexity. This crime takes much forethought and can involve intricate and amazing sophistication. The jury hearing such cases must pay strict attention. There can be no daydreaming, or the value of evidence will be missed.

In the case presented here, the fraud—and you will see the *methods* in which it is being carried out—is being committed in the name of God, the Church and the truth, and the goal has been to steal God’s *tithes* and His *people* (II Pet. 2:1-3). In the world, those convicted of this crime usually go to prison. Of course, this does not occur when it happens among God’s people and within His Church. Therefore, the guilty must be discovered and addressed through other means.

Hold no illusions. What is being offered—what is *packaged*—today as “God’s government” (and in a host of different wrappings) to thousands of unwitting splinter members constitutes *spiritual fraud*. And you will see that the fraud is PLAIN!

Acquit or Convict!

The goal of a prosecutor in a criminal court of law is to *prove* his case against the defendant charged. His assignment is to present the *facts*—the EVIDENCE—in a manner that is airtight. The jurors also have an assignment. They must be able to recognize what they are hearing and bring in the correct verdict.

I have the same responsibility as the prosecutor. My purpose is to present the “case” through the rest of the book, similarly making it airtight—and you have begun to see the “opening argument.”

By reading this book, *you* have chosen to sit in the jury box. This means that you must listen as an objective juror, accepting only the *facts*, *evidence* and *proof*. If I may be dramatic, your job is to assess the facts

all the way through “final deliberation.” At some point, every juror is *required* to decide for guilt or innocence. If you remain objective—and you can cut through the convoluted gyrations of the splinter “defense attorneys”—you will see that their presentation disregards every rule of evidence, and the case for the defense is in shambles.

Do not misunderstand! This trial carries higher stakes for you than it would for normal jurors. You have a *personal* stake in the outcome. If you ignore the facts and decide the wrong way, and juries often do, YOU will be held accountable by God—the COURT OF HEAVEN!—and there will be consequences in the years just ahead that pass to YOU!

You are admonished to pay strict attention to facts presented throughout.

The Destroyer

Satan is described in God’s Word in a variety of ways through use of different descriptive terms: “deceiver,” “roaring lion,” “prince of this world,” “prince of the power of the air,” “god of this world,” “tempter,” “accuser of the brethren,” “father of murder” and “father of lies,” among others. But the single most descriptive of all of the devil’s names is “destroyer.”

Let’s see why.

Revelation 9:11 refers to Satan using both the Hebrew (Abaddon) and the Greek (Apollyon) for his role as “the destroyer.” In truth, the greatest evidence that Satan is present in any matter—either in the world or the Church—is that something was *destroyed*. Something was severely damaged or ruined. This could be people’s lives, friendships, families, organizations, programs, important projects in which wrong attitudes brought them to nothing, sports or athletic teams, companies and even countries. It could also be said that the *level* of destruction in a situation is directly proportional to how many of the devil’s fingerprints can be found in the wreckage.

John 10 describes “wolves,” “strangers,” “hirelings,” “thieves” and “robbers” at work among the people of God. The chapter also speaks about the “porter” (faithful administration) who lets only the “Shepherd” (Jesus Christ) in among the “sheep” to fellowship with them and to lead them to safety when necessary. In verse 11, Jesus is also called the “Good Shepherd” who will protect His sheep at all costs from wolves and strangers—but only as long as they recognize “His voice.” Putting together John 10:4 and 27, and coupling them with 18:37, makes plain that voice is “the truth,” or true doctrine.

Verse 10 presents Jesus' instruction to His people regarding how to know that a stranger, wolf, thief or robber has entered the sheepfold. The second half of this scripture is more familiar, and the part usually quoted and committed to memory: "I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more *abundantly*."

While this portion of the verse is inspiring, there is another very crucial element of the passage to consider: What makes the second part of the verse, our focus here, much more powerful in meaning today is that the reader would have *first* read the beginning of it, the part that sets up the promise portion: "The *thief* comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to *destroy*."

How to Know

Let's summarize this in context: When things are going smoothly, and good fruits, peace, harmony, production, abundance and real success are evident and abounding within the Church, Christ—the Good Shepherd—and His government are present and leading. But when these things are absent, and have been replaced by division, competition, accusation, splitting and chaos—bad fruits—and on a wide scale, it should be obvious that the DESTROYER is present! And he comes in the form of a "thief" whose game is fraud.

The Christian is supposed to be on the lookout for and to recognize—and discern—these differences (Heb. 5:13-14). But most today are failing to make this connection. They have become lazy, disinterested jurors.

The many and ever-increasing number of splinters and slivers that appeared after the collapse and destruction of the Worldwide Church of God represent a picture of turmoil and devastation perhaps only a little less awful than occurred in the WCG. Much of what was described in the previous chapter has been replaced by something completely unrecognizable to those who are looking for the *fruits* of the government of God. Many people still *do* believe that God's government is at work *some-where*, but more and more are concluding that it cannot be in their organization.

The chapters that follow cannot be appreciated without first examining the almost complete wreckage—the truly terrible destruction—masquerading as government carrying God's authority all through the splinters. Nowhere in their false teachings, which are constantly increasing in number, are the fingerprints of the destroyer more evident than in the kaleidoscopic picture of AWFUL DESTRUCTION evi-

denced in the many humanly-devised forms of altered governance found among them. You must come to grips with the collective mess in these organizations that has supplanted the harmony described in Chapter Two, depicting the mid-1980s and before.

The contrast between what many suppose to be the “church” of the twenty-first century and the Church of God of the twentieth century prior to 1986 is stark!

Only Through Close Examination

Let’s examine these differences in detail. We will take a look at a number of the largest splinters, as well as several of the larger slivers. Each one tells its own story. This is because every group seems to have crafted its own “theology”—often “on the fly” as needed—to justify what it is doing. Together—with the latest trends in thinking and approach among independents included—they tell a bigger story. This chapter then is necessarily direct. As with the paragraphs introducing it, the rest will pull no punches—and there is *no attempt* made to hide or cover up the organizations or groups described!

The reader must understand that I will periodically reference errors in thinking and teaching, sometimes very serious. But these will not, actually cannot, be demonstrated as such until later chapters present proof of exactly *how*—in *what way*—they differ in administration and practice from the Church prior to 1986. Therefore, accept that, in some cases, it will not be fully understood *why* these things are wrong until they can be addressed in a broader context later. The reader must be patient with the continuing need to develop the book—the case—step-by-step in the most correct way to lay the foundation for all that the Bible teaches and that Mr. Armstrong taught. The whole picture will come together in time.

Some will surely say that what follows in this chapter is an “attack” on other organizations. I have been accused of this by those who in fact attack me. Do not be foolish enough to fall for this as some have. Again, you will see that it is the leaders of these groups who are, in fact, *attacking* their trusting, but gullible, members who are looking to them for faithful guidance. These leaders have been able to get away with this by concocting various unusually exotic and complicated kinds of *layered deceit* to cover the truth of how God governs His Church. No one has been willing to “bring charges against them” and to “prosecute” their arguments, passed off as theology and growth in understanding. Thus, it is *these* men—and you will not be able to miss this—who have literally

attacked God's government through a veritable explosion of deception designed to destroy even all *memory* of previous understanding in the minds of their followers.

This is not a book they want you to read!

The Very Large, Paralyzed Splinter

Nowhere is the departure from God's government more evident than in the United Church of God (UCG), begun in 1995. When its government is understood, it is hard to imagine that any person or group of people could have devised a method of governance and administration more different from the Bible pattern. The system this organization has created is literally fraught with political infighting and opportunity to climb, as well as cumbersome mechanisms that almost appear to have been purposely designed to checkmate progress on every front. In the name of "transparency," UCG's leaders also foolishly publish virtually *everything* they do in matters that should be decided upon in private. While they should be red-faced with embarrassment, they trumpet their errors to all without shame. But at least this makes it easy to examine how their government "works."

So much is wrong with this organization's leadership structure that the section devoted to it must be the largest in the chapter. Recognize that this group also commands extra attention because over one half of all those who left the WCG and entered a splinter chose to join it. However, bear in mind that what is described here still barely scratches the surface of UCG's jumbled, tumbling, stumbling, bumbling, fumbling—and, worst of all, widespread internal mumbling and grumbling!—form of governance. Truly, these horribly misguided officials have created the very definition of *administrative disaster*! If you are in this organization, try to pull back your thinking and read with objectivity.

While it is hard to know where to begin, we will start with their decision in the spring of 1995 to create a representative, parliamentary, democratic, or actually more properly labeled, *republican* form of government, similar to modern worldly democracies.

Endless Committees

As with any democratic or representative form of government, miles of bureaucratic red tape began to appear—and fast! Exactly like the national governments of men, particularly in the West, committees and

study groups began to form for virtually every need that this church could face. There have even been committees and study groups appointed to study other committees and study groups.

Contrary to Mr. Armstrong's plain teaching—and WARNING!—a *doctrine* committee was almost immediately created so that UCG could examine all of the doctrines established in the Church through Mr. Armstrong. And this was done, wittingly or not, in the very same manner that THE APOSTATES' EXAMPLE had taught them! There also have arisen an *education/ministerial services* committee, a *member appeal* committee, a *strategic planning and finance* committee, a *youth* committee, a *media and communications* committee, an *executive* committee, an *advisory* committee of the council and even a *nominating* committee of the council.

But there is also an *ethics, rules and bylaws* committee, which explains WHY there has appeared an endless array of rules in this organization following in the wake of what was already an immense set of bylaws that had to be established for practically every contingency that disagreeing elected officials might otherwise fight over. And those who know the facts will admit there have been any number of internal “struggles”—some very intense—over a variety of issues and personalities, but usually leading back to pursuit of power. And finally, no wonder then that there is also the need for an *amendment* committee to keep council members from being frozen at impasse when all of the previously-established bylaws and rules have not been sufficient to spell out exactly how to proceed in yet another (and another, and another) “unforeseen” situation. But even this has failed to break some of the impasses.

One is left to wonder if somewhere in a secret closet sits a specially designated—and highly motivated!—“destruction committee,” hard at work destroying this church.

This organization has proved true the axiom, “A committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and quietly strangled.”

The Top Committee

Bear in mind that the overall organization is actually run by an elected 12-man committee called the Council of Elders, with these selected by all of the ordained men in the organization—something very different from the *Advisory* Council of Elders that Mr. Armstrong, as *both* its President and Chairman (as well as apostle and Pastor General), established by HIS *appointment* of its members to advise him. (But we will see the actual *scope* of the Council's governance is still in question.)

In UCG, it is the other way around. The Council appoints the President who, in both reality and practice, is actually a President who advises the Council (for a three-year term)—making him, in effect, an *Advisory* President reporting to the Council. (I am compelled to say with the vernacular for those who know what this means for an organization: “It is so bad, you can’t make this stuff up.”)

This Council also appoints its Chairman. Truly, there the tail wags the “dog” (it will be interesting to note a scriptural reference in Philippians 3:2 and Revelation 22:15 about false ministers), and God is *completely excluded* from the process, whether or not these leaders will see and believe this.

The entire collective ministry of this splinter—at one point well over 400 men (with so many untrained men now having been wooed into the ministry), and referred to as the General Conference of Elders—votes on all important church matters, including approving budgets, changing doctrines, establishing priorities and, of course, who should sit on the Council (also for three-year terms). National councils in other countries are elected by the *local* ministers of these countries.

It is widely reported that as many as 25 percent or more of all of the ordained men in this organization refuse to participate in its governance because they either see the process as political or simply do not care. They are certainly correct in the former, but sadly they cannot see then that *God* could not possibly be in it—and that they should GET OUT! These men seem willing to remain, however, and to send God’s tithes to those whom they *know* are deeply confused, politically driven, terribly doctrinally-compromised and divided in a host of ways—and who have rejected outright God’s form of government. The net effect is that they stay and underwrite a system they know is politically corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. (In late 2010/early 2011, some did decide to leave UCG due to the widespread division. This large number of ministers then formed their own new group, called Church of God, a Worldwide Association [COGwa]. Its government is no better.)

Of course, UCG’s council has found a way to justify and excuse its upside-down, broken government. Here is how they do this. They declare variously, “We are awaiting a chief shepherd” or “...God’s choice of leader” or “...God’s man” and “Our form of government is just temporary” and “We were forced to improvise with government until this man arrives.” A previous president of United told me personally in 2003 these very words, and added a comment to the effect that “Our government doesn’t really work” and “I serve as long as they will let me.” He would not deny these words.

Sadly, this decent man was summarily removed—in effect, thrown!—from office less than two years later in favor of a younger, “more progressive” man. Yet, because of this new man’s general *agreement* with the apostates, Pasadena *handpicked* HIM in 1993 to replace me in Akron, Ohio, at the time I was fired for unwillingness to accept what he *embraced*. He had accepted, by his *own* public and private admission(!), *all* of the already scores of false teachings in the WCG to that point—including the trinitarian false god! I have his sermon(s)! Of course, at predictable moments, such men often “see the light” and “recover.” And their march toward advancement can continue unabated.

Tragically, thousands of brethren seem to believe the above thinking and are waiting “in faith” for God to show them the “leader” He has chosen to “unite all of God’s people.” (Many in other groups or at home are doing the same.) In the meantime, the Council appoints—and seems to happily tolerate—such near-apostate leaders as the one described above to, they would say only “temporarily,” keep the home fires burning while waiting for “God’s appointed leader.” Not only will the man *they envision* never come, but they would never follow *God’s* kind of leader, as they pretend to hope for, unless tremendous miracles accompanied that man—something God has never done in Scripture or at any time in the New Testament era following an apostasy.

Mass Resignation to Lower “Office”

There was a time when every minister and elder in the Worldwide Church of God believed, or at least seemed to believe, that he had received his office within Christ’s Body (I Cor. 12:18, 28) from the living Jesus Christ Himself.

Prior to ordination, extensive recommendations were made (the form for this is shown and examined in a later chapter) and approvals took place through a process that, again, all ministers and elders seemed to understand. There was no mystery. Each time a man was ordained or raised in rank to higher office, that process began again, with the knowledge that Christ, the Head of that Church, had made the final decision. A form was submitted. Faith was involved. So was God’s government.

At its outset, in an unbelievable act of mindless conformity and “lemming effect,” the hundreds of ministers who began the United Church of God all agreed to *simultaneously* give up their offices, no matter the rank, and simply refer to themselves as “elders.” This designation was now to apply equally to evangelists, pastors, preaching elders, local elders and local church elders. All were now simply *elders*, with their

“rank designation” entirely based on what their exact *function* or *assignment* would be at any given time.

Incredibly, evangelists of decades standing gave up their offices in the stroke of a moment. So did Pastor-rank ministers of similar seniority. In other words, these men decided that, if they were not *actually* “evangelizing” or *actually* “pastoring,” they should not be considered to any longer hold these *ranks*. Yet, in the past, there were always pastors and evangelists, a great many of whom served either at Headquarters or in a regional office, or within the colleges, who did neither of these things. These men never popped in and out of their offices—meaning their ranks—because of job changes, like so many jack-in-the-boxes. (In fact, this was the case on numerous occasions in the WCG with many of this splinter’s senior men.)

We must ask: Did these men never believe that it was *Jesus Christ* who had put them into their offices? Did they believe Mr. Armstrong and others were not led of Him, and made an error in judgment by approving their promotions in rank? Tragically, these men simply forgot what these offices meant—and that they were ranks within God’s government. They lost sight of the fact that they had no right to *overrule Christ’s decision* so that they could all be “equals.”

It must be recognized that the idea behind their decision—and this was openly stated—was to introduce a form of democratic governance over the “church,” in which decisions were made by “one man, one vote.” The chief goal was to attract as many local church elders and ministers as possible into their fellowship with the promise that—from senior evangelists to junior local church elders—they would all carry equal weight on Church-wide matters. Political motives create political environments—and vice-versa.

In this regard, you need to ask yourself if ministers of Jesus Christ can by their own authority reduce the office given them by the Head of the Church to a lower one. We must ask: Could a man *promote* himself to a higher office? Of course not! Then how could so many believe themselves authorized to *reduce* their offices?

An Inset From Mr. Armstrong

What we have just described commands an inset to the chapter. While we will generally be quoting Mr. Armstrong much more extensively later, we need to let him, as the one who signed their ordination certificates, address what all of the senior ministers in UCG did in their mass action.

This was not the first time that the question had arisen about whether there is a difference between *rank* and *function* within the offices of the

New Testament ministry. This problem arose in the “liberal years” of the mid-1970s, and Mr. Armstrong addressed it. He left no doubt that the various ranks of the ministry were, in fact, RANKS—specific OFFICES! A man’s designation did not move with his function, duties, responsibilities or particular job assignment at any given time. When the man was ordained to a certain office, that was his RANK in Christ’s ministry, and it did not change!

You will be able to see exactly what Mr. Armstrong wrote to the entire ministry in 1979 about this matter. Bear in mind that virtually all, if not *every single one*, of the senior ministers who reduced themselves to “elders” in this organization in 1995 would have received the *Pastor General’s Report* explaining what you are about to read. Notice the very title of the article (at the end) written to the ministry, and take special note of the last sentence, given all caps for emphasis by Mr. Armstrong:

“I hope it is understood that designation of ordination as Evangelist, Pastor, etc., refers—and always has—to rank [emphasis his], rather than assignment of activity.

“As I recall at the moment, none who have held Evangelist rank have devoted themselves to holding evangelistic campaigns—preaching to public audiences regularly in proclaiming the Gospel Message to the world.

“The nearest exception to that, as I now recall, is that Mr. Rod Meredith held two or three campaigns, with public invited, in England more than twenty years ago. My son Garner Ted held occasional two- or three-night abbreviated campaigns a number of times, taking along on some of them singers, M.C., etc. He also held an evangelistic campaign of some weeks at Springfield, Missouri, in the late 50s. A few others of Evangelist rank have held a few occasional one- or two-night campaigns.

“But none has been occupied regularly in holding evangelistic campaigns preaching to the outside public.

“For years Mr. Norman Smith, of Evangelist rank, was occupied in supervision of radio and TV Production. For years Al Portune was occupied in the Business Office, handling finances. For years Mr. Les McCullough, ranked Evangelist, was executive in charge of the Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College. For years Mr. Raymond McNair was occupied as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College in England, as he is on the Pasadena campus now. And so with the others—none has been occupied in evangelizing the outside world,

though many have spoken more or less often, on the Sabbaths, to our own congregations.

“In I Corinthians 12, the various functions in Church organization are explained. ‘There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord’ (verse 5). Different administrations require administrators—and that is listed first in the designation of duties within the organized Church. Most of our administrators have been ranked Evangelist.

“Next, ‘And there are diversities of operations’ (verse 6). This can include all other specially designated operations within the Church, devoted full time (not laymen necessarily). For these many varied functions in a united, organized, cohesive Work, God has given various ones special spiritual gifts—dividing to each as GOD wills.

“Then, same chapter, God has set in the Church, apostles, prophets, teachers...governments. In Ephesians 4 this is amplified a little further: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. It is apparent these are intended to be ranks, rather than definite occupations. AND THAT IS THE WAY GOD HAS SET IT IN HIS CHURCH TODAY!”

*“Evangelist Rank Is Designation Of Rank—Area Of Operation,”
Pastor General’s Report, October 24, 1979*

There are only two possible explanations for why scores of senior ministers did not follow this instruction. They either *forgot* it—or they *rebelled* against it. We can naturally wonder if *all* of them could have forgotten *in unison* such an understanding—and official ruling. No serious person could believe this, and we could conclude that if just one or a few had “remembered” Mr. Armstrong’s teaching, would they not have reminded the others of what they were doing?

Voluntary Resignation!

Grasp this. For one of these two reasons, these men voluntarily resigned their appointed offices in Christ’s Body. Make no mistake about the current rank of all the senior ministers in UCG. These senior men formally *resigned* their higher WCG offices *many years ago!* While deceived, they *chose* to do what they did. Worse, this decision in itself formally **DISQUALIFIED** these men from holding their old offices and, when truly understood, from the ministry altogether. They have straight out *rejected* where Christ put them in His Body (I Cor. 12:18). Do you think that He could still use—work through—such men?

Consider further. When men do this for *any* reason, they cannot later decide of their own accord—should this become desirable—that their

actions were wrong and then reinstate themselves. Under no circumstances does the Bible *ever* permit men to *reinstate themselves* to the ministry either after involuntary removal from office or resignation. Let's state this plainly again: After having rejected, and for many years now, the calling of Jesus Christ to an office—any office—such men are OFFICIALLY DISQUALIFIED from that office until, upon sincere repentance, they are formally—meaning officially!—reinstated by the higher *true* authority in wherever God's government is. Laugh and sneer as they surely will at this explanation, these senior men have wholesale *left the ministry!* They are simply no longer true ministers—period! These men are in no sense *Christ's* ministers, any more than they are “united.”

On the basis of what you have just read in this section, can you begin to understand more about how God could not POSSIBLY be leading a government formed by men whose *very first action* was to outright REJECT the very offices into which Jesus Christ had placed them?

As you read the next section, keep asking yourself how an organization over 15 years old could be lost in such a maze of ignorance and confusion.

By Their Own Admission

At least this organization has been somewhat “honest” about the Frankenstein form of government it has created. Its January 2006 church newspaper contained a telling article titled “Role of the President in International Areas.” The article opened with a statement that the Council of Elders had surveyed ministers in the international areas about their view of the president's role. In practical reality, this means that the “dog” consulted with its “tail” for instruction on how to—and even *permission* to—wag it!

The article referenced one Council of Elders member as stating, “...the responses to the survey went in a different direction than was anticipated and opened up even more fundamental issues for discussion.” It reported that this Council member wrote the Council Chairman “that confusion ‘...in the international areas regarding the role of the president internationally is to some extent...due to a lack of clarity with respect to how the Council and president should function.’” Incredibly, no one recognized that human nature had been given a voice.

The article continued with this same man asking the rest of the Council “to consider some questions about those foundational concepts. What is the United Church of God? Are we merely an associa-

tion of independent entities around the world with no overall global central administration? Are we just tied together by certain doctrines or policies, but not by a common administration?...does the United Church of God transcend national boundaries and legal documents? Are National Councils the supreme administrative authority for each area? Or do they recognize an authority over them? If so, is that authority the Council of Elders?"

How many members and ministers understood the seriousness of what is in question here? Even though this organization long ago published a "study paper" on this aspect of its governance, the article continued with the Council then "point[ing] out that we have a common vocabulary, but often don't have common definitions for our words. For example, what is the meaning of 'governance,' 'administration,' 'association,' 'micro-management,' etc.?" Astonishing.

The article also referenced another Council member—this is almost too incredible to believe—who, the article reports, "stated that the fear some international areas have, based on history and experience, is that the 'strong arm from Headquarters' will try to take control. He said that it is important to coordinate with international areas, not to control them."

What?!! "Coordinate"?!! Every form of government *must* involve control. This is what government IS! Government means *governing*!

However astonishing this is, what may be the worst from this article is saved for last. The Council Chairman himself declared this: "There are fundamental questions about what leadership is, what authority is and who has it." Absolutely incredible! I am compelled to repeat, "You cannot make this stuff up." One could wonder how so many could follow such leaders, and for so many years.

But there is more.

No Wonder...

No wonder the United Church of God refers to its "capitol" as "home office" instead of HEADQUARTERS. No wonder it customarily sends regular monthly letters to its membership signed by two men—the Chairman of the Council *and* the President, both of whom also merely consider themselves "elders."

No wonder UCG calls itself "an International Association"—with this because its leaders and ministry no longer understand WHO or WHAT is the Church and Body of Christ, and that Christ always intended His Church be much more than a mere "association" of similar congrega-

tions. (Mr. Armstrong thundered against this kind of human “affiliation.”) As the next natural byproduct of such a spectacular and catastrophic collective memory loss, no wonder the leadership in this organization cannot any longer recognize the need for God’s pattern of government—or even what that pattern was.

No wonder local congregational boards were permitted at the outset, even though the home office was forced to renege on this promise because they faced too much of the kind of chaotic government at the local level that they wanted to reserve for their “home office.” No wonder local pastors sometimes permit teenagers and unqualified others to speak from the pulpit, little children to take up offerings on Holy Days (thinking it “cute”), and do other things reserved for duly-appointed deacons and leaders. (They have forgotten that it was the apostates who taught them to break with “decency and order”—and established tradition—with these ideas.) No wonder the true gospel—a message about God’s coming, world-ruling GOVERNMENT—has been rejected by this group in favor of one half-mirroring the world’s gospel about “Jesus” and His “forgiveness.”

No wonder ministers polled certain local congregations to see if *the people* preferred an opening prayer before or after the songs that open the service—or if *the people* did not. No wonder that addressing and referencing ministers and other officers as “Mr.” has disappeared in much of UCG. (It comes as no surprise that this evidence of disappearing respect for offices of God is also visible in virtually all of the other splinters and slivers.)

Again, no wonder its Council publicly declares it is still “unclear”—and this done seemingly without the slightest embarrassment—how the respective local councils of other nations should report to either the President or the Council at the home office. No wonder this organization, over 15 years later, is *still* studying how that President interacts with the Council.

These “no wonders” could go on and on, because there is *much more* wrong with UCG’s atrocious governmental structure. In fact, this organization is best described as a breeding ground—a virtual training school—for opportunists, climbers and those for whom political thinking comes naturally. While there is temptation to continue, even a description of this group must have a limit.

In late 2010 and early 2011, the United Church of God lost several thousand members and over 150 ministers to a new organization—Church of God, a Worldwide Association (COGwa). Born after a long, internal and disgraceful public fight, COGwa leaders built a near clone of the UCG government they left behind. By any reckoning, the differ-

ences are so minor one can only wonder why a separation took place. The facts demonstrate that no *other* doctrines seemed to be driving UCG's latest split. By all accounts, ministerial egos were the cause of so much additional damage to the brethren.

A final acknowledgement—and admonition: The travesty occurring in the name of “government” that is being perpetrated by these two organization's leaders lies equally at the feet of their memberships. The home office could never have gotten to first base if brethren there were not sending tithes and offerings to empower it, now them. Fraud, spiritual or otherwise, often involves co-conspirators, and these organization's leaders have unwitting thousands.

Armed with right knowledge, however, individuals *can* choose to be different!

The Big Pentecostal Splinter

The Living Church of God (LCG) claims to be the “living branch” of God's Church, was formed in early 1993 under a different name (the Global Church of God), and also consists of thousands of people. Having undergone a name change in 1998, it is still led by a self-proclaimed “senior evangelist,” Roderick Meredith, who constantly speaks of having spent “thousands of hours with Mr. Armstrong.” LCG does not practice the same mistakes of government as those described in UCG. Its errors are different and more easily summarized, but they are also several in number and gravely wrong.

It is important to realize before continuing that Satan has always been willing to permit the churches of his world to teach different kinds of error. Unlike God, he does not require uniformity among his followers. He knows error is error—heresy is heresy—false teaching is false teaching—and that it fulfills his purpose in every form. The devil's goal has been consistent—to overthrow and destroy the government of God, and he is more than happy to offer God's people a variety of wrong patterns from which to choose to achieve his end. Ultimately, no form of government error is better or worse than any other.

A side note is important here regarding LCG and UCG. These two splinters have periodically quietly held meetings toward the express purpose of an eventual MERGER. While most of the membership of both are probably unaware of this—there are the usual denials—*many* know of the process. There have been meetings involving both groups, formal and informal, and held at different levels in different places, including at LCG's headquarters. Details of leadership are reported to be the sticking point.

But, because of “flexibility,” the differences in government—as well as other doctrines—will evaporate in time. These facts will almost certainly be denied, as they were in 1998, when I witnessed the same thing firsthand.

One or Three?

First, this organization has changed the biblical pattern of offices once practiced in the Worldwide Church of God, and has introduced new titles, among other errors.

Mr. Armstrong explained that there are three kinds of elders (this will be more clearly understood later) with “elder” in the name, and most readers are familiar with them. These categories functioned in three offices: Preaching Elders, Local Elders (those in the full-time ministry) and Local Church Elders (elders who are *not* full-time). Roderick Meredith has done away with all three designations—three offices—and merged them into one office, that of simply “elder.” He claims that Mr. Armstrong created the office of Preaching Elder as a kind of maneuver to “satisfy the draft board” in the 1950s. This is patently false, as well as silly, and you will see Mr. Armstrong’s own description of how this biblical office fits into Christ’s ministerial hierarchy.

With this leader’s merging of three offices, not only is all distinction between these then lost, but the office and rank of Pastor—that of the most senior ministers under evangelists—is significantly diminished. The experience, importance—and level of respect to seniority—that this rank once represented in God’s structure largely disappears in this system. In practical application, this organization routinely raises men (sometimes also young men) of minimal training and experience to “Pastor rank.” Of course, and this is a real problem, such promotions play wonderfully in stroking younger, more junior ministers. This alteration also serves to automatically create an environment that is more political. Inexperienced men ordained and raised to this office will naturally feel that they have *quickly* risen to higher rank. They will feel themselves to have “arrived”—meaning they have “grown spiritually” at “unusual speed”!

Gone and forgotten are the all-important admonitions of I Timothy 3:6 (do not ordain novices or pride will lift them up) and 5:22 (avoid sudden decisions to ordain, where proper thought and discussion were obviously lacking).

More obvious, however, is the basic fact that three offices of God, once held by many hundreds of men when the Church was on track, have been thrown out the window in LCG’s ministerial structure. (Many will

be able to remember that local elders—those full-time—were always to be considered of greater office than local church elders.)

New “Presiding” Office

Recognize that this change was unilaterally instituted by a man who has also created a new title for *himself*—Presiding Evangelist. (We will ask momentarily whether he actually takes a very different and higher level of authority than that of evangelist.)

Mr. Armstrong never referred to himself or anyone else by this title. We knew he was Christ’s apostle, and he never referred to himself as “Presiding.” Also, we understood he was the Pastor General (or “general pastor”) because he supervised all congregations, and he referred to himself as such. And, of course, he was the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Worldwide Church of God, as well as the Chairman of its corporate Board of Directors.

Not only did Mr. Armstrong never give this designation or use this term, neither does the Bible. It is mere human invention, and breaks with plain understanding of evangelists as the *third* office within the Body of Christ, and thus one that would not “preside” over the Church as a whole. Many do not realize that Mr. Armstrong thought himself to have been leading the Church as an evangelist for 19 years—from Autumn 1933 to Autumn 1952—until he recognized this was erroneous thinking, and God revealed to him how it was to be corrected. This story will begin to be understood in Chapter Five, but will be more fully explained in a later chapter.

As with UCG, and directly related to the humanly devised title he has taken, Roderick Meredith established a Council of Elders. He also dropped the word “Advisory” from its description. Obviously, because he no longer either understood or held to other elements of God’s government practiced in the past, he had no difficulty making this change. When I sat on his Council (for about four years prior to Restored’s inception), I asked him in its first meeting, why he did not use the word *advisory*. I was direct. He explained that “he was part of the Council” and that he should be considered “just one of the men on it.” This was his explanation.

The Council in this organization is also vested with the authority to change official church teachings—doctrines—by two-thirds vote. In this way, they are little different from UCG, except that the latter is more honest in publicly admitting what they are reviewing and what has been decided—because the entire ministry participates.

The reader can easily investigate whether this is true.

Also like those of UCG, the ministry of this so-called “living” organization looked the other way and permitted all of these changes. They should never have accepted alterations in God’s government that they in fact, at least in most cases, received with open arms.

“Restoring Apostolic Christianity”

Before continuing, and again as with the leaders of UCG, recognize that Roderick Meredith does not understand Mr. Armstrong’s role as the final prophesied Moses, foretold to come (Mal. 4:4) ahead of the end-time Elijah who would “restore all things” (Matt. 17:11) to God’s Church before Christ’s Return (Mal. 4:5-6). (This is explained thoroughly in my three-part sermon, “First a MOSES, Now ELIJAH—130 Proofs!”) This ignorance of fulfilled prophecy paves the way to a host of connected problems in leaders who reject the *understanding* of this fulfillment—what it means to the Church. Let’s see how this has affected the thinking of this leader, and what it has to do with government in LCG.

Many will remember that Mr. Armstrong repeated over and over, and the INTRODUCTION cited several examples, that God raised him up more to re-establish the government of God in the Church than for perhaps any other reason (except for the co-equal importance of re-establishing the true gospel, which is entirely *about* God’s government). Of course, Mr. Armstrong did bring a great many other truths to God’s Church, but he believed the ones about government and the true gospel to be the most crucial—and he also said as much more than once.

Here is what has happened in LCG. Roderick Meredith and those he calls his “lieutenants” seized on the idea of constantly repeating and emphasizing the theme of “restoring apostolic Christianity.” In so doing, this man is affirming what many know to be his private desire to *be* the Elijah.

Have you recognized this? Have you grasped its significance—what it means?

Here is another problem with this: As an *evangelist*, Roderick Meredith sees *himself* as chosen and led to “restore *apostolic* Christianity”—in other words, the way of life first taught through APOSTLES—to the Church. Here is the incredible irony in this. He is saying the man who *was* an apostle—Mr. Armstrong—apparently never did this, but as an evangelist, *he would and is!*

Take special note that this man has linked his view of what he sees as the “restoration” to an emphasis on performing “miracles” and demonstrating “great power,” like the original Elijah, so he can “shake the

nations.” Of course, similar to Simon Magus in Acts 8, however obsessed this leader has become with such gifts, I tell you on God’s authority that he will *not* be given this power—at least not from the true God. It is in this area—that of spiritual “gifts” described in I Corinthians 12—that LCG’s leader has become obsessed, coveting the power of miracles, especially to heal. Of course, who would not be in favor of healing? However, all who truly still believe God heals would know this occurs *only in* the Body of Christ, for those with simple faith.

The understanding of true and false miracles will be covered in greater detail, and in a fascinating context, in Chapter Eighteen. However, those with serious interest will want to carefully listen to my vital three-part sermon series “Understanding Signs, Wonders and Miracles—True and False!” You will be left stunned at what is at stake within this subject. You will also understand that miracles and even *special* miracles are part of the signs and wonders that are the “signs of an APOSTLE”—not of an *evangelist* working without an apostle’s authority.

“Another Gospel”—and a Curse!

We must ask: Is it really any wonder this “senior evangelist” would pervert the New Testament offices of Christ’s ministry, and invent for himself a new title—or alter the name of the Advisory Council of Elders? Of course not! He cannot possibly believe Mr. Armstrong restored God’s government to the Church any more than he believes Mr. Armstrong restored the true gospel to the Church. This is because this man has also perverted *this* central, titanic truth in favor of “another gospel” (II Cor. 11:3-4). Like UCG, he has shifted halfway to acceptance of the world’s focus on the *Messenger* (actually, when understood, on “another Jesus”) instead of His MESSAGE. LCG, again like UCG, also lists Christ’s forgiveness of sins as the *first* element of the gospel. The reader should take a moment to read and be sobered by what Paul said about the *double* curse related to this in Galatians 1:6-9. In losses of astounding proportion, over 70 percent of LCG’s original ministry has left the organization (for various reasons), retired or died—often suddenly or tragically—since 1995, but most since late 1998, with 2004 and after witnessing a dramatic acceleration.

Time will demonstrate that Galatians 1:6-9 reveals this process and other *worse* problems to be ongoing—far from complete in LCG. In fact, as this curse takes greater and greater effect in the large splinters (and any others who adopt this false gospel), their *problems* will continue to grow in a parallel and commensurate intensity.

You must understand the reason God places a double curse on those who pervert the truth of the gospel. (Ask: How many other doctrines are even connected to a *curse*?) It is because the gospel is *only* about the coming, world-ruling government of God!

God no more wants this message about government perverted before all nations than He wants His government perverted in the Church! Woe unto those who pervert either!

How ironic that LCG and so many other splinters happily put Christ where He *is not* and does not want to be—as part of the gospel! Yet, they refuse to acknowledge Him where He *should be* and declares that He is—the Head of His one, undivided government, leading a single organization!

But how many will see the *fuller, bigger picture* here? How many will be able to connect all of these different elements in Roderick Meredith's thinking?—and to LCG's fruits? How many will be outraged at such an appalling focus on himself and subtle—but clear—denigration of Mr. Armstrong's true fulfillment and establishing of many vital doctrines? How many will see why this man freely changes any number of *other* doctrines? How many will connect the dots to why he feels that establishing the right form of government in the Church is *his* role, instead of Mr. Armstrong's?

What Office?

There is further evidence of Roderick Meredith's desire to elevate himself, and this will become more evident when we examine the duties of an apostle in Chapter Twelve. Despite the appearance of “lowering” himself into his organization's Council, this man has actually *elevated* himself by taking almost every responsibility—at least seven!—*exclusively* given to, and designated as functions solely of, the highest office in Christ's ministry. When we come to them, members and ministers of LCG will want to focus on the *duties* of this highest office with their leader in mind, as well as on Chapter Nine, which will explain what the Bible teaches, and what Mr. Armstrong taught, about the rank and duties of evangelists. Chapter Thirteen will also address false apostles in more detail.

If honest with the facts that will be presented, these readers will be left with the question of whether their leader is in fact a FALSE APOSTLE! Of course, this leader does not actually *claim* to hold this highest rank. However, we must ask whether that changes the truth—the net effect—of his actions.

I am aware that this is a most serious question—in fact, how many could be more serious?—but YOU be the judge in later chapters, when

this is covered in greater detail, of whether the facts have been honestly presented. For instance, the leader of the next splinter to be discussed takes at least a dozen titles that belong only to Christ or the Father. While he certainly does not refer to himself as God or Christ, or think himself doing anything wrong, he is no less a false christ. We will also later see *how* this is true.

This introduces the next section about the splinter this man leads.

The False Prophet Splinter

The leader of the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG), Gerald Flurry, claims to be a prophet. But the Bible teaches, and this will be made clearer in Chapter Ten, that no one can hold the office of prophet unless there is a living apostle to whom he can report. Also, a prophet can *never* lead the Church, because this rank is not now, and has never been, an *administrative office*, or even one involving general preaching and teaching. Again, that will be made clear.

Before continuing, it is important to note that there are also several small slivers led by men claiming to be prophets. And more are appearing. Note also, however, that these “prophets” all work in opposition to one another, each offering differing prophetic scenarios, theories and “insights.” Suffice to say regarding such men, they cannot be true prophets. Every one of them is false.

Again, Gerald Flurry takes perhaps a dozen different titles and offices that apply solely to either the Father or Christ (he takes more than 30 titles total). This is outright blasphemy and rank idolatry of the highest order. This man is worse than a false prophet, and even a false apostle. By taking just a single title of Christ, never mind having taken *at least* a dozen divine titles, such a leader has made himself a FALSE CHRIST in the fullest sense!

When presented with the facts, no serious person would believe such a man has anything whatsoever to do with the government of God—and none should follow him to the *kitchen*, let alone the KINGDOM OF GOD!

It is worth noting—and this is important in regard to PCG—that the true government of God is benevolent, loving and a wonderful blessing to the people who serve under it (and yes, again, it is understood that it is not perfect, and that there are mistakes made by every human within it). But the type of government practiced within this bizarre organization—and they take special pride in describing themselves as “having the government of God”—is so dictatorial, brutal and despotic that any honest observer could not differentiate it from the worst forms of tyranny. The WCG apos-

tates proved that much more than outward appearance and pattern must be present for the government of God to be present. (But PCG has also rejected the pattern in numerous ways.)

Truly, and this is difficult to say, people there would be better off under either of the groups already described than to stay for even five more minutes under the so obviously error-driven, demon-inspired leadership of this organization.

The Intellectual Splitter With “Vision”

In 1998, approximately 1,500 to 2,000 people departed from UCG and formed their own new organization under a newer (post-1986) WCG evangelist. Copying the churches of the world, who see themselves as having a place as one of many “communities” within a kind of amorphous whole of the *supposed* body of Christ, this group chose to call itself “an International Community” of believers, after the evangelical term popular today.

David Hulme led the separation of those who followed him basically under the following scenario: UCG had twice *elected* him as its President about eight months apart in its first year of operation. However, the Council of Elders three years later decided it was time for a change. This man immediately swung into action, and here is what happened.

This “evangelist” simultaneously came to what amounted to two opposing conclusions. As “winner” of two separate elections, he felt this meant he was *God’s* winner—meaning God’s electee—and that he had been selected to be “leader of the church.” Yet, and here is the problem, he simultaneously believed he should publicly “repent” of having participated in such a political process. This meant he had to “repent” of having taken part in these elections, but accept that God had, in fact, revealed to him through his initial installation *born of rebellion*—voting!—that he must step out on his own as the church’s new “leader.” Unbelievable! (It is understood that there were a couple other differences behind the division between the groups. And it should also be understood his organization has forsaken numerous other true doctrines.)

Tragically, this group’s leader *has* now finally written a book—which, incredibly, he SELLS for \$65! Having lost all grasp of how only Christ, at His Return, can solve the problems of the Middle East, he offers a “path to peace” in this impossible region of the world. Having rejected Matthew 10:8—“Freely you have received, freely give”—how could this man possibly remember and understand how the all-powerful Christ alone can solve the world’s great problems.

He could not!

The description of the government in this group can also be relatively short because its errors are similar to the second group above. The “intellectual” evangelist leading this breakaway splinter has also taken many of the duties designated to be carried out solely by apostles. The membership there should also carefully examine the facts presented in Chapters Nine and Twelve.

The Small, Upside-Down Sliver

When the Global Church of God (formed in 1993) eventually split in late 1998, with the majority forming LCG, over time, several smaller groups formed from the approximately 20 percent that had remained behind. While each of these tiny groups carries its own story, one stands out as having invented a new kind of confusion, not previously seen after the apostasy.

One of the slivers that emerged eventually came to believe itself led by its very own “evangelist.” Here is what happened: In early 2005, several elders and one pastor gathered around another thought-to-be pastor in their group and “raised” him to “evangelist.” However sincere, this man was trained almost exclusively in a very different endeavor, and possessed little practical experience or training of almost any kind in the ministry. (He was not even an elder in the Worldwide Church of God, and yet was ordained three times in two organizations thereafter.)

Of course, the idea that this “evangelist ordination” could be valid is ludicrous in the extreme to anyone remotely familiar with the truth of the Bible. However, this did not stop the group from “researching” the Scriptures until they supposedly “discovered” that the apostles Paul and Barnabas appeared to have been ordained apostles by the authority of lower-ranking men who were only “prophets and teachers” (Acts 13:1-3). I have read their explanation, and it is at best misguided, and at worst, pitiful and comical. But so is this organization’s convoluted and embarrassing continual references to how such thinking—and they offer any number of instances of this with various teachings—is evidence of ability to “grow beyond Mr. Armstrong” (with such “growth” portrayed as a *command* to Christians). Of course, this thinking of “going beyond Mr. Armstrong’s level of understanding” is common to *every* splinter and sliver. A few may have simply not recognized it.

There is not space here to explain the true circumstances in Acts 13, but Mr. Armstrong himself will make clear later in Chapter Nine what

really happened when Paul and Barnabas were ordained—in other words, under what and whose authority this occurred.

To its credit, this little group is at least trying to do a tiny “work” of sorts. I know these men, and they are sincere but, as Mr. Armstrong would say, “They are sincerely wrong!” Hopefully, it will eventually be evident to a few more in this group that this “ordination” was bogus and their “work” has been of men.

In any event, when one who is not even a properly ordained minister, let alone evangelist, takes to himself responsibilities designated to apostles, the problem is only compounded. Such efforts to do the Work are still false, are contrary to the way God’s government operates, and are not led of Jesus Christ.

Another “Evangelist” Sliver

A more recent sliver—Church of God, 21st Century—led by a man ordained evangelist in the early 1950s, appeared in early 2004, and several hundred people quickly associated with it because of his name. This small organization presents a different and unique government problem, related to what all the elders in UCG did.

Some history: In late 1998, the leader (who died in October 2008) of this group parted company with LCG for about a year and a half. He later had second thoughts and decided to return, which he did for approximately three years. It was explained to him upon his return that he must give up his office as Evangelist until those over him felt he had sufficiently “repented” of “rebellion.” He voluntarily and publicly agreed to the terms, and thus was *completely removed* from the ministry for over three years. When his reinstatement did not come when or as he had hoped—his “jailors” were considering reinstating him to much lower office—this man left this organization for a second time and declared that he was an evangelist once again.

We must ask: Can this be done? Can a man reinstate himself into the ministry after voluntarily leaving his ministerial calling—and in this case for over three years? Is his action legitimate? Does he again carry authority—in the case of his office, more than a little?

Let’s carefully analyze what happened, let’s reason together in the light of how God governs His Church. Recognize that there have been men who were removed from the ministry and later reinstated. For various reasons, this has occurred numerous times through the years. (Of course, I am not speaking of those who were *unwillingly* removed from the ministry for *wrong reasons*—cases in which a man refused to go

along with false teachings in order to keep his job. I have experienced this twice and, believe me, I know the difference. You should, too.)

When this man *voluntarily* divested authority over his office to an organization (LCG) that he was in fact *re-entering*, he understood *exactly* what he was doing, in his case, having considered the decision beforehand for many months. He *knowingly* handed away his credentials to an organization he recognized later—now for a second time—was false. When this man checked his ministerial credentials at this splinter’s door like they were little more than a coat, his decision not only dishonored Mr. Armstrong, the faithful human apostle used to install him into office so many years before, but he dishonored the Apostle above Mr. Armstrong—Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1)!—Whom he presumably believed guided his original appointment and ordination into office.

Here is the point: By allowing this organization to remove him from office without true cause (except in the view of the leaders there)—and doing so with his eyes wide open—this man utterly *disqualified himself* from that office and from the ministry. Naturally, he later regretted his decision. But, as Esau found with his birthright blessing (read Hebrews 12:16-17), it was too late! Seeing no other option, the man simply reinstated himself. But this man had absolutely no biblical authority to “reinstate” himself, particularly after committing such a monumental offense against Christ’s decision to place him into high office.

The reader might try to find in the Bible where any man was EVER permitted to leave the ministry (and for so long) and then *reinstate himself* on his own authority. There is also no such historical instance—no such confusion—that one can point to, either in the Philadelphian era or in any previous era, where such a thing occurred. Some seem to believe that because we are in the Laodicean age, this sort of rebellious confusion can be acceptable. Various former ministers and brethren who follow him seem to think in such cases that because misguided, foolish flatterers—other brethren or ministers—tell them that they are playing an “important role” or “making a difference” (the case with this man), self-reinstatement is permitted. Who are they kidding? Certainly not thinking people who understand anything about the government directed by Christ as it was given to the Church through Mr. Armstrong!

In a sense, the over 400 “elders” in UCG who transferred authority over their office to their organization have been more honest than this man and certain others. However wrong they were, at least they *admitted* openly that they were all *agreeing together* to reduce their ranks to achieve “one man, one vote” in their General Conference of Elders. If, as explained, UCG’s senior men have now disqualified themselves from

returning to their previous higher offices—they have!—then one who voluntarily left the ministry *completely*—and for years!—has gone far beyond what they did in disqualifying himself from further service in Christ’s ministry—until repentance and possible reinstatement by Christ’s duly-appointed authority!

It is no accident that the man who led this “21st-century” splinter “examined” in the late 1990s the Church’s understanding of government and decided that Mr. Armstrong “got it wrong.” And it is also no accident he concluded God’s Church and government are divided today. He knew that if one unified government of God still existed, as Mr. Armstrong taught, he would have to diligently seek it until he found it—and then SUBMIT to it!

Sadly, many prefer to believe that circumstances in the “church” today mirror Judges 21:25, where “every man [may do] that which [is] right in his own eyes.”

But there is more to examine before we are finished with the smaller splinters, or slivers.

Another Early Splinter

In late 1991, an associate pastor (John Ritenbaugh) resigned from the WCG and created a new organization, the second to form after the apostasy.

This splinter never grew to more than a few hundred, and this is largely because its leader does not believe Mr. Armstrong “had the right balance” between “doing the Work” and “feeding the flock.” He explained that he felt Mr. Armstrong’s improper *overemphasis* on preaching the gospel and warning Israel, instead of “taking care of the sheep,” is the principal reason so many fell away so easily when the apostates threw out the truth.

An interesting and effective speaker, this man decided to specialize in giving helpful, in-depth sermons (certainly not a bad thing), but to the complete exclusion of continuing God’s Work. His initial focus was entirely on “readying the bride,” and it remained so for a while. However, having accepted from the beginning a number of the apostates’ doctrines, this man eventually fell into a host of absolutely preposterous prophetic ideas. Consider just one, because it well illustrates how far afield so many have gone: This man has gone so far as to conclude that the “great whore” and her “harlot daughters” of Revelation 17:5 are actually the twelve nations (or tribes) of Israel, *not* the Catholic and Protestant churches!

Think for a moment of all the basic understanding of prophecy that Mr. Armstrong had to have wrong for this man's theory to be correct. The whole framework on which hangs the one-third of the Bible that is prophecy implodes into a pile of rubble if this idea is right. Could any even half-experienced Bible student possibly believe that the nations of Israel are going to ride the final, ten-nation European Union—the Beast?

Now try to comprehend how a person's—a senior minister's!—understanding of basic prophecy could so completely *collapse*. In fact, this particular idea is so outrageous that some would naturally want to investigate it out of curiosity—just to “see what he said.” The result: The weak are taken in, a splinter that should not be able to attract five people grows—and a deceiver gets paid.

The “Faithful” Sliver

One other small organization has arisen in recent years, and it is presenting itself as a unique and attractive alternative to those who are tired of the compromise in the big splinters. Led by an elderly pastor, Don Billingsley, this small group has striven to hold fast more than any of the other splinters and slivers.

In some regards, this group is, quite literally, “so close, and yet so far.” While they are probably the most doctrinally accurate group other than The Restored Church of God, their leader has fallen into three titanic errors.

First, he has concluded that the Work of God, as defined by the Bible and Mr. Armstrong, has been essentially finished for over 20 years—except for gathering those who will follow to wait for the Place of Safety *under him*. Like UCG from which he came, he was *conditioned* to feel that there is no “Chief Shepherd” to lead God's Church today. Although he saw this splinter's terrible doctrinal compromise, and experienced the same in the smaller, breakaway group he joined that left it in early 1998, he tied his belief that there is no “Chief Shepherd” today to the idea that there can also no longer be any meaningful Work of God today. Even the United Church of God did not go this far.

Second, this man has then *necessarily* concluded that God's government is no longer in place today—and, of course, this is its own colossal error in understanding. Such men, and there are many like this, are taking tithes that belong to God, which are to be paid only to where His government exists, and thus where His Work is being done. May God help all such men, however sincere they may be, to see they are *stealing*—and from Whom they are doing this!

I have referenced elsewhere that Mr. Armstrong explained how the government of God primarily exists for the purpose of doing His Work through His Church. In the book *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!*, it is carefully explained how Mr. Armstrong said that the Work of God—and I mean the *true* Work of God!—would continue until the Great Tribulation. This means with both its component parts in place—announcing the gospel and warning Israel. That is why the scope, size and power of the Work being done by The Restored Church of God continues to explode almost beyond imagination year after year. This is why many millions are reading our vast arsenal of literature today in every nation and virtually every territory on earth. (We can sometimes have 2,000 readers in a *single week* from smaller countries, even Muslim, such as *Saudi Arabia!*)

While it is not our purpose to repeat that extensive book here, suffice to understand there are a great many tiny groups that will not do God’s Work—and this is partly because they are not *capable* of carrying it on. They have not been trained to do it, they do not have the resources to do it, they are too doctrinally compromised to do it correctly, they have lost sight of what the Work is, and they do not have the backing of God, who only works through one organization and one chosen leader at a time. This will be amply demonstrated in the rest of this book, and it has been variously discussed in other books to the splinters.

The third major error that this small organization has fallen into—and really this is the first in importance—is that the leader and those there no longer understand who and what is the Church and Body of Christ. At risk of being repetitive, I keep emphasizing this great error because it is widespread and correct understanding of it is so important. It is also connected to recognizing that God’s government is in place and, therefore, that the Work must be done. (Our book *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* reveals the importance of this subject.)

These three great errors in thinking—“government,” “no continuance of the Work” and “forgetting what is the Church”—are all a *package deal*. Each leads to the other two. Lose any one, and the other two are also quickly lost.

“The Joyful G.R.U.M.P.s”

A word should be mentioned about a little-known, but very real, underground “splinter” still *inside* the Worldwide Church of God. This group refers to themselves as “The Joyful G.R.U.M.P.s,” meaning God’s Remnant Under Much Persecution. Obviously, after years in these cir-

cumstances, this group is far from joyful. Miserable is closer to the truth. They count their numbers around 1,000 or a little more, and they list ministers of the same thinking within the WCG who they report “quietly support and work with them.”

While this group believes itself “holding fast” and “rejecting all the error” now taught, in fact, the entire group is actually starving to death. For many, the process has probably long been complete. I know, because I have worked with some of them, and have seen how trapped they are in their desperately confused thinking regarding rebellion and the guilt that would result, and how “they must not leave the WCG because God is going to turn this around.”

This group’s misery is truly self-inflicted. In effect, this underground WCG faction did not—would not!—choose easy self-liberation from “Auschwitz” when they could have, somehow believing that *God* actually wants them to stay under their captors. Stated more plainly, lacking willingness to free themselves, when the “Allies” came to liberate them—God’s alternative and true government having been made available to some of them—they rejected deliverance because they were looking for a “guard” *within the compound* to “rise up” and make the “death camp” a Garden of Eden once again.

Such tragic thinking literally makes the head hurt.

You simply cannot tell these terribly deluded people that a champion sent of God is not coming to save them and their corporation. Of course, all or virtually all of them have unwittingly accepted a host of false doctrines they have permitted themselves to listen to for so long that, no matter their protestations otherwise, they now have only a very clouded idea of which doctrines are true and which are false. In other words, these have stayed so long that they have accepted many false teachings by forgetting that the apostates, not Mr. Armstrong, first taught these ideas. They are simply blind to this conditioning process.

For instance, returning to government, this group is so confused about it—where and what it is, and how to identify it—that they have remained in the WCG (now for many years) patiently waiting for, and only willing to accept, an *insider* to miraculously right the “Church” (which, again, they have confused with the corporation) under God’s direction because they believe that *His government* is still there, albeit now captured by His enemies. They have been told over and over that the ministers who left the WCG were hirelings, while those who remained were faithful. This group is so desperately deceived that they have actually convinced themselves that God wants them to pay *His* tithes to His WORST ENEMIES! In other words, they *personally* assist—directly under-

write and empower!—these enemies, so that they are given more time to finish slaughtering His flock.

Tragically, this flock includes *themselves*—and is tantamount to your *paying* a “hitman” to shoot *you*!

Truly—truly—incredible! One is left to wonder if such people *ever* understood that God’s government had nothing to do with a corporation unless that corporation was under control of and being directed by His faithful leaders, who were in turn being directed by Christ.

I mention this group because the “GRUMPs” form a kind of splinter within the Worldwide Church of God, and because they represent another, and perhaps the most extreme, way that proper understanding of God’s government can be butchered beyond recognition, and bring real and awful consequences. This group also demonstrates that there are people who, like prisoners offered parole, will not leave the confines of familiarity even when the courts tell them they are free.

Mercifully, the new WCG seems to be officially purging all Sabbath-keepers from its ranks. The “GRUMPs” will be forced to take a stand.

More “Affiliating”

A more recent movement has been taking place among many of the tiny groups, and it seems to be growing. It should be at least briefly addressed here, because it rejects virtually *every* element of understanding within the knowledge of what is God’s government.

Many of the almost microscopic groups now believe that they should be out “evangelizing” and “spreading Christianity” in some form or other, variously defined. Like evangelicals, these usually believe God’s Work today is to “reach out” and “help others” (including through aiding relief organizations and disaster victims), and to try to lead as many people as possible to “Jesus” and the Sabbath and perhaps a few other key doctrines. But “Jesus” and Sabbath-keeping are their centerpieces.

These small groups, however, have found it to be tough sledding going it alone. The result is some of them have decided it would be better if they “affiliate” with one another on a kind of “co-equal” basis. (This is different from the actual *merger* talks that occur between UCG and LCG.) The idea is that no one should be in charge, but they can still enjoy the benefits of being part of a larger “association” of groups, people and efforts by “coordinating” activities. Then there is the fact that these groups are experiencing *some* “success,” however defined, and this becomes a heady experience. These leaders truly believe God is showing them some new and more spiritually advanced way of doing His Work

most effectively today. While actually *way behind* even where the splinters and larger slivers are, the leaders and members of these tiny groups see themselves as having advanced *far beyond* the big organizations they have “courageously” left behind.

On the surface, all of this certainly seems attractive to human reasoning. This plan seems to offer many benefits, including freedom from all government. The problem is that it could not be farther from the way God works, even if these groups *did* have the full truth—and these usually tiny little clans are often the *most* doctrinally compromised!

But the chaos and confusion of the splinters has more elements to be aware of—and all of them are wrong!

More and More Chaos!

The reader must understand that all kinds of innovation and personally-stylized thinking is occurring—and rapidly multiplying—in the number of tiny ex-WCG groups popping up today. Here is a summary list:

- There are more and more independent and tape “ministries” that have appeared, almost always led by men of lower rank and less experience. Again, because these men have not been trained to do the Work, they have had to devise some other “reason for being.” Their methods could be described as a little different, but in summary are pretty much the same in purpose. These often specialize in prophecy, meaning strange ideas and theories.
- There is also an ever-increasing number of “prophets” arising, exactly as Jesus warned (three times in Matthew 24) would occur at the end of the age. Also, just as He warned, “many will be [and are being] deceived.” Most are not aware of this, in part because they do not understand that certain ministers are becoming *de facto* prophets, in the sense that they are radically altering proven prophetic understanding.
- Local elders and local church elders (and other low-ranking ministers) are ordaining other local church elders by their own authority, and we will see this to be contrary to what Mr. Armstrong explained regarding who is authorized to *approve* ordinations, and who is not (not speaking of who may physically *perform* them).
- The Protestant concept of “local evangelism,” first introduced to God’s people when they were still in the WCG, has reinvented itself over and over in a variety of ways throughout the large and small splinters, and this has become the driving force among those involved in forming the “affiliations” described above.

- The previous point is the driving force behind a veritable explosion of personal websites that have appeared, with any number of them illegally reproducing Mr. Armstrong's literature. The idea is that individuals may now take the gospel to the world, thus taking matters into their own hands. Gone is any need to submit to government authority in the Church or to the copyright laws of men because so many find "we can get away with it."
- Directly related, some local *ministers* in UCG and LCG operate their own websites spouting—pontificating—their "reports" to any who will listen. Their headquarters are unable, unwilling or just uninterested in reining them in.
- Worse, more and more pastors in the big splinters are going "independent," and are being received as "heroes" who had the "courage" to leave the "big groups." However, upon close examination, in every case, these men are seen to fall into even worse thinking, worse doctrines and worse problems.
- A (wide) open-door policy exists in virtually all the splinters, large and small. People of every stripe and flavor—and appearance—may now freely attend. For instance, in LCG (and in others) visitors and attendees are now sometimes heard to actually utter "amen" or "thank you Jesus."
- An increasing number of women are writing—more accurately, are preaching—in various publications and websites, and at least a couple have been ordained, so far occurring only in the tiniest groups.
- Even among those who left to attend one or more splinters, more and more of what could only be called *former* brethren are coming to "despise government" and "speak evil of dignities" (including Mr. Armstrong and nearly all other ministers) of every capacity and in every organization (II Pet. 2:10)—and in strident tones! These are usually those who are dropping out of *all* organizations, either to become "Christians at home" or to freelance—bounce around *between* various organizations. Some of these believe that God's government has disappeared permanently, others believe only temporarily, and still others believe Mr. Armstrong "never had it right."

Almost all of this confusion actually originated in the WCG. Let's understand. Great numbers left for the splinters *after* it had introduced lay ministers, women and teens behind the pulpit, local evangelism and politically-motivated ordinations, all occurring during and after the rejection of the government of God. Almost none have recognized how the WCG *apostates* played a huge role in bringing about the chaotic condition within the splinters today.

Think! A completely carnal false apostle arose there, taking—actually seizing—an office that neither Mr. Armstrong nor Jesus Christ had given him. (You will learn later why Mr. Armstrong did not—and actually could not!—install this man into the office of apostle.) Think for a moment of the environment that was created by just this single act of gross rebellion against Christ’s lead at the very top of the Church. Think of all that would *not* have changed within the climate of the Worldwide Church of God without such evil at the top of the human hierarchy in the organization—again, all of this just as a result of this one act of terrible defiance against Christ’s government.

When Rebellion First Became Fashionable

Before concluding the chapter, we must look at the very earliest beginnings—the first occasions—of rebellion in the Worldwide Church of God. They had a direct effect on events and conditions that would be taking place over 30 years later.

In 1972, Mr. Armstrong had to disfellowship his son for a short period. Upon his reinstatement, a percentage of ministers went underground in disagreement, leading them to begin to examine various of the Church’s doctrines. This caused them to “discover” one “error” after another. Encouraged by the Director of Church Administration, groups of ministers quietly began to form around certain regional directors in the field, 75 percent of whom came to be in general agreement with the headquarters underground. Circumstances allowed that it had slowly become the norm to feel that one could “question Pasadena.” (A quote from Mr. Armstrong in Chapter One referenced this period.)

A major rebellion ensued in February 1974, led by six of the eight regional directors. This became a crucial turning point, occurring just into the liberal years. Several thousand brethren and scores of ministers left the Church in a seven- to ten-day period. While this was a small number, relatively speaking, it had a lasting impact in the Church in a similar way that “Watergate” of the same year had upon America ever after. Nothing would be the same.

This rebellion, coupled with the many false doctrines allowed into the Church during these liberal years (until mid-1978), resulted in many who had remained in the Church being left unable to “uneat the rebellion apple.” Much like a couple who mentions the idea of “divorce,” without filing the papers, the idea of rebellion was now quietly on the table within tens of thousands of minds. “Divorce” from the Church and government of God was no longer unthinkable!

The net effect was that the horse was out of the barn—and the skids were effectively greased for the introduction of the Laodicean age of a dozen years hence.

The nauseating material found today on various websites and in certain “newspapers” is directly attributable to events occurring in the early 1970s. In fact, many in the splinters and slivers have gone full circle in their willingness to associate with and to follow the very ministers who left or were disfellowshipped in the liberal years. “Gatherings,” “conferences,” “forums” and “workshops” with such men—this includes a variety of other kinds of activities across group lines—have become the order of the day in the land of chaos.

Simply Not Possible

Twenty-five years ago, the entire Church would have said with one voice that the things described in this chapter could NEVER happen. They would be seen as IMPOSSIBLE. Yet, today they are not only happening but are accepted as *necessary* by many more than could be believed—and even seen by some to be the way things always should have been.

Such terribly tragic and misguided thinking!

I have explained in detail in *THE WORK OF GOD* book that the collective splinters—and I am speaking of those who supposedly survived the apostasy—are suffering from a kind of mass amnesia. They have completely *forgotten* large areas of belief and understanding and cannot seem to even *remember* the Church when it was very different from the picture in the splinters, or in any single splinter. People who once professed to know a true servant of God when they saw him will now follow virtually anyone who claims to be of God. (With a few adjustments, Rasputin could probably find followers in the splinters.) Almost no one seems to require, even demand, facts, evidence and proof—FRUIT!—that a minister is not a compromising charlatan (or that many working together are not a *group* of charlatans). Almost no one seems to care if a man is faithfully upholding the government of God as it was placed into the Church in the twentieth century, *as well as* not compromising other doctrine.

(To learn more about *why* the splinters have fallen into the many errors listed throughout this chapter, listen to my sermon “The ‘Synagogue of Satan’ Identified—and Marked!”)

Since so few of God’s people any longer understand—perhaps most never understood—the full nature of all that was restored under Mr. Armstrong on the matter of government, they are rendered unable to hold ministers to account when they make claims about their authority. In

Chapter Five, you will learn there is actually no possibility—ABSOLUTELY NONE!—of the restoration of God’s government within an organization if all offices of the ministry are not understood, recognized and accepted within it.

What could really have been one extremely long chapter is better broken into two because there is another different but related facet of all that has been described. It must be identified. The sea change in thinking that it examines reveals a transcendent CAUSE behind all of the BAD EFFECTS you just read, and shows that they are attributable to who is holding power today...

ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE

As long as was Chapter Three, its subject is really not complete until another central point is raised and addressed. If that chapter speaks to *WHAT* is occurring in the splinters and slivers, this one speaks to *WHY* and explains the *CAUSE*.

There is an overarching trend in the splinters that demonstrates *how* the destroyer has come to be at work on such a grand scale. We need to see *how* God's people and ministers have come to believe that they are "doing what the Bible says" as they take authority to themselves.

The topic of discussion in this chapter also reveals, perhaps more than any other single fact, *why* the Laodicean age was able to come upon God's people, and *how* it is directly manifesting itself within the splinters. Some of what appears in this chapter is from a section of another book to the splinters, but it has very helpful application here. We will need to examine this in some depth.

The Democratic Way

Some time ago, a famous Hollywood actor, thinking with nostalgia and interested in returning the country to "better times in the past," was quoted in an interview in a national newspaper. Speaking of his new movie about politics set in the 1950s in the United States, he said, "The greatest thing about this country is that anyone can question authority. That's what I'm doing."

At about the same time, in reference to America's war in Iraq, an American senator expressed a similar sentiment. He was reacting to what he felt was the president's defensiveness at being challenged over his policy in Iraq. This senator declared, "The...administration must understand that each American has a right to question our policies in Iraq and elsewhere, and should not be demonized or condemned for disagreeing with them. Suggesting that to challenge and criticize policy is undermining and hurting our troops is not democratic, nor what this country has stood for for over 200 years."

These two men are no doubt sincere in their belief about the "strength" or "beauty" or "wonderfulness" of "democracy in action." Of course, almost everyone living in a democracy believes that it is a good thing that their leaders, in fact, work for all the people, and that the populace can question or remove their political "bosses" anytime they do not give them what they want.

In *every* democratic government, no matter its particular form, *every* leader is ultimately accountable to the people. Every office holder has been elected through some form of voting, or appointed by someone who was elected. This means that these leaders can either be installed by people, or *removed* by them—if they do not "deliver the goods" the electorate desires.

In fact, not only can people question authority in America and most countries of the West, they are strongly encouraged to do this from a very early age in school. This could not be farther from God's Way. His servants are not to be continually questioned and challenged. But this is only applicable *if*—and of course this is the big *if* today—these leaders are completely faithful to the truth, God's government and His Work.

Let's add the effect of the Western free press. A popular American television network repeats over and over that it delivers "fair and balanced" news. After giving particulars of unusual, difficult or controversial issues, commentators repeat, "We report, you decide!"

Here is what this says to the viewer: "You have all wisdom, knowledge and understanding. You—the people—are eminently qualified to decide upon and solve the problems we report. We trust the good judgment of the American people." This reflects unfounded confidence because it is *not* true. Human beings are *not* qualified to solve the world's problems, troubles, evils and ills. Apart from God's divine guidance, they are *not* qualified to lead nations, armies, communities, large institutions, schools and colleges. And they are *not* qualified to lead God's Church!

It might be surprising to learn how many well-known people, including famous politicians, have offered surprising insight into democracy, voting and politics. Some are humorous (all are fascinating), and reveal the cynical view that so many even in the world hold toward democratic government. For instance, Winston Churchill said, “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.” (The next inset offers only a tiny smattering of this perspective.)

By Whose Authority?

This background leads to a question once considered unthinkable in the Church: Do God’s true leaders and ministers serve either by the will of the people or by the will of other ministers who elected them? As we have seen, most of God’s people are in an organization (there are many others besides UCG and COGwa) that has adopted some form of elective, democratic government in place of government from the top down, which Mr. Armstrong taught. (The organizations that practice voting in some form invariably attempt to justify actions that copy the world by presenting what they do as a “converted consensus.”)

Let’s return one more time to some basic understanding, explained in a number of places in the books written to the splinters, but helpful to be reviewed here.

The word *Laodicea*, derived from two key root words, literally means “the people rule, judge or decide.” Many either never understood this or have forgotten it. Consider! The Greek word *laos* means “people.” (*Laymember* derives from it.) Then, from the Greek word *dike* comes the English word “decide” or “decision.” This word can also be rendered “rule” or “judge.” Some may argue the nuances of these words, but there is no disputing that this is essentially what *Laodicea* means.

Therefore, the final era of God’s Church is best described as the time THE PEOPLE RULE...JUDGE...DECIDE! The whole concept of the age when *people* decide everything means that *all* the people in this era (lay members, deacons, elders, pastors and even evangelists) have taken on this attitude. This view crashes straight into God’s government.

It was mentioned that II Peter 2:10 refers to those who “despise *government*” and “speak evil of *dignities*” in the “last days.” An honest look at the broad spectrum of modern society presents a startling picture. Social norms have changed radically in recent years. Most people will no longer tolerate much from their governments. The citizenry of Western

Democracy, Voting and Politics

- “Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation” (Henry Kissinger).
- “Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary” (Robert Louis Stevenson).
- “The great thing about democracy is that it gives every voter a chance to do something stupid” (Art Spander).
- “Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy” (Ernest Benn).
- “Since a politician never believes what he says, he is quite surprised to be taken at his word” (Charles De Gaulle).
- “I have come to the conclusion that politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians” (Ibid.).
- “Nothing can so alienate a voter from the political system as backing a winning candidate” (Mark B. Cohen).
- “Anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job” (Douglas Adams).
- “In politics you must always keep running with the pack. The moment that you falter and they sense that you are injured, the rest will turn on you like wolves” (R. A. Butler).
- “Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed there are many rewards, if you disgrace yourself you can always write a book” (Ronald Reagan).
- “Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first” (Ibid.).
- “Get all the fools on your side and you can be elected to anything” (Frank Dane).
- “The reason there are so few female politicians is that it is too much trouble to put makeup on two faces” (Maureen Murphy).
- “Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river” (Nikita Khrushchev).
- “An honest politician is one who, when he is bought, will stay bought” (Simon Cameron).
- “Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few” (George Bernard Shaw).
- “Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half the time” (E.B. White).

nations do routinely despise their governments and speak evil of civil offices and authorities over them.

These governments have fallen under virtual siege from a myriad of factions, special interest groups, and political action committees, which are either blaming them for wrongs, demanding action on issues or calling for investigations to “get at the truth.” Dissent is celebrated in nearly every form. Strangely, however, society has at the same time been conditioned to be “tolerant” of every form of immorality and perversion—every “lifestyle”—that it can manufacture. In fact, about the only thing people will no longer tolerate is *intolerance*. The motto has become “live and let live” in the fullest sense, except where *government* is concerned! In a way, the splinters are no different. The people and ministry want to rule their governments, and tolerate very little from them, while they are at the same time perfectly happy to tolerate all kinds of perverse doctrine and wrong conduct.

Continuing, “scandalgates” of every sort have left citizens of nearly every Western country deeply cynical and mistrusting of almost all authority. Again, Romans 8:7 states that human nature has never been subject to God and His Law (*or* the laws of men). However, what has always been a natural tendency in people has now become much worse in this age. Open rebellion and protests of every kind have become the prevailing attitude around the world!

“Taking Matters Into Their Own Hands”

Now look at God’s people—and yourself! A similar mistrust has developed due to government abuse, scandal and false teaching. As a result, many have felt they should take government into *their own hands*. But the membership is not supposed to rule within God’s Church—GOD IS! Mr. Armstrong understood this, and we all once believed it. But a funny thing happened on the way through the apostasy. *Everything* changed! Many came to believe that government could now only be “kept in check” if members and the general ministry actively participated in it themselves!

People began to trust THEMSELVES—instead of God—to lead His Church. Yet God, through Solomon, declared that “He that trusts in his own heart is a FOOL” (Prov. 28:26). Also read Proverbs 16:2 and 21:2. Feeling themselves “burned” too many times, very few any longer trust—have faith in!—Christ to lead His Church.

God understood that the apostasy, coupled with end-time conditions throughout the world, would spawn the last era of His people—when the people would take over and rule the “church.” Therefore, this era appeared

right on schedule, exactly as God said. While none of God's people should be confused, most are. Again, this confusion should *never* have been. My splinter book *Surviving "Perilous Times"* includes a must-read article that covers the Living Church of God's new teaching that the "falling away" of II Thessalonians 2:3 was not fulfilled in the WCG, but rather is a future event involving the world and led by the man of sin.

There has always been one true Church. There *are*, however, *two* co-existing CONDITIONS at the end of the age. One is large and dominant, and the other is small—of "little strength" (Rev. 3:8)—but completely UNIFIED!

The serious reader will want to carefully read *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* It paints the complete picture.

"Sheriffs" and Shepherds

Another critical element of groundwork was laid in the early stages of the apostasy by the new men who entered Ministerial Services, including the final Pastor General, in Pasadena. It served to inoculate God's people against almost any use of government.

At a certain point, it was announced to the entire ministry that all the while in the past that the ministers of the Worldwide Church of God "thought they were being *shepherds*, they were really being *sheriffs*." Once this cliché was introduced, popular with human nature, it quickly took root. I have explained in other places how ministers were almost browbeaten into avoiding the use of government—being a "sheriff"—as people were led into the mindless "grace" of Protestant thinking toward obedience to God in any form.

The "sheriff/shepherd" phrase came to be repeated endlessly by ministers and brethren who had no idea what they were talking about. But this served a more sinister purpose—it further set up God's people to be snared by the culture of arrogance prevalent in the societies around them.

"We Are Lords"

The prophet Jeremiah spoke about conditions in the modern nations of Israel just prior to Christ's Return. What he describes is not pretty. In chapter 2, God speaks of an attitude that has developed in the nations of modern-day Israel—the United States, Canada, Great Britain and others. What is recorded is fascinating to comprehend—if you will receive it.

Notice: “Wherefore [why] say My people, *We are lords*; we will come no more unto You” (vs. 31). The next verse explains that the nations of Israel today have “forgotten God days without number.” When people forget the true God, they find a replacement. While few recognize it, this prevailing, worldly, end-of-the-age thinking—“we are lords”—has deeply affected virtually all of God’s people.

Many are simply no longer willing to let the living *Jesus Christ* rule HIS Church. The report is often, “I am not into ‘control’ anymore”—“No more government over me.” Each person wants to be his own lord—“his own man”—with a “nobody’s telling ME what to do” attitude.

When things go wrong, most brethren today criticize or lash out because they will *no longer be ruled*. They do not use injustice, setbacks or doctrinal compromise as reason to go in search of the government of God. Instead, they come to their *own* decisions—their *own* judgments—on almost everything to do with the Church and Work, and how administration and government should work in their group. As a result, the “hatred, betrayal and offense” (Matt. 24:10) that Jesus foretold would appear in the Church prior to His Return has arrived, and it will only grow worse. This has allowed most to easily justify the “every man for himself” approach to governing the Church. Now, the tail wags the dog almost everywhere. Many brethren now spout opinions that cover a wide range of topics, and do this without any idea of what they are talking about. But try to tell them this.

Woe to leaders who will *not* cave to the will of the many “lords” who have come to rule the “Church” in place of Christ! The Catholic pope takes the title *Vicar of* (meaning “in place of”) *Christ*. The age of *many* would-be “Vicars of Christ” has appeared, and it is found throughout the splinters. Yet, ironically, when confronted with correction or instruction, it is these very *same* people who will accuse the *minister* of this—of getting between them and Christ!

Matthew 18:15, Ministers and Charges of “Misconduct”

Let’s take a brief journey into the past to examine some of the most important history of the Philadelphian era.

In 1979, six misguided former members of the WCG hired an attorney “to bring Mr. Armstrong to justice” for supposed wrongdoing. These six “relators” (a legal term) took it upon themselves to address what they perceived was “wrong in Pasadena.” They sought a judge’s assistance, and an *ex parte* hearing took place (meaning *without* one of the two parties involved present or even informed of the meeting). The

judge appointed a receiver, and the infamous assault on the Church ensued. It lasted almost two years and brought many important lessons to the Church, almost all of which have been *forgotten* by most of God's people today! If you will permit it, this book is able to bring them back to mind.

Continuing, outrageous charges of misconduct and misspending were leveled against Mr. Armstrong, and the actual facts and truth did not matter to many. This was made possible by the willingness of just *six* people to take matters into their own hands! Of course, they failed. But before they did, their reckless, misguided "zeal" caused major disruption in the Work. It also helped "set the table" for the whole new way of thinking to come into the Church.

Can Brethren Remove Ministers?

Parallel circumstances exist today. There are now "brethren" who feel it is their prerogative to use Matthew 18:15 to address perceived misconduct in the ministry. In a terrible misapplication of this verse, some feel that they can gather witnesses and approach a minister with their "charges." When the accused does not accede to and "repent" of the offenses outlined, these "brethren" feel they may, in effect, declare him to be "a heathen man and a publican" (vs. 17). They do this by taking it "to the Church," which means the Internet and anywhere else they can publicly slander the man. Writing hideous, untrue letters, they use any and all forums that will help them spread their "charges"—and their "findings." The goal is to reach as many people as possible in order to assassinate the character of a minister they could not control. The attack can be murderous—I know!

Here is the next stage. Invariably, some people will almost eagerly believe the accusations, and even *thank* such people for their efforts. In turn, this confirms to the accuser(s) that a high and noble purpose has been served—people have been "enlightened"—"helped." The Internet and a variety of chat rooms buzz every day with such "grist for the mill."

Recognize that the Church *never* understood Matthew 18:15 to mean brethren, *on their own authority*, could publicly assassinate ministers or other brethren, through "investigation" and "trial," whether publicly or privately. We have *always* known that the last step of Matthew 18:15 is carried out from the top down—never the bottom up!

Let's examine this: Can any two or three brethren remove a minister of God by merely alleging misconduct or heresy on his part? Could any

group of brethren from any part of the world target a minister whom they did not like or agree with, and actually remove him from office? Does the Bible permit—even authorize—this? Consider! If your answer is either “yes” or “maybe,” then you are suggesting that *any* minister of God can be held hostage to dissidents who decide—for *any* reason—that it is in their interest to remove him. This is exactly what one must conclude in order to start a “proceeding” against a particular minister or ministers. Of course, if they are indeed *true* ministers, then, in effect, *GOD* can be taken hostage in the same action! And so can His government.

Now think of how many people do not like or agree with their minister. There are countless numbers, and a thousand books could be filled with their reasons! All true ministers would have to spend their entire ministry “hoping against hope” that they never offended any two or more people in their pastorates, or they could find themselves the object of Matthew 18:15.

Do you see the preposterous illogic of such a dissident action?

What About Mr. Armstrong?

In the above light, any two or three people anywhere in the Church could then have *removed Mr. Armstrong* at any point in his ministry! Of course, in the 1979 receivership, six tried through the world’s courts—but FAILED! Would anyone doubt that there were hundreds, or even thousands, of members—and no small number of ministers—who wished to remove Mr. Armstrong over the course of his lifetime? Of course there were! (In reality, the false leaders who succeeded Mr. Armstrong, and sought to silence the truth he taught, prove this.)

Did the requirements of Matthew 18:15 mean an apostle of Christ had to sit throughout his entire ministry—for 52 years!—hoping not to offend what would be *any* several people in Denver, Dallas, Dubuque, or Detroit, because this tiny group might have started proceedings and removed him if he had? When thought of this way, it makes even considering the idea ludicrous. It would have made Mr. Armstrong hostage to any lynch mob with a notion.

The scripture instructs, “Go to your brother,” not “Go to your *minister*.” This is not because ministers are above the law, or that you could not (this would certainly be very rare) respectfully talk to your minister if you did not understand one of his actions or decisions. It is because a true minister cannot be removed by any except God Himself, usually through His *faithful* senior ministers. Even then, of course, if they are

His duly-appointed servants, they will always have *right* reasons for doing this! But all of this turns on understanding where the true government led by Christ—the only real government of God—exists. Without establishing this, everything becomes murky and subject to human opinion, interpretation and application, and confusion triumphs over every action.

There were numerous men around Mr. Armstrong who wanted to get rid of him. If they had succeeded, God would have literally *lost* His chosen apostle as human leader of His Church. In other words, God would have called and trained His servant for years, in preparation for His great purpose, only to watch a handful of rebellious dissidents thwart His entire plan. If you see that people—“brethren”—could never be allowed to do this to Mr. Armstrong, then it should be clear that it cannot be done to *any* true minister!

Marking

Romans 16:17 does say, however, that “brethren” *are* to “*mark* them [ministers or members] which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; *and avoid them.*” We have long understood that “mark” means to “take note of.” Of course, if *any* member *anywhere* is authorized to mark *any* minister for *any* reason (real or imagined) at *any* time, the Church would have *immediately* descended into *absolute chaos* 2,000 years ago! (For instance, how many enemies did just the apostle Paul have?)

Do you see this? And can you see how various forms of this very thinking is what is fueling the division, confusion and chaos throughout the splinters?

Brethren certainly should note false or compromising, lukewarm ministers—or members—and avoid them. While they ought to be careful in this, it is in fact a clear biblical command. All of us did this when we left the WCG. While most no longer will, every Christian must obey Romans 16:17-18. But this passage does not license people or organizations to slander, defame, libel, attack or publicly assassinate ministers whenever *they* see fit. This is the simple truth of how the Church has *always* handled these matters in the past!

Recognize that if people in the splinters who still have God’s Spirit were still willing to individually and collectively obey this instruction today, they would be led to the door of the only place that does *not* compromise, and to the only place where God’s government exists and Christ is leading. It would be the natural—in fact, automatic—result.

One additional point to consider, and this is amplifying a point stated earlier: If a minister is removed by his superiors because he will not stop teaching the truth, but these leaders charge him with “dividing the Church” or “sowing discord,” with charges of “misconduct” as throw-ins attempting to legitimize it, it is a bogus removal. (Of course, Christ can be expected to guide His faithful stewards not to do this.) Would Mr. Armstrong have ever permitted ministers to remove him in this fashion, particularly when he knew their real motivation was *disagreement with his* (God’s) *teachings*? Yet, fraudulent expulsions are also a result of false leaders in power after apostasies.

I have been either put on trial, fired or demoted a total of 12 times solely on issues of doctrine and principles of truth. Believe me, I know a “kangaroo court” when I see one. So did Mr. Armstrong. Nevertheless, if I were the devil, I would use my agents to set up such a “court” in order to expel an uncompromising, faithful minister anytime I could. I would use every opportunity possible. Satan does this because he knows some are foolish enough to *believe* his “order of the court.”

Do you comprehend this? Will you understand how this relates to the government of God?

No passage or account anywhere in God’s Word records “brethren” ever collaborating on their own—apart from Headquarters (which must be on track)—to remove even a *false* minister. You now understand *why*. Similarly, no passage or account anywhere in the Bible records *ministers* ever collaborating to remove a minister above them. Again, hopefully, you now understand *why*!

No Way to Discipline

There is another side of this issue that becomes an irony today, as well as a proof that there must be one, unified government of God somewhere that carries Christ’s authority. It serves as a kind of inset and presents vital insight into more of what happened as ministers and brethren have taken over in the Laodicean age. Before continuing, recognize that ministers and organizations in the Laodicean age would be no different from brethren taking random authority to themselves.

Of course, the Bible does speak of disfellowshipping those who fall into serious wrong conduct, as well as marking those who try to divide the Church with false doctrine, rebellion or slander. Romans 16:17 certainly is in the Bible. So is II Thessalonians 3:6, which states—in fact, commands, “Now we **COMMAND** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *withdraw yourselves* from every brother that walks

disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” And then there is this: “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth...from such *withdraw yourself*” (I Tim. 6:5). And finally there is the instruction to “*Cast out* the scorner, and contention shall go out; yes, strife and reproach shall cease” (Prov. 22:10).

These are all real biblical principles—and seen to be commands, requiring authority to administer—that periodically had to be enforced in the Church in the past. But consider that if the Church is composed of many groups and organizations, with each administering its own distinct and separate authority, carrying out these actions with finality—authority!—is impossible. So is correcting, admonishing or rebuking, when necessary—either members or ministers.

Here is why. The recipient of the disciplinary action can simply go elsewhere, to *any other* group or organization—“true church”—and likely be welcomed. And, as is often the case today, he will probably be seen as a virtual “hero” for having seen the light, the “wrong” of the “offending” organization that corrected, suspended or disfellowshipped him. In other words, if there are hundreds of “true churches,” it becomes absolutely impossible for the ministry to carry out God’s instruction to discipline those who need it. Those disciplined can always go to another, and then another, and then another “true church.”

But there is a related yet different problem having to do with which are the doctrines that must be *defended* and which are to be *rejected*. The ministry, and the brethren, must have a STANDARD of true doctrine to discern who it is they can fellowship with—or must avoid. This requires a SINGLE CENTRAL AUTHORITY led of Christ to instruct in all true doctrine.

The Church as Mother

Let’s go further with the above principle, remembering that one of the greatest responsibilities of the true Church of God is the *protection* of its members. Mr. Armstrong taught, and other literature that we offer confirms the Bible plainly teaches, the Church is the “Mother” of the begotten children of God within it (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 12; and II John 1 and 5). She alone is given the charge—the solemn, God-ordained duty—to keep those children secure, safe from harm. How would any *human* mother accomplish this if her children could freely roam the neighborhood, picking, choosing and living with any *other* mother of choice?

Today, God’s people—His begotten *children*—are roaming and wandering the streets of a town with 300 “homes” (the number of supposed “true churches” today, with more “moving into town” by the day).

It could be said that some are with foster mothers, others with adoptive parents, still others with nannies and babysitters, some at daycare centers, and yet others with kidnappers. In fact, there are now an almost endless array of substitutes, counterfeits and surrogates “welcoming” and “rearing” God’s children.

Every mother knows her own children best, and how they differ from each other. Only the *true* mother will have a *mother’s* love for those children. Other “mothers” in the neighborhood are at best pretenders, none of whom will protect or care for her children in the same way she would. And only the real mother of a child knows best when that child needs correction or discipline. She also knows her other children can be harmed if one child is left out of control. Sometimes that child must be spanked or sent to his room.

So it is with protecting the sheep in God’s Church through disciplinary action. The sheep are not permitted to pick and choose among groups and shepherds that would protect them in whatever way they—the sheep!—think should be done. Nor can they pick another “nicer” mother when their own disciplines them. Yet, this would be the natural byproduct of trying to administer any kind of correction, admonition, suspension, disfellowshipment or even marking when necessary today. In the present circumstances, the member “child” can merely declare, “I don’t like my mommy, I’m going to get another one because she spanked me.” This is translated, “I don’t like the way I was corrected (treated) by my organization, I’m going to find another ‘true church’ that will be willing to accept my conduct and my doctrinal ideas—one that will let me tell my mother how to ‘rear me.’” Worse, the first thing the “new mother” usually says today is that the child was a victim of abuse, and “did the right thing” by coming to the new, more tolerant and understanding “authority.”

But there is a very critical *related* aspect of the mother/child analogy to be considered. The Church, like any human mother, is responsible for the *diet* of her children, in this case the *spiritual* diet. She must work out a daily menu that ensures the health of her growing children. (We will read later about who has ultimate authority to decide how the flock is to be fed.) If children do not like the courses their mother serves, they do not have the option of picking a family that serves food to their liking. If a child does not want fruits, vegetables and grains—the typical child—he cannot go where he will receive only candy and ice cream.

Jesus Christ would *never* permit His Church to be broken into 300 homes, all serving as different “mothers,” in which God’s children can roam, picking and choosing at will. This understanding becomes its own

powerful PROOF that there has to be *one central authority*, THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD, within the Church of God administering to the needs—protection, doctrine, discipline and diet—of the Church Christ built!

“Christ is not divided”

Most simply no longer understand what Paul meant when he cautioned the Corinthians, “Christ is not divided” (I Cor. 1:13). First, the context flows from verse 10, which states in five ways that the Church has to have doctrinal unity. So many seem to have come to believe that “Christ is not divided” means His *Church* can be divided, but that somehow Christ *Himself* does not have a divided mind. Now, no one actually thinks in these terms, but this is the only conclusion one can draw to believe Christ heads hundreds of differing organizations.

We might ask: Would the perfect, supreme, all-knowing Jesus Christ really need to tell the Church He is not divided if it only meant that He was *personally* single of mind? Consider. If even “a double-minded *man* is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8), could any think Christ’s point is to explain that His mind is not divided so the Church will not think *Him* “unstable”? Of course not! Christ has to be talking about how He is not divided in His *leadership* of His one, unified, organized Church—that He would not simultaneously direct multiple organizations that compete and oppose each other, and teach different doctrines. This would divide Christ’s government, and hence Christ Himself. When *men* choose to lead a host of different groups, Christ is not bound or required to lead them *all*. (Again, our splinter book on the true Church covers this in detail.)

The living Jesus Christ is NOT divided, meaning He leads just *one* organization! Men ARE divided, and naturally split into *many* groups. But Christ is uninvolved because this is simply not the way He works.

But what is the ultimate CAUSE of this constant splitting and division?

“Not holding the Head”

The Corinthians were not the only congregation that had problems with how Christ leads the Church. The Colossians did too. This congregation had gone off track and back into other old beliefs and ideas, including “vain deceit,” “philosophy,” the “tradition of men” and the “rudiments of the world” (2:8, 20).

Why? What caused most of a congregation to go so far off?

Paul identified what was the problem then, and what is the problem today. He told the Colossians that they were “not holding the Head”

(2:19), which is Jesus Christ and His leadership over the Church—"the Body of Christ" (vs. 17). They were looking *outside* His government, meaning His Body, where He was "Head," in this case to angels for instruction and leadership. If just this much of Colossians was understood—or *remembered* in the case of God's people—the "difficult scripture" of Colossians 2:16 becomes very easy to understand. Take a moment to read the whole context of what Colossae forgot, and what the entire Worldwide Church of God also once knew.

The reason so many brethren and ministers *today* have seized for themselves rule of the "Church"—by first creating, and then picking, choosing and moving among many organizations—is because, having forgotten what the government of God looks like, they are no longer "holding the Head" (Jesus Christ and that government), and because they no longer understand that He "is not divided," meaning again that His *leadership* over His *government* is unified, and in only one location. Of course, all must eventually remember, understand and repent of rebellion against Christ's government over His Church.

"Where is the Lord?"

Let's return to Jeremiah 2. Many today, especially the ministry, have become like those described in verse 8. That passage actually forms part of the background and setting for verse 31, which describes modernists in Israel who declare, "We are lords."

Let's read verse 8: "The priests [leaders] said not, *Where is the LORD?* And they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against me...and walked after things that do not profit."

While this passage is primarily describing the ministers of this world, it has come to picture the thinking of so many brethren and former WCG ministers today—but particularly the ministry, because it is chiefly they who "handle the law." Yet, it also has a very real application to God's people.

Several obvious questions enter: Why are so few in the splinters willing to ask, "Where is the LORD [Christ]" at work? Why are so many unable to see that raising *this* question is the only way they can begin the task of locating His government? Why are thousands not out "moving heaven and earth" to find it? And, most important, why do so few seem to care? The answer lies in the fact that most people now consider **THEMSELVES** to be "lords." Why would anyone want to go looking for Christ—to "hold the Head"—when he sees the "lord" in the mirror every day?

Stop and face these questions.

Aversion Therapy

The last two chapters have been necessarily long to paint a complete picture. Throughout the splinters and slivers, God's pattern of government has been lampooned, impugned, botched, butchered, trampled, scoffed and sneered at, undermined, misrepresented and terribly misunderstood. And yet the entire Church—virtually all of God's people—once understood that it was practicing, in the form of a *forerunner*, what would be the wonderful, marvelous and *glorious* GOVERNMENT OF GOD, the very *same government* that would soon become God's greatest gift to an unhappy, deceived, sick and dying world, now cut off from Him.

I have tried to make all that you have read in these two chapters a kind of aversion therapy, partly for the purpose of almost nauseating the reader. If this has been accomplished, then you are ready for the remainder of the book.

All those who do *not* want to be *their own* “lord” must grasp the following! To find God's government is to find “where the Lord is”—where Jesus Christ is the Head—and where the government of God is in place. It is that simple, and it has always been that simple!

But this means understanding what the re-establishment of God's government looked like...

THE RESTORATION

A tremendous amount is at stake in God's people understanding the manner in which He governs His Church. Of course, God knows this better than any. Therefore, He would never permit the subject of New Testament ministerial offices and duties, and how they function and interrelate, to be objects of guesswork, personal opinion or mere human interpretation. While these things play a large role in every doctrinal teaching within the churches of this world, this has never been the case with the Church that Jesus Christ built.

The true God reveals the *plain truth* from His Word on all matters to those He calls. He is a God of ANSWERS, not merely *questions*, which is what defines the theology of this world. The ministers, religionists, seminary professors and Bible students of professing Christianity almost seem to pride themselves in being able to ask deep, esoteric questions about every theological issue. But I, and probably you, responded to God's calling because He not only offered *answers*, they were the *right* answers—the ONLY right answers!

Always Made Clear

In the Church of God, so much is at stake in first identifying and then holding to the truth of each Bible teaching that God could simply never leave His people floundering without specific direction, and on *every* vital biblical doctrine. What doctrine could be more vital to salvation

than government? I remember hearing often in the 1960s, during the early days of my calling, that God never allows His people to decide *what* is right, but only *whether* they will DO what is right. This made perfect sense in 1966, and it still does.

Christ knew that the Laodicean age would arrive. After all, He foretold it. He understood the many reasons most of His people would not “hold fast” what the Church had been taught in the previous era. Therefore, He certainly would have known that certain leaders would come along in the final age and re-engineer the Church’s teaching about *government*. He knew that a whole variety of new “approaches” to this subject would develop because the agenda of these different leaders would require that they alter old understanding into whatever they thought circumstances dictated if they were to advance themselves. He certainly would have also known that the truth about government would be one of the *first* casualties in the splinters. How else would the people and ministry be able to seize the reins of authority from Christ and His appointed leaders? (Yet those with God’s Spirit will have to yield back those reins.)

But, of course, God knew that the *whole body* of His truth would come under attack during the apostasy, and that this would also help to introduce this last era. Therefore, He would have recognized that steps would have needed to be taken to ensure that those who chose *not* to hold fast would do so *without excuse*. With the Tribulation—and much more, ETERNAL LIFE!—at stake, it would have been gross injustice for God to do less.

He did not!

The Foundation

Think, if you will, of Mr. Armstrong’s entire body of work as laying the foundation of God’s truth (Zech. 4:9) in the Philadelphian era. (Of course, other writers did at least play certain much smaller roles in this process.)

In selecting Mr. Armstrong to lead His Church in the twentieth century, God chose a man who was a very prolific writer. He was also an effective speaker. Probably all would at least agree on this much. This man carefully spelled out the doctrines of God—one by one—in specific, and usually even exquisite, detail. These explanations always included many smaller points and subpoints. His goal was to make the truth *plain*, impossible to misunderstand to the mind being opened by God. In addition, his manner—and he followed this practice throughout his ministry—was to *repeat* the truth in different ways, over and over, so that

people would “get it.” This was certainly the case with the doctrine of government.

While some may believe otherwise, Mr. Armstrong left nothing to speculation or human interpretation in regard to understanding the all-encompassing subject of government. You are about to witness this. It was as though God wanted to be absolutely certain that a *complete* and *unabridged* RECORD had been left on the subject of GOVERNMENT in a way that no one sincerely seeking the truth (we could add, either before or later after the apostasy) could possibly misunderstand. Of course, there would always remain the question of *whether* individuals would follow what was taught—but never the question of *what* it was that they were supposed to believe and practice.

In this chapter, and in others later, we will carefully examine EXACTLY what Mr. Armstrong taught about the subject of God’s government, specifically at work in the Church. This doctrine is multi-faceted, and so what Mr. Armstrong taught is comprehensive. Of course, we will also look at certain scriptures, as well as meanings in the Greek or Hebrew. Obviously, Mr. Armstrong’s quotes themselves contain many scriptures, and the reader will be left to judge whether he faithfully taught from God’s Word on this subject. (If you are reading the book already having come to believe that he did not do this on various *other* doctrines, what is quoted here will probably not convince you.)

Before Understanding Came

A little history is necessary before proceeding. Many who choose to reject what Mr. Armstrong taught about government, but who want to look like they are upholding him in other areas, love to quote his February 1939 *Good News* article “Did Christ Re-organize the Church?” This now famous article describes Mr. Armstrong’s thinking before he understood that the government of God was hierarchical, and that it always begins with one man. These “analysts” make the assertion from this article that Mr. Armstrong “changed” his understanding of government because he was “lifted up” and because increased authority as the Work grew “went to his head.” The thinking continues with “when he was humble” he taught the truth of the subject because he was “more objective.” The people who reason this way have lost their own objectivity—and in perhaps the worst possible way!

Consider the following: Mr. Armstrong did not even know he *was an apostle* for almost 14 years after he wrote the 1939 article. All who embrace this article today never previously did this. They do not seem

able to grasp that they would almost certainly have never been called if Mr. Armstrong had not grown out of his previous understanding.

Here is why, and it is not difficult to understand: When Mr. Armstrong came to see how God's government functioned—how it was unified and structured with its different offices and responsibilities, including the magnitude of his own office—the entire Work was able to change and expand in almost unimaginable ways. It was able to leap forward and grow to massive proportions, while still working harmoniously in all of the ways Chapter Two described.

Those who now hold to Mr. Armstrong's previous understanding should be thrilled and thankful beyond bounds that he grew out of it because they would have never been called if he had not. Without this growth and understanding in his thinking, there would not have been a great Work. The net result would have been that these critics would not have been privileged to learn the truth. I can add facetiously that they then would not have to be in a position to "worry" about criticizing his "humility" and "objectivity" today.

Get this! If Mr. Armstrong had not grown from his previous thinking, thousands now criticizing him would be lost deep in the world, and probably as deep in one of Satan's churches!

Most acknowledge that Mr. Armstrong slowly *grew* in understanding all through his 52-year ministry. This growth involved many doctrines, with his knowledge developing over time with each. This process was true of nearly every doctrine. However big and far-reaching, government was just one of many hundreds of Bible truths. Since people generally understand and are usually appreciative of this growth in *other* areas, why will some not see this regarding the all-important doctrine of government? And why do almost none connect the need for this growth for themselves to have learned the truth in the first place?

Here is what Mr. Armstrong wrote in his *Autobiography* looking back from the early 1960s. He is explaining that he came to recognize the government in Sardis did not work. It offers insight into his thinking process, then and earlier:

"The state conference was agreed to and formed. The concept of church government seemed to be that lay members should be in the offices of authority. Ministers were to be employed, and under orders from the lay members. This is essentially the concept of what we call democracy: government from the bottom up. Those being governed dictate who shall be their rulers and *how* their rulers shall rule them.

"The most perplexing subject in all the Bible to me was this matter of church government. I never did come to clear understanding of the

BIBLE teaching on the subject until after Ambassador College was formed and well on its way.”

Vol. 1, Chapter 23, pp. 411-412

No Committee

Most of the rest of this chapter will continue to be statements from Mr. Armstrong. Several are among the longest in the book. I will only offer minimal comments as you read, because Mr. Armstrong’s statements are explicit. You will see they are conclusive and nearly impossible to misunderstand.

The first, shorter quote forms the bedrock of what Mr. Armstrong believed and taught about how God teaches His Church. In regard to what will be revealed about God’s government, this brief statement becomes the litmus test for whether you will return to proper understanding of this subject. It “sets the bar” for the rest of the book, and separates those who will accept the foundation from an apostle (and one who was also the end-time Moses) from those who will not. It must be clear to the reader exactly how Mr. Armstrong believed was the only way the Church received its teachings.

Let’s read carefully:

“One thing there will not be in the millennial Headquarters Church is a doctrinal committee of intellectual ‘scholars’ to decide whether Christ’s teachings are true doctrines.

“There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God’s Church today since the Bible for our time is complete). God’s Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 350

Do you still accept what Mr. Armstrong taught? The next quote, also brief, comes from a sermon given just two years before his death. It prepares the reader for the quote to follow and begins to introduce the different offices of the ministry, and the two Bible chapters that reveal them:

“But to go on with the things that have been restored...The government of God has been restored to the Church, and the government of God

has been placed in the Church. You read that in Ephesians 4 and I Corinthians 12. Christ is the head of the Church and under Christ in the administration of the government are an apostle or apostles, then evangelists, then pastors, then all are called elders, all ministers all the way up clear down to the lowest. So then there are teachers and elders both speaking elders and preaching elders, deacons and deaconesses. And the Church is restored in that form of government. The Sardis Church even didn't have the right form of government."

Sermon, Dec. 17, 1983

Establishing True Authority

With this first introduction of the various offices in the ministry and in the Church's governance comes the question of how to *know* when authority has been conferred in regard to these offices. In a sense, Mr. Armstrong establishes the important questions that must be answered. He states that these answers are "vital," and what he writes is explicit. Notice that the next quote is from an article written over 50 years ago. You will momentarily learn that this was within the brief span of time between when Mr. Armstrong was learning the truth about God's government, including when he first understood his own office, and when the full restoration of that government in the Church had occurred.

Let's read:

"It's VITAL that you know *how* God confers the authority of office in His Church.

"Jesus conferred upon His called ministers of His Church the keys of the Kingdom of God. He vested them with *authority* to guide His Church, and carry on His work, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

"But how can you know who carries this authority? How are those upon whom it is conferred ordained to office? How can you recognize the one and only true Church of God—the very Church Jesus said He would build—HIS BODY, thru whom the Spirit of God today carries on *the work of God*?"

"What is God's order of authority in His Church?

"You find it in Ephesians 4:11-12: 'And He (Christ, the HEAD of the Church) gave some, APOSTLES, and some, PROPHETS, and some, EVANGELISTS, and some, PASTORS (leading or presiding elders of local churches), and TEACHERS; for the perfecting of the saints, for THE WORK of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: *till* we all come to *the unity*

of the faith...’ [Author’s note: Do not miss the warning that follows in Mr. Armstrong’s statement as the thought continues.] In other words, to *prevent* separate, *independent*, and competing work which would introduce confusion, and division, driving many out of the Body of Christ, GOD HAS ORGANIZED GOVERNMENT in His Church. That government is the government of GOD.

“It operates from GOD, at the top, on down. It is government of and by and from GOD the Father, thru CHRIST, thru God-called and ordained APOSTLES, thru EVANGELISTS, thru PASTORS, thru TEACHERS, *in that order*. This government means TEAMWORK. It works for UNITY, not division.”

“*Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?*”,
GN, May, 1954

This is clear-cut—and emphatic! Mr. Armstrong cites the ranks of the ministry in order, and straight from the Bible. Notice that division and splitting can drive “many out of the Body of Christ.” This statement sets up the next very extensive quote of over 30 years later from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. Read carefully to get the big picture revealed in it. Mr. Armstrong presents an expansive view. Notice that he begins to offer more detail about *administration*, exactly what is the Church and Body of Christ, the role and purpose of different offices and the importance of maintaining unity at all costs, and why.

As you read, try to let your mind receive the whole message with all of its elements. Try to see the “connective tissue” between these different elements. Also try to appreciate how all that Mr. Armstrong describes was once seen as directly connected to the picture painted in Chapter Two. And if you find yourself challenging or even questioning what is written, ask and try to identify *why* your thinking has shifted from what you once believed you had proven. What moved you? Try to pin down *where*—from *WHOM*—you obtained ideas different from the truths in this quote. If you once agreed with them, why do you not now? Read every word—*after* reviewing the upcoming organizational charts (all emphasis and subheads his):

“God explains in I Corinthians 12 functions, offices, administrations and their officers as GOD set them in his Church.

““Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant...Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all...But all these worketh that one and self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members,

and all the members of that one body, being many, ARE ONE BODY: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we [in the Church] be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free...' (I Cor. 12:1, 4-6, 11-13).

One Church with One Government

"Notice especially, there is only the ONE CHURCH. Not MANY churches. The CHURCH is not divided. There is only one Church. Not a parent church and many little daughter churches that have split off in disagreement. Divisions splintering off are NOT STILL IN THE CHURCH. It is the CHURCH that is to marry Christ in the resurrection at his coming—not disagreeing churches—not groups who have broken off! Not a parent church and apostate daughters. That will become more obvious as we continue.

"So notice, too, the Church conducts VARIOUS OPERATIONS. For these in the ONE Church there are also various ADMINISTRATIONS or executive departments, with an executive manager over each department or operation (verses 4-6). Remember, an executive administrator DOES NOT SET POLICY OR PROCEDURES OR DOCTRINES. He administers—he carries out and directs—what has been already set from above.

"Even in this world, in the United States the President does NOT MAKE THE LAWS. He administers the policies as functions authorized by Congress—enforces the laws made by Congress. Administrators are set in the Church merely to supervise, direct, execute the policies, procedures, doctrines assigned to them from above.

"The ONE Church, undivided, is emphasized again in verse 20: 'But now are they many members, yet BUT ONE BODY'—ONE UNDIVIDED CHURCH! Even GOD is composed of more than one Personage, yet but the ONE GOD! GOD, remember, is the divine GOD FAMILY. Those in the Church are already begotten sons—begotten members of that GOD FAMILY. But not yet BORN as GOD BEINGS!

"Notice verse 25: 'That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.'

"To administer these many operations, God—not a vote of the members—'hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.' Or, as stated in more detail in Ephesians 4:11 (RSV): 'And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.'

"An apostle is 'one sent forth' with Christ's gospel message, including the supervision of proclaiming that message to the world by means and persons other than himself. Also an apostle was given supervision

over all the local congregations or churches (I Cor. 16:1). The apostle Paul had oversight over the churches of the Gentile world (II Cor. 11:28).

“The prophets set in the foundation of the Church are those of the Old Testament, whose writings were used to form a considerable part of New Testament and gospel teaching and functioning.”

“Evangelists were leading ministers, proclaiming the gospel to the public, even raising up local churches and having supervision over some churches under the apostle. Therefore an evangelist may hold executive functions under the apostle in the Church headquarters or work today. An evangelist is not necessarily stationary. Pastors are stationary pastors over a local church or contingent group of local churches. Then there were placed in the Church teachers—not necessarily preachers. Yet all ministers and teachers are called elders in other New Testament texts. Therefore, in God’s Church today there are both preaching and nonpreaching elders. Preaching elders pastor local churches. Then some elders, not preaching, are called local elders in the Church today.

Temple to Which Christ Shall Come

“Now further about CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

“The CHURCH is the spiritual Body of Christ—not a secular or worldly organization, club or institution. Yet it is HIGHLY ORGANIZED.

“Notice how thoroughly organized: ‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.’ Notice the Church is a FAMILY, even as GOD is a divine FAMILY—‘the household of God.’

“Continue: ‘And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building’—the Church is a building ‘fitly framed together’ (WELL ORGANIZED—all parts joined and functioning together in harmony and teamwork)—‘groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit’ (Eph. 2:19-22). This scripture plainly reveals the temple to which the glorified world-ruling Christ shall come at his soon Second Coming. There is no scripture foretelling the construction of a material temple in Jerusalem before Christ’s appearing. The 40th chapter of Ezekiel, however, describes the building of a temple after the return of Christ.

“The Church, then, is to grow into a HOLY TEMPLE—the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ shall come—even as he came to a material temple of stone and metals and wood the first time.

“Notice further: ‘...the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together’—ORGANIZED—‘and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body...’ (Eph. 4:15-16). Compacted means knit together, compressed together, as closely together as if welded together. This shows ORGANIZED UNITY, HARMONY! It is commanded that those in the Church be so united that they ‘all speak the same thing’ (I Cor. 1:10).”

“Yet none is truly the Church OF GOD, unless it is GOD’S CHURCH, continuing in doctrine, practice, organization, in all ways on the original biblical pattern, headed by Jesus Christ, yet belonging to God the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, having GOD’S TRUTH, fulfilling Christ’s commission of proclaiming his GOOD NEWS of the KINGDOM OF GOD to the world as a whole.

“And there is only ONE such Church!

“And it CANNOT BE DIVIDED. It remains ONE.

“In I Corinthians 1, the apostle Paul was inspired to command that all in the Church ‘SPEAK THE SAME THING.’ There must be no division in what is believed, taught or preached.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, pp. 243-246, 249

How many of the elements that you read do you still believe? How many have you, perhaps *unknowingly*, permitted to slip or blur in your thinking? For instance, do you still believe “It is *commanded* that those in the Church be so united that they ‘all speak the same thing’”? Do you still believe this is true regarding government, and as Mr. Armstrong described it here? Or do you believe that circumstances today permit any number of altered versions of government to be accepted, as long as some man or men say they are acceptable? Do you still believe *all* of the things in the larger paragraph near the end beginning “Yet none...”?

THE RESTORATION!

We are now ready to examine the moment in Philadelphia’s history when Mr. Armstrong explained that the full restoration of God’s government in His Church had occurred. Almost none remember, or knew, that there was a *specific moment* in Church history that this government was restored, never mind exactly *what* had happened—*what* was now in place that had not been for many centuries.

Savor what almost no one today either knows or comprehends. And recognize that if Mr. Armstrong was wrong concerning what you are about

to read, meaning that the previous long statement from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* was simply not true, in some or all of its elements, then virtually the entire foundation was faulty on which the greatest Work of God of all time occurred. This means Mr. Armstrong sort of “lucked out” by picking a humanly-devised form of governance that allowed the Church to achieve unprecedented productivity beyond any other time in Church history. Will you believe that? Will you believe that the chaos, confusion and division that followed his time was a return to the way it should have been?

The first sentence, in italics, formed what is often called the “deck” or “promo” of the article, and the subheads are Mr. Armstrong’s:

“Now, for the first time in 750 years, God’s complete government is restored in His Church.”

“JANUARY 22nd was a Sabbath that will go down in the eternal history of God’s Church and His Kingdom!

“On that day, for the first time in 750 years, the government of God was fully restored in His Church. *Every* administrative office which Christ set in His Church is functioning once again.”

“We find *prophets* mentioned in the historic portions of the New Testament, but they...carried no authority. The New Testament Scriptures were not yet written. God used these prophets to convey messages direct from Him to the apostles. We find no prophets in the church today. The written Scriptures are now complete. There seems no need for prophets today. Furthermore, it is GOD who *sets them* in His Church, and if there are none, it is because GOD has not seen fit to set them in His Church. That is GOD’s responsibility, not ours.

“So, then, that leaves us with the executive and administrative spiritual offices in the Church. These offices of authority, then, are first, *apostle*; second, *evangelist*; third, *pastor*; fourth, *teacher*.”

Christ the Living Head

“Christ is the *living* HEAD of the Church!

“HE sets the apostle in office. But we do find historic example in the New Testament of the apostle setting in office the evangelists, pastors and teachers, and even delegating to the evangelists the responsibility of ordaining pastors and other elders, and deacons.”

“So there are the COMPLETE offices in God’s Church—Christ the HEAD, then *apostles, evangelists, pastors, minister-elders, non-preaching elders, deacons, deaconesses*. [Author’s note: Take note of Mr. Armstrong’s reference to “*minister-elders*” and “*non-preaching elders*.”]

These Offices 750 Years Ago

“The last historic record of this *complete* government of God in the true Church is found around 1200 A.D. Because Peter Waldo was the man God raised up as His instrument for His work at that time, the world called the Church by the nick-name ‘Waldenses.’ But they themselves recognized only the name ‘The Church of God.’

“Peter Waldo occupied the office of APOSTLE. Apparently he, himself, did not claim the title. There is no record of the Church of that time directly using the title. But the historic facts do show that Peter Waldo occupied that office, and through him God exercised that authority. The actual *title* of *Apostle* was used by the Catholics against Peter Waldo. That he carried out the apostolic office in God’s Church at the time is clear from the following: ‘...he (Waldo)...dared to usurp the office of the apostles, preaching the Gospel and the things he had committed to memory...*He sent men...*to preach.’ (From page 55 of *A History of the Vaudois Church*, by Antoine Monastier.)”

“...God used no one of apostolic rank during the Sardis period of the Church of God.”

*“Six More Ministers Now Ordained,”
GN, Feb.-Mar. 1955*

This quote is equally clear-cut and emphatic—and PROFOUND in meaning! When was the last time you were reminded of the AWESOME IMPORTANCE of January 22, 1955? Ever? The Church experienced something at this time that had been missing for three-quarters of a millennium—that had not been seen since that previous date. Peter Waldo was once a name well-known to God’s people. While the apostates tried to undermine his role by suggesting he was a Sunday-keeper, he was, in fact, the leader of the Thyatiran (or fourth) era of the Church of God. And our book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* proves Waldo knew this.

I have added the following quote because it further demonstrates why prophets were not included in the restoration Mr. Armstrong described:

“In these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. These prophets ranked second to the apostles in the framework of God’s Church. (Eph. 4:11.) Their mission seems to have been to receive messages or prophecies direct from God, and to convey these messages from God to the apostles or evangelists or elders. God’s Word

had not yet been completely committed to writing. The New Testament was still in process of being written. There is no evidence of the existence of any prophets in the Church since the New Testament was written.

“Every example in the New Testament, however, shows that Christ carried on affairs in His Church according to HIS GOVERNMENT, and in definite order. There is no doubt, therefore, that *these prophets were sent from Jerusalem BY AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES.*”

“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”,
GN, May, 1954

Reread the first sentence of the last paragraph again before continuing. Roll it in your mind, asking if you believe it is still applicable today. Two years and eight months after the January 1955 time of restoration, an article (the next quote) appeared listing all of those who held office within the ranks that Mr. Armstrong described above. If nothing else, it illustrates how the Church once recognized these offices, and the office-holders within them. These lists were used to pray for men and women serving around the world, and they came out regularly in varying forms, but it also became its own constant reminder that God’s government had structure and order and specific offices within it. Now continue:

“Many of you brethren are in scattered areas—and do not really KNOW who all the ministers are! Usually, we have always printed in the *Good News Magazine* an article about any ordinations that have occurred—but many new members have been brought in to the flock of true believers in recent months and years, and they are unsure as to WHO is a minister, and who is not!

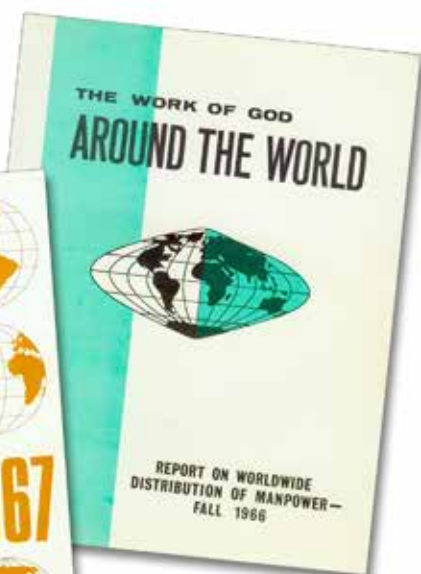
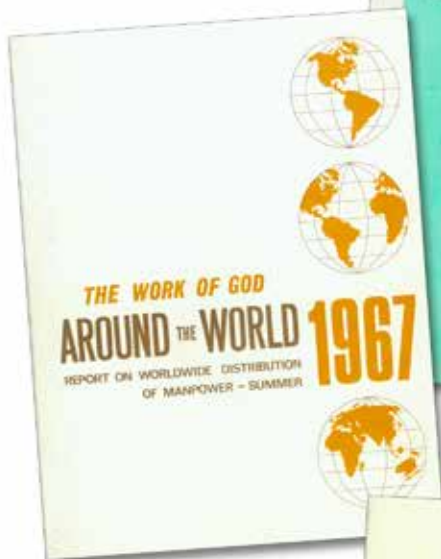
“For that reason, we give you the following *list*, which comprises ALL the God-called and ordained ministers, deacons and deaconesses in the True Church of God for today!

“The one whom God has placed in the office of APOSTLE AND GENERAL PASTOR: Herbert W. Armstrong;

“EVANGELISTS: Garner Ted Armstrong, Richard D. Armstrong, Raymond C. Cole, Herman L. Hoeh, Raymond F. McNair, Dr. C. Paul Meredith, Roderick C. Meredith, Norman A. Smith;

“PASTORS: Dean C. Blackwell, C. Wayne Cole;

“PREACHING ELDERS: James L. Friddle, Jr., David Jon Hill, H. Burk McNair, George A. Meeker, Jr., R. Carlton Smith, Kenneth R. Swisher, Gerald D. Waterhouse;



WORLD OFFICES



U.S. DISTRICTS



MEXICO

WEST INDIES

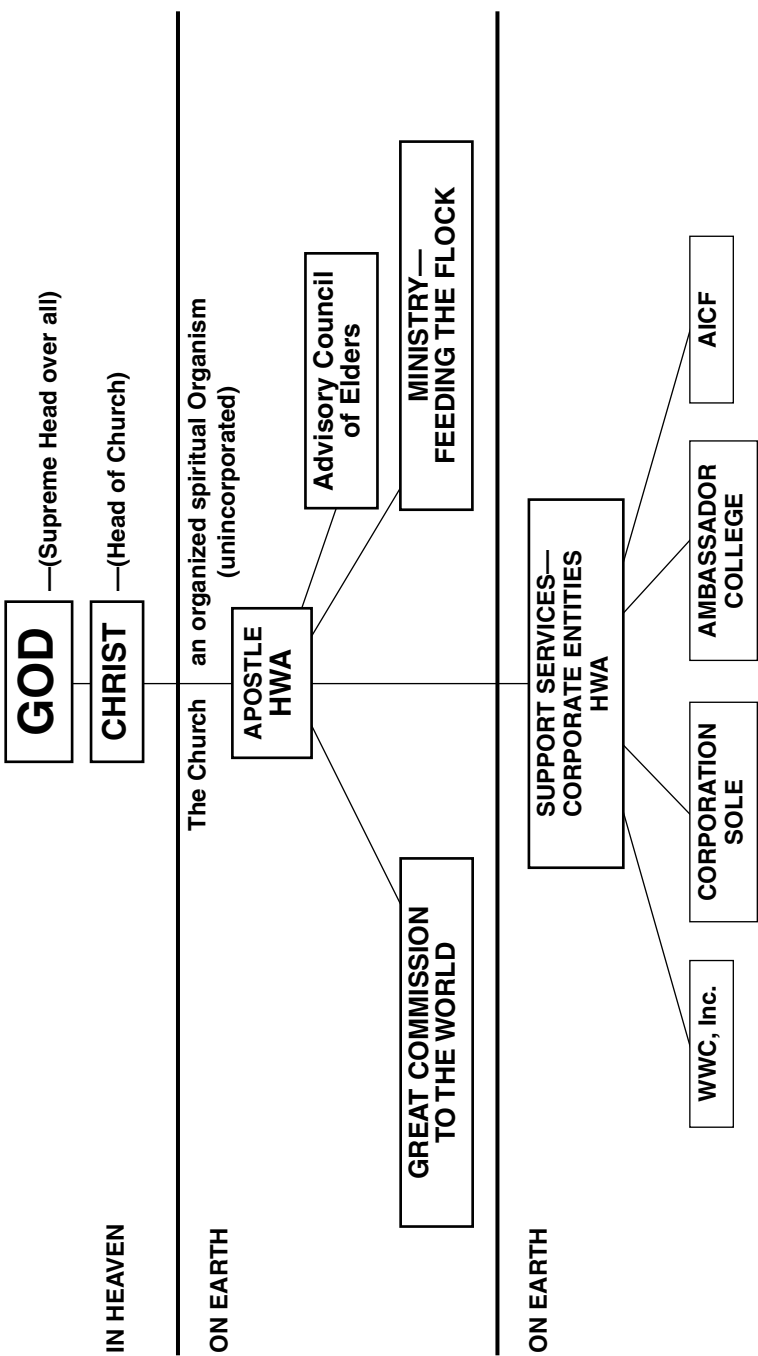
PHILIPPINES

INDIA

The map shows the British Isles, Scandinavia, and Central Europe. Labels include: BRITAIN, IRELAND, DENMARK, SWEDEN, FINLAND, POLAND, GERMANY, CZECH REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA, AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND, ITALY, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, GREECE, TURKEY, and the BALTIC STATES (ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA). The sidebar on the right lists the countries with their flags and names: BRITAIN, GERMANY, and FRANCE.

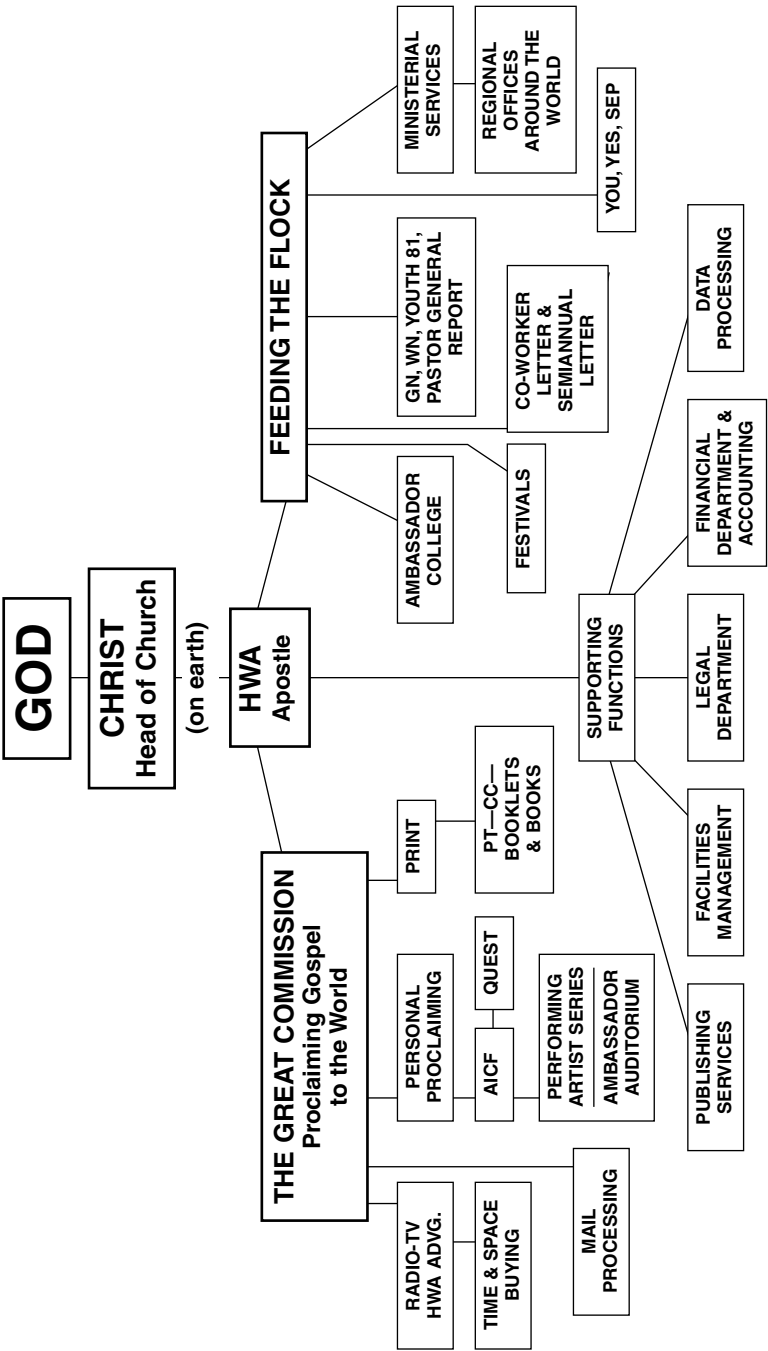
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ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGRAM OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD



Here is an exact visual representation of God's government in place and at work in His Church, as seen in the March 6, 1981 *Worldwide News*.

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ORGANIZATION CHART



This is a more detailed view of the cohesive structure within the government of God, from the same *Worldwide News*.

“LOCAL ELDERS: Richard Prince, Jr., Basil Wolverton;

“DEACONS: Alton B. Billingsley, Widd Boyce, Gene Carter, Otis Cole, Eddie Eckert, Buck Hammer, Roy Hammer, Dave Henion, F. William Homberger, A. R. Jantzen, James F. Kunz, Malcom Martin, H. A. Olsen, A. N. Roesler, Otis Rowell, I. E. Starkey, Dwight Webster;

“DEACONESSES: Mrs. Roy Hammer, Mrs. Annie Mann.”

“How God Calls HIS Ministers,” GN, Sep. 1957

Notice that each office Mr. Armstrong listed in various earlier quotes is seen here to be filled by one or more people. Regularly *reminding* a small, growing Church of this in the early days was deemed important. In fact, here is how and why it was important.

Prayer Lists and Manpower Brochures

The previous inset introduced something that was once intrinsic to the whole Church and to the prayers of the whole Church, but that has been discarded and forgotten as little more than a relic of history.

On a regular basis in the Church’s early years, Headquarters would design entire issues of *The Good News* magazine into what were referred to as “manpower brochures.” These special editions consisted of the names and some pictures of ministers serving the brethren around the globe. These were accompanied by maps of each region of the world, and areas or districts within the United States. The lists of names were delineated into which men held which offices, as the last quote above illustrates.

These tools were absolutely invaluable to the daily prayers of thousands. I remember them well, and students at Ambassador College were taught to use them to “pray around the world.” So was the Church. This made brethren feel connected to all parts of the Work, the Church, the regional offices, the three colleges and the ministry who once served them so tirelessly. God’s people were also made to know that ongoing prayers for these things was *their*—the BRETHREN’S—part in them!

But these extensive editions quietly served two more purposes. They made the layout, order and structure of God’s marvelous form of government something that was very real to all of His people—and something they would see and think about on a daily basis. They also served as a kind of regular eyewitness account of the Church’s growth and development through those exciting years when God’s government was so productive in every corner of the world.

For a growing number today, this excitement has returned. We have continued this tradition by producing a yearly Manpower Brochure for members to see the growth in the ministry and Headquarters staff.

The Purpose of Church and Government

Here is a final quote again from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. It reveals the inspiring overall picture of how the various ministerial offices in the Church, as well as the role of the laymember, permit it to carry out its commissions. Although not as long as some other quotes, this one becomes the standard—the fully-painted canvas—of God’s government at work. Mr. Armstrong’s points and instruction are specific, and many know they come from what he called his most important work and the most important book written since the Bible.

This statement, one that also becomes a perfect summary for the whole chapter, appears under the subhead “Real Purpose of the Church.” As you read, see if the divided, scattered, competing, compromised and disagreeing confusion that is the splinters and slivers today—every one of which has rejected the government of God in multiple ways—is remotely comparable to what you see described here:

“NOW MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL—what is the REAL PURPOSE for the Church? WHY did God have Christ raise it up?

“The CHURCH is the spiritual MOTHER of human converts. They are the spiritual embryos and fetuses as yet UNBORN, although begotten by God’s Holy Spirit—already children of GOD.

“The CHURCH is God’s spiritual ORGANISM, well organized, for feeding on spiritual food, training and developing in spiritual righteous CHARACTER the future GOD BEINGS—sons of God the Father!

“For that training—that spiritual development of God’s CHARACTER, God has given his Church a DUAL responsibility:

“1) ‘Go ye into all the world’ and proclaim the GOOD NEWS—announcement—of the coming kingdom of God.

“2) ‘Feed my sheep.’

“But in FEEDING the ‘sheep,’ developing in them God’s spiritual CHARACTER, God has given them THEIR PART in supporting, backing up, the great commission: ‘Go ye into all the world.’

“This first and great commission was given to the apostles. To a lesser extent evangelists were used in carrying forth the message. Other leaders—ordained ministers—were stationary, yet even the local pastor of a church may hold evangelistic services in his area—not the

‘soul-saving crusade’ type, but lectures ANNOUNCING and PROCLAIMING as a witness the coming KINGDOM OF GOD (the true gospel)!

“This ENTIRE GREAT COMMISSION—proclaiming the GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom, and ‘feeding the sheep’—is a COMBINED administration and function of the Church.

“The individual lay member HAS HIS VITAL PART in proclaiming the GOOD NEWS (gospel) to the world. How? Not by going out and himself proclaiming Christ’s message to the neighborhood or to the world. That is done primarily by the apostles, to some extent by evangelists, and to even a lesser extent in local areas by local pastors. (The chief responsibility of local pastors is supervision of and preaching to the local church.)

“But the ENTIRE CHURCH OPERATION is one WHOLE, organized into various operations and administrations (I Cor. 12:5-6).”

pp. 265-266

What Happened?

What happened to the thinking of so many thousands? Why would they wish, or passively permit others, to change a governmental structure that produced such wonderful unity in the Church and the largest Work in scope and size—countless millions reached—that the world has ever seen? Why would not thousands be out searching diligently today for the extraordinary government that God’s people and Work enjoyed for so many decades? Why are so many content with a variety of replacements that are no more than cheap substitutes and counterfeits? Why would so many so willingly exchange what was a magnificent treasure chest full of jewels for no more than a sack of gravel?—the Hope Diamond for a trinket? If this portrayal seems unfair, then it is because the gap between items is so great that the value of the gravel and the trinket are *over-stated* in the comparison.

It becomes apparent that more would choose to return both to right knowledge about and to the location of God’s government today if they understood more detail of its inner workings. Of course, the purpose throughout is to take the mystery from this pursuit. This chapter should have gone a long way in doing this.

Planting a Seed

Before leaving the restoration, a seed must be planted in your thinking. Consider. Christ leads His Church through apostles—and few would

disagree with this premise, at least on its face. In other words, this is the way He does things in the Church that *He* built. The entire Church once saw that one of the greatest distinctions between the way the all-wise, all-powerful, LIVING JESUS CHRIST does things differently than churches built by men is that He teaches and directs the government of His Church *starting with apostles!*

Before studying what Mr. Armstrong taught about the offices of the New Testament, it is critical that you ask yourself some questions: Do you still believe this—that *this* office is “first” in the Body? Returning to a line of thinking similar to earlier in the chapter, if you have changed—moved—*why* have you changed? Are you really sure you understand *why* your thinking has shifted?

Everyone’s thinking evolves over time. In some ways, this is simply a natural byproduct of maturing, and of growing older. Sometimes these changes are good, and sometimes they are not. Sometimes people recognize that they have changed their thinking, and sometimes they do not. It is critical that you try to identify what it was that altered your thinking about how Christ leads His Church, and *when* this change began. Tracing the footsteps of your thought process will help you walk back down the path to where you were when you took the wrong fork in the road.

Christ has certainly not shifted *His* thinking about apostles. He knows best what they do—after all, He *is one* (Heb. 3:1). In the truest sense, Jesus Christ and human apostles HOLD THE SAME OFFICE. Except for level of authority—and the gap is certainly great—it could be said that, with apostles, Christ is directing “one of His own.” Would the all-powerful Christ somehow be incapable of teaching His human servant holding the same office about the exact duties and functions of that office? Would He “mess up” communicating such an integral part of how God’s government works? After all, the Father sent Christ as an apostle and delegated very specific authority to Him. In identical fashion, Christ sends human apostles and delegates very specific authority to them. Christ is not confused about His role, and He would not leave His human apostle confused either.

All of this has a direct bearing on what the Church learned—about everything!—throughout Mr. Armstrong’s 52-year ministry. If we cannot be sure that Mr. Armstrong correctly understood and taught the offices of the ministry, including his own as apostle, why would we be certain about other teachings? Would God permit His people to later pick and choose doctrine based on *feelings*—where they *feel* he taught correctly, they should hold fast, and where they *feel* he did not, they should shift to

the latest popular human innovation? As you read Mr. Armstrong's explanations of particular offices in the chapters that follow, see if they square with what you see in the Bible.

Much of the rest of the book will take you deeper inside the specific offices and duties—the special responsibilities—of the New Testament. As you read, try to see *why* Mr. Armstrong taught as he did, and whether or not you want to again live under Christ's structure of authority. The Church is called our “Mother” in Scripture. Also think about what it will mean to *your spiritual growth* and YOUR ETERNAL LIFE if you can find the only Church that will feed you with the love of a mother feeding her *own* child.

Now here is how God's government worked...

DEACONS

Mr. Armstrong has sketched an outline of each of the different offices within God's Church. Of course, he did not say all that could be written, or even all that the Bible teaches, about each. But he did establish a framework—a skeleton—sufficient to see more than the basic shape. We will begin to learn about these offices in more detail now. This chapter will take a basic approach, and here begins the “text-book” portion of this volume.

Also, Mr. Armstrong generally explained the government of God by listing the highest office first and then coming down the chain of ranks. For practical reasons, it became best here to begin with the lowest ordained position and work up. It is recognized that this means certain sequencing of information given will have to change. However, it is more natural to discuss last the additional special New Testament *duties* (as opposed to offices or ranks, and we will see this distinction later) within God's Work, immediately *after* discussing the highest offices in the New Testament.

This means starting with the office of *deacon*.

Men and Women Servants

Recall that Mr. Armstrong, and at least one other author, referred to deacons and deaconesses. In the past, virtually every congregation of any size that had been established for very long had one or more deacons. A

smaller number had deaconesses. These offices were eventually common to every congregation and pastorate around the world. No pastorate was complete, and no congregation of any size could function very effectively, without several.

Deacons and deaconesses are people who have been ordained to *physical* service in the Church. Obviously, a deaconess is a woman holding an office serving among women similar to a deacon among men (and women). We will see more of what this means momentarily.

First, here is a single, brief quote from the early days that defines this office. It was also written during the period after Mr. Armstrong came to understand his own office, but before the Church had come to see the complete restoration of God's government. While it was not written by Mr. Armstrong, it certainly presented understanding that was well-known in the Church:

"Paul wrote to the Corinthians that *beside* the spiritual administration, there was also a *physical* administration made up of helps or helpers, usually referred to in Scripture as deacons. They were physical or material helpers, who waited on tables, did janitor work and many other physical duties."

Herman L. Hoeh, "*Government in Our Church*,"
GN, August 1953

What was outlined here is simply physical labor. Often, a deacon or deaconess was a person who could be described as "in charge of sweat and hard work." Many who served in this office were some of the truest servants anywhere in the Church. These were to be "roll up your sleeves and dig in" kind of people, and that is what most were—although this waned later.

In fact, some of the greatest servants I have ever known were deacons or deaconesses. Some that I can think of were almost hero- or heroine-like in the way they stood up, came forward and "saved the day" through long hours of faithful service, and with many it was time and again. And there were occasions when this was almost forced upon them without notice because of an unexpected need, and sometimes genuine emergency. These were people the pastor could count on "rain or shine," and who usually served without complaint. I often think of the extraordinary reward that certain deacons and deaconesses that I have known have established for themselves (Matt. 10:42)—*if* they survive(d) the apostasy and let "no man take [their] crown" (Rev. 3:11). Of course, and obviously, more than a few did not take their office seriously.

I have been privileged to train, ordain and teach many, many deacons, and any number of deaconesses. This involved conducting scores of what most pastors referred to as Deacon and Elder Meetings. I have learned that these servants come with all kinds of backgrounds, experiences and personalities. No two were alike, except in one all-important way—they were servants of their fellow brethren!

How the Office Began

The biggest key to understanding the duties of a deacon or deaconess is found in the first chapter in the Bible where this office is mentioned—Acts 6. This short chapter could easily be called “the deacon chapter” because the first eight verses introduce the office, and the last seven verses describe the powerful message for which the newly-ordained deacon Stephen lost his life.

Verse 1 describes a rapidly-multiplying, young New Testament Church, stating, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied...” The account continues with the twelve apostles having difficulty staying abreast of the “daily ministration” of the “widows” who were part of two different bands of local converts. With too much of their time taken, the apostles were not able to keep up with their greater *spiritual* responsibilities. So dissension arose. Here was their difficulty: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables” (vs. 2).

This introduces the problem—and the purpose for which the office was created. Somebody needed to *serve tables*. That is about as physical as it gets, and it defined the most basic parameters for which the first seven deacons were selected.

In verse 3, the apostles instructed, “Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint [Greek: ordain] over this business.” This kind of physical service—the types of things that would be compared to waiting on tables—was then differentiated in verse 4 from the service of the ministry, what those holding spiritual offices (in this case the apostles) were to do: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

Modern Church government revisionists have tried to say that the people’s involvement in the selection of deacons is evidence that the brethren or ministry should participate in the selection of leaders in the Church. This thinking is at best woefully ignorant and at worst deliber-

ately dishonest. Closer reading reveals no such thing. Verse 6 reveals that the *apostles* prayed, and the *apostles* laid hands on the seven ordained after the *apostles* had defined the parameters of the search for candidates. Every still-honest minister in the splinters today remembers how the Church always understood this account, and that it meant local pastors could ask for opinions from various brethren—and certainly other deacons—about particular people being considered for deacon or deaconess. I almost always did this, but made sure to do it very discreetly, and to only consult with the most spiritually strong and stable brethren—those who would best know—as well as who might be serving under a particular “candidate.”

To say, as do UCG and COGwa, that the Acts 6 account authorizes voting in the Church, and for top *ministers*, is patently dishonest, and the discerning person will see this. It is about as honest as saying that the biblical casting of *lots* in Acts 1:22-26 (UCG also cites this passage for support of voting), which yielded Matthias as the one to replace Judas among the twelve, is voting—it is bal-loting.

Before leaving Acts 6, it is worth noting that Stephen, “only” a deacon, “full of faith and power [Grk. *dunamis*], did great wonders [Grk. *teras*] and miracles [Grk. *seimion*] among the people.” Later we will learn that Stephen’s ability to do these things derived directly from apostolic authority present in the Church. However, I mention this because every deacon should recognize that when properly fulfilling his office he is doing more than “*just* that of a deacon” or that he is more than “*only* a deacon.” Recall that Acts 8 describes what the deacon Philip did in Gentile Samaria (vs. 5-6, 13) and also describes the “miracles and signs” he did there.

The three Greek words above were included to prepare you for their re-introduction near the end of the book in regard to apostolic power and the signs of it. The reader is put on notice.

Other Qualifications

In one other series of verses, the apostle Paul formally lists what are often referred to as the “qualifications of a deacon.” Not as long as those of an elder, they still reflect a deeply converted person of exemplary conduct in the congregation. These are found in I Timothy 3:8-13:

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives

be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Both references to “using the office of a deacon” derive from the Greek word *diakoneo*, which means “to be an attendant, that is, wait upon (menially or as a host...) administer (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon...” When the meaning of *diakonos*, derived from *diakoneo*, is included, meaning “a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); (technically a deacon or deaconess)...servant,” the picture is clear. Deacons were servants in menial, physical matters.

There is a great deal more to consider in this list of qualifications than meets the eye. Every pastor must carefully evaluate any who are being considered for this office in the full light of these verses and of Acts 6. The office of deacon, as with any other office of God, must never be given because one is a “favorite,” or is good at flattery, or has been a “friend,” or has been “particularly loyal”—or as happened many times in the past, was one of the “beautiful people,” usually synonymous with materially successful. Nor can it be a “golfing buddy,” or worse, as also happened more than once, a “drinking buddy.”

Do not lose sight of the fact that God is the one who “sets the bar”—the *spiritual standard*!—for this and every other New Testament office. There can be no room for politics, nepotism, favoritism or cronyism—or for just rewarding “senior” people—when it comes to this or any other OFFICE OF GOD!

God’s standards must always prevail from the highest to the lowest office.

Most Also Leaders

Without exception, deacons (and deaconesses) had to exhibit at least a minimal level of leadership. Of course, some served more naturally as assistants, often to local church elders, but as often directly to the pastor. Some were very effective leaders, however, and their office often amounted to a training period for higher service in a spiritual office. For instance, this was the case with Philip, referenced earlier, who was serving as a deacon in Acts 8, but also performing baptisms. This deacon went on to become an evangelist (Acts 21:8).

To be a leader—one with authority over and responsibility for others—one must first demonstrate that he can *be led*—that he can be a

Support Functions— “Helps,” “Governments,” “Diversities,” “Administrations” and “Operations”

It is possible to go further than the offices listed in Ephesians 4:11, through a careful look at I Corinthians 12:27-28. This passage includes other often-overlooked functions within God's government. Notice verse 28: “And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, HELPS, GOVERNMENTS, DIVERSITIES of tongues.”

What *are* “helps”?—“governments”?—“diversities”? What do these terms reference? How do these function within the Church, and under the direction and leadership of God's ministry? To better understand their purpose, we must examine the definitions of the Greek words from which they derive:

“**Helps**” is translated from *antilepsis*. Its primary meaning is simply “relief or help.”

The *Thayer Greek-English Lexicon* notes that the plural usage of “helps” in I Corinthians 12:28 relates to “the ministrations of the deacons, who have care of the poor and the sick.” Of course, the Church has long understood that “helps” indicates the service of deacons and deaconesses, and this was referenced in a quote within this chapter.

Further, *antilepsis* derives from a root word meaning “to participate: help, partaker, support,” and “to take hold of in turn, i.e. succor,” as in to grip the opposite side—literally, “opposite grippers.” This is analogous to someone moving a heavy table, and requiring that someone else grip the other end. A “help” is literally just that—someone who aids others in areas that need assistance. And we have seen that the service of a “help”—a deacon—can range from serving tables to assisting in the First Commission.

“**Governments**” is translated from *kubernesis*, and means “pilotage, i.e. (figurative) directorship (in the church).” *Thayer* notes that its use in I Corinthians 12 points to a figurative render-

ing such as “wise counsels.” It is easy to see a host of different ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS in a Church and Work as large as that under Mr. Armstrong would require a variety of different levels of administrators—directorships.

“**Diversities**” is also used in verse 28, and comes from *genos*, which derives from a root word that means “kin.” *Genos* primarily means “born, countryman, diversity, generation, kindred, nation, offspring, stock.” *Thayer* defines this word as “the aggregate [collection] of many individuals of the same nature, kind, sort, species.”

Now that we have examined the definitions of “helps,” “governments” and “diversities,” let’s reread I Corinthians 12:28, but this time replacing them with their expanded meanings:

“And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, *the caring for the brethren in need, the giving of wise counsel and direction, all in a variety of different languages—along with the miraculous gifts to communicate this freely.*”

When tied to verse 28, verses 4-6 convey even deeper meaning. In fact, the reader comes to this before addressing the offices and roles of verse 28: “Now there are DIVERSITIES of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of ADMINISTRATIONS, but the same Lord. And there are DIVERSITIES of OPERATIONS, but it is the same God which works all in all.”

“**Diversities**” is in this case different from the Greek word rendered the same in verse 28. This time it is translated from *diairesis*, defined as “a distinction or variety; difference, diversity.” *Thayer* adds “in particular a distinction arising from a different distribution to different persons.”

Also, *diairesis* comes from the *diaireo*, which means “to separate or divide.” It could be said that a person’s *diary* divides important events that take place on the separate days of that person’s life.

“**Administrations**” is *diakonia* in the Greek. In defining it, *Strong’s* references *diakonos*, which we saw means “the service of an attendant or waiter”—one who carries out menial labor, as performed by deacons or deaconesses.

But *diakonia* is a little different in that it is defined as “an aid, (official) service of the Christian teacher.” This is very interesting

because it pertains to minister, ministering, ministry, office, relief, the carrying out of service—apparently defining service in a more official capacity.

“Administrations” also provides a biblical basis for those in training for the ministry, which the Church has generally called “ministerial assistants” (or trainees). Those qualifying for this training usually begin by assisting as an attendant, with initial focus on menial services while being tutored for future responsibilities. As the candidate grows, the nature of the tasks escalates with time, and he becomes better prepared to fulfill assignments that are more sensitive.

Of course, at some point, a ministerial assistant would go on to ministerial ordination, with his final rank or office determined by how Christ ultimately plans to use him. In other words, his ministerial training would continue after ordination toward his final role within the government of the Church under Christ. (The next chapter contains an inset that covers ministerial assistants in more detail.) However, again, the word could also be referencing senior administrators in the Work.

“**Operations**” is translated from *energema*, and it means “an effect, operation or working.” The familiar English word “energy” obviously derives from it. Certainly, wherever God’s Spirit is at work within His government, there is very real supernatural ENERGY—Christ’s lead, accompanied by miracles—that is powering the Church.

Now let’s reread verses 4-6, replacing “diversities,” “administrations” and “operations” with their expanded definitions: “Now there are *distinctly differing gifts given to those who labor in the service of the Church*, but all of the same Spirit. And there are *different kinds of services within the ministry for the edifying of the brethren*, but all this originates from the same Lord. And there are *distinct aspects to accomplishing God’s Work*, but it is the same God which works all in all.”

The God of order and design has left a marvelous blueprint of His government within His Word for those who are willing to see it. This extensive inset has put more “meat on the bones,” while at the same time revealing more of the inspiring hand of God in the design of the wonderful government He has put in place over His Church.

Building a Qualified Headquarters Staff

Hiring staff was vital to an ever-expanding Work and Church. At one time, hundreds of people held positions in dozens of departments just at headquarters. A large Personnel Department was necessary in order to manage new hires, promotions and transfers.

As needs arose, announcements of specialized positions appeared in *The Worldwide News* and *Pastor General's Reports*. (The latter were read in all congregations.) Applications were taken, recommendations were given, interviews occurred and hires took place. Many congregations “lost people to Pasadena.” Excitement was real for those PRIVILEGED to *personally* serve in the Work.

Here are ten vital “staff” qualities that stood above all others:

(1) TEACHABLE. God’s people are disciples—students or pupils—and those who “knew it all” had no place at headquarters.

(2) LOYALTY. Prospective hires had to have a complete grasp of God’s government if they were to be employed within it.

(3) DOCTRINAL SOUNDNESS. The worst place for false doctrine was at headquarters, where any discord would reduce production.

(4) SELFLESS ZEAL. Those hired had to be tireless in their dedication to the all-important Work of God.

(5) DILIGENCE. Doing things *correctly* and *on time* was vital to the integration of many departments working toward the same goals.

(6) SKILLS. Training and “skill set” were of immense importance. Employees were encouraged to continually add to their base.

(7) EXPERIENCE. Few things compare to experience. Novices can easily step into pitfalls and snares others would see in advance.

(8) THICK SKIN. The sometimes “pressure cooker” work environment simply did not suit sensitive people. They could not survive.

(9) SELF-MANAGEMENT. This includes money, mouths, marriages, minds, moods, emotions, health and children, among others.

(10) BALANCE. Most in this age have come to lack even *natural* balance. Those at headquarters were taught not to drift into quirky, misguided, wrong-headed values and thinking.

Sadly, many—in fact, most—lost sight of these attributes in the past. But others have been able to retain or return to them. These may be languishing in a splinter. In today’s fast-growing Work of God, these are still vital qualities.

We constantly scan the horizon for those who reflect them!

good follower, one who is FAITHFUL *under* authority. He must be able to bring the voice of experience in teaching others to follow. Since there are some who are leaders in a local congregation but not ordained, a deacon could, in a sense, sometimes be thought of as a “second-level leader.” In other words, while not all deacons in the past led “crews,” or teams, that had their own leaders, many or perhaps most did. This is often what became necessary in larger congregations where responsibilities usually took on greater size—more brethren to organize. For instance, a small congregation might have one or two ushers, but a much larger congregation, 500-600 people, might have 10, 12 or more.

At the Feast of Tabernacles, a deacon might find himself supervising considerably more than this. In the early years of the Church, some men were even formally appointed to be “head deacons.” While this idea was eventually dropped for problems it presented, supervising larger numbers of people requires *real leadership*. This can mean the need for effective communication, the assessment of men’s strengths, effective planning, budgeting and the juggling of schedules. It can also mean teaching others to deal with various kinds of attitudes and different situations that can arise. And all of this can be connected just to leading a crew of ushers. It also meant keeping the pastor or an elder regularly informed as needed.

Of course, there are those leaders who “drop the ball” and, in so doing—if this becomes a pattern—demonstrate that they are not leaders. I have seen deacons who were entrusted with important responsibility let down other brethren because they did not: get to the hall early enough to open up, send in the Holy Day offering on time, properly research the location for a social, be sure that rides have been provided for certain people, set up the sound system or the stage, bring important items to sabbath services, and a host of other things. Sometimes the entire congregation has been injured because of negligence. Men (and women) servants “full of the Holy Spirit” evidence trustworthiness, dedication, zeal, attention to detail and selflessness, among other qualities.

Proved First

All of this describes the greatest reason men must be carefully evaluated *before* ordination—“let these also *first* be PROVED; *then* let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.”

Although rare, deacons—and, of course, those in higher offices—can *disqualify* themselves from further service. Deacons and deaconesses should be careful to ensure that they do not slip outside the qualifications

to hold office. As *examples* to the congregation, they must “be found blameless,” and before God and man (the brethren).

Despite the fact that many deacons were leaders, and some grew so that they were able to go on to higher spiritual office, it must be stressed once more that this office did not carry spiritual authority. There are several ways we know this:

(1) Ephesians 4:11-16 lists the offices of the ministry and their overall purpose, meaning those offices that Christ appoints “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ” (vs. 12). While the other offices in the Church are included here, the office of deacon is left out. This is because it is not *directly* involved in the three phrases within verse 12.

(2) The office of deacon and deaconess were, in a sense, paralleling counterparts. In fact, some husbands and wives appear in Scripture to have been ordained to these offices as a couple (Aquila and Priscilla, and possibly Philologus and Julia). Since it is well understood that women are neither to preach nor teach in the Church (I Cor. 14:34), and their office could never be spiritual in nature, this becomes its own indication that neither would be that of a deacon.

(3) Church Pastors were permitted by Headquarters, meaning Mr. Armstrong had instructed this, to ordain deacons (and deaconesses) on their own authority of their own judgment. Of course, they were to be careful with this in every sense, and to notify Pasadena afterward. Here is why this is significant. All other ordinations—those placing men into spiritual office—were approved at a different level and by a very different process, including filling out a detailed “Recommendation Form.” This will be addressed in a later chapter.

All of this said, do not forget Stephen and Philip, and recognize that all pastors were given the authority to work with certain men in ways that had overtones of spiritual leadership. This was understood and permitted because those men were in training for possible higher office. An example would be that some deacons were selected to give sermonettes and split-sermons, and on more rare occasion, sermons (always with the pastor present). They also could be used—and occasionally were—to lead visits in which certain very minimal spiritual counsel and encouragement might be given. (We will see that Paul was a “teacher” even before any ordination.)

A point should be brought out before closing. Deacons and deaconesses do not retire from service—ever. They can slow down or become disabled, but retirement *never* enters the picture. Chapter Eight will look at retirement in greater depth.

What About You?

Many deacons will no doubt read this book. It is hoped that every deacon who did not fall away in the apostasy would eventually have this opportunity.

Some questions: Are you weary with disorganization and poor communication? Are you fed up with confusion, division and a flawed “chain of command”? Are you tired of “climbers” and flatterers receiving office? Are you tired of politics and compromise in governments that do not work? Could you be one who desires to return to his first calling and service within the structure of God’s government? Are you determined to “*hold* the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience”? Do you not care about serving for either physical reward and recognition, or pursuing money—“greedy of filthy lucre”? Are you one who wishes to get fully back to “using the office of a deacon well” and “purchasing to *yourself* a good degree, and great boldness in the faith...”? If this paragraph describes you, the greatest, most important and fastest growing Work on the face of the earth is where you belong—if you ANOINT YOUR EYES!

Finally, to those faithful leaders who have never been ordained: The vast majority of deacons in this age have fallen deep into compromise or left the faith altogether. The living Jesus Christ may yet use you in a position of real leadership, if you qualify.

And those who *are* deacons today could, with others, go on to the greater service of spiritual office, if they qualify...

ELDERS

The office of Deacon was actually the first of *seven* New Testament offices or ranks. There is this one physical office and the additional six spiritual offices—Local Elder, Preaching Elder, Pastor, Evangelist, Prophet and Apostle—that collectively represent Christ’s ministry. We are almost ready to discuss the meaning of elder. But first we should explore and understand a point related to the number *seven*.

Seven, Not Six

Among other purposes, this chapter will explain the difference between preaching elder and local elder (also called local *church* elder if a man was *not employed* by the Church). If preaching elder and local elder are merged into one in the way several splinters have done, the number of God’s offices in the New Testament is reduced to *six*.

While many would think this change in number mere coincidence or unimportant, God views it differently. Here is what is interesting—and important.

The Church has always understood that six is the “number of man.” There are six days in the week that men can labor, 6,000 years devoted to man’s rule under Satan and the number 666, called “the number of a man,” among others.

The number *seven* is well-known in the Bible (and in the Church) as the number for *completion* or *perfection*. For instance, there were

seven days of Creation, and thus seven days in a week. God has a 7,000-year Plan, there are seven annual Holy Days, there were seven deacons initially ordained, there are seven Church eras, seven trumpet plagues, seven *last* plagues, and seven times punishment to occur with Israel (actually three times seven), among others. In this light, God's number of *seven* New Testament offices is seen to be both perfect and complete.

Is it coincidence that most of the splinters—*led by men* (self-appointed or elected), not God!—have reduced the number of New Testament offices to man's number of six (or less), and replaced the biblical number of seven revealed by Christ through His apostle when His government was fully restored to the Church? If Christ used Mr. Armstrong to restore the government of God to the Church, would He permit His chosen servant to foul up the order and number of those offices by adding too many? Of course not, because the very idea is inconsistent with what a restoration *is*. You cannot have one without the other—too many or not enough of the offices present—and even achieve a full, complete restoration. At best, any number of offices too few would be only a *partial* “restoration”—or too many an *excessive* “restoration.” Carefully mull these things.

Distinction Made

Before reviewing what Mr. Armstrong taught about elders in general, here are just two short statements in which he offers a difference between the offices of Preaching Elder and Local Elder. As you read, consider that if the Sardis era “didn't have the right form of government,” as Mr. Armstrong states at the end, it should be obvious that an era *named* “the PEOPLE rule, judge and decide” would almost certainly be *further* from the truth of government than even the confusion Mr. Armstrong described in Sardis:

“You read that in Ephesians 4 and I Corinthians 12. Christ is the head of the Church and under Christ in the administration of the government are an apostle or apostles, then evangelists, then pastors, then all are called elders, all ministers all the way up clear down to the lowest. So then there are teachers and elders, both speaking elders and preaching elders, deacons and deaconesses. And the Church is restored in that form of government. The Sardis Church even didn't have the right form of government.”

Sermon, Dec. 17, 1983

“Yet all ministers and teachers are called elders in other New Testament texts. Therefore, in God’s Church today there are both preaching and nonpreaching elders. Preaching elders pastor local churches. Then some elders, not preaching, are called local elders in the Church today.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 245

Coupled with the longer quote below, these statements from near the end of his life plainly demonstrate that Mr. Armstrong never moved for over *30 years* from his position that the offices of Preaching Elder and Local Elder were distinctly different, with one being able to pastor and the other not—one more a preacher and pastor, the other nonpreaching, but able to speak, meaning that he might generally give sermonettes, among other duties. (He could go longer on occasion or in an emergency, but a few elders *never* spoke.) Remember, *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* was written in 1985, just before his death. It was mentioned in Chapter Three that Roderick Meredith claims Mr. Armstrong invented preaching elder to “satisfy the draft board” in the 1950s. Were this true, Mr. Armstrong “forgot” why he did it, or deceived the Church for decades until his death so that he did not have to publicly reverse a decision that was only to satisfy draft boards. Never mind that the United States was not involved in a war in the mid-1950s when this office first appeared in the Church.

Then there are the two overarching questions: *Who*—what office—would Christ use to reveal to His Church the *number* of New Testament ordained offices?—and *when* would He do this?

Two options present themselves: (1) an *apostle* would reveal it in the *Philadelphian* era—or (2) an *evangelist* in the terribly compromising *Laodicean* era. In other words, when and through whom is the most natural time of full restoration of understanding regarding God’s government? The answer requires no thought—it is a “no-brainer.”

What Are Elders?

Mr. Armstrong was very specific and thorough in explaining to the Church the overall meaning and background of the term “elder,” so there is no need for me to cover the basics. The following came from the earlier-quoted 1954 article “*Ordained by Hand of Man?*” and is found under the subhead “Titles of Office.” It reveals that the history of the term extends back to ancient Israel:

“It is well, here, to explain the titles GOD uses for those in office in His government. We have just considered such offices as those of *apos-*

tle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher. But what about such titles as ‘Elder,’ ‘Bishop,’ ‘Overseer,’ or ‘Presbyter.’ All these are used in the New Testament. Actually, all these latter four mean exactly the same thing. A Bishop, or an Overseer, is an Elder—and the Presbyters are, simply, elders.

“But some Elders hold higher office of *authority* than others. Actually, Apostles are also elders, and the assistant pastors, or even nonpreaching teachers and leaders in local churches are elders. The Apostle John called himself an Elder (II John 1, and III John 1). The Apostle Peter called himself an Elder (I Pet. 5:1). In other words, *ALL* ministers of Christ, no matter how high or low the office of authority, are Elders. All Apostles are Elders, *but all Elders are not Apostles!*”

“To understand the derivation of the term ‘Elder,’ let me briefly sketch for you the history of the title.

“The original government of the Hebrews, from Abraham, was patriarchal. The head of the family exercised the supreme rule (under God), over all his descendants. His married sons bore rule over their respective families, children and grandchildren, etc., but still remained subordinate to their father as supreme head. It was government from the *TOP, down*. At the father’s death, his firstborn son succeeded him in supreme headship over the family. Naturally, these positions, hence the designation, ‘Elder,’ which simply meant the oldest one. Thus Jacob (Israel) was the supreme head over all who went to Egypt with him, although his sons had families of their own. Thus ‘Elder’ became the official title of those in authority.

“The earliest mention of ‘Elders’ in government office (aside from family rule), is at the time of the Exodus. The seventy elders mentioned in Exodus and Numbers were a governing body, a sort of parliament. This was the origin of the Sanhedrin, or Council. This carried to the time of Christ. In the New Testament Church, the Elders, or Presbyters, were the same as Bishops—the general title for *ALL* spiritual offices of authority over the Church.”

*“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”,
GN, May, 1954*

It is worth noting again that Peter Waldo was an apostle (recall Mr. Armstrong commented on this), but he always referred to himself as “Chief Elder.” It should be easier to understand why he was not wrong to do this, and how it mirrored what Peter said above as Chief Apostle, or “Chief Elder.” Also, since elders in the New Testament derive from the pattern in the congregation of Israel under Moses,

Christ merely needed to fill in their specific ranks within His Church. The Levitical priesthood system had disappeared—these offices were its replacement.

Name Is Key to Function

The word “elder” is found literally scores of times throughout the New Testament. The actual Greek word from which elder derives is *presbuteiros*, from which comes the name of the church in which I grew up—Presbyterian. Its literal definition is “a senior, elder, old, presbyter, member of a council.” Note that the last part of the definition offers insight into why Mr. Armstrong used the term Advisory Council of Elders, the subject of a later chapter.

In the strictest sense, an elder holds the office of “older” or “senior.” God always names things what they are—and it is absolutely crucial that this be understood regarding *every* New Testament office. For instance, if it could be said that deacons hold the office of “attendant/waiter on tables,” then elders hold the office of “older/senior.” In effect, the higher offices within elder then could be thought of as “more senior”—“even more senior”—“yet more senior”—“most senior,” etc., but of course with other crucial elements and description added.

In the Greek, the name of *each office*, or more correctly the *meaning* of each name when translated to English or any other language, is simply vital to understand. Perhaps the very biggest key to understanding the workings of God’s government lies in the specific *name* He has chosen for each office.

Let’s consider some examples in which names have meaning. In regard to Church eras, Philadelphians are to be thought of as “people of brotherly love,” just as Laodiceans are better thought of as the “people who rule, judge and decide.” Now think of God’s names, or why Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, or Jacob’s to Israel. Lucifer’s name was changed to Satan, meaning *adversary*. None of these words have meaning until they are translated into English. Of course, all of God’s people learned when first called that even the name of the Church built by Christ—CHURCH OF GOD!—is one of the proofs separating it from all others built by men. After all, the biggest reason we understand God’s names do not have to be spoken in Hebrew, as some believe, is because they only have *meaning* when translated to one’s native tongue. In regard to offices, MEANING is what we are after.

It is crucial that you get this pattern of how God names His ministerial offices in your mind now in preparation for understanding that the

other offices are directly connected to *how* God uses a man—what the man DOES! We will also see that the definitions of offices yet to be discussed form parameters or, in a sense, *boundaries* beyond which the occupant is not authorized to go. You will also see, and this has already begun with deacon and now elder, how these offices fit within God’s perfect, complete GOVERNMENT!

We should note that Mr. Armstrong also seems to have “had it right” on elders. In other words, Christ led him to restore the meaning and function of this office in a correct way.

Must Be Trained

We have seen that deacons are leaders who assist in local congregations under the Church pastor. So are local elders and local church elders, but in spiritual service. These are men who have been trained and ordained for spiritual responsibility, but short of pastoring Churches, with this first office either temporary or permanent, depending upon how Christ wants to use a man. Of course, this depends upon how much the man grows in spiritual stature—how much he yields to Christ shaping and fashioning him. The temporary status applied mostly to full-time men who generally came from Ambassador College.

A man is selected for this next office of service only on the basis of having met certain very specific biblically-outlined criteria or qualifications. This list is more extensive than that of deacons, and is found in two separate places.

Before examining these stronger qualifications, it must be understood that those who are used in the ministry, if they are to be effective leaders, *must* be TRAINED. Of course, this was one of the purposes of Ambassador College. The Work needed staff at Headquarters—and the Church needed ministers (and some staff) around the world. (The inset on the facing page explains more about the role of ministerial assistants, and their training process toward ordination.)

Mr. Armstrong spoke often about how God had *trained* him for the job he was called to do. God does not train the Church’s general membership, or even deacons, in the same way He does those used in spiritual office—whether His top leader or all other ordained men of whatever ranks below. Brethren are simply not equipped—not qualified!—to do the kinds of things duly-trained, ordained and consecrated *spiritual* leaders carry out. They cannot take the gospel to the world, warn nations, evangelize, feed the flock—preach and teach—raise up colleges, train leaders, conduct visits, direct Spokesman Clubs and all of the other

Ministerial Assistants

Over the decades, hundreds of men entered the full-time ministry of the Worldwide Church of God. In the early years, when need for field ministers was most crucial, men were often ordained straight out of college at a very young age. Some were given high office, we now know, long before they were ready. Over time, it was recognized men needed to prove themselves—demonstrate fruit—*before* ordination.

In the mid-1950s, Mr. Armstrong approved the concept of appointing qualified Ambassador College graduates to be ministerial assistants in the field. These men, usually married and most often in their early 20s, would be assigned to a circuit of two or three congregations anywhere in the world. A pastor, and often to a lesser degree an associate pastor, would actively work with the man and teach him about service in the field ministry. The pastor's wife would work with the man's wife, although to a lesser degree. (Those chosen to be assistants were the subject of exciting announcements every college year, with several juniors usually sent to "summer assignments.")

The man might serve under several pastors, either because *he* was transferred or the *pastor* was. For these reasons, I worked short stints under three different men, before ordination under the fourth. In my case, a fifth man raised and approved me to pastor. But there was no set pattern applicable to all because every situation was different.

As a man grew, he would be given assignments to do on his own. His visiting would start with widows and graduate to prospective members (PMs) or PM follow-ups, with serious personal counseling the final element added to his visiting. Men were also taught about the many aspects of office work, organization of socials, conducting clubs, Bible studies, marriages, funerals and training leaders, among others.

Starting with sermonettes and song leading, assistants were then assigned sermons, sometimes split-sermons before full ones.

Regular progress reports were given to the man and sent to headquarters until a decision to either ordain him or, as could occasionally be the case, explain why he was not called to the ministry.

The Restored Church of God has appointed, trained and ordained numerous ministerial assistants. Of course, the needs of the Church require that more be continually chosen for this service. But we are mindful of deficiencies in the past that produced so many men with seemingly little or no understanding of such a high calling.

administrative matters that pertain to pastoring or administering. Of course, laymembers are also not equipped to bring truth to the Church or to be prophets, etc. They lack both careful preparation and vital experience necessary to perform a host of duties they cannot really completely understand, let alone do. (We will learn that even the training of prophets, evangelists and pastors, not to mention elders, deacons and laymembers, limits how God can use each of these.)

Qualifications

In Titus 1, Paul instructed Titus concerning needs in congregations that Paul had raised up: “For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should *set in order* the things that are wanting [lacking], and *ordain elders* in every city, as I had appointed you” (vs. 5).

In this passage, Titus, either a senior pastor or an evangelist, was given his “marching orders” *from above*. We have seen that Mr. Armstrong taught that apostles were authorized to delegate to ministers of lower rank the selection and training of other ministers. Of course, Paul was an apostle, and as such he also held authority to spell out the criteria for holding spiritual office.

Note that senior ministers were responsible for “setting in order” the various things that were lacking in certain cities. But do not misunderstand. Titus was not told here to ordain an elder in every single city in his jurisdiction, because there may not have been a man *qualified* in every city. Careful reading—so often the case—reveals that the men to be ordained were in the particular cities “as I had appointed you.” The point is that the qualifications—the “bar”—set for being used of Christ in the ministry cannot be compromised from city to city, no matter how great an area’s need.

Also note that if Titus were an evangelist, Paul did not mention it. Yet, he did with Timothy. This becomes an indication of why those of more senior Pastor rank (probably the case with Titus) carry greater weight of administration than preaching elders. This introduces an important distinction explained later regarding Pastor rank. Now let’s read:

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (1:6-9).

The next passage with the qualifications for ordination is directed to Timothy, who clearly was an evangelist—a minister of high rank, consistent with what Mr. Armstrong taught about who could train and ordain. Again, however, it is evident that Timothy had no authority to act on his own without direction from an apostle. This is implicit in what is a list of qualifications being sent to Timothy by an apostle:

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (I Tim. 3:1-7).

A great deal could be said about the many “qualifiers” of elders listed in these passages. In fact, this could become several chapters. A later inset in Chapter Nine covers these and expands on the meaning and importance of these qualifications. It is important to see that some are identical in both places. It is as if God wants *double emphasis* given to certain points of character or training.

Can One Desire the Ministry?

Also, note that it is not wrong if a man “desires” or hopes for the “work,” while not seeking an “office,” of the ministry. If a man genuinely wants to *serve*, and as long as he does not try to force or dictate to those above him—including Christ!—how he is to be used, he is not out of line striving to do everything in his power to grow into the qualifications you have just read. Seeking *service*—the long, difficult, sometimes fatiguing hours of helping others—is not an act of covetousness, presumptuousness, arrogance or self-promotion. But men must be careful to look into their hearts for the *reasons* they may desire the office of an elder (bishop). Many in the past have badly lost their perspective because the thought of having “power” blinded their eyes. (Remember Simon Magus.)

It may be of interest to the reader that we have prepared an article similar to one offered in the past by the Worldwide Church of God on the subject of how ministers are selected. It is titled “Who Should Become

God's Ministers?", and all who are interested in examining this subject more closely should study it.

Of course, elders were not required to be sin-free—exceptions to Romans 3:23 ("all have sinned"). Everyone makes mistakes and commits sins. I certainly committed sins when I was a local elder, and others when I was a preaching elder, and still others as a *regional* pastor, and so forth. It is the overall character of a man that must reflect these qualifications. This subject will be revisited more thoroughly in a later chapter.

Recognize that most men would be told in advance that they were under consideration and being worked with toward *possible* ordination. While this was not always the case in the early years with local men, it was in later years. (Of course, full-time field assistants from college *always* knew that they were in training toward *probable* ordination.)

In this regard, some of those who are in training for elder (local or preaching) or pastor, we saw *may* first be chosen and officially designated as *Ministerial Assistants*. (It usually applied to men who had graduated from Ambassador College, but who were not yet ready for ordination, and the inset referenced this.)

The Restored Church of God continues to have a significant and growing number of ministerial assistants, and these men are undergoing very specific training. A number have already reached the point of ordination. This is in part because we have a formal, very detailed Ambassador Center curriculum in place. Of course, our leaders also regularly receive important communication from Headquarters designed for them. In addition, we have various manuals and an annual Conference that these leaders attend. We also have a special personal kind of "hands-on" approach to guiding and helping men who are in training or already in office so leaders are not left hanging, unsure of what to do. This is covered further later.

"Double Honor"

An important point needs to be made to God's people. The Bible states, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of DOUBLE HONOR, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). The implication of this passage is that an elder must be in the only true Church of God to even be a candidate to "rule well." (This will be apparent in a moment.) This verse holds meaning for all brethren in regard to the service many of these men give tirelessly and most without remuneration. Putting aside organizations for a moment, how many today appreciate a truly dedicated local church elder (or for that matter elders of any other rank) they are privileged to know?

On the other hand, elders who do not “*hold fast* the faithful word [the truth] *as he has been taught*” are NOT worthy of honor at all, let alone double. These men have certainly NOT “labored in the word and doctrine” as they should have. Neither are those worthy of *any* honor who will not anoint the sick at inconvenient times, visit widows in their affliction (Jms. 1:27), “weep with those who are weeping” (Rom. 12:15), encourage the discouraged, preach “meat in due season” and be willing to preach or serve on short notice, among many, many other avenues of service.

At this point, it is helpful to reference a phrase I heard many years ago regarding local church elders. It demonstrates the difference between their role and development and that of pastors. It was “Pastors come and go, local elders stay and grow.” While pastors were regularly transferred, and could therefore in a certain sense leave their mistakes and inexperience behind, local church elders were, also in a sense, “stuck” where they were, having to not only live with their own mistakes, but also the mistakes and inexperience of different—and differing—pastors who always moved on. These local men had to continually adjust to new pastors in their areas in certain ways more than did their congregation, because these leaders worked in such close quarters with the pastor. Their vantage point allowed them to see mistakes made by one man that previous pastors had not made. They were literally forced to grow in patience, mercy and flexibility, but also in wisdom and experience because they were exposed more closely to a variety of different personalities, experience levels and even ranks of authority. Christ could yet tap the wealth of training and experience in some of these men still in the splinters before the age is over—and this cannot be repeated too often—if they anoint their eyes!

More of Elders’ Role

On a related note, with the development of the apostasy, there has arisen a whole “culture” of local church elders who now lead their own groups. This is an egregious violation of the government of God as the Church understood it and as it was taught and practiced under Mr. Armstrong. When correctly understood, this becomes an *additional* reason, once you have done your research to find God’s government, that you, as a local elder or local church elder, need to come under the authority of the senior minister appointed to lead it.

Local church elders and even local elders (full-time men) were never considered *full* ministers in the WCG. Many forgot or never knew this. Yet, hundreds of ordination certificates are testimony to the fact that Mr.

ELDER

Worldwide Church of God

World Headquarters, Pasadena, California

Certificate of Ordination

Be it known by this official document that

_____ has been chosen according to the will of God to become an Elder in the Worldwide Church of God; that he is qualified in character and by consecration, education and experience; that he meets the Scriptural qualifications; and that he has been duly ordained this _____, by laying on of hands by the ministers of this Body upon recommendation by a District Superintendent of Ministers of this Body, and approved by the World Headquarters of this Church.

In Testimony Whereof: we solemnly set our hand, and cause to be affixed hereto the seal of this Church.

(signature) Herbert W. Armstrong
President and Pastor

Superintendent of Ministers

MINISTER

Worldwide Church of God

World Headquarters, Pasadena, California

Certificate of Ordination

Be it known by this official document that

has been chosen according to the will of God to become a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that he is qualified in character and by consecration, education and experience; that he meets the Scriptural qualifications; and that he has been duly ordained by authority of Jesus Christ with fasting and prayer and laying on of hands by the ministers of this Body in congregation assembled upon recommendation by the Board of Trustees, and that he is authorized to perform all the duties and exercise all the powers of the clergy, and is clothed with all the authority conferred by Jesus Christ upon His called and chosen ministers, this _____ day of _____, nineteen hundred _____.

In Testimony Whereof: we solemnly set our hand, and cause to be affixed hereto the seal of this Church.

(signature) Herbert W. Armstrong
President and Pastor

Secretary

Armstrong did not consider these men to be ministers in the sense of having full vestment of Christ's authority, but rather they were *local* or *local church* elders. He only considered preaching elders and above to be *full* ministers. Those who doubt this need only examine the two ordination certificates provided. I have shown any number of people my own copies of both, each signed by Mr. Armstrong. The wording and differing authority given are VERY PLAIN!

Let's say this in another way: All ministers are elders, but not vice-versa. For instance, Mr. Armstrong did not authorize local church elders to either recommend *or* perform ordinations—and we will learn a little later that this is because they are, in fact—and this is a revelation to most—only elders *if* they are serving under a full minister who is *within* the Body of Christ! But neither could *any* office below apostle give *final approval* for ordination to *any* ministerial rank (also explained momentarily), deacons excepted. This was recognized policy for decades (since at least 1957) and integral to the Church's understanding of God's government. However, while most did and all ordained men should have known this, most brethren probably never did. And probably most elders and ministers have forgotten it.

But God has not forgotten!

Because local elders and local church elders are not empowered to either *train* or *ordain* other ministers to care for the flock, recognize that Jesus Christ could *never* lead His Church through one! Yet, several claim to lead the one true Church. These men have become grossly deceived about their *role* in the Church! And these men reject the very government of God they often claim to most perfectly uphold. These must find and come to Christ's government.

Regardless of what his feelings may tell him, any man who has been ordained by another local (or local church) elder is *not*—under *any* circumstances—a valid elder in God's sight! Not even evangelists carry this authority, unless delegated by an apostle to do so.

While we will learn this in greater detail in Chapter Twelve, suffice to say that *Mr. Armstrong* approved *all* ordinations into the ministry, and taught this to the Church. Here is what he said as early as the mid-1950s:

“Christ is the *living* HEAD of the Church!

“He sets the apostle in office. But we do find historic example in the New Testament of the apostle setting in office the evangelists, pastors and teachers, and even delegating to the evangelists the responsibility of ordaining pastors and other elders, and deacons.”

“*Six More Ministers Now Ordained,*” GN, Feb.-Mar. 1955

Irony

There is an irony about certain local church elders of whom I am aware. Again, they claim to *most properly* uphold the understanding of God's government—and usually assert that it only exists in their tiny “true Church.” I repeat, however sincere, they are sincerely wrong!

Why? That they are trying to lead the Church—even a single congregation, no matter its size—as local church elders demonstrates that they have *lost* the most basic understanding of *how* God's government guides His Church. Consider. Of necessity, these men *must* work alone or *without God's authority* ordain others to help them. The same is true of pastors and others. But working alone is wrong.

I repeat: They must find and come to God's government!

Once again, such ordinations performed by these “loners” are actually INVALID! Christ's *true* ministers would *always* be given their offices *by Him* through His unified government from inside His one Body. (We will examine later what ordinations, if any, that are performed outside God's government and Christ's Body might be accepted.)

Grasp this most fundamental point. This function of local elders was so obviously always intended to be “LOCAL.” In the next chapter, we will read in *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* that Mr. Armstrong even described *pastors* as functioning “locally” and as “stationary.” Again, of course, local elders have neither been trained to do the Work nor to pastor!

Now take a moment to carefully read the wording on the ordination certificates shown. These were the two certificates (previous pages) used in the Worldwide Church of God. A man was either an *elder* or a *minister*—and the latter could have been either preaching elder, pastor, evangelist or apostle. All preaching elders received the certificate of a “Minister,” and the certificate is exactly how my certificate read when I was ordained to the rank of *Preaching Elder*.

Thundering Reality!

Now here are two astonishing facts—both no doubt, again, complete revelations to most local elders and local church elders.

First, notice that the more expansive, comprehensive language used to describe the authority of full Ministers is entirely missing from the description of the lower office. Second, and much more stunning to local elders and local church elders reading this, is the fact that those ordained to Elder only held office insofar as they were in the *Worldwide Church of God*!

Now take a deep breath, local (church) elders. Then take a moment to notice that this language is not present in an ordination to “Minister.” And recognize that the language chosen and elements included would not have been by accident, or without careful precision of wording. In fact, they were not. Mr. Armstrong knew *exactly* what he was saying. He knew *exactly* what an elder was, and he knew *exactly* what a minister was—and he knew *exactly* from where each one derived authority!

Pause and prepare to let the next paragraph sink in!

Plainly, elders could not function on their own authority—anywhere—EVER! They held no authority whatsoever—meaning no office at all—unless they were serving under a full minister within the true Body of Christ, which was at *that time* identified with, but never completely synonymous with, the Worldwide Church of God. (This is because the *corporation* itself was not the Body of Christ, and this is carefully explained in “*ANOINT YOUR EYES*” and *THE TRUE CHURCH*.)

Let’s state this another way: Any full minister who left the Worldwide Church of God *might* remain a minister—but only *if* he left over matters pertaining to holding to the truth, as did Mr. Armstrong when he left Sardis. Then, because there are ministers of TWO CONDITIONS in this age (Philadelphian and Laodicean), he might be either *true* or *lukewarm*—either *in* the Body and led of Christ or *outside* it and *not* led of Christ. The latter would be considered in the process of falling away, determined at the point when he has *completely* lost God’s Spirit. Until that time, he still has some “oil” in his “lamp” (Matt. 25:1-12), but it is “running out” and not being replenished. He is “a branch” cut away from the “Vine” (John 15), unless and until grafted back into Christ by *returning to God’s Church and government*—and soon!

This time, pause and let the previous paragraph sink in!

After the apostasy, many local elders and many ministers fled, choosing from a host of organizations or forming their own. The local elders are simply *no longer elders*—period! But, if they locate and are grafted back into the one, unified, organized Body of Christ, they can be *re-activated* as elders within and under the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. The ministers who wish to be found faithful should be in the process of pursuing until they *find* God’s one Church and Body or else, and I repeat, they simply continue in the process of falling away. They remain unplugged from Christ’s authority and power, found *only* in the place where He is working through *His* structure of authority.

This adds extreme urgency to a minister’s search (or an elder’s) for the government of God, where Christ—the Vine—is leading it. Like Noah building the Ark, he must “move with fear” (Heb. 11:7) to find it.

The key word is MOVE!

Too Few Ministers?

Think. If you believe that there may not have been enough ministers or elders who came with RCG initially for it to be where God's government, Church and Christ's Body are reconstituted, then for the same reason you would not have followed *Mr. Armstrong* when he left the safety of numbers in Sardis because "he was the *only* minister who left them." Be honest with your conclusions.

When the age of Philadelphia began, Mr. Armstrong and only *one* faithful local church elder from Sardis—Mr. Basil Wolverton—were all who cared about doctrinal precision. While a number of elders and ministers have found us, the Laodicean era could prove to be similar.

If some are tempted to feel offended because I present such realities—and surely some who read *will* be offended!—they can alleviate the condition. They can REPENT and RETURN to being a TRUE minister or REAL elder in the one TRUE Work and TRUE Body of Christ—part of the ONLY existing government of God on the face of the earth!

A few faithful pastors, elders and deacons (from different organizations), having anointed their eyes and having purged wrong doctrine and thinking from their minds, *are* being grafted back into the Vine.

Who Will Qualify?

It is important to offer a closing inset here, referenced in the INTRODUCTION. As we have seen earlier, Mr. Armstrong spoke constantly of organization and structure within the Church. This is absolutely necessary in order to stabilize and feed the flock, and to baptize those new people whom God is calling.

Another word to all ordained men (no matter the office) and women who could yet help lead and stabilize the Church of God before the age ends: Will you intend to take a stand, but never do it? Will you *qualify* or *disqualify* as leaders? Church history will one day record who stepped forward and accepted their burden of responsibility as *true* leaders of God (Jms. 3:1-2).

To those elders and ministers ordained in the Worldwide Church of God: You were called to and have been given special training by God, and you will be held accountable for what you know.

Will you ignore this? I will be blunt: Christ's flock in RCG could use your help—*IF* you are also willing to anoint YOUR eyes and be truly

faithful to your original calling and understanding of the Church, the Work, the Truth and God's Government. You must come to again "hold fast the faithful word as you have been taught" (Tit. 1:9).

We are now prepared to move to the next office in Christ's ministerial structure...

PASTORS

We now come to the role of pastors—a role often referred to formally by function in the WCG as *Church Pastor*. This was the responsibility that was so central to the overall unity, stability and spiritual growth of congregations, individually, and the whole Church, collectively. In fact, certain parables given by Christ, such as the “wheat and tares” and the “sheep, wolves and hirelings,” basically center on laborers *in the field*—pastors!

In a very real sense, Church Pastors represented the “middle management” of the Church everywhere in the world. Every pastor had to possess certain basic *administrative* ability. Having this capability was an absolute must for those holding this responsibility, and we will see more of why at the end of the chapter. Understanding the name that God gave to those who pastor churches reveals much.

Clarification of Rank

First, a differentiation of office needs to be made for clarification purposes here. A man who pastored could either hold the rank of Pastor (the more senior and experienced Church Pastors were usually raised to this rank) or the lower rank of Preaching Elder. Actually, the great majority of the hundreds of Church Pastors in the WCG held the rank of Preaching Elder, and we will see that these were most—not all—of those who fulfilled the role of “teachers,” or the teaching/preaching elders (as opposed

to the “non-speaking” elders) Mr. Armstrong referenced. It was very rare that a man skipped the rank of Preaching Elder if he was on the way to Pastor rank. This virtually never happened in later years. Of course, the majority of Church Pastors never went on to Pastor rank. On rare occasions, however, an evangelist could also serve as a Church Pastor. (A local elder only pastored very temporarily while awaiting ordination again, which followed prior approval to become a Church Pastor.)

It would always be either those of Evangelist or Pastor rank who could carry the additional role of a field supervisor, called by different names in different periods of the WCG. Almost always, however, with some exceptions, these men also served as Church Pastors.

History of In-Field Supervision

First, a brief history would be helpful and interesting. Over the years, a number of administrative titles appeared as the need arose for an additional level of field supervision over Church Pastors, but under, and in international offices at least in part *on behalf of*, those who served in Church Administration/Ministerial Services at Headquarters. These were senior men who lived and served in the field.

The first “managerial” title that appeared in the WCG was “District Superintendent” (early 1960s to 1972), with the United States ultimately divided into 16 districts by 1972. This was replaced and followed by “Regional Director,” with these men handling either one-eighth of the U.S. or an international regional office. Regional directors did not pastor churches, and the concept did not work well. These men were given extraordinary authority—way too much!—and began to be seen as and thought themselves to be “god and king” in their regions. In fact, most became lifted up and did begin to see themselves this way. When six of these eight men rebelled and left the Church in 1974, Mr. Armstrong ended any kind of *in-the-field* supervision for a little over two years until a reassessment could occur.

In 1976, the title of “Area Coordinator” was created, with the United States divided into 11 of these areas. But each international office continued to be administered by a Regional Director. By then, due to significant growth in the number of United States congregations since 1972, it was thought that these “Coordinators” needed assistance with their pastoral responsibilities. So this structure also involved using many of the pastors and older preaching elders in the role of “Senior Pastors.”

Each of the men who carried this designation had two or three Church Pastors that they “advised” on behalf of the Area Coordinator.

This is because the Area Coordinators were supervising as many or more churches in their “areas” as had the eight Regional Directors, who were not also Church Pastors. When another rebellion occurred in January 1979, with the Director of Church Administration fired and disfellowshipped, Mr. Armstrong intensified the process of “putting the Church back on track,” and this time he relieved the Area Coordinators of their responsibilities, determining that field-level supervision would never return to the Church. Later, after his death, his successors revived the idea of field supervisors in the form of twelve U.S. “Regional Pastors.”

I was able to gain valuable experience and training as a Regional Pastor for several years (post-WCG) with seven pastors in my region. Circumstances required I raise up congregations (43) in the Global Church of God over an area involving one-third of the country, and to interview many prospective ministers before hire. This extra “managerial” experience is appreciated and helpful today. However, I was eventually removed as Regional Pastor by Roderick Meredith for unwillingness to compromise doctrine and biblical principles (and replaced by a man who had been briefly fired for rebellion as far back as 1974). Of course, the truth of what happened was strategically buried under a blizzard of misinformation.

Politics Everywhere

Some of the worst politics to ever enter the Church of God appeared within these various structures. Again, Mr. Armstrong saw that this approach was too layered, and that it “cut off the men too much from Headquarters” (his words), so he did away with all the various structures that were continuing to produce regional “power blocs” and foster political climbing. Mr. Armstrong had no choice but to do as he did.

However, it should be understood that by the time the apostasy arose and was going full-blast (the early 1990s), when I was terminated from the WCG, there were a very large number of congregations across the world. While international regional offices still existed, there were at that time a greater number of pastors in the United States (and many of them young) than all other nations combined. This permitted a much lower level of supervision and “monitoring” of the field than ideal, and there began to be a steady increase of “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 21:25).

Coupled with this, and related to causes described in Chapter Four, it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Western society began to take on in earnest the “every man for himself” mindset that dominates

the world today. This affected both ministers and brethren, and all of these things came together to help set up—and speed up—the apostasy and the chaos that developed within the splinters, spawned in the aftermath. Pastors and brethren had been *empowered*—they had “grown voices”—and it became much easier for the government of God to fall into disuse, replaced by “better ideas” born in the minds of men who had enjoyed the freedom that developed from 1979 forward.

Quiet Groundwork

Finally, it is worth noting the brief history of “Regional Pastors,” late in the WCG decline. This structure was planned and its appointees were very carefully handpicked in the summer of 1993 by the man who went on to initially direct UCG’s new Ministerial Services. These Regional Pastors (RPs) were selected with the quiet understanding held that they were in disagreement with the “changes,” and could be “rolled over” as RPs in the birth of the new “church” (UCG) that was being carefully planned for *over two full years* before departure. This organization’s new leaders-to-be wanted to leave nothing to chance in preparing *their own* safety net. The plan was that everything was to be “ready” for the time of departure, with each man’s future position to be virtually “settled.”

Obviously, the apostates had no idea a group of men was quietly waiting and planning *inside* the WCG *for years*, so that they could remain “on payroll” until key components of the new infrastructure were “operation ready.” Of course, these men decided they could not speak out too loudly against false teachings for fear of discovery—and the unwarned sheep paid the price for their cowardly focus on self-preservation.

These are the painful *facts* of history, and they are helpful in understanding the tremendous—absolutely explosive!—level of internal politics and maneuvering throughout the field around the world as the WCG broke up. Do not miss the point—it *must* be understood—that promises were quietly made to men who had carefully positioned themselves for advancement in the “new structure.” The effect of this environment also served to help overthrow the thinking among most of the “surviving” ministers after the apostasy toward the government of God they now so conveniently saw as a “flawed system” that “failed” them.

Thousands of eyes were taken off Christ as the Head of the Church. Ministers and brethren had been slowly choosing to place their eyes on *themselves*, trusting in their *own ideas* for how “God would use them” to construct a “better system(s).”

The Name

Now to the name God chose for pastors: If I were to ask how many times either the word “pastor” or “pastors” is found in the New Testament, what would you say? Five? Ten? Twenty? Thirty? More? You will be surprised to know the answer is just *once*—Ephesians 4:11! Let’s read it: “And He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, *pastors* and teachers.”

That’s it—the *only* time “pastor” is found throughout the New Testament! It should be noted that “pastor” is also found a few times in the Old Testament, and that the Hebrew word is almost identical in meaning to the Greek word in Ephesians 4. The Greek is *poimen*, pronounced poy’mane, and it means “a shepherd (literally or figuratively), pastor.” The verb form of this word means “to tend as a shepherd (or as a supervisor), feed (cattle), rule.”

None of this is difficult to understand. A pastor is a *tender of sheep*. In effect, God has given those who pastor the office of “sheeptender” or “shepherd” (from shepherder). In fact, the *only* other places that *poimen* is found are in Luke 2, four times translated there “shepherd” (vs. 8, 15, 18, 20), and always referring to *literal* shepherds tending *real* sheep out in the field around the time of Christ’s birth.

Again, now for the third time, we see another office of the ministry de-mystified by merely examining the word that God selected for its function. All guesswork, speculation, opinion and human interpretation of the responsibilities assigned to this office evaporate in the face of God’s designated name for the men who hold it. We must merely believe the Bible.

The question may arise as to why there is not a specific list of qualifications for pastors as there were for elders in Titus 1 and I Timothy 3. Recognize that those lists are bedrock for elders of *every rank*. Recall that it was explained that “elders” was a term for *all* ordained men, local elder through apostle. In other words, for a man to even be ordained to the lowest office in the ministry, he had to meet all of the qualifications from these passages. It goes without saying then that all ranks above him would have had to have met the *same* thresholds. (An extensive inset in the next chapter covers them.)

Whether a man rose to ranks above local elder would be connected to his level of conversion, skill, capacity, experience—and the all-important FRUIT in his ministry!—as well as any special gifts that Christ would make evident to those evaluating whether a local elder was

being “given” (Eph. 4:11) to be in higher office—either preaching elder or any above that. There would be no need, therefore, for a list of *additional* qualities of character and basic skills for the man to rise in rank.

Did Mr. Armstrong Understand?

We will continue with the office of Pastor the pattern of examining what Mr. Armstrong taught about it. Let’s see if his teaching was consistent with what we have just read—or if he envisioned something different. We will examine six short quotes, all from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. The first two serve to introduce the office in the context of the Church as a whole and the other offices within the government of God. It is also in the context of getting *all* of the truth right, not just portions:

“Many Protestant denominations, and some personal ‘ministries,’ quote certain scriptures, especially concerning Christian living, faith, love, etc., correctly. But they ignore numerous basic scriptures, cited in this book. Satan seems willing to let the deceived have parts of the truth.

“But these run afoul on pivotal truths. Usually they do not have the proper name, The Church of God. Neither do they know or proclaim the kingdom of God or what it is—that is to say, they do not have or proclaim the true gospel of Christ. They do not have God’s government headed by Jesus Christ, with apostles, evangelists, pastors and other elders. They do not know what salvation is. They do not understand God’s purpose or plan.

“One original Church, much persecuted and opposed, but still in existence, has these evidences proving it to be the original true Church. And even this Church, until after the year of 1933, had lost many of these vital truths. At least 18 basic and essential truths have been restored to the true Church since that year.”

p. 251

Mr. Armstrong calls his description of the items presented “evidences” of where Christ’s Church is. These “evidences” still exist—and they still point out the *ONLY PLACE* where “the original true Church” can be found. Let’s continue with Mr. Armstrong adding the *why* of God’s government in His Church, and *why* it is connected to certain offices that He has defined.

Any quote that begins “Understand this!” deserves careful attention (emphasis his):

“UNDERSTAND THIS!

“The CHURCH, as initially called in this life, is NOT YET capable of RULING the earth—of sitting with Christ in the THRONE where God originally placed Lucifer—of administering THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

“And THAT IS *WHY* God has placed HIS GOVERNMENT in his Church. That is *WHY* God’s Church government is theocratic instead of democratic. That is why God has set ranks of government in his Church, apostles, evangelists, pastors, elders, both preaching and nonpreaching, ‘till we [in the Church] all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13). It is not a matter of having ‘made it into the kingdom’ upon being baptized, but a matter of spiritual growth and development in knowledge and in righteous character. That is *WHY* it is hierarchical in form—government from GOD at the top on down, not from the bottom up. Otherwise those at the bottom would be ruling GOD!

“It is the SAME government by which Christ shall rule all nations beginning with the millennium!”

p. 256

This is a most important quote, and it should introduce a question in the reader’s mind. Remember, the *gospel* is exclusively about the KINGDOM OF GOD—God’s coming, world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT under Christ. Of course, God’s kingdom is made up of members of His divine Family governing all nations—recall again the purpose for which we are all in training. I ask, do you think that God can use—that Christ can lead—an organization to present the message of the kingdom of God to the world when that organization neither understands nor practices His government, or *does* understand, but has *rejected* it? Could God just “work around” such ignorance, confusion—and REBELLION?

The next quote introduces the question in a greater way:

“This first and great commission was given to the apostles. To a lesser extent evangelists were used in carrying forth the message. Other leaders—ordained ministers—were stationary, yet even the local pastor of a church may hold evangelistic services in his area—not the ‘soul-saving crusade’ type, but lectures ANNOUNCING and PROCLAIMING as a witness the coming KINGDOM OF GOD (the true gospel)!

“This ENTIRE GREAT COMMISSION—proclaiming GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom, and “feeding the sheep”—is a COMBINED administration and function of the Church.

“The individual lay member HAS HIS VITAL PART in proclaiming the GOOD NEWS (gospel) to the world. How? Not by going out and himself proclaiming Christ’s message to the neighborhood or to the world. That is done primarily by the apostles, to some extent by evangelists, and to even a lesser extent in local areas by local pastors. (The chief responsibility of local pastors is supervision of and preaching to the local church.)

“But the ENTIRE CHURCH OPERATION is one WHOLE, organized into various operations and administrations (I Cor. 12:5-6).”

pp. 265-266

Pastors Local

This and the next quote defines the role of pastors as “local,” working with the “local” church and “local” areas. While these men had real and significant authority within the congregations they served, they were not to work outside a relatively narrow jurisdiction. Their confines were clear.

This makes perfect sense, since a pastor would have been limited by the physical number of sheep he could look after—“tend”—at any one time. Some pastors were also “bishops,” (Greek *episkopos*), meaning “a superintendent, i.e., a Christian officer in general charge.” This helps make it easier to see why Mr. Armstrong recognized that there were, in effect, two kinds of pastors—those who supervised a number of churches, or much bigger churches, and those who had just one or two, and probably smaller congregations. The former would generally be those of Pastor rank (but also an occasional evangelist), and the latter would have been of Preaching Elder rank, but also full ministers and over churches.

Notice how Mr. Armstrong references preaching elder in the following statement, because it introduces more. Also as you read, notice who is in charge within God’s government—in other words, from where does it receive its authority, and from where does it *not* receive it:

“To administer these many operations, God—not a vote of the members—‘hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.’ Or, as stated in more detail in Ephesians 4:11 (RSV): ‘And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.’”

“Pastors are stationary pastors over a local church or contingent group of local churches. Then there were placed in the Church teachers—not necessarily preachers. Yet all ministers and teachers are called elders in other New Testament texts. Therefore, in God’s Church

today there are both preaching and nonpreaching elders. Preaching elders pastor local churches. Then some elders, not preaching, are called local elders in the Church today.”

pp. 244-245

In the next quote, Mr. Armstrong, in the context of different roles within the Church’s commission to the world, speaks a little more about the basic duties of a pastor:

“In general, the whole operation of the Church costs money in this late twentieth century world. Facilities and methods are available to the Church for performance of its commission that did not exist in the first-century world. Without the tithes and generous freewill offerings of lay members the Church commission could not be performed in today’s world.

“Without the fervent and prevailing continual prayers of all members the work could not be accomplished. Without the continual ENCOURAGEMENT of lay members and those over them locally, those of us operating from headquarters could not bear up under the persecutions, oppositions, trials and frustrations.

“Also in reverse, the lay members need just as urgently the encouragement, teaching, counseling and leadership from headquarters and local pastors.”

p. 268

Finally, here is one more quote from Mr. Armstrong’s final work, this time discussing the role of pastors among other offices that will exist throughout the world during the Millennium. There is also included another reference to how the Church is to be learning and practicing God’s government *now*.

Let’s notice:

“With only one Church—one religion—one faith—there will be many church congregations in every city, others scattered through rural areas. There will be district superintendents over areas, and pastors, elders, deacons and deaconesses in every local church.

“This, then, gives an insight into how the world will be organized.

“This shows how a super world government can, and will, be established on earth.

“The very purpose of the Church of this present time is to provide God’s training school or teachers’ college to train in spiritual knowledge,

education and godly character, to supply all the positions at the beginning of this wonderful 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.”

pp. 350-351

Obviously, from the name of the office and from all that Mr. Armstrong taught about it, pastors are neither appointed to, nor qualified to, take the gospel to the world, warn the nations of Israel, bring truth to the Church, have general supervision of *all* the congregations worldwide (or of even *a few*, if not designated by higher authority to do this), or to carry out any of the other more expansive responsibilities that are assigned to the offices above them.

Again, while the offices of Preaching Elder and Pastor are vital to God’s Church, they have very real confines.

Local Administrators

This chapter opened with a reference to Church Pastors fulfilling the role of “middle management” within the Church. Why these ranks must have some administrative ability requires further explanation before going on to discuss the next office.

Every pastor had to be, at a minimum, a “leader of leaders,” meaning a leader of any number of elders and deacons, and sometimes one or more associate pastors and ministerial assistants. In some cases, and this even applied to those over single pastorates, they had to be what I call “a leader of leaders of leaders.” While it is obvious why a superintendent of other pastors had to have this skill, it is less obvious why a Church Pastor might. Let’s break this down. Pastors must lead local church elders. Obviously, under the elders were deacons. We also saw that some of these had “crew chiefs” in charge of various things under them. In a sense, a pastor has to have what could be described as “third-level leadership” capability.

Truly, a pastor *must* be a real LEADER. But, it should be mentioned that he must also be able to *follow* those above him. As with every other office, he would have first learned to be a good follower (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1), before he could teach others under him to be the same. This is all part of teaching the government of God to people both up and down the chain of hierarchy within God’s Church.

The administrative duties of a pastor required him to be multi-faceted in capability. The pastor must be a good organizer, a skilled communicator, an understanding counselor, an effective teacher, an experienced problem solver, wise in delegating, sound in doctrine, hard-working, selfless, a capable trainer of men, diligent to know the state of his flock,

able to prepare sermons and Bible studies, and to plan socials, as well as be able to set a balanced and wholesome example. But above all, he had to be close to God, and loyal to His government above him.

A Closer Look Inside

The spiritual strength and condition of Church Pastors was crucial. They had to remain clear-headed about the needs and priorities of their flock—and, when necessary, this could mean juggling priorities, as well as sacrificing those in their own lives.

For instance, a critical need for counseling could arise suddenly, as could a need to anoint. Pastors sometimes had to temporarily set themselves (and their families) aside until an urgent need had been addressed. The problems of sheep sometimes cannot wait.

In the early days, this willingness to be a tireless worker in Christ's vineyard could mean *long* three-church circuits. These could be Denver and Pueblo, Colorado, and Garden City, Kansas; Milwaukee, Chicago and St. Louis; or Toledo, Akron and Pittsburgh. The mileage involved was simply staggering. Get a map and imagine. Three services were held on the Sabbath (one Friday night)—and sometimes Spokesman Clubs Saturday night and Sunday morning. I had one circuit for four years in which every Sabbath lasted 19 hours—5 a.m. to 12 p.m.—with the last six months including a third congregation Friday night, due to sudden change of circumstances. (My wife missed only *two* Sabbaths in those four years, this due to the birth of our third child, but otherwise *always* attended *all* services.)

These things are not written to brag. In fact, in the 1950s and 60s many circuits exceeded my above workload. Most pastors were forced to be tireless servants willing to miss sleep.

From just this brief description of not only the qualities of, but also the *workload* upon, the average field pastor, it becomes obvious why Paul emphasized, "If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good **WORK**" (I Tim. 3:1). A faithful pastor was truly a *worker in the field*!

We have seen once again that Mr. Armstrong got it right in his description of pastors as local and stationary—SHEEPTENDERS!

Do the Ordained Retire?

Many pastors, elders, deacons, and even evangelists have today fallen into the practice of "retiring." Retirements are common and announce-

ments often. Of course, forced retirement might happen because there has been a serious health setback and the man simply could no longer serve. There could certainly be men who are removed from office “for cause,” but this is not to be confused with retirement.

The idea of retirement must be addressed somewhere in the story of God’s government, and it could be in this chapter or others, and in relation to *any* office of God. What is said here applies to deacons all the way through the ranks of the ministry.

Grasp this! The Bible does *not* speak anywhere or in any sense of the popular concept in the world called *retirement*. While those of the world look forward to this “settling back” at an artificial age determined by societal norms, there is simply no such thing—no such option—for one who has been ordained of God. But it is actually equally true that there is no point at which laymembers can retire from serving either. Think! *No Christian* would ever consider “retiring” from the work of growing and overcoming in spiritual character. Why then would one who held an office? These should be the last to consider “riding off into the sunset.”

Mr. Armstrong never retired and, as the saying goes, “died at his post,” meaning that he was active to the very end of his life. The apostle John was still serving at age nearly 100 when he wrote his gospel, three general epistles and the book of Revelation. Paul ran his full “course.” Moses retired *into the grave*, and such is the example of every other Old and New Testament servant of God on record.

To retire is to RESIGN from office—period! Taking this step is the equivalent of taking yourself back from the special calling and service into which Christ placed you, and it terribly dishonors the office one has chosen to leave.

Made Official

Here is an official statement to the entire ministry in 1979. It was in response to a trend of men going “non-career” in the ministry during the liberal years, in this case, merely *shifting priorities* away from the ministry as a primary calling and duty to that of a private career in some other field. The Church Administration Director is speaking on Mr. Armstrong’s behalf:

“Fellow ministers, Mr. Armstrong informed me recently that he is definitely ending the whole concept of non-career ministry. As he stated, he didn’t know about it until the last few months and had nothing to do

with its inception. He feels it is wrong for a minister to resign from his calling as a minister and yet at the same time want to retain some of the benefits, prestige and authority of the ministry.”

“...any who have resigned or do resign in the future from the active ministry will henceforth be regarded as lay members in God’s Church.

“If, in particular cases, the local minister in future months and years—after checking with Headquarters—wishes to use one of these men to help counsel or visit, he may do so. But they have resigned from the ministry and will NOT be regarded as elders to anoint, preach, counsel, or carry on any other function of the ministry.

“Of course, this does not preclude us letting the occasional minister have an extended time off—or even reduced duties because of genuine health problems or other similar problems—or the occasional hiring of someone as a part-time minister in very special cases. If any of you have questions regarding this or suggestions about other special cases, please let us hear from you.

“But the ‘non-career ministry,’ as such, is NOT a category we feel Christ would want and so God’s Apostle is abolishing it.”

Pastor General’s Report, May 29, 1979

Most in the past who wanted to retire had simply grown “weary in well doing.” They were tired of going the extra mile, but saw retirement as a way of retaining the “prestige” of office, while not having to fulfill the duties within it.

Understand. Nowhere in Scripture is it recorded that any of God’s servants ever retired from their “tour of duty.” Certainly, men (and women) need to slow down as the natural aging process diminishes one’s energy level. In fact, some have been *unwilling* to do this when they should have. While this is a wonderful “problem” to have, it can be a problem nevertheless. The facts of aging must be acknowledged. But for ordained people, being able to continue serving—even if it is just being able to offer assistance and experience to others—becomes its own motivation to take care of one’s health!

Thorough Recommendation

One of the reasons that ministers (and to some degree deacons) understood that retirement was not an option is that the sobering calling and responsibility that came with ordination was (supposed to be) explained to a man before this would occur, usually well before. He had time to weigh what this meant.

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

FULL NAME LAST	FIRST	MIDDLE/IMPORTANT	DATE BAPTIZED
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DATE BAPTIZED _____

STREET ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

CHURCH AREA

CITIZENSHIP

RACE

☐ MARRIED☐ SINGLE☐ WIDOWED

☐ SEPARATED/DIVORCED

WIFE'S MEMBERSHIP STATUS:

MEMBER

☐ DISFELLOWSHIPED☐ NON-MEMBER

PM

☐ NEVER

BAPTIZED

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

1000

AGES OF CHILDREN

ATTACH A RECENT
PHOTO HERE
MAY BE OMITTED FOR
CHURCH EMPLOYED ELDERS

DATE OF PHOTO _____

Health ☐ GOOD ☐ FAIR ☐ POOR☐ AC GRADUATE☐ SOME AC TRAINING

Education ☐ OTHER COLLEGE GRAD.

☐ SOME COLLEGE☐ HIGH SCHOOL GRAD.

CAMPUS(ES) ATTENDED

NUMBER OF YEARS
ATTENDED

Education

NAME OF INSTITUTION(S)

DEGREE AND
MAJOR FIELDCurrent
Occupation

EMPLOYER

Being Recommended For Ordination As

☐ PASTOR☐ PREACHING ELDER☐ LOCAL ELDER☐ LOCAL CHURCH ELDER

Brief Background INCLUDE: SERVICE IN LOCAL CHURCH, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE, STATUS ON THE JOB AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, WORK EXPERIENCE, SPOKESMAN CLUB PARTICIPATION, ETC.

CONTINUED...

It was mentioned previously that an extensive recommendation was filled out and sent to Headquarters as part of a larger process involved when a man was being approved for ordination. While the form could have been in any of several chapters, it fits well here, and needs to be shown and understood, because pastors filled out more of these than did any other office. The illustration provided was the front page of a very carefully thought-out form that had to be filled out in detail before a man could be ordained. Many of the particulars in it were explained to the man before ordination.

It would be inappropriate and unnecessary to show the entire form. Doing this would actually work against the very principle of God's government by taking a vitally important *confidential* procedure that was part of the government of the Church and unnecessarily laying out certain details that laymembers would not be privy to and could not fully appreciate.

However, there are a few elements within the form that can be shown so the reader can appreciate how serious the process was. There were several essay sections asking for general background, areas of chief strength, as well as one for additional comments, including possibly those of other ministers.

But there were also specific areas of character that were to be assessed with a man such as: how well does he exhibit common sense and balance; rate his general knowledge of the Bible and Church doctrine; does he enjoy helping others; is he argumentative, cynical, intolerant or self-willed; and about 15 others referencing speaking, human relations, wife and family, etc.

Notice that there were four offices listed on the form, with boxes to check for designation. This is instructive. Notice that "deacon" and "evangelist" were excluded, and there were separate reasons. Deacons did not hold *spiritual* office, and evangelists could not be recommended by those of *any* office—including *other evangelists*! Why? Only Mr. Armstrong selected and approved evangelists. No more was an evangelist authorized to ordain another evangelist (an apostle's role) than was Mr. Armstrong authorized to ordain another apostle (Christ's role). How ironic that it is Roderick Meredith who has most rejected this understanding. After all, it was he who longest administered (as Director of Church Administration) under Mr. Armstrong this very form for 11 years—1961 to 1972!

I repeat: The process was serious. In fact, the reader may be able to read the admonition at the top of the form cautioning that it was to be filled out completely and would be sent back if it was not. The form

ended with the recommending minister certifying with signature that the candidate fulfilled I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Sadly, most who were ordained forgot to review, or regularly review, these qualifications.

Styles Differed

Finally, and obviously, some details of administration, style of leadership and types of personality varied from pastor to pastor. This was generally good, because it did not permit congregations to settle in and stagnate by learning exclusively only *one way* to do everything.

This introduces a final point. Some pastors did *not* do things as Headquarters outlined! They were freelancers—mavericks and some outright rogues—who did things their own way, and who may have gotten away with this because there were certain ones over them who liked and covered for them. Others just went undiscovered.

These things happened even when the Church was on track—of course, no minister is perfect, anyway—and some of you reading this experienced such men. Some of you also witnessed or experienced abuses, injustice or other kinds of problems, such as negligence, false doctrine taught, drunkenness, poor planning, and even outright incompetence and carnality. Also, wives of ministers could be real assets or equally real liabilities. In some cases—we could now add *many* cases—God’s people experienced shepherds who did not even have the Holy Spirit! If Mr. Armstrong could see that some rose to evangelist and did not have God’s Spirit, and he said this more than once, then rising to pastor without it would be easier. Both of these did happen, many times, and the apostasy exposed this with large numbers.

This takes us to the example set by the office above...

EVANGELISTS

We are now ready to examine the higher office of *Evangelist*. This rank carried a special, and even extraordinary, kind of mystique in the minds of most brethren within the Church. This was the second highest office in the WCG, and the highest under Mr. Armstrong. Until his death, no more than about 15-20 men held this rank at any one time in the Worldwide Church of God. Many who rose to hold this office were the older men in the ministry, some of whom either died in the faith before Mr. Armstrong's death, or died after him, but before the apostasy. I can think of three or four such men, with all others having either fallen into severe compromise, or fallen away completely.

During but especially after the apostasy, this unwarranted "aura" surrounding the office came to wonderfully serve several of the men who held it. The standing of two or three older men was further enhanced because they were able to (constantly) talk about and portray themselves as "senior evangelists," as though this could override deficiencies in doctrinal soundness, understanding, character, judgment, work ethic, priorities, experience and general capability. That evangelists were somehow automatically "men of renown" stuck in thousands of minds.

This widespread sort of reflex thinking toward evangelists had firmly gripped the vast majority of brethren who entered a splinter. It explains the greatest single reason why so many are fixated on the Evangelist rank of certain men today, instead of recognizing in a man the kinds of qualities described in the last paragraph. "Evangelists" are

being permitted to get away with incredible things simply because their rank gives them a comfort zone of insulation from scrutiny others would naturally receive.

How They Functioned

There are other reasons—good ones—that the office of Evangelist carried extra weight within the Church. Many of the men who held this office, particularly in the early years, when Mr. Armstrong was present and younger, served long, hard and faithfully, and in ways that were plainly visible to the whole Church.

For instance, many of the baptizing tours in the early- and mid-1950s were carried out by those who were already evangelists and others by men who went on to hold this rank. This helped to cause the names of some to become household words in the Church. But these men also were regularly seen on field Church visits, often during Holy Day seasons, when several congregations would be meeting together, usually in larger cities. When an evangelist was scheduled to visit an area, very real excitement was generated, and the brethren eagerly anticipated his arrival for the news and sermon he would bring. Of course, these men were also very visible at the Feast of Tabernacles and, in the case of several of the better speakers, would usually travel to two or three, and sometimes even four or five, sites within eight days. Many, many thousands were able to see and hear them, and for years.

Most, not all, evangelists were assigned to responsibilities at Headquarters. Mr. Armstrong designated three or four to carry the title of “Division Head,” which meant a man was in charge of several usually related departments (such as Landscaping, Custodial, Maintenance, and others, all under the DIVISION of Buildings and Grounds), with respective department heads reporting to him. Others might be vice-chancellors at one of the three colleges, regional directors over the larger foreign posts, and one always served as Director of Church Administration.

This much needed to be understood before we could go on to look at the office through the rest of the chapter. Keep these things in mind as you study what God says and what Mr. Armstrong taught about evangelists.

What Mr. Armstrong Taught

Before examining exactly why God named the office of Evangelist as He did, let’s examine what Mr. Armstrong said about it in *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. By now it should be evident that this book is quoted so often

because it was his definitive work on virtually every element of the government of God.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Armstrong's comments about evangelists were almost no less brief than those about pastors, elders and deacons, and this is perhaps its own first clue as to the *true* importance of the office within Christ's governmental hierarchy. While the duties of evangelists were certainly greater than those of the ranks below them—and you will see there is no doubt of this!—you will not see that Mr. Armstrong assigned the duties of, or the men who held, this office any kind of special status or “mystery” that the brethren came to give those who held it. In fact, you will learn later that their service is far below the importance of the top two offices within Christ's ministry, and that they were neither trained, qualified, equipped—nor appointed—to lead the whole Church. Sadly, fruits of many today almost suggest that they are determined to *prove* they are not.

It is a gross misunderstanding that is now occurring in the minds of thousands that they must somehow go “find an evangelist” or, better, “find a *senior* evangelist” to follow. In the book's latter chapters, it will become clear beyond all doubt—and this should be occurring in your mind already—that most brethren today are looking to follow an office that God has not told them to seek, one He does *not* use to lead His Church when clear apostolic authority is required to carry out the Work in a particular age. Let's read:

“Evangelists were leading ministers, proclaiming the gospel to the public, even raising up local churches and having supervision over some churches under the apostle. Therefore an evangelist may hold executive functions under the apostle in the Church headquarters or work today. An evangelist is not necessarily stationary. Pastors are stationary...”

p. 245

This quote opens the understanding. Perhaps one of the most important phrases it contains is “under the apostle.” Evangelists today have universally forgotten or rejected the knowledge that their authority in God's government is derived solely through delegation from above. Like every other New Testament office, including that of prophet—a higher rank—authority flows from above. In fact, we will see further that the *higher* office of prophet cannot exist without a living apostle with whom the prophet interacts.

The following quote, also from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, as is the last one, is repeated from a previous chapter so that this time the reader

may focus on the brief reference to the role of evangelists within its context:

“This ENTIRE GREAT COMMISSION—proclaiming the GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom, and ‘feeding the sheep’—is a COMBINED administration and function of the Church.

“The individual lay member HAS HIS VITAL PART in proclaiming the GOOD NEWS (gospel) to the world. How? Not by going out and himself proclaiming Christ’s message to the neighborhood or to the world. That is done primarily by the apostles, to some extent by evangelists, and to even a lesser extent in local areas by local pastors. (The chief responsibility of local pastors is supervision of and preaching to the local church.)

“But the ENTIRE CHURCH OPERATION is one WHOLE, organized into various operations and administrations (I Cor. 12:5-6).”

pp. 265-266

The final quote at this point is added not so much because it describes the work of a true evangelist, but rather because it describes what one of God’s servants holding this office would never emulate among the world’s “counterparts” of the same office. Surprisingly, we came to see that some of those whom we thought were *Christ’s* appointed evangelists within His Church were, in fact, little more than worldly “human evangelists,” as Mr. Armstrong described them—wolves in sheep’s clothing—waiting for the opportunity to throw off their outer garment and “win souls for ‘Christ’” in the WCG after the apostasy through the methods described below. Note also the reference to the Church as spiritual Mother:

“It is the function of the CHURCH—as the spiritual MOTHER of Christians in it—to develop holy, righteous and perfect godly CHARACTER in those God has called—those God has added to the Church.

“Remember, none CAN COME to Christ, except called and drawn by God the Father (John 6:44). Newly converted members are not brought to spiritual conversion by ‘salesmanship’ of human evangelists—are not ‘talked into’ being ‘converted’—are not emotionally high pressured by high-powered evangelistic oratory or fervor—or by emotion-packed ‘altar calls’ in evangelistic crusades to the moanful strains of a choir singing, ‘Just as I am, I come, I come.’

“You cannot find that sort of MODERN ‘Old-Fashioned Gospel’ crusading either taught or used to set us an example in the New

Testament! Yet people today suppose falsely that is the way Christ intended—the way Jesus initiated.”

p. 263

Revealed in the Name, Again

Almost as surprising as the Greek word translated pastor, *poimen*, found only once, the word evangelist is found only three times in the entire New Testament. Most would probably suppose it is found many more times, yet it is this few. Prophet and apostle, we will see, are a very different story.

Yet once more, fascinating understanding flows from the meaning of the Greek word translated “evangelist” in the New Testament. It is *euaggelistes*, pronounced yoo-ang-ghel-is-tace’, and it means “to announce good news (evangelize), especially the gospel; declare, bring glad (good) tidings—a good message.”

A tremendous amount is revealed here, both for what this definition says, but equally for what it does *not* say. In short, an evangelist is a “good news bringer.” The root *gel* means “good.” This describes a man whose messages bring *gladness* because they involve *good news*. It is easy to see the connection to preaching the gospel on this point alone. It is also easy to see why Mr. Armstrong described one of the duties of evangelists as “proclaiming the gospel to the public.” Naturally, this would cause congregations to be raised up. The evangelist involved would then most naturally be the one to supervise the clusters of congregations with pastors raised up near him, or in his general area, at least in earlier periods.

Recognize that the office of evangelist involves certain parameters, clear within the definition of *euaggelistes*. It is only modestly amplified by the definition given through a faithful apostle. It must be understood and emphasized again that an evangelist’s role involved bringing *positive* messages to his audience. In fact, it could be said he held the office of “good news bringer.” He was also authorized to preach beyond the area of a local pastorate, but only as directed by or “under the apostle.”

Before continuing, simply ask yourself whether you believe that God meant what He said in the name He assigned to this office. This is because two evangelists today (David Hulme and Roderick Meredith), leading groups that are respectively medium and large in size, believe they can, to quote the military, “work above their pay grade.” This puts them into direct conflict with the very meaning of their office name.

Here is what is meant by this: Chapter Fifteen will discuss the role of “Watchman” to the nations of modern Israel. Briefly here, this is a job

that involves warning, “crying aloud” about “sins” and “transgressions” (Isa. 58:1), and explaining that devastating punishment lies ahead for these nations. By no stretch is this delivering *good news* or a *good message*. Far from it! It is explaining the arrival of the most horrific suffering and punishment that the world has ever seen—the worst possible BAD NEWS for those involved! We will learn later that prophets could be assigned to this task (and one more time they will be), as obviously could the rank of apostle. But, fulfilling the role of “Watchman” in this age cannot be carried out by either evangelists or offices below them. This would be in defiance of the boundaries set for their service by Christ!

“The Work of an Evangelist”

The apostle Paul gave the evangelist Timothy a special charge, and we can learn from it more about this office, and about what evangelists today *should* be doing. It offers additional insight into what the office is. Paul instructed, “But *watch* you in all things, endure afflictions, do the WORK OF AN EVANGELIST, make *full proof* of your ministry” (II Tim. 4:5).

Now we must ask: Would God leave the duties of this important office subject to interpretation, speculation or “fluid” with prevailing circumstances? In other words, is an evangelist able to sort of mutate or metamorphose into whatever an officeholder, or especially a “senior” one, might wish it to include in his duties in order to raise himself to a “higher pay grade” to fulfill a personal agenda? Of course not. Once more, you will see that Mr. Armstrong explained the work of an evangelist within the framework of Scripture. Yet again, Christ inspired His servant to *get it right*!

Paul’s instruction to Timothy offers several insights. First, it speaks of the “work of an evangelist.” This means there must be a specifically defined role—a *kind* of “work”—committed to those with this office, and we have already seen a good deal of what this means. But there is more, and it is revealed in the context from chapter 3:1 forward to this passage. Let’s back up.

Chapter 3 begins with a description of “perilous times” to arrive in the “last days.” The general breakdown of character and the disappearance of “truth” follow in context and lead up to verse 13—“evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse” (today’s circumstances). This is followed by the all-important instruction to “*continue...in* the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them.” The thought flow continues into Chapter 4 with this

sobering admonition: “I *charge* you [Timothy] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom” (vs. 1).

It becomes plain that what follows is most serious. Reread Paul’s wording. Its purpose was to set up the importance of what follows—the *specific responsibilities* of an evangelist. First is, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering *and doctrine*” (vs. 2).

Ask: How many evangelists have done this?

The next two verses establish what is at stake for all of God’s people when seducers, particularly those of high rank, are loose in the Church, in our case having captured the *WHOLE corporate* sheepfold: “For the time will come when they *will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto *fables*” (vs. 3-4).

Appointed to “Watch”

Now that the Church has reached the last days, this is absolutely vital to grasp. This is because Timothy had learned what he did *from an apostle*—and his job was to *remind* people of this—as well as to “continue in” these things himself—and to be watchful on behalf of larger numbers of people and ministers for which one of evangelist rank would be responsible.

By now you can better understand why verse 5 begins with “But watch...in all things.” In fact, this passage is so supremely important that God inspired Paul to explain that it is the way an evangelist “makes *full proof* of his ministry.” What makes this even more crucial is that Paul was saying these things as he was about to die, because the next verse adds, “the time of my departure is at hand.” In effect, these are God-inspired instructions from an old apostle nearing death to an evangelist, regarding the crucial need to carefully watch events and trends so that he could help brethren and pastors “*endure sound doctrine*” (vs. 3). Timothy’s influence would be significant in such circumstances because of his rank, experience and seniority.

This is the way it *should* have been in the wake of the apostasy following Mr. Armstrong’s death. But it was not. While evangelists *should* have been carefully *watching the doctrinal landscape* in Pasadena, and resisting the “evil men and seducers” destroying the corporate Church and devouring the flock, these men were in most cases otherwise occu-

Qualifications for Elders

The qualifications for ordination were listed earlier from I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Below is a list of these qualities with commentary. Terms appearing more than once are noted. Some repeated terms are not identical, but bear the same meaning.

“Blameless”: (3 times) derived from two separate Greek words, both essentially meaning innocent of committing immorality or of falling into wrong doctrine. This also implies innocence of covering for others involved in immorality or heresy.

“The husband of one wife”: (twice) forbids polygamy.

“Vigilant”: attentive to potential dangers; ever watchful to protect the flock.

“Sober”: (twice) discreet and prudent, as opposed to a state of being oblivious or comatose. Knows when to avoid humor.

“Good behavior”: orderly, modest, not given to extremes, courteous, polite, well-refined.

“Given to hospitality”: (twice) the proclivity to readily and easily receive brethren into one’s home (especially those sojourning or in distress).

“Apt to teach”: instructive or skillful in teaching, capable of imparting spiritual knowledge and instruction to others (one-on-one or a congregation) in a unique or colorful manner, and happy to exercise that gift.

“Not given to wine”: (twice) this does not describe a “teetotaler,” but rather moderate use of alcohol—not exceeding a reasonable limit. Alcohol can never be abused. (Proverbs 31:4 shows kings—or those with much responsibility—must not give themselves to wine or strong drink.) The Greek also seems to imply a warning against abusiveness and being quarrelsome.

“No striker”: (twice) this references those who eagerly strike bargains or deals, not punching people. Proverbs warns against being “surety,” or co-signing for others.

“Greedy of filthy lucre”: (twice) describes those inclined to seek money wherever opportunity beckons. The ministry is a calling, not a place for those interested in pursuing or scheming for personal financial gain.

“Patient”: bearing up under pain, duress or provocation with calmness and without complaint.

“Not a brawler”: one who shuns contentious, quarrelsome braggarts. One who would never fist-fight or punch someone.

“Not covetous”: one who carefully avoids the extreme pursuit of possessions or money, usually related to what others have.

“Rules well his own house”: in charge of how his family is to conduct itself; exercises compassionate leadership without dictatorial or *laissez-faire* extremes.

“Not a novice”: not one new to the faith or recently baptized.

“A good report of them which are without”: in modern times, this would relate to having a clean record with legal authorities, clear of felonies or criminal citations after conversion (DUI charges, tax fraud, etc.) It also would seem to apply to clean employment and financial records (clear of repossessions, bankruptcies, etc.), with a track record of compliance with law, virtue and diligence.

“Grave”: dignified, honest and gracious in conduct.

“Not slanderers”: would never assassinate character or dispense false, malicious gossip. (Found under deacons, but then obviously applicable to elders.)

“Faithful in all things”: reliable and trustworthy in all matters. (Under deacons’ wives, but would apply equally to elders’ wives.)

“Having faithful children”: has obedient, trustworthy, well-mannered children, as opposed to unruly, boisterous and loud.

“The steward of God”: one who manages the people, property and finances that belong to God.

“Not self-willed”: not self-pleasing, arrogant or looking after self-interest. Self-will is the *very worst* problem in a minister. He is to seek *God’s* will in every matter of spiritual stewardship.

“Not soon angry”: not lashing back in vengeful outrage upon real or imagined injustice. Properly directed anger is not wrong, but being *soon* angry is *never* good. Disaster can result. This is because “he that is soon angry *deals foolishly*” (Prov. 14:17).

“Lover of good men”: this references good *things*; promoter of virtue for all people. A minister—a Christian—loves *all* people.

“Just”: fair and right; righteous in deeds and character.

“Holy”: virtuous, pure from defilement; divinely guided; saintly.

“Temperate”: has self-control over every passion or appetite.

“Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught”: stands for the truth in all circumstances, not just when in presence of those opposing it, but also in the face of injury, penalty or death. This was exemplified by true martyrs of past eras of God’s Church.

pied. While these respected, senior officers *should* have been shielding, protecting and urging God's people to "endure sound doctrine," most were shielding and protecting *themselves*. Others of lower rank were busy trolling the corridors of Pasadena hoping to hook this higher office *for themselves*. (Gone, or never present in many minds, was much concern about the qualifications described that a man must meet, even for initial ordination.)

There was a reason the above self-focused, corporate-climber thinking found room in so many of these minds.

Special Treatment

Evangelists always received very special treatment, and certain respect *was* obviously due their office. They were thought of as senior VIPs. Over time, most evangelists, certainly those at Headquarters, came to lead gilded lives. So did their wives who, in most but not all cases, served little or not at all, but rather stood apart from and above the "little people" of the Church. Their lives often reflected no more than a fashion parade. I wish this were an exaggeration, but it is not. (Mr. Armstrong was traveling around the world, and his eyesight and hearing were diminished in the latter years, and he could no longer monitor trends as he once was able.)

Part of the problem was that from an unusually early age the majority of these men never really had to suffer as did others in the ministry, or as did laymembers. To some degree, just their larger salaries insulated them. Problems they evidenced later were directly connected to the fact that the *character* of most who held this rank was never forged, tempered and toughened by the kind of pain and suffering that most other brethren and ministers were naturally experiencing.

Looking back, it became clear that Mr. Armstrong's overall presence did seem to suppress or hide the character of so many whose outer "sheep's clothing" did not come off until he was gone.

This introduces other developments quietly occurring in the background after Mr. Armstrong's death, both before and during the apostasy.

Collapse of an "Office"

After Mr. Armstrong died, his successor terribly cheapened a very high office by using it as a "carrot"—no more than a reward!—for loyalty to his agenda. After all, this man was perfectly willing to cheapen a much higher office when he almost immediately installed himself as an "apostle."

I was offered the evangelist carrot in early 1992 when a man in Pasadena made plain to me “how I could be used in a much greater way—if I went with the flow” (his words). Later, and similarly, Roderick Meredith at least twice explicitly offered me promotion to evangelist if I would be “patient,” as well as “stronger in my support” of him.

Mr. Armstrong and others warned of the dangers of becoming “rank conscious.” Sometimes men had to be told in the past that this thinking was affecting them, and that they were serving for the wrong reasons. Sadly, almost overnight, the warnings of years past were swept aside in what became a nearly mad dash for promotion and status under the “new man” in Pasadena. These are some of the men who today speak most often of the catch-phrase “servant leadership.” Truly, it has come to pass—and this is no accident—that those who speak most of this term least understand and demonstrate it.

Let’s speak plainly, with all sugar-coating removed. There are men in the splinters today who left the WCG as “evangelists,” and received the expected adoration, solely because they were effective politicians before and through the apostasy. (Check the dates of their ordinations and the duties they held en route.) In other words, some knew how to smoothly maneuver within the “halls of power” so that they could, like Catholic cardinals, become “princes of the church” within the WCG, while at the same time positioning themselves to look like strong leaders of important rank should they need and find available “another option” outside the WCG. In some cases, these were the very men who supported, and even directly helped to *empower* Mr. Armstrong’s successor as he and only about *five other men* destroyed the Worldwide Church of God!

The thinking person realizes that such a small group of conspirators could never have gotten more than a fraction as far as they did if just the evangelists who eventually left had set aside their petty differences and personal agendas in order to resist the conspirators *en masse*. (Of course, there was certainly no help or resistance from the *other* evangelists, those who simply folded their tents, either in agreement or confused compliance, and stayed or retired in the WCG.) In the end, several of these men, at the very last minute, suddenly decided they “loved the truth” (II Thes. 2:10), and went seeking a salary and important position in the splinter of their choice.

In all of this, Satan had fulfilled his purpose—he had reduced a high office of God to little more than a pile of rubble. We are left to wonder if a single evangelist ever read II Timothy 4:1-5. Of course, a similar cowardice, dereliction of duty and collapse of strength occurred with other of

God's offices. However, thousands of brethren were to be fooled *later* more by the collapse of *true* leadership at Evangelist rank than by any other factor. This office degenerated into little more than a gimmick used to attract God's people to, and hold them within, competing splinters.

“Teachers”

The chapter on evangelists will conclude with what can be considered two more insets.

First, the Bible speaks of, and Mr. Armstrong referenced, “teachers” within the framework of offices that Christ uses to “edify the body” and “perfect the saints.” An explanation of this role could have appeared either within the previous chapter, this one or either of the next two.

This statement introduces the subject.

First, let's define the word “teacher.” It derives from the Greek word *didaskalos*, which simply means “an instructor (general or specific), doctor, master, teacher.” So there is no mystery in the Greek. If someone is said to be didactic, he is considered *teacher-like* or *professorial* in style of speaking. In fact, the Greek word for knowledge is *didache*. So a teacher is merely one who dispenses knowledge. Thus, there is seen to be no unusual or different meaning regarding what a biblical “teacher” is.

But what office or offices does this represent among the different ministerial ranks?

The answer begins in I Corinthians 12: “And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly *teachers*, after that...” (vs. 28). Here, evangelists and pastors are left out and, in effect, lumped with “teachers.” Ephesians 4 also speaks of this responsibility, but adds a little more. Speaking of Christ, it says, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, *pastors and teachers* [note these are phrased together]” (vs. 11).

Let's summarize by comparing several passages: I Corinthians 12 indicates that teachers were primarily those below prophets. Ephesians 4 indicates that they were somewhat more attached to the duty of pastors. However, II Timothy 1:11 shows that Paul referred to himself as both an “apostle” and “teacher.” (You will momentarily see from Acts 13 that Paul and Barnabas were already teachers *before ordination*.) Therefore, this role can be carried out by those in any of the ministerial offices, and actually even by some who are especially effective at delivering knowledge, but who may not meet—or yet meet—the qualifications for ordination. Mr. Armstrong indicated that being a teacher is more associated with the rank of Preaching Elder, and yet none could doubt that Mr.

Armstrong himself, an apostle, certainly had the gift of teaching in an extraordinary way. Of course, so did Paul. But it appears at the end of Ephesians 4:11 that teachers were most similar to or associated with pastors, yet a little different, hence the word “and.”

Ordained by Ministers of Lower Rank?

Now for the second “inset.” In Chapter Three, we discussed a man in a small splinter who was “raised” to “evangelist” by three or four elders and one pastor in his group. As explained, most people know this is an invalid ordination, pure and simple. Actually, since Christ only authorizes ordination within the one, unified, organized Body He directs—and this is the *first* reason it is invalid—we must examine what then becomes a *second* reason this was a bogus ordination. It comes from Mr. Armstrong.

This group made a big issue that Acts 13 records the ordination of Paul and Barnabas to the higher office of apostle solely by the authority of the prophets and teachers who performed it. Were this true, the tail *can* wag the dog in God’s Church. God knows that what men give, they will believe they can later take away, if necessary. Continuing, this little group asserted that the apostles in Jerusalem were neither connected to nor involved in the ordination. Before looking at Mr. Armstrong’s quote debunking this, try to imagine the incredible confusion that would have existed all through the Church—and in every age—if *any minister* (or group of ministers) *anywhere* could ordain *anyone* at *any time* to *any rank*—and either above or below themselves—let alone to APOSTLE, and in this case TWO! Because God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), no reasonable mind could believe Him capable of permitting such appalling “nuclear” confusion.

Mr. Armstrong understood the basics about God’s government in matters such as this—the circumstances in Paul’s and Barnabas’ ordination—from as early as 1954. Incidentally, since we already saw that Paul knew himself to be a teacher, now note here that he was a teacher before he was ordained, thus proving that teachers are not *always* ordained men. Again, this was also true of Barnabas:

“Now *chapter 13*. At this time there were, at the Antioch Church, PROPHETS and TEACHERS. (No apostles.) But God’s authority was vested in the Church at Jerusalem, and authority there was vested in the APOSTLES, who undoubtedly, in the process of GOD’S GOVERNMENT, *had sent* the prophets to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were included among the TEACHERS at Antioch.”

“So here we see in operation THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD IN HIS CHURCH, *through* His human officers chosen by Him, headed by prophets sent by Apostles! *Verse 3*: ‘And when they had fasted and prayed, *and laid their hands on them*, they SENT THEM away.’

“THERE IT IS! Barnabas and Saul, renamed in verse 9 PAUL, were then and there OFFICIALLY ORDAINED, after fasting and prayer, BY THE LAYING ON OF HANDS of those in authority, SENT there by the Apostles, and as DIRECTED by the Holy Spirit! God did not ordain Paul privately, secretly or INDEPENDENTLY of HIS CHURCH. He was ORDAINED BY THE HAND OF MAN, according to GOD’S ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, as directed by Christ the HEAD of the Church, but THRU THOSE HUMAN INSTRUMENTS according to God’s own ORDER.”

“The Prophets with the teachers, who, under direct instruction from Christ, ordained Paul at Antioch, had come from Jerusalem. And in the operation of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD within His Church this could not have been except by authority from Peter and the Apostles. Nothing was at any time done contrary to, or in opposition to, Peter or the Apostles. There was always perfect harmony and cooperation.”

“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”,
GN, May, 1954

How could intelligent people suffer such incredible memory loss, or collapse of understanding, regarding something understood for so long—the apostles’ place of overall authority? This is the case when also the ministry, not just the lay people, “rule, judge and decide.” In fact, if the group of men involved in this supposed ordination of an evangelist had merely remembered what they were taught about the role and limits of prophets in the Church—involved in Acts 13—they could never have committed such a grievous error in their thinking about government...

PROPHETS

This chapter covers the office of *Prophet* and will be written almost entirely by Mr. Armstrong. My role has been basically that of assembling what he taught. So we will see that there is only a need for very minimal comments about what you will read.

This chapter paints a full picture of the role and work of prophets within God's Church and structure of government. Also, Chapter Seventeen of this book discusses the Two Witnesses, whom the Bible also identifies as "prophets." The subject of the Witnesses is large enough that it requires its own chapter, written in detail.

The Meaning of Prophet

This time, before examining what Mr. Armstrong taught about prophets, let's understand the Greek word translated into "prophet." Interestingly, much like its English equivalent, it is *prophetace*—pronounced pro-fay'-tace. It means "a foreteller [prophet], by analogy an inspired preacher, a poet." The Hebrew equivalent is virtually identical—"a prophet or (generally) inspired man."

Unlike the words for pastor and evangelist, found one and three times respectively, this word is found 160 times in the New Testament. This is largely because the New Testament Scriptures quote the Old Testament prophets so often. The apostles wrote in a fashion that could be described as intermingled with the office and writings of prophets.

You noticed that a prophet is an “inspired man,” but also one who “foretells,” meaning one who reveals things yet to come. This summarizes both of their chief duties. While much or even most of what the prophets recorded under inspiration had to do with prophecy—naming events before they happen—this was certainly not always the case with a prophet.

However, the apostle Peter said this of prophets: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God [prophets] spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:19-21).

Plainly then, prophets were inspired men *moved directly by God* through His Spirit to record Scripture that “you [we today] do well that [we] take heed” to carefully follow. (I might add, how much more the words of apostles?)

Great Servants

Many of the Bible’s *greatest* servants were prophets (and these men held *great office*). In fact, as mentioned, most of those whom God worked with in the Old Testament held this office. Their names jump from Scripture.

Peter offers additional, revealing insight into the work of prophets, and I have covered some of this in *Which Is the True Gospel?*, a booklet to those learning the truth for the first time, and in *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* to the splinters.

Now let’s read what Luke recorded in Acts: “And He [the Father] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of *all His holy prophets* since the world began...Yes, and *ALL the prophets* from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days” (3:20-21, 24).

This familiar passage is speaking about the coming “restoration (restitution) of all things,” this time not just of the one within the Church, but involving both truth to and God’s government over all nations. In fact, this was the constant theme preached by all of God’s servants in the Old Testament and New.

Notice that Samuel was a prophet. Obviously, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets. Everyone recognizes that Moses was not just a judge, but was also a prophet.

Can Announce Kingdom or Warn

It is obvious just from Acts 3 that prophets certainly can announce the kingdom of God, and they were directed to do this under Christ's supervision in the Old Testament. And the Two Witnesses will no doubt speak of the imminent kingdom of God, again under Christ's personal direction (Zech. 4:14).

Of course, Peter earlier mentioned that some prophets were used to record Scripture. But others were used to deliver powerful messages, almost invariably WARNINGS. The two extraordinary prophets at work during the Tribulation certainly will not record Scripture, but these men will deliver VERY POWERFUL WARNINGS—both to world leaders and probably to billions of people in most or all nations.

An interesting point to consider. The greatest warning work that the world has ever seen will be issued by Christ's one true Church prior to the Tribulation. Billions of people will be familiar with the message *that* Church will deliver. This becomes its own great foundation upon which these final prophets will build.

What Mr. Armstrong Taught

As you read Mr. Armstrong's quotes in the next sections, you will see that what he taught is perfectly consistent with the very straightforward role of prophets. It will be clear that he was correct yet again. The duties of this office were not many or complex. Since God would never have an office lower than that of a prophet direct a Work to all nations, it becomes evident that when there *is* a living prophet, there would have to be a living apostle directing the Church under Christ.

Several quotes will follow, some lengthy. They are easy to understand, and you will see why my commentary is minimal. The first, taken from an article previously quoted, shows Mr. Armstrong has understood this office from about the same time he understood his own. The reader should momentarily review I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 to recall that prophets are second in office under apostles. Now just let Mr. Armstrong teach:

“In these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. These prophets ranked second to the apostles in the framework of God's Church. (Eph. 4:11.) Their mission seems to have been to receive messages or prophecies direct from God, and to convey these messages from

God to the apostles or evangelists or elders. God's Word had not yet been completely committed to writing. The New Testament was still in process of being written. There is no evidence of the existence of any prophets in the Church since the New Testament was written.

"Every example in the New Testament, however, shows that Christ carried on affairs in His Church according to HIS GOVERNMENT, and in definite order. There is no doubt, therefore, that *these prophets were sent from Jerusalem BY AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES.*"

*"Must God's Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?",
GN, May, 1954*

Next comes the first of several quotes from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, which many will recall Mr. Armstrong calling his most important book, and he believed the most important since the Bible. It strengthens the above quote, but also demonstrates that he *did not move* from his previous understanding:

"There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God's Church today since the Bible for our time is complete). God's Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31."

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Mr. Armstrong continues his comments about the early role of prophets:

"Upon Adam's making this fateful and fatal decision, God CLOSED OFF THE TREE OF LIFE (Gen. 3:22-24) from the world sired by Adam, for 6,000 years. That is, except in the case of chosen prophets for the writing of the Bible, and of the Church called out of this world by Jesus Christ. But even Jesus said plainly: 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him' (John 6:44)."

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"Satan has blinded the minds of those of 'traditional Christianity' to the fact that God closed off the tree of life until the glorified Jesus Christ comes in supreme power and glory to restore the government of God over the whole earth. It was decreed, I repeat, that it was appoint-

ed to humans once to die, and after death is to come the resurrection to judgment (Heb. 9:27). Meanwhile the world of Adam is not being judged, though in the final judgment all shall be held to account for their sins.

“But, meanwhile, God has made certain exceptions for a definite purpose. God raised up prophets for the very purpose of being part of the foundation of the Church. Jesus called disciples OUT OF THIS WORLD to be taught to teach others and in the coming millennium of the restored kingdom of God, to rule and teach under King of kings Jesus, when the tree of life will be opened to all flesh.

“The Church was called to be trained to become rulers and teachers in the kingdom of God WHEN the tree of life shall be opened. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit has been closed to all but the prophets and the called-out-ones of the true Church. The prophet Joel foretold it shall come to pass afterward—after the 6,000 years of this world of Satan, that God will pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28).

“Meanwhile it was necessary for God’s purpose that the Holy Spirit be given to the prophets and those specially called out for training to become rulers and teachers under Christ, when the government of God is restored to the earth over all nations.”

pp. 131-132

“BUT—nevertheless, the Old Covenant with Israel at Sinai was a type and forerunner of the NEW COVENANT. It will be made with the New Testament CHURCH, which is the *spiritual* Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:6, 10).

“Meanwhile, an individual few in Old Testament Israel did obey God and by becoming God’s prophets, they became part of the *very foundation* of the New Testament CHURCH OF GOD. The Church is built on the solid FOUNDATION of the prophets (Old Testament) and apostles (New Testament), Jesus Christ himself being ‘the chief corner stone’ (Eph. 2:20).”

pp. 173-174

The latter part of the next quote ties the role of prophets to doing the Work. So many today have forgotten that Christians are not called to merely “get salvation.” Now read:

“As for humanity as a whole, it was appointed at the time of Adam’s sin for humans once to die and after death, by resurrection, shall come the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

“The Holy Spirit was not given to the people of ancient Israel. Since God called and raised up prophets for a specific purpose preparatory to the salvation of humanity, it was necessary, in order for them to perform their called function, that an exception be made and they be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

“In the same manner since God through Jesus was now calling out his Church for a specific function preparatory to the establishment of his kingdom and government over all nations, it was now necessary that the same exception be made for the Church and that they be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

“God emphatically did not empower the prophets with his Spirit merely for the purpose of giving them salvation. Likewise, God did not call saints out of this world merely for their salvation and entrance into his kingdom. Otherwise God would be a respecter of persons to have called the few of his Church at this time, while refusing to call others to salvation.”

pp. 214-215

Did Paul Agree With Mr. Armstrong?

We have seen that Mr. Armstrong stated prophets always report to apostles. Did Paul agree with him? Notice the qualifier that Paul, writing to the Corinthians, attaches to *any* who could be a prophet: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him *acknowledge* that the things that *I* write unto you are the COMMANDMENTS of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37). Paul is stating plainly that a prophet would have to acknowledge or accept—in effect, *submit to*—what he (Paul), an apostle, taught. The word “commandments” is used. This is further proof that any true prophet *must* come under an apostle.

Now notice the next verse in the same chapter, this time from the *Revised Standard Version*: “If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (vs. 38). Strong words! Anyone who thinks he is a prophet, but does not come under the authority of God *through* His apostles, should not be recognized by God’s people. In other words, he is *false*, and to be REJECTED!

Also, it is interesting to note another passage referenced earlier in the same chapter: “Let the prophets speak *two* or *three*, and let the other judge” (vs. 29).

It is natural to deduce from this instructive guideline that *one* prophet could not arise in the New Testament era without one or two *others* present to confirm what he taught. This would help alleviate any “confusion” (vs. 33) that could arise in the Church through a report

from one prophet only. And this could be one reason TWO prophets ["witnesses"] arise at the end of the age.

In the Foundation

Paul quotes from the prophets all through his epistles. Time and again, he draws upon what these men recorded. Not only is the Old Testament mostly recorded by prophets, it is three times as long as the New. But this gap in size is even greater when one considers that much of the New Testament consists of excerpts from the prophets, in effect, making the Old Testament even longer and the newly-inspired New Testament, in a way, shorter. (In fact, prophets recorded *much* more of the Bible than did apostles. And remember that Luke, the writer of one gospel and the book of Acts, was not even ordained.)

For instance, Paul quotes the Old Testament 21 times in I Corinthians, 10 times in II Corinthians and more than these combined in Romans. This demonstrates how the offices of prophet and apostle *come together* to form the New Testament.

The next quotes introduce the special roles of prophets with apostles in forming the very *foundation with Jesus Christ* upon which the Church stands. Clearly, these two offices are separated from the rest of Christ's ministry, and this is because of the extraordinary authority and/or service attached to them.

The reader should ask if it could be possible that Mr. Armstrong could not even understand how his office worked together with the only other one in the very foundation of the Church—and one that would be subordinate to his own. For Christ to permit such confusion at the top of the human hierarchy within His government is unimaginable.

Let's continue:

"So, at the very beginning of his earthly ministry, preparing the FOUNDATION for the Church, Jesus Christ chose his chief human apostle and the other original 11. They, with the prophets whose writings were preserved from the days of God's first chosen Congregation (and NATION), Israel, were to form the very FOUNDATION of God's CHURCH. Jesus himself was to be not only Founder but HEAD, and chief 'corner stone' of the CHURCH (Eph. 2:19-21; 5:23)."

pp. 221-222

"The Church could not be actually founded *UNTIL* Jesus had ascended and been glorified (John 7:37-39). But in a sense God began

calling out some to form the foundation of the Church with Abraham and the prophets of the Old Testament—even, perhaps, with Abel, Enoch and Noah (Eph. 2:20).

“And Jesus, immediately after qualifying by overcoming Satan, began calling out his future apostles. They were to form, with the prophets, the very FOUNDATION of the Church, under Christ who himself is the real foundation and HEAD of the Church (I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 5:23).”

“Such righteous men as Abel, Enoch and Noah undoubtedly were used to play some part in the ultimate creation of the KINGDOM OF GOD. But the Eternal began laying the actual foundation of that ultimate GOD FAMILY through the patriarch Abraham. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph formed part of that prefoundation.

“Then through Moses, God raised up the nation Israel—God’s first Congregation or Church. That Old Covenant Church was given God’s government, but NOT his Holy Spirit! Israelites were not begotten to become future GOD BEINGS. Yet ancient Israel fulfilled a necessary part in God’s supreme program.

“Nevertheless, during those years, God continued to call and prepare individual PROPHETS to become part of the FOUNDATION for his CHURCH.”

“Through the years from Abraham until Christ, God had called out of Satan’s world begotten and prepared PROPHETS, as the preliminary co-foundation of God’s CHURCH! Jesus himself is the main foundation.

“During Jesus’ 3½ year earthly ministry, he called out, chose and trained, to begin with, the second co-foundation, his original 12 apostles.”

“The FOUNDATION for the Church of God had been laid. Christ himself is the Head and chief cornerstone—the main foundation. His apostles, with the prophets, formed the remainder of the foundation.

“The apostles were chafing at the bit to GET STARTED—to go forth proclaiming the gospel message. But God has wisely used restraint, with patience, taking a proper step at a time. So Jesus cautioned his apostles to WAIT! ‘Tarry ye,’ he commanded (Luke 24:49), ‘in the city of Jerusalem, UNTIL ye be endued with power from on high.’

“Ten days later came the annual Day of Pentecost, originally named the Feast of Firstfruits (Num. 28:26).

“On that day the Holy Spirit came! On that day THE CHURCH WAS FOUNDED!

“That day symbolized the very firstfruits for God’s kingdom. God’s feast days picture God’s spiritual harvest. The very first portion of God’s spiritual harvest of humans finally to be born of God—made GOD BEINGS—is THE CHURCH! That’s why even those who shall be born into

the kingdom of God at Christ's return starting with ancient prophets are part of the CHURCH OF GOD. Even prophets of Old Testament times are part of the FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH (Eph. 2:19-21)."

pp. 230-234

Let's understand what Mr. Armstrong was saying. The reason *only* prophets and apostles form the foundation of the Church with Christ is because THESE TWO OFFICES—prophets of the Old Testament through their writings, and the apostles of the New Testament through their over-all supervision of all teaching to the Church—are the ONLY OFFICES that God uses to bring truth to the Church. (More correctly, prophets bring truth to Scripture or to apostles, and apostles take it to the Church.) This is why they work so closely together, in complete harmony, as will occur *one final time* before the age is complete.

The reader simply must comprehend this. And it is *its own* very important truth standing among the many other truths of the Bible. Those who will not grasp this understanding will never recognize the certainty of Christ's *voice* from the *hissings* of clever deceivers.

Dispelling a Notion

Many have attacked Mr. Armstrong by saying, "Mr. Armstrong was a *false prophet*." These people ought to at least be smart enough to claim he was a false *apostle*, because he never said he was a prophet, and in fact he was *not* a prophet in any sense. Of course, people have in mind that he "set dates" and that the events he supposedly "prophesied" would occur on these dates did not come to pass. Mr. Armstrong never *prophesied* or *foretold*, but rather only speculated, and over time he grew out of even the tendency to put too narrow a range of years on when certain conditions or events might occur.

The reader should note that the apostle Paul believed that the Second Coming of Christ would occur in his own lifetime (I Thes. 4:15). Since he was off by almost 2,000 years—TWO THOUSAND YEARS!—and Mr. Armstrong miscalculated certain events of *much less importance* by only a FEW YEARS, why do the same people not believe Paul to be a false prophet?

As an aside, how many times have you found *yourself* speculating about how much time may remain before the Great Tribulation occurs? How often have you watched world news, or the drama of current events unfolding before you, and mused to yourself, "I wonder if we have 10 years left," or "Could we possibly have five to seven years left?", or

“When will earthquakes, famines, pestilence, droughts or the ‘famine of the word’ begin?”, or “When will Europe unite and the beast and false prophet appear?” Were you a false prophet on such occasions?

Many have been the times I speculated about these things—and so have you. I would hate for anyone to look at what I have said—and preached!—over a period of decades about when I thought things might “come to an end.” I have more than once speculated aloud in sermons, Bible studies and meetings about when I thought—more like hoped, as Paul did—that prophecy was coming to a head. Who can blame Mr. Armstrong for wishing “Thy kingdom come” any more than could Paul be blamed for the same thing? Which of us have not prayed for this countless times—and then looked for corroboration?

Mr. Armstrong’s Admission

Here is what Mr. Armstrong said, and notice what he states about the only kind of “prophets” alive at the end of the age:

“Emphatically I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks specially and directly, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new and special instruction direct from God—separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I never have claimed to be.

“There is no such human prophet living today!”

“The Bible is the written Word of God—and, for our time now, it is COMPLETE! Never have I believed or claimed that God reveals to me new truths not contained in the Bible—in addition to, or apart from the Bible.”

“Let’s take a look at the Church of God of the first century, as we find it revealed in the Book of Acts, beginning from the day of Pentecost, 31 A.D. The Bible was not fully written—only the Old Testament—in 31 A.D. God then was still communicating new truth, instruction and knowledge directly and personally to prophets. As the Church progressed, it was the function of a prophet to communicate to the apostles special messages, which God had personally revealed to them. Others were inspired in the writing of the books of the New Testament.

“So we read, in Acts 11:28 and 21:10-11, of the prophet Agabus. But today we have the COMPLETE Word of God, for our time, in the Bible. There are no such prophets—except false ones.”

Personal, Tomorrow’s World, Feb. 1972

Prophets in the New Testament Era

In the Old Testament, the human instruments God used were sometimes patriarchs, judges, kings, priests, etc. But the Bible shows that most of the servants God used in ancient Israel were prophets. Although it appears that these prophets carried out independent commissions from each other, they worked *directly* under the Apostle Jesus Christ.

Many assume prophets of the New Testament also functioned independently. This is not true, before or after Christ built His Church.

First notice reference to the prophetess Anna. Jesus' parents took Him to the temple where He met her, and she "...spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

During the first century and the beginning years of God's Church, prophets occasionally appeared. Notice Acts 11:27-28: "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth [drought] throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." He also foretold that Jews in Jerusalem would constrain Paul and deliver him to the Gentiles (21:10-11).

Acts 13:1 references "prophets and teachers" ordaining Paul and Barnabas, and 15:32 speaks of Judas and Silas as also being prophets, and "chief...among the brethren" (vs. 22), but working alongside the apostles Paul and Barnabas.

Some see John the Baptist as *only* a prophet (Luke 1:76) since he came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah. But John's ministry was intended to represent a turning point in how God worked with His people: "For all the prophets and the law [O.T. Scriptures] prophesied *until* John" (Matt. 11:13). And the Bible also calls John "*more* than a prophet" (Luke 7:26).

By the time most of the New Testament was written and compiled, but not yet canonized, the only references to prophets were of false ones. When the apostles Peter, John and Jude wrote their general epistles, there were no references to *any* active prophets. But John did record that "*false* prophets" had become a major obstacle for the Church (1 John 4:1). Peter compared false teachers to "false prophets" and Jude referenced "filthy dreamers," those who might be akin to false prophets.

Consistent with this, modern experience demonstrates that those presenting *their own* credentials as prophets among the splinters and in the world are invariably false, do not work *together* and, invariably, are in *disagreement* in the ideas they spread.

Over time, in the New Testament period, *true* prophets of God seemed to play no role. This makes its own statement about how, with the appearance of apostles, this office would largely pass from the scene until the very final years of the end time.

Time and again, and we have seen this, Mr. Armstrong spoke and wrote about the role of apostles and prophets, and how they worked together. I have reviewed a near endless number of cases in which Mr. Armstrong discusses how these functioned *together*. This alone tells the astute person that the role of prophets was something Mr. Armstrong had carefully studied—and well understood. He knew exactly what he was saying and that it was the truth of the Bible.

No Room for Doubt

Two final quotes from Mr. Armstrong finish painting the picture of this second highest office in the Church, and whether there have been prophets later, after the early New Testament period. Do you see room for any true prophets today (other than the Witnesses and the final “prophet Elijah” – Mal. 4:5) in his statements?:

“The Church of God is founded on the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. The PROPHETS upon whom the Church is founded are NOT New Testament prophets. Only four are mentioned—and NOT ONE OF THEM contributed any doctrines or beliefs to the Church—but the apostles did, and they quoted at great length from so-called ‘Old Testament’ prophets.”

“Now God Speaks to You Ministers,” GN, Oct.-Nov. 1979

“The Church of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets—Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. The prophets who form part of the very foundation are the OLD TESTAMENT prophets, for the apostles’ teachings, and New Testament writings, are quite largely built on the Old Testament prophets.

“There were NO NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS WHO CONTRIBUTED any doctrines or teachings to the Church.”

“Non-Tithing is Stealing,” WN, July 9, 1979

Having been literally *forced* to research the office of Prophet at extraordinary length, I can confirm Mr. Armstrong’s statements. Only one office remains for examination, that of Mr. Armstrong and all those directly commissioned as ambassadors of the gospel, and personally sent by Jesus Christ...

APOSTLES

We are now ready to examine the final and highest office described in the New Testament—that of APOSTLE. Because of the extraordinary weight of authority and responsibility that this office carries, as well as what is at stake in identifying a true apostle from those who are false, it is best to cover the many aspects of this office in two chapters, with then a third chapter looking at the office from another and very sobering perspective. Since this office is only rarely given, when circumstances both in the Church and the world require, it must receive special attention.

Only Two Purposes

The first chapter will cover two basic points. First, similar to the other offices, it will explain in the simplest terms exactly what *is* an apostle. It should be clear by now what *is* a deacon, what *is* an elder, what *is* a pastor, etc. But the highest office has yet to be made plain in meaning and purpose. It will become obvious that much more rides on correctly discerning this one.

The second purpose of the chapter is that, since all other offices in the ministry derive their authority from the one or ones who would hold this office, it becomes crucial to understand how to KNOW with absolute certainty when one truly has this authority. Knowing what an apostle is holds little value if we cannot know for certain whether a man occupies

this office. Therefore, we must give extra attention to *how* a true apostle can be *recognized*. In other words, how do we correctly distinguish when *Christ* has sent a man—when one *has* been “given” to be an apostle (Eph. 4:11)—from an imposter?

These two elements of the office are separate from the work and duties—the level of authority and responsibilities—that an apostle carries within the government of God. Like every other office, those who are apostles have certain tasks to perform, and these will be the subject of Chapter Twelve and some of Thirteen.

What Mr. Armstrong Explained

The short form of the definition of an apostle is very easy to understand. What it actually means is more involved, and to be covered later. Here are just three of many places in which Mr. Armstrong offered at least the most basic definition:

“Notice carefully. This GREAT COMMISSION to be SENT FORTH with Christ’s Gospel Message was given only to those who were apostles – and the word ‘apostle’ means ‘one sent forth’ with the Message!”

“...The GREAT COMMISSION was given to the APOSTLES – those ‘sent forth’ with the Message – NOT the lay members of the Church.

“What, then? Did not the lay members have any part in proclaiming the gospel? Definitely they did, as we have seen. Their part was to *back up* the apostles – stand behind them with their prayers, encouragement, tithes and offerings. They are PART OF A WELL ORGANIZED TEAM, as we shall show in more detail.”

“Jesus Christ specially called His disciples, trained them to become His apostles. To THEM – the apostles – the ones ‘sent forth’ with His Gospel message – He gave THE GREAT COMMISSION – *not* to the laity of the Church as a whole.

The Incredible Human Potential, pp. 117-118

“The word *apostle* means ‘one sent forth.’”

“The New Testament Church of God received all its teachings, practices, customs, FROM THE APOSTLES, with Peter chief over all the others.”

“Yet the apostles were the teachers, who instilled in the Church the BELIEFS, TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS of the Church. And all members of the Church were required by God to BELIEVE and SPEAK THE SAME THING!”

“THERE WAS NO DOCTRINAL BOARD! The teachings of the Church did not come from a COUNCIL of ministers and/or lay members, who voted on what to believe.” [Author’s note: Those in UCG and COGwa should review this statement, and so many others like it.]

“How Christ Gives The Church Its Beliefs,” GN, Nov. 20, 1978

“In Mark 3:14, 16, we read: ‘And he [Jesus] ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach... And Simon he surnamed Peter.’ A surname is, according to Webster, ‘an added name derived from occupation.’

“The surname Peter had for centuries been a surname or TITLE, designating a religious LEADER, HEAD or HEADQUARTERS. Peter was the first and chief apostle. An apostle is ‘one sent forth to proclaim or preach.’”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 221

Looking Closely at the Name

There are a number of other places in this volume where Mr. Armstrong explains that the word apostle connotes one sent by Christ. Therefore, it is not necessary to include a large number of additional quotes saying about the same thing. And there is certainly nothing complicated about “one sent forth.”

Yet again, now for the last time—although we will see the basic meaning and value of understanding key words work with yet other special New Testament *duties*—we have de-mystified another ministerial office. The top human position under Christ is revealed to be the office or rank of “one sent.” While the definition is simple to remember, it is of tremendous importance to grasp—to truly comprehend—in preparation to go on to understand the responsibilities and functions of this office.

The Greek word for apostle is much like that of prophet in that it is similar to the English in sound. It is *apostolos* (a’-pus-tol’-os), and means literally “a delegate, an ambassador of the gospel, officially a commissioner of Christ [with miraculous powers], messenger, he that is sent.”

This fuller definition reveals that those who hold this office are *directly appointed* by Christ and sent to carry out what will be seen to be its extraordinary duties. An apostle is Christ’s *personal* representative or, in effect, he is *His* delegate, ambassador, commissioner and messenger—carrying *His* personal and specific appointment, and *His* AUTHORITY, and he does things completely different from, and even

more specific than, any other office. This office is also *sealed* by Christ, in a very real sense, with special, miraculous power. This power, including signs, wonders and miracles, will be more fully addressed in Chapter Eighteen.

We should also note—yet one last time—that Mr. Armstrong also correctly explained the definition of the office *he* held. We should say one final time that he “got it right.” This will be seen to carry much greater importance when we move away from what *is* an apostle, and how you *know* when one holds this rank, to Mr. Armstrong’s authority and accuracy in defining exactly what his office was supposed to DO—how it was to FUNCTION!

This will take on increasing importance because of what will be covered in Chapter Thirteen. The reader should begin to prepare now for very serious understanding to be brought later. The weight and authority behind this understanding *must* be established in this chapter and the next for the reader to appreciate what he will learn about those who confuse or take to themselves responsibilities *not* given them. This aspect of the subject is not as pleasant to discuss, but it is of equal importance. Chapter Thirteen examines it.

Whose Apostle?

A point of clarification is necessary before continuing: Human apostles are sent or given their office by Christ (Eph. 4:11), not the Father, because Christ is the Head of the Church, which is *His* Body. Thus, New Testament apostles are *Christ’s* apostles, not the Father’s. But it was mentioned earlier that Jesus Christ was Himself sent to earth by the Father to fulfill His purpose and to be Head of the Church. The Bible calls Christ “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession...” (Heb. 3:1), and therefore He is to be thought of as the *Father’s* Apostle. But He could also be thought of as *God’s* Apostle, because the Father is God.

You may recall that Mr. Armstrong referred to himself in the latter years of his life as *Christ’s* apostle. He originally referenced himself as *God’s* apostle. While not technically wrong, because Christ is also God as much as is the Father, Mr. Armstrong largely moved away from referencing himself as God’s apostle.

In summary, Christ is the Father’s Apostle, human apostles are Christ’s apostles, and both Christ and human apostles are God’s apostles, though the latter should be thought of, and more generally referenced as, sent by Christ.

Original Apostles Were Sent

History records that the first-century apostles *were* sent by Christ to various remote parts of the world. For instance, the apostles Matthew, Thomas and Bartholomew served in the far-flung region of Parthia. The ministry of Thomas remains the best documented to this day. After taking the gospel to the tribes of Israel in Parthia, his ministry later included India and even China.

While Philip and Andrew were sent to Scythia, the largest number of apostles during this period were directed to Britain. Besides Peter, who coordinated the apostles in all regions, we also find Simon the Zealot and James, son of Alphaeus, serving there. The following quote confirms the presence of some of these (as well as others) in Britain: “The true Christian Religion was planted here [Britain] most anciently by Joseph of Arimathea, Simon Zelotes, Aristobulus, by St. Peter, and St. Paul, as may be proved by Dorotheus, Theodoretus and Sophronius [highly acclaimed historians of that period]” (*Remains of Britain*, William Camden, 1674, p. 5). Without question, these first-century apostles were sent to take the gospel to the whole world, following Christ’s commission (Mark 16:15).

There is evidence of other apostles in the following centuries, such as Polycarp, who followed in John’s footsteps, and Polycrates, Polycarp’s successor, also an apostle. Other apostles appear to have been raised up in the Smyrna era, as well as in Pergamos. In the early Thyatiran era, we observe the disdain of the Catholic Abbot of Clugny as he derided two men known to have fulfilled the office of apostle during the early 1100s. He sneered, “Has the whole world been so blinded...[that it should] have to wait so long for you, and choose Peter of Bruis and Henry, his disciple, as exceeding recent apostles, to correct the long (standing) error” (*Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, lesson 51, p. 6). Of course, Peter Waldo (1161-1218) was renowned as an apostle during the Thyatiran era, and was probably the most well-known man to hold this office between the second and twentieth centuries. The Work he led made a lasting impact on Western continental Europe.

Each of these men—sent by Christ—faithfully completed his commission. Students of history may learn more through our informative, well-researched book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!*

We—You—*Must* Know!

From this point forward we will address the other central element of this chapter—HOW does one know that a man has been given the office of apostle? (Of course, how also would *that man* know?) Christ could never make what is seen to be such an extraordinary personal appointment, and then not have told His Church, meaning individual members and ministers within it, including those He would call later, how to be certain that He had done this.

Think of the matter this way. What would be the point of Christ appointing a man to an office or responsibility—*any* office or responsibility—and then not have revealed to the Church how to know that he had—and how to distinguish him from imposters? What if the office were so broad in scope and authority that it affected every possible aspect and element concerning the functioning of the Church around the world—what it believed, including doctrines and traditions, its commissions, who held offices at every level within it, including who became ministers and who did not, who made various levels of decisions and when, as well as who had final authority over God's tithes, among others? How is the Church to know to follow him? What about other ministers knowing to defer to one with such extraordinary and all-encompassing authority?

It is obvious that an immense amount is at stake in being able to recognize when a man holds this office. Christ could never leave the means for knowing in doubt. He would have to establish the criteria in a way that none who truly knew where and how He was at work could be confused or mistake this. And the means he presented would have to be above debate, crystal clear. He has done that, and the formula is like the very definition of the office itself—simple and yet profound. A series of quotes will make this statement easy to appreciate.

Mr. Armstrong did not understand his office all at once. While he came to realize that he held the office of apostle rather suddenly, he did not understand all the particulars that pertained to it in the same instant. This took time, and involved a process of growth in knowledge and understanding. There is not time or space in this book to tell the *whole* story, but at least a little is helpful and interesting.

Mr. Armstrong has explained that the Philadelphian era began in October of 1933. From this time forward, he assumed he held the office of Evangelist, and you will read his explanation, as well as why he believed this. About 19 years later, in the fall of 1952, he concluded that he had been wrong, and this process of realization began about a year earlier.

All-Important Fruit

The first quote is presented as background about the period before Mr. Armstrong's full realization. Before looking at how to identify an apostle, look at this one statement explaining some history:

"In a special group festival held at Belknap Springs, in Oregon, in the autumn of 1951, I was shocked – and so were those there – to hear Herman L. Hoeh, then recently graduated from Ambassador College, say with conviction, as if with authority, 'Mr. Armstrong IS NOT A PROPHET – but a man called to the same kind of commission as the original evangelists and apostles of the first century Church of God – to proclaim the Message – the Announcement – the Good News of the Kingdom of God – the Message that Christ brought from God and taught His disciples.'"

"Personal from Herbert W. Armstrong," TW, Feb. 1972

The next quote offers beginning insight into the all-important criterion for how to recognize where God is at work. Actually, as you proceed, it should be obvious what is the way to discern many vital things, including where Christ is leading, where is His true Church, who holds offices within His ministry, who then holds the highest office in it, as well as various other key points inseparable from God's government. Do not miss the beauty—and simplicity—of what follows.

Let's begin to look through the window of what God tells us is how to know all of these things:

"If you've watched the growth and development of this work for any length of time—the rich and abundant harvest of precious souls being reaped by it—the miracles of healing and changed lives God is performing with and thru it, then you'll recognize, and you'll KNOW—and exult in joy and great rejoicing in the recognition—that THIS IS INDEED THE VERY WORK OF GOD!

"You'll know it by its FRUITS—rich, abundant, continuous."

"And Now...ON TO EUROPE!", GN, April 1952

Fruits and the Work

The Work of God is known by its fruits—Mr. Armstrong adds, "rich, abundant, continuous"! It is that simple, *if* the reader will just let himself accept AGAIN what he once professed to believe and understand. Of

course, not many would really doubt Mr. Armstrong's statement. Some might question *how* to distinguish the fruits that are important to look for and examine—and some *are* struggling with this distinction because they have not taken the time to carefully examine what the Bible reveals. But very few who are true Christians would be so far removed in thinking from the past that they would completely forget or challenge the basic premise of his statement. And discussing *how* to distinguish fruits is also vital, and this will not be left out of the equation.

As a side note, in April 1952, the then Radio Church of God was a very, very tiny Church. This did not keep Mr. Armstrong from declaring its fruits to be as he did. We can surely say the same, since The Restored Church of God and the Work done here is *vastly*—VASTLY!—bigger than God's Church and Work of that early time.

What Any Would Look For

Let's continue by looking at the world at large. It is well-known that before companies hire applicants, investors buy stocks, breeders buy animals, colleges accept students, sports teams draft players, the military promotes officers, and before a person would make the decision to marry, as well as in a host of other situations, carefully examining the fruits of the person or object under consideration is the approach practiced in virtually *every* important decision *in the world*. This is especially true of those in which miscalculation can be costly.

Now ask: What could be more costly, and eternally so, than following a false apostle? Following a leader who one thinks is of God, but who is really of Satan—in other words, *mistakenly* thinking that one is following a man toward the KINGDOM OF GOD and very SALVATION!—is the greatest miscalculation one can make. It is of absolutely paramount importance to the Christian and the Church to be sure that he and it are not following a charlatan. How many thousands miscalculated with Mr. Armstrong's successor?

The next long quote begins to introduce the vital connection to leaders within God's Church. It begins with a little extra background and setup that is repeated from the last chapter because it will help you to appreciate the extraordinary picture of what follows. Mr. Armstrong makes plain how it was *known* that *he* was an apostle. You should note that Mr. Armstrong offers a kind of incidental, additional description of the office of evangelist, consistent with what we saw he said about this office earlier, and at the same time consistent with his own duties when he thought he held this office (the subhead included is his):

“We find *prophets* mentioned in the historic portions of the New Testament, but they...carried no authority. The New Testament Scriptures were not yet written. God used these prophets to convey messages direct from Him to the apostles. We find no prophets in the church today. The written Scriptures are now complete. There seems no need for prophets today. Furthermore, it is GOD who *sets them* in His Church, and if there are none, it is because GOD has not seen fit to set them in His Church. That is GOD’s responsibility, not ours.”

“So, then, that leaves us with the executive and administrative spiritual offices in the Church. These offices of authority, then, are first, *apostle*; second, *evangelist*; third, *pastor*; fourth, *teacher*.

“Christ is the *living* HEAD of the Church!

“HE sets the apostle in office.

All Offices Again Restored

“Until the past very few years there was no real evidence that God had set anyone in the office of apostle in His Church today. *Men* cannot elect or place in office an apostle. And the only way men can *know* when God has set one in that office is BY THE FRUITS.

“My personal office, from the beginning of the ‘Philadelphia’ Church era, appeared to be that of evangelist. At that time God had used me to preach the Gospel in several towns and places, to bring numbers to repentance and conversion, to heal the sick, to raise up churches in several localities, and to ordain elders and deacons in them. But the work itself had not grown to the point where there were other evangelists whom I should send to raise up churches and ordain elders and deacons.

“The first proclamation before the Church that God had filled the office of apostle was made by Herman Hoeh in his sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles, at Belknap Springs, Oregon, in 1951. He had not consulted me. I had no inkling of what he was to say. At the time his words hit my startled ears like an atomic bomb, and my first impulse was to deny and correct his statement immediately. Only propriety restrained this impulse. I felt Mr. Hoeh was just a little young, and carried away with himself. Never in my life had I thought of occupying such an office.

“But in the light of events, the fact of how God has set up His Church today has become self-evident to all. It is GOD’s doing. If one does find, unexpectedly, that God has set him in such an office, there is only one choice—he must accept it with full humility, realizing personal

lack, and surrendering the self totally to GOD as an instrument in HIS hands, relying wholly upon God for guidance and every power and need.”

“*Six More Ministers Now Ordained*,” GN, Feb.-Mar. 1955

Was Mr. Armstrong Ordained “to Apostle”?

The history just given is very interesting, and probably unfamiliar to most who read it. But it is plain.

Mr. Armstrong recognized that it was solely by *fruits* that he was an apostle! The last paragraph in the quote carries a message. It becomes a kind of “boilerplate” or “template”—a clear instruction—for any who might come later and find just as unexpectedly that he held this office!

Let’s understand. Mr. Armstrong never tied his own recognition that he held the office of apostle to an ordination service specifically designating him *to this rank*. As with Paul, this would have to have occurred under the direction of *other living apostles*. Men of lower rank could not raise him to one above themselves.

Remember that there were no apostles in Sardis. Certainly the leaders there were not authorized to do what the prophets and teachers who ordained Paul and Barnabas were not authorized to do. This means Mr. Armstrong could *only* have become an apostle at some point *later* when CHRIST decided it was time to place him into that office.

Peter Waldo was an apostle, but there is no evidence that there was *another* apostle prior to his time who could have ordained him. If there were such a man, what apostle would have ordained *that* man, and so forth on back, ultimately, and necessarily, to the original apostles? Make yourself confront this question.

The point becomes unmistakably clear. Those who believe that an apostle must be ordained *by an apostle* never understood Mr. Armstrong, and believe similarly to Catholics. Think! It is the Catholics with their popes who believe in what is referred to as the “doctrine of succession”—that each pope must be succeeded by another, and that there can be no interim without another pope. But even they do not have the pope choose his successor, or at least only very rarely farther back in history. The problem is that Catholics do not really *act* as if Christ picks their popes either, but rather, similar to UCG and COGwa through their Councils of Elders selecting presidents, believe that the voting members of the College of Cardinals do this.

How many will connect this parallel to *which spirit*—I John 4:6!—led UCG and COGwa to pattern themselves so closely to ROME?

Mr. Armstrong carefully explained that he thought he was an evangelist for at least 19 years. No serious person can believe God would allow him to hold an office—let alone the highest in the Church—for perhaps a full time cycle (1933-1952), and not at some point permit him to know that he held a higher office! (His ordination was actually *28 months earlier*, in June 1931, increasing the years to 21.)

How would Mr. Armstrong know that his responsibilities had changed *if* God did not *at some point* plainly REVEAL to him the office he held? For Mr. Armstrong to proceed to the extraordinary authority necessary for the even more extraordinary ministry that he was sent to carry out, he would have to have been assured at some point that he was not acting *presumptuously*—but rather *within* his full parameters of God-ordained authority in the Church and Work! To leave His servant permanently twisting in the dark would have been cruel at best, torture at worst—and it simply would have made no sense.

Mr. Armstrong understood that Jesus Christ, and He alone, gave him the office he held. Of course, Mr. Armstrong *was* ordained by the Sardis ministry. But that ordination is not from where he derived his *apostolic* authority. The FRUITS, and nothing else, demonstrated that he was, in every sense, “one sent” BY JESUS CHRIST!

Another significant distinction must be made here regarding the fruits of a man, and whether God is using him. All fruits must be determined by a set of criteria subject to independent investigation and corroboration. A man’s assertions about himself play virtually no role in the examination. Christ would never require people to simply “believe the man” as sufficient grounds to follow him.

A person would have to be able to go to a *set standard* and confirm or deny the man’s spiritual credentials. These certainly would—and could—*never* have anything to do with what “people say.” Human beings are capable of saying anything and usually do. And again, this can include any given man speaking to the question of his own authority—in other words, why he should be considered an apostle, prophet or in any other office.

So what then *is* the fruit of a man’s ministry? First, and foremost, he does not, and would never, compromise the truth of God. This towers above every other point. But there are an array of standards, such as steady growth in size of both the Church and the Work, *real* conversions occurring, amount and quality of literature prepared to do the Work, amount and quality of literature to properly feed the flock, miracles—healings, demons cast out, and others—and that he is fulfilling, and willing and *able* to fulfill, ALL of the duties of an apostle, to be covered in

the next chapter. Of course, it would be absolutely essential that the man would have a thorough and solid understanding about God's government. After all, he could not possibly be used to *lead* a government that he did not *comprehend*! Nor could he announce its arrival to the world.

Not Perfect

The authenticity of an apostle, or any minister, does not turn on whether he is or has been perfect. Since no one is perfect—without sin (Rom. 3:23; John 8:7)—this could never be the standard by which fruits are assessed. And God knows this. Many have felt that Mr. Armstrong could not have been an apostle because of what “people reported” about him. While he made mistakes, and certainly committed sins—nothing remotely close to what is reported—none of these could alter the office he held.

Let's consider some of God's greatest servants. The apostle Peter was guilty of blatant racism, and Paul addressed this with him face-to-face in Galatians 2. It is recorded there for us to see that even the chief apostle was not perfect, and even far from it. Never mind the things that Peter did during his training, *before* receiving God's Spirit. And what is recorded about Paul, regarding persecuting the Church *before* he was converted, could only be described as horrifying (Phil. 3:6; I Tim. 1:15).

How many would follow Noah today if they knew he got drunk and was sodomized by his grandson? Yet, he is listed with Job and Daniel as “righteous men” of truly extraordinary spiritual stature (Ezek. 14:14, 20). Then there is the terrible attitude reflected throughout a large book of the Bible almost entirely about Job's self-righteousness.

How many would follow Abraham today as the father of the faithful if they knew that he had lied *twice* out of fear regarding Sarah his wife—and offered her to a foreign king for sexual favors in order to save his own skin? Most would think this man not to be faithful *at all* let alone the *father* of ALL who would have faith (Rom. 4:16) for the 7,000-year duration of God's Plan.

It is evident that Moses had a severe anger problem—it kept him from the Promised Land in his lifetime—and he lacked faith in God's ability to use him before Pharaoh. He was also a stutterer and previously killed an Egyptian in a violent encounter. And much later, he wished to die because carrying on seemed too difficult. In stubborn rebellion, Jonah also wished to die. So did Elijah, and so did Job. The autobiography reports the same of Mr. Armstrong. Of course, all repented and kept going forward.

Certainly Samuel, Aaron and Eli were not renowned for their child-rearing skills—look at their sons.

Finally, there was David. Where do we start with him? He was guilty of adultery, the subsequent murder of the victimized husband, who was one of his most faithful servants—even requiring complicity of other faithful servants to pull it off—numbering the armies, not to mention the fact that *he* was also apparently less than the best parent. And yet—may I be facetious?—his “only reward” in the kingdom of God is that he will lead *all* the tribes of Israel with the very 12 apostles themselves reporting to him.

No, Mr. Armstrong was not perfect, and neither is any apostle. His fruits were discerned by the things listed in the paragraph across the page, not someone’s list of real or perceived sins. In any event, the reader is always left to ask, “Is Christ using the man?” If He is, if the man *has been sent* to this high office, and to great responsibility carrying out great commissions, his validity does not depend on whether *people* think he “passes muster.” Critics would do better to ask if *Jesus Christ* seems to be pleased with His selection, and to focus such scrutiny on evaluation of their *own lives*. (It is vital to read our book *Should Accusers Be Answered?* to get a great deal more insight into this subject. You may also wish to read the thorough brochure *Do You Know “David Pack”?* – *My Life and Ministry—Rumors and Lies vs. Facts and Truth*. For the fuller picture, my two-volume biography is also available.)

Extra Insight

The next quote is longer and comes from a sermon Mr. Armstrong gave in 1978, just as he was beginning to put the Church back on track. It is included because it offers several helpful insights beyond just the question of his office. I urge you to read it very carefully and to “listen” to Mr. Armstrong’s words.

Obviously, any emphasis in his speaking is mine, and I tried to use capital letters and exclamation points where Mr. Armstrong was using power or strong inflection. Sometimes he thundered in this excerpt as loud as I *ever* heard him, and I only wish every reader could hear what is written with Mr. Armstrong’s own emphasis:

“‘Then spake Haggai the Eternal’s messenger in the LORD’S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, says the Eternal.’ Look brethren, if we are only with Him, let me tell you the living Christ is with us.

“We noticed attacks within the public press. Not only our two newspapers here in Los Angeles and Pasadena, but in *Time* magazine, and

other magazines all over the world. There's been a lot about us in the daily newspapers in London, England. And the people read about us all over. But let me tell you, whenever that happens, I do not worry about it. But I do go to the throne of grace. I do go to my knees and go to Jesus Christ the living Head of this Church. And He has delivered us every time. And He will. But we have got to believe that He is living—that He is here!

“While I am thinking about it, let me tell you something else that has come to my mind. I am going to have to write something, get into *The Good News* on this line, and try and get it to the whole church as soon as I can. There are too many people that are wondering: Now who is going to take over if Mr. Armstrong dies? I'm supposed to die right away. Because, of course, a lot of people do die before they are as old as I am now. But whether or not I die is going to depend on whether the living Christ lets me, or whether He keeps me alive. And maybe we will see something about that before we get through right here.

“But, someone says, Well, have I appointed someone to follow to take my place? The answer is NOoooo! That is not my place to do! I have no authority to do any such thing! You know, it's a great deal like the woman who was the mother of two of Christ's apostles, when she came to Jesus, she said, ‘Well Lord, when You come into Your kingdom, I want to make a request. Please let one of my sons be on Your right hand and the other on Your left hand when You come into your kingdom.’ He says, ‘Madam, you don't know what you're talking about. That is not Mine to decide. I have nothing to say about it. My Father only. God the Father will decide who will be on My right hand and My left. I can't do it. That's out of My hands.’

“Let me tell you. The Head of the Church is alive! Do you believe it? Jesus Christ! Do we believe He lives? Do we believe He is on the job? Do we believe that if I need correction that He is able to see it and give it? Well, let me tell you I believe it. I believe it through and through, and I fear it. I tremble at it. If anything should happen to me, and it will only happen if God allows it, God can keep me alive as long as that is necessary. And He will. As long as He feels it's necessary. And I don't think He is going to take me from this Work until this job is finished. But if He should, if I should be wrong about that, can you trust the Living Christ to provide the man that will take over? If you'd ask me to choose, I couldn't do it. I don't know who to choose, right now. And I have no authority to do it.

“This is going to be a test of your faith! Or do you want to take it into your own hands and know who is going to be someone you can

know in advance, someone you could approve, someone you could vote for? Oh, sometimes I say shame on us. Let's wake up.

"Let's see. See if I can find my place here. 'Then spake Haggai the Eternal's messenger in the Eternal's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, says the Eternal.'

"I think that's where I was. And we need to realize that He is with us. And He is going to take care of His part of it. I am not here because a lot of people decided to vote for me or put me here. You have nothing to do with me becoming God's apostle.

"Someone says to me, 'Well Mr. Armstrong, how do you know you're God's apostle? Did Christ appear to you, did He speak to you, did He say, Now, Herbert Armstrong I make you my apostle?' I answer, No.

"Did you know back in 1933 when this era of the Church was started that you were God's apostle or that you would be?' No, I didn't.

"Did you know how big or how great this work would be?' No, I didn't. I just knew that God had called me, and He was using me and I would go as far as he wanted me to go, no further and no less. Whatever that is. If it meant the whole world, I knew that I would be able to do it, because I would do it in the power and the strength of the living Christ.

"So then how do I know today? I will answer just as Jesus Christ answered when the messengers of John the Baptist came to Him and said, 'Well John wants to know, are you really the Messiah that was to come?' Jesus didn't say yes or no. He said, 'You go tell John what you hear and what you see being done. Go and show him the FRUITS of what you see coming from Me.' By their FRUITS you shall know.

"No, back in 1933 I didn't know. Well, how do I know now? Because I looked back in all these years, and I see the FRUITS. And you're here as part of it. You're part of the *evidence*. Because you're here. And I had something to do with that. And so did Jesus Christ. And He was using me. I didn't do it myself. And woe be to me if I ever take credit for doing it."

Sermon, July 21, 1978

The reader should consider rereading this excerpt for the incredible insight it offers. Take special note that Mr. Armstrong does not recount any kind of a separate ordination service designating him specifically to apostle that occurred in 1952. And there was no other unusual event described. He certainly never saw a "sign" indicating his office or heard a voice from heaven stating he was Christ's apostle.

Recall the string of questions that Mr. Armstrong offered for illustration. And notice that he simply recognized it was absolutely

apparent—obvious beyond all question—that Christ had been using him, as well as the only way that he knew this—FRUIT!

Even the *Ambassador-Spokesman Club* manual, read and studied by thousands of men, emphasized the importance of fruit under the section explaining that practicing God's government was a purpose of the club:

“Jesus told the apostles: ‘You have not chosen me, but I have CHOSEN you...’ (John 15:16).

“Throughout the Bible, we find that God's government is by *appointment, from the top down*.

“In this age, we in God's Church see *by the fruits* (Matt. 7:17) that God has chosen Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong as His chief human shepherd or *minister* in His Church. In like manner—according to their *fruits*—Mr. Armstrong has *appointed* others to positions of responsibility within the Work of God today.”

“Club members learn *how* God's government functions by an intimate contact with it through the club program. They are taught to look on *Christ* as the One who stands behind each club officer. By experience and *seeing* the ‘fruits,’ they learn that Christ *does* directly guide in the appointment of club officers.”

How many remember this central purpose of these clubs? The next quote, by Dr. Hoeh, confirms more of the definition and role of apostles:

“The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of God's Government. The church is composed of the *advance agents*, the emissaries, of that government. To inherit and rule in that kingdom we must come under the authority of the rule of God now, in this lifetime.”

“So there *are* differences in authority in God's government; some are *greater* than others; some are *chief*. But they act as *servants of God*, not as lords over God's heritage.

“Do we grasp the all-important significance of this teaching? Do we really understand the great meaning of it? Among God's people, in His church—our church—there are some who carry greater responsibility and authority. But they exercise their power as the servants of God for the other members of the church.”

“Christ directed the church through the apostles who were chosen directly by Him (Luke 6:13). The apostles were His *direct* representatives, His *delegates*, sent into the world as ambassadors *bearing authority*. The word *apostle* means ‘one sent bearing authority.’ The apostles

were instruments in Jesus' hands, through which He could spread the gospel, correct, reprove and lead the church."

"Jesus commissioned *the apostles* to preach the gospel *to the world* and gave them the assistance of evangelists. But He also told Peter to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17)."

"...Yet it was James—not the apostle James, but the brother of Jesus—who, in the capacity of *pastor* in authority over the other elders, voiced his decision (Acts 15:14)."

"Here, then, is the spiritual government of God in the early church plainly stated: The Father manifested His will to Jesus, the living Head of our church, Who in turn manifested His will to the apostles. They in turn instructed the evangelists in carrying out the gospel. The evangelists, together with the apostles, taught the elders who presided over the local congregations. In each congregation was a presiding pastor, usually with other elders, who taught the members. There was no membership politics, nor voting on church officials or doctrines. The elders *ruled* the local church, but *were not ruled by* the congregation or lay boards."

"...God, not man, decides who shall be given the responsibilities in carrying out His work.

Government in Our Church Today

"Down through the ages Jesus has chosen directly those who serve in the capacity of apostles—His direct representatives bearing His authority."

"But in our church, the church of God, *in which the government of God exists today*, Jesus has chosen Mr. Armstrong as His direct representative, as an ambassador of the Kingdom of God to the nations of this world, as a man through whom He can work in preaching and publishing the true gospel to the whole world. Mr. Armstrong's office carries with it divine authority, backed up by the *power of God*. Jesus has sent him to speak in His name and by His authority, and has given testimony to it *by the fruits which only God can produce*."

"...Jesus told John's disciples to LOOK TO THE FRUITS—the sick were being healed, the gospel of the kingdom was being preached (Luke 7:22). It is *by the fruits* that we recognize the office with which God has invested His direct representative.

"In the work of carrying the gospel to the nations, Mr. Armstrong has had to choose young men, as did the apostle Paul; and as God has given proof by their fruits, he has ordained them as ministers, with the authority of evangelists ministering to local churches and serving in

various other fields in our complex ministry of today when we must use the radio and the printing press.”

“How plain it is that *God* rules our church. The congregations are ruled by the elders, who are ruled by the evangelists, and they are ruled by the apostle who is ruled by Christ who is ruled by God! All offices are appointive, by a superior office. It is government from *God* down to each individual member in the church.”

*Herman L. Hoeh, “Government in Our Church,”
GN, August 1953*

It is evident from this longer statement that the Church once understood precisely how God’s government worked, and this bedrock of thinking began early in the 1950s. While it has become a matter of debate and doubt now—all because ravenous wolves, having nothing in Christ, entered the flock—it was once perfectly clear to all God’s people *how* Christ ruled in His Church. And this understanding was the norm for decades. In fact, this knowledge was still in place almost two years after Mr. Armstrong died. Here is what appeared in an article at that time:

“Just as the proofs in the life of Paul set him forth as an apostle of Jesus Christ, in our time others have also been used by God in powerful ways. Through one, Herbert W. Armstrong, the Worldwide Church of God was established. Through him...doctrines of God were restored to the Body of Christ...Through him, demons have been cast out, and many have been healed. Isn’t that the fruit, the seal, of apostleship?”

“Several years before his death he finally recognized by the fruits that God had appointed him an apostle.” [Author’s note: You have seen Mr. Armstrong actually first understood his office over 33 years before his death.]

*L. Leroy Neff, “How Many Apostles Were There?,”
GN, Sept.-Oct. 1987*

The Seal of Paul’s Apostleship

This last quote ties in two passages recorded by Paul, and refers to how the validity of his apostleship could be understood. He wrote this to Corinth: “If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the SEAL OF MY APOSTLESHIP are *you* in the Lord” (I Cor. 9:2).

When read carefully, it is seen that Paul is simply declaring that *the Corinthians*—“you” (and this would be true, therefore, of all the other

congregations he raised up)—were part of the FRUIT—the “seal”—of his apostleship. So what this is saying is that it is the fruit itself—conversions in a wide area in the wake of a man’s efforts—that is the SEAL. Even a cursory glance at chapter after chapter in the book of Acts reveals that Paul preached the kingdom of God, miracles were present and conversions took place, often in large numbers. The miracles accompanied his office, the conversions sealed it!

In his second epistle to Corinth, Paul added another big element to the picture surrounding a true apostleship: “Truly the SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs*, and *wonders*, and *mighty deeds*” (12:12). Together, these two passages present the means we have seen described in the last several quotes. They use the words “seal” and “signs,” but the picture is clear. The “seal” is another way of describing FRUIT, the “signs” being further *confirmation* of office.

We will revisit the elements of II Corinthians 12:12—the *signs* of an apostle—in Chapter Eighteen in a broader context, and you will find what you learn fascinating.

Did Christ Agree?

But let’s see the above principle in Christ’s own words. Did Mr. Armstrong invent the idea of seeing a man’s fruit as all-important, and then twist what Paul recorded to further a false premise?

Here is what Jesus privately instructed His disciples near the end of the Sermon on the Mount: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You *shall know them* by their FRUITS...Wherefore by their FRUITS you *shall know them*” (Matt. 7:15-16, 20).

If this is true of prophets, how much more of apostles?

Many are afraid today to “know” leaders as Christ meant the term. In the modern politically-correct world, people have been conditioned to believe that even a simple *acknowledgement* of what their eyes tell them is “judging” others, when it is actually only making a basic *observation* based on discernable facts. Of course, judging—meaning CON-DEMNING—is God’s job.

It is a man’s teachings, and the other readily discernable things discussed, that identify a man as true or false. Tragically, so many today are content to accept the outer layer of the man’s persona—his sheep’s clothing—and give him a free pass because of his Evangelist rank or seniority or charisma or that he claims to have spent “thousands of hours

with Mr. Armstrong.” Most will not put in the effort to get close enough to such leaders to look underneath and see “what big eyes they have” and “what big teeth they have.”

Abundant Fruit

When considering the overall fruit displayed throughout Mr. Armstrong’s 52-year ministry, the evidence is plain. Like Paul who was actually *defending* his apostleship in both the above passages when he should not have had to do this, Mr. Armstrong could simply fall back on the vast harvest and abundance of fruit in his ministry, including miraculous signs—and stop every mouth! Instead, so many today cannot even *remember* that FRUIT is what they should be looking for, let alone what *kind* of fruit it is that should be evident. Thus, wolves and thieves among the flock are getting away with spiritual murder (John 10:10)—the sheep today are virtually putting themselves on plates and providing wolves with “knife and fork”!

Christ **COMMANDS** His true followers to **KNOW** men—to make the distinction of a leader by his fruits, what he *teaches*. This is how any discerning person “shall know” his leader or leaders! Why do so many today ignore Christ’s (and Mr. Armstrong’s) instruction? Why are thousands not out searching for the “seal” of a man, including whether there exists today a “seal of an apostleship,” with “signs” also evident?

If brethren are not willing to know what Christ told them they *can know*, they had better prepare now to pay the greatest price!

What will you do?

Now that we have seen what the office of apostle means—what one **IS**!—and we have seen how to know—to **PROVE**!—when Christ has sent one to this highest office—we must look just as closely at the duties of this position. What are the *responsibilities* and *functions* within this office?

We must learn what apostles **DO**...

APOSTOLIC DUTIES

It is obvious that Christ must have a firm grip on what could be called an apostle's "rudder"—and He does! This leads to the crucial and separate subject of the direction Christ steers this office—*how* an apostle serves under Him. What are these men sent to do?

Like all other ministers, those holding the highest office are *servants*, but they are servants vested with extraordinary authority. Obviously, God cannot leave such an office—meaning any man who holds it—in the dark about what is required of him. This would mean that the man must also understand all *other* offices and how *they* are to function—what are *their* duties and responsibilities—and what those offices are *not* authorized to do, because Christ has only delegated these things to *the highest office*! While some clarification will be necessary later, this much suffices now.

A Matter of Doubt?

However, we should pause a final time to ask if Christ would possibly permit an apostle to be uncertain of his own duties—and for several decades. If He must show a man that he *is* an apostle, why would He keep him in the dark about the *purposes* of the office? What sense would that make?

Since we have seen that Mr. Armstrong was accurate in his description of the duties of the *other* offices, would his thinking be clouded

about his own? Then, would his thinking have remained clouded for so many years about the functions he was carrying out *daily*? Would he be so out of touch with the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, that he would not grow over time to fullness of understanding about matters of governance so intrinsic to the day-to-day life of the Church—and the Work around the world?

Having even the most basic faith in the living Christ's ability is brought into the equation. Would Christ so badly botch His selection of the very man who was to restore government to the Church that the man could not be brought to understand the office he held? And would He not have carefully prepared this man to humbly follow His lead in *at least* all important matters?

Remember again that Christ is an apostle Himself, meaning He knew *Himself* to be sent. And He knew what His duties were. He spoke often in Scripture of only carrying out the *Father's* will, not His own. The very last thing that the all-powerful, all-wise Jesus Christ would do is select a man He could not sufficiently conquer so that this man could understand what he was supposed to do and not do. (Remember, Christ *must* be able to steer one holding such great authority.) Since we have seen He guided Mr. Armstrong to get the duties of the other offices correct, we should expect no less with Mr. Armstrong's own office.

Remember, the Bible teaches there are different "administrations" and "operations of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:5-6). Therefore, it is recognized that differences in personality mean that not *every* apostle would do *everything* in the exact same way. (Of course, this is also true of those holding any other office.) This is partly because circumstances and needs can vary in a given Church era or age. But, certainly in a general sense, those who hold the highest office in the New Testament ministry function in the same way. They have the *SAME* duties—the *SAME* responsibilities—and they carry the *SAME* authority. And each must be understood.

My comments will sometimes be minimal. Mr. Armstrong's words present a complete picture of the duties of an apostle within God's government. The reader will not misunderstand.

It is most proper that this chapter begin with the first and perhaps greatest and most important responsibility of apostles. The opening point covered is also the natural place to begin, because *all* other duties of the Church's highest human office flow straight from the foundation of this one.

Above all that separates the Church of God from every other church on earth stand its teachings!

Truth Through Apostles

The Bible states emphatically that “God’s Word is truth” (John 17:17), and that “you shall *know* the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*” (John 8:32). Literally, scores of other passages could be added to these two because *believing* and *living* THE TRUTH defines not only the Church, but whether anyone who fellowships with it is a true Christian. Therefore, Christ would have to have a very specific, as well as well-outlined and understood, *method*, visible to all brethren and ministers, of how—exactly how!—He places truth into His Church. This would not be—and could not be—a method subject to human interpretation or personal opinion. The only opinion that would count would be Christ’s—and He would make it conclusive to all sincere observers.

In fact, it could easily be argued that the single greatest truth known to the Church of God is how that Church *receives* the truth. Without knowing the means or vehicle through which (or whom) Christ works, the Church could never know any of the OTHER truths of the Bible for certain—who and what is God, salvation, heaven, hell, judgment, the gospel, prophecy, the Sabbath, the law, the annual Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, financial laws, repentance, means of baptism, when being “born again” is to occur, who and what is the Church, and, of course then, how that Church is governed. Like all the churches of men, we could theorize that God’s Church might on its own correctly discern a *few*, or parts of a few, biblical truths, but, also like the churches of men, it would get most things wrong.

Further, if *anyone*—or even anyone in the ministry—could stand up and deliver his own ideas, which surely would be different from how *others* would “see things,” how would the Church come to agreement? Since God is not the author of confusion, the very *last* teaching that He would allow people to decide for themselves would be the means for knowing what to believe. When this happens (the *government* truth would surely be an early victim), the result should be obvious—hundreds of splinters and slivers appear, with all claiming to be part of the “Church.”

In other books, such as *THE TRUE CHURCH*, I have covered this subject in greater detail, and with a larger number of quotes. Here are four plain statements:

“There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God’s Church today since

the Bible for our time is complete). God's Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31.

"One other tremendous organizational function will be directed from this Headquarters Church—that of direction of all the local churches over the world. These churches will be composed of those who become converted—begotten of God by receiving his Holy Spirit—though still mortal.

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 350

"Church teachings were being changed. The most resultful booklet of all, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, was attacked...the same with a number of other basic and important booklets written by Christ's apostle."

"How does God's Church receive its doctrines, beliefs and teachings? Direct from God, through the channels of Jesus Christ as HEAD of the Church, and from Him through *the apostles!* NEVER by any others! NEVER by a group of ministers appointing themselves as a Doctrinal Committee! So it was in the first century.

"How did the Worldwide Church of God receive its doctrines, beliefs and teachings? EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH CHRIST'S APOSTLE!...BUT EVERY DOCTRINE, BELIEF AND TEACHING IN THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD HAS COME FROM CHRIST THROUGH HIS CHOSEN APOSTLE!"

"What Is a Liberal?", WN, Feb. 19, 1979

Notice that Mr. Armstrong commented on the fact that the "the basic and most important booklets [were] written by Christ's apostle." I did not discover this quote until *after* I was required to write, quite literally, at that point well over twice as much as Mr. Armstrong. This became a point of great inspiration to me looking back. Let's continue:

"The living Jesus Christ founded the one true Church of God, A.D. 31. The same living Jesus Christ started the Philadelphia era of God's Church through me, as His chosen apostle, August 1933.

"God commands in His word that we all 'SPEAK THE SAME THING.' That 'same thing' He put into His Church through His apostle."

*"Watering Down—Or Slowly Building Solidly Up?",
WN, June 11, 1979*

"But *HOW?* How does Jesus Christ put HIS doctrines into His Church? How did He in A.D. 31? How in A.D. 1933?"

“God says we in His Church must all believe and speak the SAME THING—we must be AGREED on what is truth and right and good as opposed to what is evil and sin.”

“Only by His chosen apostles.”

“Our teaching and doctrines MUST COME FROM GOD! Through CHRIST! And through His apostle!”

“God has always, in dealing with humans, worked through ONE MAN at a time—one who believed God! Some in ancient Israel challenged this one-man leadership. Some, likewise, have challenged it today!

“First, Moses’ own brother and sister challenged his one-man leadership... ‘And the anger of the Eternal was kindled against them’ [Num. 12:9].”

“Yet, though our members and ministers all know this, some are NOT AFRAID to speak contemptuously, in hostility, or defamingly against Christ’s apostle today! They need not fear *ME*! For I will not turn on them or strike them.

“WHY, then, do they not fear GOD? It must be one of two things. Either they do not really comprehend this teaching...or they do not believe that God has chosen me as His apostle and human leader today.”

“The CHURCH is *GOD’S* Church. The HEAD of the Church, under GOD, is Jesus Christ. Under Christ, on the human level, is His chosen apostle, through whom He has *raised up* and *built* this SPIRITUAL TEMPLE to which the reigning CHRIST shall soon come in glory (Eph. 2:20-21).”

“All doctrines in the Church as it began, A.D. 31, were put in *by the apostles*. All doctrines in the present Philadelphia era were put into the Church by Jesus Christ through His chosen apostle.”

“And Now Christ Sets Church Back on Track Doctrinally!”,
WN, Feb. 19, 1979

Yes or No?

You understood these statements would be plain, and we discussed that God could never leave the responsibility for the Church’s teachings—matters of eternal truth!—hanging in doubt, ambiguous and subject to opinion. He has not! You either believe what you have just read or, in effect, you believe that anyone, anywhere can teach anything at any time as long as he believes “I got it from the Bible” or “Jesus told me.”

Believe me, there are countless thousands in the world who believe this very thing. We receive letters from them regularly. Sadly, and

incredibly, the majority of God's people have come to tacitly believe as does the world. While they once understood the crystal clear statements like those above, they now believe committees, councils, "prophets," evangelists, pastors, elders, laymembers, the Protestants and women, including widow Jones in Jonesboro, can have revelations or "come to truth" that is "vital to everyone." Hundreds of letters that we have received are testimony to what human beings can *sincerely* believe they "received from God."

Truth enters the Church through apostles and *only* apostles. If the apostle who taught this could not even get this much right, there is no doctrine he taught God's people that is not open to challenge—and this is exactly what the apostates thought!

Why would God's people let themselves fall for this thinking? What happened? How could they have been so easily seduced on a point so great by those they *knew* to be Satan's agents? Yet, thousands were, including most of the ministry who supposedly escaped their clutches and formed the splinters.

Let's get this straight for the record—or more properly for those who will believe the record. An apostle was sent in the twentieth century by the Head of the Church to explain God's government to it. (In this regard, as you read, you are left to decide if I have been sent to re-explain it—to restore *again* what had been restored.) If you believe that Christ sent Mr. Armstrong, you cannot believe he would be permitted to be wrong on something of such COLOSSAL IMPORTANCE as how Christ governs—is Head of!—His Church. Simple, basic faith in the all-powerful, living Jesus Christ's ability to guide His Church will not permit one to believe that He would allow Mr. Armstrong to foul this up. If you believe that He would, and are not convinced that Mr. Armstrong had the scriptures correct on this matter, this book cannot help you—and you are *doomed* to wander among the splinters and slivers, or to remain at home in the rooms of your own house, never knowing where to plant your feet!

How Christ teaches His Church, and how He governs His Church overarch *everything*. I repeat: Surely—surely!—He could communicate this much to that Church.

Obviously, this office also carries authority to establish *traditions* in the Church. Paul commanded these also be held fast, and they were so important that any who would not adhere to them could not "company" with the Church (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6). In this light, and no one points this out today, it is of note that Revelation 3:11 states Philadelphians should "hold that fast which you have." This phrase is interestingly worded.

This is because Philadelphia received not only the true doctrines, but also a host of traditions, which work together to organize and unify the Church. Therefore, the phrase has even greater meaning than perhaps those who still remember and seek to follow it have understood.

A final point of confirmation of what you have relearned here, and it is easy to understand: We have seen Ephesians 2:20 declares that the Church stands on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ. In addition, Acts 2:42 speaks of continuing in “the apostles’ doctrine”—not in the evangelists’ (or a “presiding” evangelist’s), the pastor’s, the Council of Elders’, the General Conference of Elders’, or even in the prophet’s doctrines, because in the New Testament there were apostles to whom any prophets would have communicated.

What will YOU stand on? More specifically, *who* will you stand on? If you say Christ, but add evangelist(s), pastor(s) or any other office, you have broken with the biblical foundation—and you have *chosen* to stand on self-appointed men! What price are you willing to pay if wrong?

Takes Gospel of Kingdom to All Nations

A number of times the book has referenced one of the other great responsibilities assigned to apostles. Christ has literally commissioned these men as His ambassadors to all nations, as representatives of His government, with the announcement that His kingdom will soon come to rule the whole world. But this responsibility is so important—so extraordinary in size and meaning—that the chapter must include at least two quotes from Mr. Armstrong explaining it:

“‘Now the eleven disciples’ (Judas already had left them) ‘went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them...’ To WHOM? Not the Church as a whole! Only to the disciples who were to become the original APOSTLES! ‘...“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *GO*, therefore, and make disciples [learners – those taught] 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; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age”’ (Matt. 28:16-20, RSV).

“Notice carefully. This GREAT COMMISSION to be SENT FORTH with Christ’s Gospel Message was given only to those who were apostles – and the word ‘apostle’ means ‘one sent forth’ with the Message!”

The Incredible Human Potential, p. 117

“For that training—that spiritual development of God’s CHARACTER, God has given his Church a DUAL responsibility:

“1) ‘Go ye into all the world’ and proclaim the GOOD NEWS—announcement—of the coming kingdom of God.

“2) ‘Feed my sheep.’

“But in FEEDING the ‘sheep,’ developing in them God’s spiritual CHARACTER, God has given them THEIR PART in supporting, backing up, the great commission: ‘Go ye into all the world.’

“This first and great commission was given to the apostles.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 265

It has always solely been the duty of apostles to take the gospel of the kingdom of God to *all nations*—the WHOLE WORLD! This began with the original twelve when they were told by Jesus before Pentecost to “go you [the apostles]...and teach *all nations*, baptizing...teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Of course, it was also foretold that the “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world...unto all nations” before and up to “the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

(Before continuing, note again that I have covered the subject of the First or Great Commission, the object of this subhead and the next, in much greater detail in our book *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* What is written here is only the beginning of all that applies to this subject in this age. The reader needs to be able to connect this duty as one given to apostles to the knowledge that Mr. Armstrong said many times—and Christ Himself said in Matthew 24:14—that the Work of God would continue to the Tribulation.)

How often did Mr. Armstrong quote the above two verses in Matthew? Many, many times! But he also recognized that no one had taken the true gospel to the *whole world* for 1,900 years. First, this was because there were *no apostles* to carry out this function. (Of course, Peter Waldo is excepted, but he would not have had the means to do this in any large way.) There is another main reason: God’s purpose would only involve *one man* fulfilling Matthew 24:14, and the means of radio, television and the printed word would not be available to this man to do this on a large scale until the twentieth century. (Events revealed that one other would finish a later “short work”—Rom. 9:27-29.)

But there is a *third* great reason: This responsibility was to begin with the man who was also to lay a foundation of “law”—established doctrine—for the Church (Mal. 4:4).

A long series of questions: Can you better understand *why* God only brings truth into His Church through apostles?—*why* having the FULL truth is part and parcel with teaching ALL THINGS to ALL NATIONS?—and can you now also see the ludicrous nature of any other man (Roderick Meredith) saying that *he* was “restoring apostolic Christianity,” asserting that doctrinal truth can enter the Church through lower offices and redefining God’s government?—and can you see *why* it is absolutely crucial that the gospel of the kingdom not be perverted to include Jesus within it (when understood, actually “another Jesus”)?—and finally, in this regard, can you also see *why* such men would think *themselves* permitted to take the gospel (in this case, *their* gospel) to all nations, among the other apostolic duties they are assigning to themselves?

Can you see these things? Can you connect one vital understanding to another and another and another here, so that the overall tremendously important *right* understanding becomes clear to you? Can you see WHY it is so crucial to hold fast in *all* points and, above all else, *not* move away from the colossal truth of how GOD’S GOVERNMENT administers *His* way to *His* people as the whole Church does *His* Work?

Warning to Israel

We saw earlier that lower offices of the ministry are not permitted to announce the kingdom of God to the world as a whole, and that even evangelists are not permitted to carry this out to the whole world, unless designated to do so by an apostle, as with Mr. Armstrong’s successor. But there is another duty performed alongside announcing the GOOD NEWS of the kingdom of God to all nations. It has to do with a smaller number of nations—and involves BAD NEWS!

Already mentioned, Chapter Fifteen will cover this responsibility in much greater detail. However, it should at least be very briefly referenced and summarized here because it is a duty that has *never* been, and could *not* be, carried out by anyone other than a prophet or an apostle.

The spiritual leader—and *only* the spiritual leader—of the Church is charged to be the Ezekiel 33:7-9 (and 3:17) “watchman” to all of the modern nations of Israel before they receive the most terrible punishment that the world has ever witnessed—the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21-22; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1)! This responsibility in no sense involves good news, which an evangelist or pastor could deliver, and then only within smaller arenas. The watchman is to speak in the spirit of Isaiah 58:1-2—he must “cry aloud and spare not” in his warning of these nations. (See my thorough article on this subject, “‘Cry Aloud, Spare Not’—What ALL Forgot!”)

Supervision of All Churches

Mr. Armstrong carried the title of Pastor General. This is because an additional responsibility given to apostles is that of supervision of *all congregations worldwide*. Actually, this summarizes the Second Commission, which is to “feed the flock” (John 21:15-17). This is a duty also not given to evangelists and pastors or any other office. This was made clear in previous chapters.

Christ is called the Chief Shepherd in verse 4 of I Peter 5. Just before this, in verse 2, the apostle Peter, the chief of the twelve, and thus the *human* chief shepherd under Christ, held the authority to tell all other elders to “feed the flock of God.” It is more than interesting that Peter, as the human leader under Christ, was the one whom Christ told to “feed my sheep” *and* the one who later told all elders in a general epistle to feed God’s flock. In this, Peter was revealing a pattern to apostles who would come later. Mr. Armstrong understood this, and this is the reason that he used the title of Pastor General, one that spoke directly to his Second Commission duty. He recognized that he had the responsibility to set policy and general rules of administration to all congregations so that they would move forward teaching, believing and understanding in harmonious unity the doctrines and commission of the Church.

Here is what he taught:

“The ONE Church, undivided, is emphasized again in verse 20: ‘But now are they many members, yet BUT ONE BODY’—ONE UNDIVIDED CHURCH! Even GOD is composed of more than one Personage, yet but the ONE GOD! GOD, remember, is the divine GOD FAMILY. Those in the Church are already begotten sons—begotten members of that GOD FAMILY. But not yet BORN as GOD BEINGS!

“Notice verse 25: ‘That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.’

“To administer these many operations, God—not a vote of the members—‘hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.’ Or, as stated in more detail in Ephesians 4:11 (RSV): ‘And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.’

“An apostle is ‘one sent forth’ with Christ’s gospel message, including the supervision of proclaiming that message to the world by means and persons other than himself. Also an apostle was given supervision over all the local congregations or churches (I Cor. 16:1). The apostle

Paul had oversight over the churches of the Gentile world (II Cor. 11:28).”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 244

Obviously, Christ would never have one man through whom he revealed truth to the flock and who fulfilled the First Commission of taking the gospel to the world and warning Israel, while a different man of equal authority was responsible for the Second Commission—receiving, baptizing, organizing and feeding all the new converts to the flock that would result from what the first man did. This would create tremendous confusion, since it would be God’s tithes and offerings, paid by the flock, that would make possible the fulfillment of the First Commission.

Of course, Mr. Armstrong always largely delegated the responsibility to feed the flock to one other man (at a time) who would serve as leader of Church Administration (later Ministerial Services) so that all policies coming down from above would be carried out, and in unity. (Sadly, every one of these men—no exceptions!—betrayed Mr. Armstrong.) The relationship of this “Second Commission leader” is perhaps best described as a parallel between the Father and Son, with the Son having enormous authority within God’s Plan, but entirely subject to the Father’s will in all matters.

The understanding of the office that supervises all churches truly becomes the all-important key to who holds ultimate authority under Christ to administer a vast number of policies, rules, guidelines, priorities, teachings and traditions to which those congregations are to adhere. It also involves another duty that is directly related to all those who baptize, preach, teach, visit, organize and supervise local congregations.

Approve Ordinations and Appoint Ministers

There cannot be a flock without shepherds. Obviously, someone has to carry ultimate responsibility to be certain that only qualified, consecrated, dedicated, Christ-led and experienced men, who are willing to do “the *work* of a bishop,” are ordained and placed over the flock.

Mr. Armstrong makes this most plain. Here are four different quotes that should all be read together with only one comment in the middle. Look for the clear picture:

“Notice especially, there is only the ONE CHURCH. Not MANY churches. The CHURCH is not divided. There is only one Church. Not a parent church and many little daughter churches that have split off in disagreement. Divisions splintering off are NOT STILL IN THE CHURCH. It is the CHURCH that

is to marry Christ in the resurrection at his coming—not disagreeing churches—not groups who have broken off! Not a parent church and apostate daughters. That will become more obvious as we continue.

“So notice, too, the Church conducts VARIOUS OPERATIONS. For these in the ONE Church there are also various ADMINISTRATIONS or executive departments, with an executive manager over each department or operation (verses 4-6). Remember, an executive administrator DOES NOT SET POLICY OR PROCEDURES OR DOCTRINES. He administers—he carries out and directs—what has been already set from above.

“Even in this world, in the United States the President does NOT MAKE THE LAWS. He administers the policies as functions authorized by Congress—enforces the laws made by Congress. Administrators are set in the Church merely to supervise, direct, execute the policies, procedures, doctrines assigned to them from above.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, pp. 243-244

“So here we see in operation THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD IN HIS CHURCH, *through* His human officers chosen by Him, headed by prophets sent by Apostles! *Verse 3: ‘And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they SENT THEM away.’*

“THERE IT IS! Barnabas and Saul, renamed in verse 9 PAUL, were then and there OFFICIALLY ORDAINED, after fasting and prayer, BY THE LAYING ON OF HANDS of those in authority, SENT there by the Apostles, and as DIRECTED by the Holy Spirit! God did not ordain Paul privately, secretly or INDEPENDENTLY of HIS CHURCH. He was ORDAINED BY THE HAND OF MAN, according to GOD’S ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, as directed by Christ the HEAD of the Church, but THRU THOSE HUMAN INSTRUMENTS according to God’s own ORDER.”

“The Prophets with the teachers, who, under direct instruction from Christ, ordained Paul at Antioch, had come from Jerusalem. And in the operation of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD within His Church this could not have been except by authority from Peter and the Apostles. Nothing was at any time done contrary to, or in opposition to, Peter or the Apostles. There was always perfect harmony and cooperation.”

*“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”,
GN, May, 1954*

The last quote included some helpful repetition, and the next one was under the subhead “God ALWAYS Ordains by Hand of Man.”

The first paragraph references the work of Satan—the destroyer—as evidenced by the fact that different men in different organizations can-

not validly ordain men to spiritual offices in the ministry of Jesus Christ—when they do not have the *authority* given to them by Jesus Christ to do this.

Mr. Armstrong plainly calls these men exactly what they are—*enemies* of God, serving the devil. Will you believe it is this simple today? Or do you somehow think that Mr. Armstrong would condone what is happening today “if he could just see that we had no choice, and why so many groups became necessary”? Let’s continue:

“That ONE BODY of Christ, carrying on HIS WORK, must function as a UNIT. It must work in harmony and unity, with teamwork, for God is not the author of confusion. There must be no pulling off in different directions by different men *in* that one Body. There must be no competition, or division. And anyone who knowingly promotes, or encourages anyone in promoting, such disharmony, competition, and division, becomes the enemy of God, and is serving the devil and not God!

“In order that this ONENESS—this UNITY of purpose and action—this HARMONY and co-operative teamwork, be maintained and preserved in GOD’S WORK, God has ordained GOVERNMENT IN HIS CHURCH. And He has empowered His Church with DIVINE AUTHORITY.

“That government in God’s Church is government from God, thru Christ, thru apostles, thru evangelists, thru pastors, thru other elders, *in that order!*

“Now suppose God did *not* have these various officers ordained by the hand of man. What would happen? One man in New York would *appoint himself*, and come up and say, ‘I claim equal office and authority with those ordained from Pasadena. I wasn’t ordained by the hand of man, but direct by the hand of God.’ And then this man carries on his own independent work. Such a work *cannot* be a PART of the work of GOD’S TRUE CHURCH, for the simple reason that sooner or later it will start pulling off in an opposite direction—unless there is DIRECTION from Christ on down, in ONE CHURCH ORDER OF GOVERNMENT as God ordained. Sooner or later competition, misunderstanding, strife, and division will result! CHRIST IS NOT DIVIDED!

“So you see, Brethren, WHY God always ordains men to office THRU HIS OWN CHURCH, THRU HIS OWN ESTABLISHED ORDER, as laid down in HIS WORD! God ALWAYS ordains to office *by the hand of men*, whom HE has placed in office. THERE IS NOT ONE EXAMPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHERE ANY MAN WAS SELF-APPOINTED, OR ORDAINED WITHOUT THE HAND OF MAN, SEPARATE FROM AND INDEPENDENT OF HIS ORDERED CHURCH! Any such claims to ordination or office are WITHOUT A SHRED OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY!

“Notice a few Scriptural examples:

“*John 15:16*: Jesus Christ Himself ORDAINED His Apostles—by His Hand in Person, direct. Also Mark 3:14.

“*Acts 1:22*: Matthias, after God thru the Holy Spirit directed that he be chosen, was ORDAINED thru the other eleven as one of the TWELVE APOSTLES. (Also verses 23-26.)

“*Acts 14:23*: Elders were chosen and ORDAINED in every city, by the hands of Paul and Barnabas, with fasting and prayer.

“*I Tim. 2:7*: Was Paul actually ORDAINED, or just made an Apostle by God direct without ordination? Paul here says plainly, HE WAS ORDAINED! That settles it!

“*II Tim. 1:6 and 4:1-5*: Timothy was sent out by Paul as an evangelist, clothed with AUTHORITY to appoint and ordain elders and deacons in the local churches, and given authority over local pastors and churches. God did this THRU THE HAND OF PAUL, and in this Scripture, we see Paul had laid hands on Timothy. If for receiving the Holy Spirit, then certainly also for his ordination.

“*Titus 1:5*: Paul gave to Titus the evangelist authority to ORDAIN elders in every city, *as Paul had appointed him*. Thus Titus was ordained to this authority by the hand of Paul, and elders in many churches were ordained by the hand of Titus, the evangelist. Here is the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, operating from Christ, thru Paul *the apostle*, thru Titus, *the evangelist*, thru local *Elders*, in the order of God’s authority in His Church according to Eph. 4:11.

“And so it goes. There is not one example in the New Testament showing that any man was ever ordained to an office of authority WITHOUT the hand of man! The *only* examples and instructions we have show God doing it thru the hand of men of His choosing!

“*Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?*”,
GN, May, 1954

“Pentecost...1,932 years after that day when the Spirit of God descended from heaven and filled those set apart by God to begin the New Testament Church (Acts 2).

“Mr. Roderick C. Meredith, Evangelist in the Church of God, was telling the assembled members about a phone call. It was a trans-Atlantic call to London which would have a great bearing on the lives of the hearers. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had authorized an ordination!”

Three Set Apart, COG News, Chicago-Midwest Edition,
June, 1963

All Once Knew!

The man in this account who phoned Mr. Armstrong is here seen to have once understood there must be apostolic approval before ordination can occur. Today he ordains ministers, even evangelists, of his *own* authority. He once *knew* that evangelists could *not* do this. Accounts like the one above were regularly put into publications so the *whole Church* would remain clear on this. Of course, and this should at least be mentioned here, this man was obviously permitted to *perform* the ordination—and the same would be true of a similar circumstance today—but only after an apostle had approved it! The effort undertaken to reach Mr. Armstrong in England reveals this was no small administrative matter in the Church.

Note well here the power of the human mind to “forget” things of such magnitude when convenient.

Recall I mentioned that I have two ordination certificates—to local elder (“elder”) and preaching elder (“minister”)—both signed personally by Mr. Armstrong. This was because *he* was the one who approved *every* ordination to spiritual office. As an important side note relevant here, like Mr. Armstrong, I was ordained into the ministry by those vested with authority to do this, albeit this involved authority in different Church eras—Sardis with Mr. Armstrong, and Philadelphia with mine and others.

Here is the point: How God used (and raised) Mr. Armstrong later, after *proper initial ordination*, and how God uses me or any man, after *proper initial ordination*, is up to Him, and Him alone. Mr. Armstrong understood that, and so do I! If others believe that I have changed positions on this, they have it backwards. I will *not* compromise—I will *not* change position—because some without proper understanding of the facts wish me to—because they wish me to *reject* what Mr. Armstrong taught and the entire Church once knew about *how* Christ selects office-holders at every level. Many today would obviously prefer the much easier circumstance—that *anyone* can ordain *anyone* to *any* rank, and in *any* organization, because the Church is now “scattered” and the Body of Christ is now “divided.”

Recognize that for an ordination to be valid it must be either: (1) performed within the one, organized Body of Christ or, if performed elsewhere, as in this age, (2) it must be formally AFFIRMED—APPROVED—at a point later by that Body that Christ through re-ordination wishes to use a man’s experience within the government of His ONE CHURCH.

“Binding and Loosing”

The next quote introduces an authority that Jesus only gave to the apostle leading His Church, and it is so important that Jesus stated it *immediately* after explaining that He would build His Church. While most have forgotten this passage, Jesus knew it would be absolutely impossible to administer unity, peace, and harmony throughout all congregations without delegating a very special authority to “bind” and “loose” in important matters, and that this must be vested in *someone* so that this could be possible. Matthew 16:19 states this of Peter: “Whatsoever you [Peter] shall *bind* on earth shall be *bound* in heaven: and whatsoever you [Peter] shall *loose* on earth shall be *loosed* in heaven.”

Christ was certainly aware that a variety of overall, Church-wide *administrative judgments* would have to be carried out under a host of different kinds of circumstances that would be presented to His Church over two millennia of time. He delegated this authority to Peter, the one who would be chief apostle after the Church was built.

Let’s now read, especially noting paragraph four:

“Right here, MARK WELL THIS POINT: GOD PUT HIS TRUTH INTO HIS CHURCH THROUGH CHRIST AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES!”

“NOTE THIS! The Church of God is built on the FOUNDATION of the apostles and the prophets...”

“I have shown you...that Peter was LEADER of the apostles—and that the Church received its teachings and doctrines FROM THE APOSTLES!”

“So now let it be MADE OFFICIAL—by Christ’s present-day apostle—that this binding and loosing PLAINLY, CLEARLY, was given to Christ’s chief APOSTLE—not to lower-rank ministers ordained by his authority—not by the CHURCH as a body—but by the APOSTLE!”

“JESUS CHRIST is the living HEAD of this Church! HE built it through His apostle. And He, CHRIST, still rules SUPREME in the one and only area on earth where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered today!”

“How Christ Gives The Church Its Beliefs,” GN, Nov. 20, 1978

There is no way to argue with what is recorded here—it must be accepted or rejected on its face. Mr. Armstrong declares in the fourth paragraph that the decision he rendered was “made official.” No splinter leader can change this today, and the Bible makes plain that Mr.

Armstrong “got it right.” Although many have sought to alter this practice, no one should want to. It eliminates division and produces peace. Take a moment to read all of Matthew 16:18-19. And do not permit the Catholics’ misunderstanding of this as pertaining to popes, beginning with Simon Magus (a “Pater”), to be a stumblingblock to reject what the Church always understood applied to apostles, beginning with Simon Peter. Christ knew exactly **WHAT** He was doing and **WHY** He had to do it!

There are a host of decisions and judgments that must be made within the Church. Let’s consider a few. Someone must have the authority to either decide or delegate to others...

- (1) if a marriage is bound or to be loosed in God’s sight
- (2) if God’s name is to be placed at a particular location designated to be a Feast site
- (3) if a person should be baptized
- (4) if a previous baptism is to be considered invalid
- (5) if a man should be ordained or raised in rank
- (6) if a minister should be disfellowshipped or removed from the ministry
- (7) *how* the Work would be carried out
- (8) if senior administrators should change positions within it
- (9) whether a college would begin
- (10) whether a regional office would be established
- (11) whether an expensive building would be constructed
- (12) whether a jet would be purchased, and so many more

Therefore, only the apostle is authorized to make Church-wide administrative judgments. Only *this* office carries the authority to bind and loose, and major administrative judgments would naturally flow from the same office. But let it be said here—“made official” in a sense—that the apostle must remain close to God. He must be in complete harmony with God, and with the will of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, in all matters (Col. 1:18, 29; Eph. 1:22-23). But it is reaffirmed that Christ would not select a man whom He had not first **PROVEN**—conquered!—whose “rudder” He could not steer! Too much is at stake with the highest office.

Prophets Report to Apostles

We have seen numerous proofs that prophets, when one or more exist, must work under apostles, which means that there has to be at least one apostle to whom they report.

Why is this important to repeat, since there are no prophets today?

First, it is a function of apostles, so it should at least be included in this chapter. (Chapter Seventeen will cover this subject in much greater detail, but, as with warning Israel, it should at least be mentioned among apostolic duties.) Second, the Two Witnesses are described by Christ in Revelation as bringing “their prophecy” (11:6) and as “these two prophets” (vs. 10). While these have not appeared as yet, they must report to, and work under—we will see at least until their commission begins—a human apostle. This was seen earlier to be restored understanding that we also saw fits the Bible teaching. Prophets certainly could not report to an evangelist or to any other *lower* office and, because they hold offices only given by Christ within His Body, they must come from inside His ONE Church. This becomes one more reason there must be one more apostle after Mr. Armstrong.

No one ever wondered if the Two Witnesses would come from outside the WCG when it was on track, and none should doubt that they will come from the one unified true Church and Body today. Carefully read Chapter Seventeen.

A Concise Summary

Beginning in 1978, Mr. Armstrong began putting the Church back on track, ending the “liberal years,” referenced earlier. What follows below was written because his son and others had left to form another organization. Of course, these claimed it was also “God’s Church,” even though it was teaching many false doctrines and introducing division to God’s people—exactly as is happening today!

Again, just like today, many had become confused (and less than now) about who and what was the Church, what was its purpose, what doctrines should be believed, who had final authority, and to whom tithes were to be paid. Some thousands had been leaving the Worldwide Church of God through the mid-70s, and liberal thinking had left brethren ripe for the picking by those ministers joining this new organization. Mr. Armstrong felt that a short, concise summary statement needed to be made.

Here is what he wrote under the subhead “Where is God’s Church?” It removed all doubt—then and forever after:

“...stating clearly which is GOD’S Church. It is:

“1) Where God’s TRUTH is. Not with one disfellowshipped for trying to water down that TRUTH.

“2) Where God’s true Work is going out to the WHOLE WORLD.

“3) Where Christ’s chosen apostle is.

“God’s tithe is to be PAID to GOD’S Church, where CHRIST is working. Jesus Christ does not work in two “churches,” one competing against and trying to draw members from the other. Christ is NOT DIVIDED!

“God does not have two churches—only the ONE Church that Jesus Christ founded in A.D. 31...”

*“Christ Is the Living Head of Only One Church—Not Two,” GN,
Dec. 18, 1978*

There are but three points listed above. And they apply whether there are two, ten or hundreds of “churches” in the picture. If you will receive it—IF YOU WILL RECEIVE IT!—stating clearly again, you have just seen in summary the model that you should be looking for today!

What About Mr. Armstrong’s Successor?

A final understanding about apostles belongs in this chapter and should conclude it. Point number three in the above quote raises the question: Can it be God’s Church if there is no apostle? The answer is yes, *IF* the leader has been designated by the previous leader—one who *was an apostle*—to receive the top position, while at the same time recognizing that only Christ could give *apostolic* office to this man. (The inset about Sardis will also be helpful with this question.)

Let’s make this question more specific: Why could Mr. Armstrong’s successor direct the whole Work, and the Church, involving many kinds of decisions that had previously been made by an apostle, and do this from the office of Evangelist? The answer, again, is that these responsibilities—and every one of Mr. Armstrong’s titles, such as President, CEO, Chairman of the Board, etc.—were all delegated to him by an apostle who understood that only this man’s FRUITS would determine if Christ would choose to use him in the highest office. Mr. Armstrong carefully and *very specifically* instructed this man not to change ANYTHING!—to hold the Church on the EXACT SAME COURSE—to keep it “on track”! Mr. Armstrong understood that his successor could possibly follow the same pattern to the highest office as he did. Of course, the man soon defied this instruction, made himself an apostle and, when he was challenged over doctrinal changes he was making, offered this now infamous retort: “*I make the track.*”

In this light, it is at least helpful to note that Mr. Armstrong warned the Advisory Council of Elders specifically and emphatically about who must never be permitted to lead God’s Church. Not long before his death,

What About Sardis?

When studying the duties of an apostle, some questions naturally arise regarding the fifth era of the Church. Some may ask: “How did the government of God function during a time when there was no apostle?” How did its many aspects described in this book apply to Sardis?

Before examining several points, we must establish the correct premises. We know Christ said, “I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). This applies to Sardis. However, we also understand this era is described as essentially “dead” (Rev. 3:1), and that only a *few* in it “have not defiled their garments” (vs. 4). This describes the whole era, not just the final years when Mr. Armstrong came into contact with it. Before proceeding, recognize that we can no more look to Sardis for a correct picture than we could to Laodicea:

- (1) Remember, Sardis did *not* have the government of God—it was *yet* to be restored—and this is *why* it was in such disarray! Grasp this. Without God’s government (Thyatira had it, Sardis did not) many points discussed in this book simply could not apply.
- (2) Without an apostle, Sardis could not take the gospel (remember that it had lost the correct gospel) to the *whole world*, but this was foretold to occur during Philadelphia.
- (3) Similarly, with the identity and location of Israel’s descendants yet unknown, there could be no need for one in Sardis to warn them. Besides, the *time* for the “watchman” had not yet arrived.
- (4) Who could bring truth to Sardis with no apostle present? The answer: Nobody! Sardis’ problem was it was *losing* truth! And it had never had certain truths, including the knowledge of God’s government!
- (5) Who supervised all congregations? Sardis’ terrible spiritual condition, with only a very few true converts, would certainly affect such “supervision.” A few ministers took care of a few scattered brethren.
- (6) Sardis also did not need an apostle to receive and direct prophets because there were no prophets.

With the fifth era, some aspects of the workings of Christ’s Body can be difficult to understand. Of course, because of this era’s awful spiritual condition, there are various questions that simply cannot be answered fully. Mr. Armstrong never felt a need to address how the Body of Christ was defined in Sardis, and neither do I. Neither should you. In other words, *everything* that the reader has learned regarding God’s government simply could not provide a perfect fit with Sardis. Trying to make every detail of the pattern fit the fifth era is the equivalent of trying to make it fit Laodicean thinking. These were perhaps the two most degenerate eras of the seven, and their understanding and application of God’s government reflect this.

The condition of Sardis underscores the dire need for a *restoring* of God’s government!

Mr. Armstrong instructed the council—actually charged it!—that Roderick Meredith (and he also named his own son during this instruction) “must never, under any circumstances, be permitted to lead the Work” after he died. After all, this man had once been disfellowshipped by Mr. Armstrong for over eight months, during 1979-1980, and his driving ambition was well-known to Mr. Armstrong and the entirety of Headquarters. It is of historical interest that I called Mr. Armstrong after he had carried out the disfellowship in August of 1979, and he thundered at me about why I did not *really* know and understand this man. I only wish I had better listened and understood all I was told, instead of having to see this years later through very painful, personal experience. Perhaps others will heed now.

Figuring It Out

Let’s start with a basic fact: Many of God’s people recognized before and during the apostasy that they must hold fast *all the teachings* God placed into the Church through Mr. Armstrong. Now, in regard to Roderick Meredith, and by way of introduction to the next chapter, think of the confusion that would be in their minds if God’s people were required *by God* to “figure out” this meant they were supposed to eventually (today) follow a man because he presented himself as a “senior evangelist” who should lead the Church even though he:

(1) Did not understand that Mr. Armstrong laid the Philadelphian doctrinal foundation as Moses; (2) believed evangelists (with possible help from a council) can bring new doctrine to the Church, as much as can apostles; (3) has altered the pattern of God’s government in multiple ways; (4) has altered a host of other doctrines taught by Mr. Armstrong; (5) also *took to himself* a variety of other duties entrusted solely to apostles; (6) was DISFELLOWSHIPED by Mr. Armstrong, but Mr. Armstrong “apologized” to him (because this man says he did)—thus making Mr. Armstrong’s administrative judgment in this matter sort of a “mistake of history”; and (7) thinks Mr. Armstrong was wrong to say he must “never be allowed to lead the Church.”

When presented this way, could one really believe that God would expect His people to “figure all of these things out?”, among others—to “figure out” they were to follow the near quintessential *opposite* of EVERYTHING Mr. Armstrong instructed, and that reality thundered should not be altered?

If an evangelist declares that “Christ led” him to perform duties requiring apostolic authority, realize that the *true* Jesus Christ would

never work against Himself. (Of course, the spirit behind “*another* Jesus” would certainly have no such concern.) And if the true Christ did this, on what basis could He expect those who *understood the government of God* to know that He had? He would be asking—actually *expecting*!—them to reject basic truth!

This introduces the titanic problem—and towering test—of clever imposters...

FALSE APOSTLES

The Bible warns repeatedly of three kinds of false figures who would continually plague God's Church. These imposters were prophesied to grow worse at the time of the end. This enormous problem *has* reared its head again, and in a big way—but it is one that almost no one has recognized.

“Among You”

The apostle Peter warned in his second epistle, “But there were *false prophets* also among the people [ancient Israel], even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS *among you*...” (II Pet. 2:1). This verse has truly become a passage for our time.

Realize that false teachers essentially (not always) enter the Church in three forms. They will be examined momentarily. For now, notice the plain warning is that they would work “among you.” It is not the false ministers of the world who present a problem to God's people. They have no credibility within the Church. It is those who come “among” us who present the threat. Peter adds this in the same verse: “who privately [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies...” and in the next verse “by reason of whom the *way of truth* shall be evil spoken of” (vs. 2).

False leaders are *always* known by the FALSE TEACHINGS they bring, which they invariably seem to bring “privately,” until their victims have

been *conditioned* to believe something they had not recognized as new. By then it is often too late to recover. The key for the brethren is to stay alert and to act before it is too late.

But the warning applies to the ministry as well. In Acts 20, Paul was speaking to the assembled Ephesian elders for the final time before his life was to end in Rome. He told them to “Take heed...unto yourselves, and to all the flock...For I know this, that after my departing [his death] shall grievous wolves enter in *among you* [there it is, again], not sparing the flock” (vs. 28-29). Many believe this only occurred in the first century, or in the WCG. They could not be more wrong. In fact, the widespread blindness of the Laodicean age ensures the problem will be more subtle, with more kinds of less obvious heresies brought in “privately,” and probably more than at any other time in Church history.

Paul’s warning continued to the elders: “Also *of your own selves* shall men arise...” (vs. 30). The *ministry* is warned here—and this must have been a very sobering statement when heard!—that some *right there* in the group would turn doctrinally corrupt. Therefore, the danger for the *ministers* was the same as the brethren. It would be their associates within the ministry standing up “speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them” (same verse).

Of course, it would generally be the TOP LEADERS who were in a position to “draw away after them(selves)” more than could any pastor or elder *within* a larger organization. The *ministry* is to be watching among themselves for such “top” wolves.

Paul’s warning in Acts 20 to the assembled Ephesian elders carries this very warning, when speaking of “*grievous* wolves.” The Greek word translated “grievous” is most correctly translated “heavy” or “weighty” (but also “grave” or “burdensome”). We might then best describe what God had in mind through Paul as HEAVYWEIGHT WOLVES. Pause to consider until the meaning intended sinks in!

Piles of False Teachers

In Chapter Nine, about evangelists, there was a section explaining “teachers.” It covered what the Bible says about those who perform this function. (You may have noticed that Mr. Armstrong referenced teachers in many of his quotes.) Chapter Nine also discussed Paul’s “charge” to Timothy in the context of the “work of an evangelist.” Recall that evangelists were to be watching on behalf of God’s people because the tendency among brethren at the end of the age would be to “heap to themselves *teachers*” due to “itching ears” (II Tim. 4:3). In other books, I have

explained that the Greek word for “heap” means literally “to pile up.” And I have also covered why so many ears itch today. False teachers offering new “Bible” knowledge *have* mushroomed in the Information Age.

But God’s people could not pile up the many false teachers of today if they understood that *true* teachers of God, no matter their office or rank, would always be found *within* the Body of Christ. Where God’s government is in place, the occasional false teacher who might rise up *within* the Church would be quickly identified as such and summarily dealt with. Of course, and here is the core of the problem, with so many having lost track of what is the Body of Christ and what is the government of God, teachers have multiplied faster than rabbits, and those who will follow them have multiplied even faster.

So few today (ministers or brethren) seem to be looking—“watching”—for false teachers *among them* who are *secretly* bringing in false doctrine. Why? Vigilance requires effort, watchfulness, diligent examination of sermons and publications—and an abundance of the Spirit of truth in the mind, so lacking today where eyes are un-anointed and BLINDNESS prevails.

Counterfeits at the End

False prophets, false apostles and false christs were all foretold to appear and deceive the unsuspecting among God’s people all through the Christian era. But the problem was to become extreme in the last days. Of course, other offices can just as easily be occupied by men who are false—and this should never be minimized—but when men of lower rank are not of God, the numbers hurt or deceived are much fewer. Obviously, Christ knew this, and recognized the greater need to warn of those claiming high office who would be “evil seducers” (II Tim. 3:13). It would be *these* who could affect the thinking of many hundreds or even thousands. It is *these* who would have much greater influence over others, and *these* who would receive the benefit of the doubt in place of normal scrutiny.

Recognize that effective deceivers must be good actors, and some today are capable of “winning the Oscar.” They must appear sincere—few will be deceived by one who comes off as phony. Therefore, “sincerity,” usually meaning only the *appearance* of it, cannot be the criterion for who is true and who is false. It simply has no relevance. Mr. Armstrong’s adage reappears, “One can be sincere, but sincerely wrong.” In this case, it can apply to either the false leader or the gullible who follow him.

Paul warned the Corinthians: “For such are FALSE APOSTLES, *deceitful workers*, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no

marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Cor. 11:13-15).

Let me repeat: False apostles—deceitful workers—in the world are no threat to God’s people. It is in the Church where these men present danger to the flock. Therefore, Paul’s reference to Satan and “his ministers” means ministers *he* controls “among” God’s flock.

Do not miss this!

Grasp this most stunning reality. The archenemy, Satan the devil, has ministers whom he directly controls *within the Church of God*. Some claim high office. This is the message of II Corinthians 11:13-15. We are specifically told—warned!—that these men *among* God’s people are hard to discern—they appear as angels of light—and can even *look like* APOSTLES!

The Meaning of “False”

If God tells His people how to know who are His true servants, He could do no less in revealing how to discern those who are false. Remember, the Head of the Church promised you “shall know them”—either way!—by their fruits.

Let’s return to the Greek. The word translated false is *pseudo*, and it means “spurious, i.e. pretended preacher, false teacher, erroneous, deceitful, wicked—false, liar.” Strong words!

Whether *pseudo* appears in front of the word “prophet”: *pseudo-prophetace*; “apostle”: *pseudoapostolos*; “christ”: *pseudochristos*, or “teacher”: *pseudodidaskolos*—and all four terms are found in the New Testament—the meaning is the same, and the Greek prefix applies. Because these men are particularly cunning—“deceitful workers” means “those *full* of guile who toil or labor”—it is always *buyer beware* when it comes to men looking to be in charge of the flock!

The word *pseudo* carries the worst possible connotation for those to whom it applies. These people are absolutely *not* of God, and God would *never* leave their identity in doubt in the minds of His people. Again, He would make it perfectly clear who is *true* and who is *false* for those who care.

While some, and sadly not many, *are* at least somewhat concerned with false teachers, and a smaller number may be concerned about false prophets and false christ, few, if any, today seem worried much about following a false *apostle*. For those who even think about this, most believe it is not a real threat at this time. However, there are several men

in the splinters who have fallen into *this category*. Some have even claimed the title, such as Gerald Flurry.

May these words hit you like a sledgehammer!

The previous chapter covered the functions of apostles. If a man is performing several of these responsibilities, he is acting like an apostle. The obvious question becomes—is he true or false? Like prophets, who must be either true or false and not both, or like Christ, who must be either true or false and not both, the same is true of apostles. They are either true or false—period!

Which Is Which?

Here is how you can know which is which when one is performing the *duties* of an apostle. Bear in mind Mr. Armstrong's instruction:

- (1) The man teaches the truth and nothing but the truth, including neglecting or twisting no true doctrines, *and* that truth only enters the Church through apostles—or he is FALSE!
- (2) The man understands who and what is the Church and Body of Christ (that it cannot be divided), and that he must be working within that one, unified organization—or he is FALSE!
- (3) The man recognizes *how* Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and therefore upholds the government of God *exactly* as it was taught to the Church in the Philadelphian era by Mr. Armstrong—or he is FALSE!
- (4) The man is taking the gospel of the kingdom of God to all nations with *nothing* else added, including putting “Jesus” into it—or he is FALSE!
- (5) The man is performing the role of “watchman to Israel,” and is truly crying aloud and warning these modern great nations—or he is FALSE!
- (6) The man understands, accepts—and upholds—that Mr. Armstrong was the final Moses sent to lay the Church's doctrinal foundation—or he is FALSE!

If one is guilty of violating several or all of these things, then he has CONFIRMED *in multiple ways* that he is a false apostle. (But even one is enough.) He has presented extra undeniable evidence to those who will see that he could not have been sent by Christ. But there is another way that false apostles present themselves and remove ALL doubt of their identity. It makes what you have read even clearer—in fact, virtually impossible to misunderstand for those who *want* to understand.

Consider the following, turning the issue presented both ways in your mind. You must read and think carefully. In addition, if a man is known to be violating some or all of the above points, and is *also*:

- (1) approving ordinations
- (2) binding and loosing
- (3) making Church-wide administrative judgments
- (4) supervising all congregations
- (5) denying that the final two prophets can only come from inside the one, unified Body of Christ and must report to an apostle
- (6) changing traditions within the Church—he is FALSE!

Now let's go further by turning the discussion 180 degrees and looking back the other way *again*. If the latter six points apply to a man, yet he is *attempting* to carry out any or all of the *first* six points above while holding an office *below apostle*, this becomes its own separate additional confirmation that the man *is* an apostle—A FALSE ONE!

If all of this is not clear to you, you are urged to reread this entire section, and the two that follow, if necessary, over and over until it becomes impossible to miss.

There are at least three former evangelists leading their own organizations, as well as certain senior pastors doing this on a lesser scale, who are taking to themselves some or even all of the duties described here. What will you allow that to say to you? Put another way, will you permit it to tell you what it should? Have you “ears to hear”?

Truly False!

Let's ask a related question on a parallel track: Does a man have to *declare* that he is Christ to be a false christ? Further, does a man have to *declare* that he is a prophet to be a candidate for false prophet—or can he just do the things a prophet does without Christ's authority, and thus *be* a false prophet? Now, does a man have to *declare* that he is an apostle to be a candidate for false apostle—or, similarly, can he just take to himself the *duties* of an apostle without Christ's commission and authority, and thus *be* a false apostle?

Let's look at how to identify a false apostle in another way. Let's use plain words. Recall that Gerald Flurry has taken at least a dozen offices of God and Christ. Obviously, this man does not claim to actually *be* Christ, but he remains no less a false christ. Understanding *why* this is true opens the door to recognizing the biggest reason certain men today are false apostles without claiming to hold this office.

Think for a moment. Jesus Christ will fulfill *many* offices and titles when He returns! Of course, He already holds several. God's Word refers to Him as King of kings, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Savior, High Priest, The Great Shepherd, Apostle, The Mighty God, and others. Certainly the reader is familiar with these terms.

Let's "reason together" about this. Would a man who takes roles designated solely for Christ be willing to acknowledge that this makes him a *false christ*? Of course not. He would offer every possible cunning, serpentine counter-claim necessary to explain away this comparison. False christs crave and are addicted to the worship of their followers and, therefore, **MUST** fight to retain their adoration! False apostles would do no less—they do not want to lose their followers. Remember, their objective is to "draw away disciples after them." (The obvious primary goal being to secure tithes—"make merchandise of the brethren.")

They *must* blur plain facts!

Let's go further by asking some straightforward questions about the titles of Christ. Think of verses such as Isaiah 9:6-7. For instance, would anyone doubt that one claiming to be our SAVIOR, while saying he did not *intend* to be a false christ, would be any less one—merely because he asserts that he is not? Would anyone doubt that if one claimed to be our HIGH PRIEST, while saying he did not *intend* to be a false christ, he would be any less one—merely because he asserts that he is not? Would anyone doubt that one claiming to be the WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, while saying he did not *intend* to be a false christ, would be any less one—merely because he asserts that he is not? The same could be said for PRINCE OF PEACE or KING OF KINGS, etc. You see the point.

Another Parallel

Now let's try to think of this in another way. Let's reason together about this one more time, this time looking at the devil. Satan does not think that he is the devil, but rather thinks he is still Lucifer—the good archangel! He thinks that he is the *rightful* occupant of his throne administering God's government on earth, not the *false* "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). However, *we* know that he *is* the devil. Why—how—do we know this? Because we recognize that Satan *does* and *is* all of the things that the Bible says the devil does and is. He is a roaring lion, the destroyer, a deceiver, the father of murder and lies, the prince of the power of the air, the tempter and the accuser of the brethren—and *we recognize* he *is* these things. Here is the point. Can we not

Required of Leaders

The Bible gives clear instruction as to how God's leaders are to guide His people. Notice the command that King David was inspired to give just before his death: "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men *must be just, ruling in the fear of God*" (II Sam. 23:3).

When one rules in the fear of God, compromising with doctrine or Christian living, or rendering unjust judgment is out of the question. God's leaders are constantly aware of His rule over them. Proverbs 5:21 states, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his goings." Proverbs 15:3 states, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

These verses are FOUNDATIONAL for true leaders of God.

Now take a moment to read John 10:12-15: "But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep."

Would God ask any less of leaders who are stewards of His most precious "jewels" (Mal. 3:17)—His people? Are they not required to lay down their lives for the sheep, in the sense of being a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1)?

If this is an expectation of *all* God's people, how much more would this apply to leaders? To care for the sheep and defend them requires sacrifice—but, as the verse states, this is a "reasonable service." Paul set the standard for courage in his instruction to the Philippians. Notice: "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Phil. 1:28).

Regarding His government in their lives, God observes the *daily* conduct of *all* His people—"judgment must begin at the house of God" (I Pet. 4:17). But the actions, words and intents of His LEADERS—those to whom much has been given, and therefore much is required (Luke 12:48)—must meet a higher standard.

How many have forgotten or disregarded the apostle James' warning: "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [judgment]" (3:1)?

Notice: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" (Prov. 29:2). How true of Mr. Armstrong's ministry! When God's government was restored to the Church under him, membership grew and the Work flourished. Organization, production and peace were firmly established—and the sense of these things prevailed around the world.

The rest of the last verse came into effect soon after the apostates gained control: "...when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." Contentment and peace gave way to selfishness and suspicion, as the fear of God was replaced with widespread disobedience to God's Law. The result?—broken families, fractured congregations, disenchantment, and equally widespread resentment and general distrust, especially toward God's government.

All the problems *began* with false leadership.

Next, consider the Exodus 18 account of Jethro and Moses. Unable to keep up with the tremendous and increasing demands of his responsibility, Moses wisely heeded his father-in-law's counsel to delegate authority to proven leaders. The advice was instructive for all time: "Moreover you shall provide out of all the people *able* men, such as *fear God*, MEN OF TRUTH [take special note of this], *hating covetousness*; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (vs. 21).

God still requires the same of His leaders!

Verse 21 also reveals various ranks functioning under Moses. These offices were responsible for wide-ranging numbers of people. A ruler of 1,000 could also mean rule over 1,000 *leaders*. This means men were chosen according to special leadership ability—similar to God's government in the New Testament Church!

God has always carefully structured His government. When administered by proven, God-fearing men of truth, it eliminates confusion, promotes peace, and produces decency and order within the Church. These, along with universal happiness, abundance and prosperity, are the benefits that will be experienced around the world after Christ's Return.

At that time, all peoples and nations will learn to *credit* THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD!

declare that Satan is the devil because he will not *acknowledge* what he is—because he will not ADMIT he is the devil—because he sees himself instead as an angel of light?

Solomon recorded, “Even a child is known by his *doings*, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Prov. 20:11). Satan is Satan because of his fruits—because of what he *does*. The same is true of apostles. We know them by their fruits—by what they *do*.

This leads us back to *false* apostles. They also have fruits. There are men who are taking duties and responsibilities that are given solely to the highest office. This *is* happening! While none of these men (so far) *claim* to hold the office, they function as if they do! Can they not be considered false apostles?—can we not see them as such? Using similar logic applied to false teachers, false prophets, false christs and Satan, are these men off the hook until they *claim* to hold the office?

So then, can we acknowledge a man to be a false apostle *before* he claims this office? By now, you should see the answer is a thundering “YES!” Remember, if the man *never* does this, “he is known by his DOINGS.”

Do not rule out that one or more of these leaders will eventually “remedy” the problem, as did Mr. Armstrong’s successor, by INSTALLING THEMSELVES into “apostleship.” (Gerald Flurry and Ron Weinland have now done this.) But, the “wise” will discern and “judge” (I Cor. 10:15).

A final point: If a council of twelve men is doing in a collective manner what others may be doing individually, what about them? The answer is that they are *functioning* as one man, and can therefore be thought of as either a “Council of Twelve False Apostles” or a “group false apostle.” That they act in concert in no way excuses them from their “doings.”

No Need to Smear

As mentioned, there is no need to follow the worldly political pattern of name-calling and character assassination of specific men in the splinters in order to discredit them. Paul’s task was to warn the Corinthians about false apostles, including the way they look and work. The brethren were supposed to connect the dots.

My job is the same—to make you aware of what these men *openly* teach and do. There is no need to smear their person, but you should recognize these men have, in effect, smeared themselves. No one needs to assassinate their character because their actions demonstrate that they have done this to themselves—their FRUITS tell the tale!

You are now WARNED—I have completed my responsibility!

Facing Painful Reality

We have reasoned through this in straightforward fashion. You will either believe the points made or you will blur and reject them. I repeat: It has been my task to warn—but it is yours to “take heed” and make a decision about your leader! No matter your feelings to the contrary, or the harshness you may think this explanation reflects, the men who are guilty of ignoring or transgressing in these points are virtually screaming at you that they are FALSE APOSTLES! Take your hands off your ears and “listen” to the evidence they are presenting to you.

Notice at the same time that these men ignore, deflect, stifle, suppress or, worse—crush!—doctrinal complaints. On top of this, they, or their designated surrogates and apologists, will squeal indignantly in “pain” and “shock” from the “attack” upon their “good person.” The squealing will include claims that they are “being persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”

Will you fall for this?

On the other hand, have no doubt that these men *or their surrogates* will turn and slander this book’s author, including the motives for which it was written. Part of their strategy must be to declare the book guilty of accusation and attack. They really have no choice.

We might ask: Did prophets of old “attack” wicked kings whom they were sent to warn? Of course not! Was Mr. Armstrong *attacking* the nations of Israel when he warned them for 52 years? Of course not! Is Christ attacking Laodiceans when He calls them “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked”? Of course not! He is trying to point out terrible spiritual problems that will take His people *into* the Great Tribulation—and potentially keep them *out of* the kingdom of God if not repented of!

Do not permit a deceitful, table-turning deflecting of facts, thus allowing these *same* false prophets, false apostles and other confused leaders to be scaremongers frightening you away from where Christ truly *is* leading His servants. Yes, these false leaders will try to *scare* you away from those who will not teach the doctrinal lies they bring.

Will you allow *your* leader to get away with his actions?—worse, will you empower him by sending God’s tithes to his organization?—and, most importantly, will you permit him to *steal your crown*?

Finally, you are urged to pray for these men because they are in trouble with God beyond what anyone can comprehend.

(Note that I have prepared a very unusual and extensive sermon, given in two parts—“21st-Century Apostle.” It adds a host of additional

points, including the fruits to look for, related to knowing when Christ has sent a man and when one has come on his own authority. It addresses what has been covered here with more detail about the confusion now reigning in the splinters.)

If one is a *true* apostle, this does not mean he has all wisdom, knowledge and understanding on every possible point, and when facing every kind of decision. The Proverbs speak in many places of seeking “a multitude of counsel.” Christ’s appointed leader must be willing to seek advice by counseling with other elders...

ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS

This chapter will be another that is almost entirely in Mr. Armstrong's words. His comments are so thorough that little need be added.

In 1981, Mr. Armstrong concluded, because of certain specific events occurring in the background within the Church, that he needed an official Advisory Council of Elders. Not only was Mr. Armstrong growing older, creating a certain need, but, since there were other ministers who were available and had enough experience that their counsel would be of value to him, he saw the need to formalize—make official—a practice that he had long been carrying out in principle.

It will not be the purpose of this chapter to repeat all that was said in Chapter Three about the councils guiding either UCG or the group that votes on doctrine alongside the presiding evangelist. The purpose here is to bring to light what Mr. Armstrong had in mind when he established the *Advisory Council of Elders*, as well as to explain, also largely in his own words, but including quotes from some others, why this kind of an inner team around Mr. Armstrong was biblical—how the pattern was revealed in Scripture.

Long Mr. Armstrong's Practice

The first quote is from 20 years before Mr. Armstrong established the Advisory Council, but it demonstrates that the principle of obtaining much wise counsel in doubtful matters, involving large decisions, has

been something done by God Himself, and had been carried through in practice into the Church well before 1981, as the date of several quotes reveals. There is recorded more here than just the official announcement that a new entity had been created in the Church. Notice the different elements Mr. Armstrong brings in regarding the Council. All are still applicable today. Without doubt, the most important thing in Mr. Armstrong's mind was what would happen to the Church if he were *suddenly* taken away and another man was not in place to take the reins.

The quotes simply follow one after another:

"Who are the 24 elders mentioned several times in the book of Revelation?"

"The 24 elders rule with God in Heaven."

"These 24 elders...are spirits, a part of the created heavenly host of beings. They have been given positions of responsibility as advisers in the Government of God through which He rules the universe."

"Short Questions From Our Readers," PT, Sep. 1961

"I want an advisory council, Advisory Council of Elders...I have always done that, as you older ministers know. And you know how far back we used to meet together...it was the way we functioned as God's ministers..."

"Often we went into session with divergent ideas. Always after an hour or so, sometimes less, sometimes more, we were all united because we only wanted God's truth...And we always came to a unanimous idea."

"Sometimes I didn't agree with the others when we went in and when we came out I did."

"Congress of Leading Ministers," WN, Mar. 6, 1981

"In the organizational pattern of God's Church an ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS has been formed. It is not a legal board of directors."

"...the GOVERNMENT in God's Church, a spiritual organism, is government from the top down."

"God says through Solomon that in multitude of counselors there is safety. We are told not to put our trust in a man, but there is safety in a number of counselors. I have always followed that admonition. Beside prayer and looking to God through Christ for guidance, I have always counseled with those I consider best qualified to advise in the subject at hand."

“This ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS, therefore, is a safety valve, in addition to relying on guidance from God.

“For this Council I have chosen from among our older, tried and proven loyal ministers—men whose fruits show the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, men of spiritual wisdom and balance.”

“Advisory Council of Elders Formed,” WN, Mar. 16, 1981

“We are not to put our trust in MAN, but in God. On the other hand, through Solomon God says that IN MULTITUDE OF COUNSELORS there is safety.”

“...I have formed the new ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ELDERS. That Council, at present, is composed of...experienced elders, all of many years’ faithful and loyal experience as ministers in God’s Church.”

“I have NEVER SAID I expect to live until Christ comes.

“But, just in case of my disability for any reason, to prevent Satan from causing division, I feel God has inspired me to delegate power to the Advisory Council, during any such complete disability, to take full charge of the Work and all its assets and activities.

“The CHURCH must not be scattered. It must not become scattered, because there is no COMPETENT, CHRIST-CHOSEN SPIRITUAL SHEPHERD, TO BECOME MEAT FOR BEASTS (human) OF THE FIELD! (See Ezekiel 34:5). This is a safeguard for YOUR protection.”

Co-Worker Letter, Mar. 19, 1981

“Brethren, put your faith in Christ and the living God and not in me. If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders to select one of them to continue leading you until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory.”

*“Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the WCG,”
WN, June 24, 1985*

Do Not Be Confused!

A very instructive and helpful background about the original purpose of the Advisory Council of Elders has been presented here. This said, it must be understood that the last brief statement above carries no application whatsoever to the voting practiced by UCG, and there are at least EIGHT reasons. They must be briefly addressed or the reader could become confused:

- (1) Mr. Armstrong describes an *already-existing* Council that might have to take action.
- (2) It was solely an *advisory* Council, carrying no authority of itself.
- (3) Its members were *appointed* by Mr. Armstrong above them, not *elected* by ministers below them.
- (4) An APOSTLE, not a man or men of lower rank, had *carefully designated* the process whereby these men would select his replacement, should the need arise. In other words, the manner had been laid out *in advance*.
- (5) This was instruction that solely applied in an *emergency*, meaning Mr. Armstrong's unexpected death or incapacitation. How do we know this? He ultimately himself selected his replacement before he died. (In fact, Mr. Armstrong more than once joked that the Council's initials "ACE" meant an "ace-in-the-hole" existed to protect the Church in an emergency.)
- (6) This instruction would not—and could not—have application to any *other* "Council," let alone one that first appeared *fourteen years later*.
- (7) These men were not to select the leader for a three-year term, but were to recognize that Christ was selecting His leader—and *He* never uses humanly-devised "term limits." The two elements here could never be taken as something that would break the Bible pattern.
- (8) Mr. Armstrong did not—and would never—have in mind that the Council appoint what we saw earlier to be little more than an *Advisory* President.

Also, Mr. Armstrong certainly did not designate that the Advisory Council would have the authority to decide doctrine, budgets, priorities of the Church, operation managers and key appointments, personnel transfers, or any other such administrative decisions. Let no self-serving opportunists or politically-driven "climbers" who want to be voted into office (or select who will be) tell you that such above quotes have even the remotest application to the authority the committees leading UCG and COGwa have presumptuously taken to themselves.

Millennial Pattern

Before continuing, we will let Mr. Armstrong's next quote add an exclamation point to the difference between an Advisory Council of Elders and what are really committees to decide what UCG and COGwa should believe and do—and committees that have even gone *much further* than

what Mr. Armstrong warns of in his next statement. However, like one who covets the authority of an apostle, but recognizes it prudent not to call himself one, these committees do the equivalent, except in reverse. They have been smart enough to call themselves Councils of Elders—they take the name—but have altered the duties of what Mr. Armstrong has described. Their purpose has been well served. They have been able to successfully disguise their function—and seduce thousands.

Let's continue with the review of a quote that looks ahead into the millennium, when the government of God now in the Church will be expanded to rule all nations:

“One thing there will not be in the millennial Headquarters Church is a doctrinal committee of intellectual ‘scholars’ to decide whether Christ’s teachings are true doctrines.

“There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God’s Church today since the Bible for our time is complete). God’s Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 350

The last paragraph of the next quote mentions counsel being received in Jerusalem, with men sitting “in authority,” and thus possibly suggesting to the casual reader that a Council of Elders should have *final authority*. It is crucial to recognize, in this case, *who* was sitting in Council—the *apostles*!—and remember that there was one man in charge among the twelve. Let's continue:

“How can you recognize the one and only true Church of God—the very Church Jesus said He would build—HIS BODY, thru whom the Spirit of God today carries on *the work of God*?”

“What is God’s order of authority in His Church?”

“You find it in Ephesians 4:11-12: ‘And He (Christ, the HEAD of the Church) gave some, APOSTLES, and some, PROPHETS, and some, EVANGELISTS, and some, PASTORS (leading or presiding elders of local churches), and TEACHERS; for the perfecting of the saints, for THE WORK of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: *till* we all come to *the unity of the faith*...’ In other words, to *prevent* separate, *independent*, and competing works which would introduce confusion, and division, driv-

ing many out of the Body of Christ, GOD HAS ORGANIZED GOVERNMENT in His Church.”

“It operates from GOD, at the top, on down. It is government of and by and from GOD the Father, thru CHRIST, thru God-called and ordained APOSTLES, thru EVANGELISTS, thru PASTORS, thru TEACHERS, *in that order*. This government means TEAMWORK. It works for UNITY, not division.”

“Acts 15...was a coming to the HEADQUARTERS Church, where the Apostles sat in COUNCIL, with AUTHORITY, for decisions inspired by the Holy Spirit, thru APOSTLES, God’s chief human offices under Christ.”

“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”,
GN, May 1954

“When there was a dispute in the Church at Antioch in the days of the original apostles, the question was *settled* thru God’s Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. But those apostles and elders were mere *instruments* of CHRIST. Read it again, in the 15th chapter of Acts.”

“When God’s apostle and ministers come together today to consider a matter in question, the procedure is the same. First there is the appeal to God to reveal His will, and guide us that the decision will be His, not ours. Then there is the discussion. This is an earnest *seeking for all the facts* bearing on the question.

“Quite often, in our own minds, we feel that the decision is going to be just the opposite of what it finally turns out to be, under God’s guidance.”

“In *every* instance where God’s ministers in this Philadelphia era of the Church have come together to make a ruling, our minds have been put in complete accord. There is no voting. But if there were a secret ballot, it would be found that God has led us and made us unanimously of one mind. In no sense do I, as the senior ranking minister, impose any decision of mine on the other ministers. In every instance the decision has been as much their definite conviction as mine.

“There has never been a dissenting voice—never a doubt in any of our minds in regard to the final decision. This very fact is proof that it is *the mind of Christ*, thru the Holy Spirit. It is proof that this is GOD’S Church—that it is led, not by the will of men, but RULED and directed by GOD.” [Author’s note: The United Church of God not only has disagreement on almost every decision, but, incredibly, as we saw, it proudly hangs this dirty laundry in public for all to know which men cast the “dissenting votes.” Which is worse, (1) that there *is* such terrible division, (2) that the supposed 12 wisest men in UCG so foolishly *announce*

this terrible division, thus evidencing that Christ through God's Spirit has not been present or (3) that over 400 elders voted them into office and tolerate what they do? My "vote" says a three-way tie.]

"It is never a matter of God's ministers deciding what we, as humans, think is right, and then imposing *our* beliefs or views on the other members. It is a matter of GOD, thru Jesus Christ, *leading* thru His Holy Spirit those in the Church that are the ELDERS to understand what is GOD's LAW on the question. It is always the LAW OF GOD, *as that Law has existed from the beginning*, and as that law applies to the specific question, that is the ruling."

"We ministers know that we serve a dynamic, living, all-powerful supernatural GOD! We *fear* to disobey, or to fail to be submissive. We *know* well what would happen to us if we should ever permit self-will to sway us in any decision."

"Christ Did Put Authority and Rule In His Church," GN, Jan. 1957

"Whenever there is doubt in the mind of any about some truth, doctrine, or God's way in any problem, we ministers meet together in council, asking GOD's guidance and wisdom, seeking HIS truth!"

"God's Word instructs us: 'In multitude of counselors there is safety.' So we meet and counsel together, seeking God's true understanding from His Word. God is always willing to give it. As long as each man is *yielded to God* in his heart, there will always be unity. Yet not one of these men would yield to the convictions of the others if he believed God's Word revealed otherwise."

"If any one of us comes up with something NEW, not previously understood and agreed to be the true revelation of God's Word, he does not speak it publicly, or write it in any article, UNTIL we ministers can all study independently into it, and counsel together regarding it, and all come to the same mind."

"[When a question arose and] we went into it prayerfully with 'multitude of counselors' the truth became very plain to all.

"There is a great deal more joy in finding GOD's way, even when contrary to our own previous beliefs or desires, than having our own way!"

"Heart to Heart Talk with the Editor," PT, Apr. 1957

No "Yes-men"

The next and final quote of the chapter also comes from the period when Mr. Armstrong was putting God's Church back on track. It speaks to the

issue of whether men around him, or those on the Advisory Council, were “Yes-men,” merely puppets ready to rubber stamp anything they were being instructed to “decide.” (The subhead within the quote is his.):

“Yes, more than generally realized, Satan was manipulating things to make God’s Church and His Work more and more secular—more like any other *purely worldly and human activity!*

“The realization of this was brought forcibly to my mind by my thinking over a criticism from one whose understanding needs updating. He said I was surrounded by ‘yes-men.’

“That set off a chain of thought. This expression *yes-men* is a bit of modern terminology, generally meaning passive, extra-docile, weak-minded men who go along purely to serve their own personal interests or through fear.

“In that category, our administrative personnel and our ministers, most assuredly are *NOT* yes-men.

“But there is another meaning that could be applied to that expression. And in *that* sense I want to be a yes-man myself—and I hope that all of us, whether lay members, ministers or administrative people, are *this* kind of yes-people.”

“I was brought to the REPENTANCE that is complete SURRENDER to the will of God! I was brought to the unconditional surrender of being willing to say, with Christ, ‘Not MY will, but *THINE* be done!’ I was brought, not only to complete repentance, but to living FAITH—to BELIEVE GOD—that is, to *believe what He says!*

“To God I said, ‘*YES, SIR!*’ In utter sincerity, I literally GAVE MYSELF to Jesus Christ. He had bought and paid for me with His life’s blood. He OWNED me. I *BELONGED* TO HIM!

“I became a YES-MAN to Christ!”

“And I hope all of our administrative people and all our ministers and their wives, as well as the entire body of God’s Church, also are *that* kind of yes-men.

“There is a vast difference between being an insipid *yes-man* weakling through cringing FEAR, and being resolute and strong minded, imbued with the Holy Spirit of God.

“On the other hand there is also a vast difference between that and being stubbornly mule-minded, each pulling *his own way* and *doing his own thing!*

“What God intends us to be—what we MUST be to succeed in His Work—are resolute people, imbued with the HOLY SPIRIT of God, recognizing that Jesus Christ is our LEADER. And we plunge forth, *all of the*

same mind (that of Christ)—in PERFECT HARMONY AND UNITY—all *speaking the same thing*.

God's Command

“Listen, then, to God’s command:

‘Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that ye all speak the same thing*, and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (I Corinthians 1:10).

“God did not inspire the apostle Paul to mean that *wrong* kind of yes-men—insipid, weak, fear-minded men concerned with self-interest. What He did mean is that we should all be led by the same Spirit—God’s Holy Spirit.”

“You are not, then, allowed by God each to preach his own interpretations, but rather *as Christ leads the TEAM!*”

“We must always keep in mind that JESUS CHRIST is the living HEAD of the Church...He does NOT lead God’s Work through the self-will of each minister or individual, each pulling *his own direction to do his own thing*.

“Jesus Christ leads God’s Work through *human leaders* whom *HE* (not the members by vote) CHOOSES and works through.”

“The Great Majestic God,” GN, July 31, 1978

How sad that those serving on the various “Councils of Elders” in different organizations seem to never take time to review these kinds of clear and powerful statements from the past. If they did, they would stop their pulling apart, either within individual councils or between organizations. Then they would *repent* of creating—and almost proudly announcing—blatant division in their ranks. This would be followed by resignations *en masse* from councils within “governments” that God is neither directing nor blessing. Next, these men would go in search of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, realizing it would be the only place where Christ is truly ruling, meaning the only place where Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is *guiding* decisions made, and in unity, and then *blessing* those decisions. Those sincerely desiring to be under God’s government would not stop until they found it!

It is my prayer that the great God will get this special volume into the hands of as many of these men as possible. They must: (1) remember *what* to look for before deciding (2) *whether* they will come to the ONLY place without the kinds of mass confusion they would leave behind.

Advisory Council of Elders

The Proverbs are filled with instruction to those who would be wise to always obtain a multitude of counsel in the face of difficult decisions, if at all possible. The Bible reveals variously that in a multitude of counsel there is “peace,” “wisdom,” “safety,” “purposes are established,” and also instructs, “with good counsel make war.” When these points are placed together, the picture should be obvious. God has promised the one—anyone—led of His Spirit, who seeks counsel that He will work through that counsel, guiding and directing, and that it will achieve correct answers and solutions, no matter the issue at hand. This is in fact seen to be one of the great principles—and promises—in the Bible!

When The Restored Church of God came into existence, I announced that there would eventually be an Advisory Council of Elders. Several years had to pass before this could occur, because, like Mr. Armstrong in the early years, I did not wish to appoint men prematurely, before they had demonstrated that God was strongly using them.

For some time, RCG has had an *Advisory* Council of Elders composed of men who have demonstrated an extraordinary level of doctrinal soundness, loyalty, dedication, zeal for the Work of God, as well as the “work” of the ministry—and, perhaps as important as any other factor, an understanding of the unchanging government of God headed by Jesus Christ! Indeed, this element within the government of God—a *faithful* Advisory Council of Elders—has been restored. It has been returned to a place of respect from the years of assault on its true purpose by those former council members who so betrayed and dishonored it. Christ and Mr. Armstrong had entrusted great responsibility to certain men, but they collapsed, quaking and shaking in fear and weakness, focused on self-preservation in the face of wolves.

Without anointing their eyes, such desperately “blind guides” would have great difficulty understanding the need to rekindle and continue fulfilling the next all-important duty...

“WATCHMAN” TO ISRAEL

The book’s title includes “understanding offices and duties.” We have so far covered the *offices* within the New Testament ministry, plus that of deacon. Only briefly referenced, we have not yet seriously addressed any of what could be called special, unusual or unique *duties*—God-ordained RESPONSIBILITIES!—to be carried out within the New Testament era. First, let’s understand the term.

Thirteen Special Duties

You are about to learn that there are a total of *thirteen* separate and distinct responsibilities that were foretold in Scripture to be assigned to specific individuals—leaders in the Church—within the Christian era. Since this is not a large number, it should be easy to understand and keep them straight. While what is presented in the next several chapters is not new doctrine or teaching, many of these duties have been forgotten, or were perhaps never *fully* understood by most brethren, and probably many ministers. Certainly, I have never seen or heard anyone actually create the *list* you will read. But a *summary* of these prophesied, absolutely crucial APPOINTMENTS would be helpful as an introduction to this and the next two chapters. I emphasize, they are nothing new.

First, there were to be *two* Elijahs, one to announce Christ’s First Coming and the other to announce His Return. Just before the New Testament era began, John the Baptist came as a type of the prophet

Elijah to introduce the first coming of Christ. Another man would fulfill the role of the Elijah who would introduce Christ's Second Coming and "restore all things" to the Church. If John's fulfillment is counted within the New Testament era—remember, he came *just before* Christ built His Church—the number becomes thirteen appointments or special duties.

Next, everyone is familiar with the fact that the Two Witnesses will appear at the beginning of the Great Tribulation and continue through the Day of the Lord. Again, these are the subject of Chapter Seventeen. So far then, these special duties involve *four* people.

Then, a designated "watchman" was to appear before the end of the age to warn the modern nations of Israel. This function began before and during World War II and continued for some decades through Mr. Armstrong. However, since Mr. Armstrong died over 25 years ago, it becomes apparent that *another* watchman had to be raised up to finish the warning right up to the beginning of the Tribulation (Rom. 9:27-29; Jer. 4:16; Rev. 10:11). Explaining this second and last fulfillment is the purpose of this chapter. Also, this subject is covered in much greater detail in a sermon series referenced at the end of the chapter.

Before continuing, you must recognize that it was not possible for God to send other previous watchmen to the nations of Israel prior to the twentieth century. This is because the *identity* of the twelve tribes who constitute these nations today was not revealed until Mr. Armstrong was used to bring this vital KEY of knowledge to the Church in the 1930s. Coupled with understanding the role of the watchman, this key of knowledge—referred to in the Bible as the "key of David" (Rev. 3:7), the identity of great nations that would be understood by Philadelphia—is what allowed Mr. Armstrong during the Philadelphian era to begin this duty. (It is crucial to get this in your mind before continuing.) This increases the number of men performing special responsibilities to *six*.

Finally, Revelation 2 and 3 describe seven separate "messengers" to the seven eras of God's Church. These are the subject of the next chapter, and they are also explained in greater detail in the same sermon series just referenced.

We have come to a total number of *thirteen* New Testament figures performing SPECIAL DUTIES designated in the same way to no one else in any other age.

Savor for a moment what you have just read. In all likelihood, you have not thought of these *special assignments* in this way before. This is because no one else is talking about—carefully reminding and explaining—these kinds of things to God's people. And yet they are of monumen-

tal importance! Consider, with the rest of this book, why it is that you are hearing these things explained from within *The Restored Church of God*. If Christ is to make all of these special duties PLAIN in meaning again—and He would surely want this to be so in the minds of His people—He would only do this from the Body through which He is working, and from the only office we have seen that He uses to deliver such information.

The Briefest Quote

This section opens with a single sentence from Mr. Armstrong. The vast majority of brethren will not remember it, and in all likelihood most probably never noticed it when they read it previously. For those who still believe the truth it contains, this is perhaps one of the two or three most profound statements that I have ever read from Mr. Armstrong's pen. I, too, did not initially recognize the weight of what was being said. It sets up all that will follow.

Read it three times:

"God expects the spiritual leader of His people to be His 'watchman' (Ezek. 33:7) and to warn the people."

Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?, p. 2

The statement is impossible to misunderstand. Like others from Mr. Armstrong, you either understand and believe it or you do not. If you do, it means you must go and *find* whoever is the man commissioned to fulfill this responsibility. But you will not be able to see the *importance* of locating the Church that is carrying out this duty until you grasp the nature and magnitude of the task Mr. Armstrong references. Once this extraordinary responsibility is truly understood, it automatically becomes its own POWERFUL MOTIVATOR and MAGNET to the person who has been shown it to begin *searching* for whom it is that God has selected to be the final "watchman" to "warn the people" before calamity strikes those who would not heed.

See this next point. The above statement is meaningless if you cannot *know* WHO the leader of God's Church is. This means—and we are seeing this in different ways over and over again—that you must know *where* the Church and Body of Christ is. *That* is where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD would be in place, and thus where Christ would be directing and empowering His chosen servant to carry out this special responsibility. It goes without saying that whoever this man is, *he* would have to be clear on these things himself because this is the only way he would be able to know that it is *his* responsibility to carry out the warning!

If the appointed leader can know—and he would have to know with *absolute certainty*—so can you! In fact, for this man to carry out his duty, he would have to have a great many people backing him up. This means that the *proof*, with all necessary *facts* and *evidence*—the FRUIT!—of whom Christ is using must be available to God’s people. Only then could they be in a position to decide if they are—or are not—going to support this effort.

Finally, God would have to have *made available* for review the fruits of the man whom he had selected, so that all could *prove* and *know* that CHRIST had selected him, and that the man had not presumptuously appointed himself. God’s people would also have to be able to correctly discern all imposters, remembering that the devil counterfeits *everything*.

Before you were ready to learn more about the warning itself, it was vital to make clear that God knows He could not have left any of these things in doubt. He simply could not, and you will find that He did not. But presenting that evidence is not the main purpose of this book. A variety of sermons do this. You owe yourself to hear them.

But let’s now look in overview at what the Church came to refer to as the “Ezekiel Warning.”

Understanding the Ezekiel Warning

We have referenced two elements or components of the Work: preaching, or ANNOUNCING, the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world and WARNING the nations descended from ancient Israel.

The second aspect has largely been forgotten, having fallen into disuse by people who were taught by the apostates to mostly focus on “love.” Only rarely does one any longer hear talk of WARNING the descendants of Israel of impending war, disease, famine and captivity, if national repentance does not occur. Yet, any discussion of the subject of God’s government would be incomplete without re-explaining this warning as an ongoing and vital part of finishing the true Work of God.

Mr. Armstrong was absolutely on fire with the duty to warn certain nations, and he continually reminded God’s people of this ongoing obligation until the very end. He saw this as the gravest of all responsibilities! In fact, the primary purposes of his book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* were to first identify and then detail what is at stake for the Israelite nations of the West *if* they did not change their ways. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, often called “the blessings and cursings chapters,” outline all that would happen to Israel—plagues, drought, famine, curses, catastrophes of every sort, and enslavement—in the last days, *if* she did not continue to obey God. This was why that electrifying book—about what

would befall America, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and other democratic nations of the West if they did not repent—was the Church's most often-requested piece of literature for decades. Its message became, or should have become, a driving reality in the life of *every* member of the Church. I remember this book hit me like a thunderbolt and changed my life forever. Many of you could say the same.

In this regard, Mr. Armstrong continually reminded the Church of Ezekiel 33:1-9. Speaking of the "house of Israel" in modern times, this passage, and actually the entirety of chapter 33, speaks of one called the "watchman" who "sees the sword come" and chooses to either "blow the trumpet" or "blow *not* the trumpet." The context of the chapter includes a specific and strong warning *to the watchman* of "blood" that would be on *his* head if he did not WARN of what was coming!

The message to the watchman is most serious!

I personally tremble at this latter admonition. Do you? Do you realize then that *you* have to participate in and support the effort? And can you grasp that no one of Laodicea could fulfill this role, that an era described as BLIND would certainly not produce a good WATCHMAN? Forgive the comparison, but who would enlist Helen Keller as an army scout or to operate a lighthouse?

Those of the final Church era cannot see their own deplorable spiritual condition, and thus they could not possibly *watch*—SEE!—on behalf of others!

How Mr. Armstrong Came to See

Let's allow Mr. Armstrong to explain again to all who will hear what the "Ezekiel Warning" is, as well as its profound importance to the overall Work of God. The statements that follow tell the story of *how* Mr. Armstrong came to understand the Ezekiel "watchman" warning, and his personal responsibility within it. May God help you to comprehend what is here (all emphasis his):

"About this time God impressed on our mind His real meaning of the prophecies in Ezekiel 33:1-19, and 3:17-21. The true significance of the entire Book of Ezekiel had been revealed for some time. But now, suddenly, it took on *immediate* and *specific* and *personal* significance.

"I had seen that Ezekiel was a *prophet* with a message for the FUTURE. He himself was in the captivity of the House of JUDAH...But he was *not* set a prophet with a message to these people."

"His message was a warning of INVASION and TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE NATION'S *CITIES*. That invasion was for the future. That prophecy

came more than 120 years *after* Israel [the House of Israel] already *had* been invaded and conquered.”

“So now I saw Ezekiel was set a WATCHMAN—to *watch* international conditions as well as God’s prophecies—and *when* this invasion is preparing, and near, shortly prior to Christ’s coming to RULE THE WORLD, the watchman is to WARN the people who had migrated, in Ezekiel’s day, to northwestern Europe and the British Isles! But Ezekiel *never carried that warning!* It was not for HIS TIME! He was used *merely to write it!* It now became plain to me that God was to use a modern 20th-century ‘Ezekiel’ to shout this WARNING.”

“I had no illusions that I was chosen to be the ‘modern Ezekiel’ to proclaim this message. But I did know that no one was sounding this alarm. I did plainly see this sword of destruction and punishment coming. I knew the time was near. Perhaps, with World War II well under way, it was even then *upon us*. We could not, then, foresee that God would grant another recess period in the series of world wars before the final round to end at ‘Armageddon.’

“And I did see, plainly, that God said: ‘If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned’ that God would require the blood of the people—and now *whole peoples*—at the watchman’s hand!

“That was a stern warning to *me*.”

The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong, Vol. II, pp. 36-38

“In those early days I was especially interested in the book of Ezekiel.”

“The message in fact is for today—and contained a WARNING of things to happen to Britain, America and the Western European nations NOW in OUR DAY.

“I saw clearly, back in those early days, that Ezekiel’s prophecy was a message to be taken by some MODERN TWENTIETH CENTURY servant of God—a ‘modern Ezekiel’ to America, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

“I dwelt in hundreds of broadcasts on this book of Ezekiel and its WARNING of things IMMINENTLY NOW to HAPPEN to Britain, the United States and Western Europe.”

“And so it was that Christ, the Head of this Work, caused me during the first 20 or 25 years of this Work to put SPECIAL emphasis on Ezekiel’s warning to OUR PEOPLE, IN OUR DAY.” [Author’s note: You will notice Mr. Armstrong repeated this paragraph verbatim below.]

*“How I Came to be Going to Kings and Heads of Government,”
PT, Feb. 1977*

"THIS is the most seriously-in-earnest article I have ever written for *The Plain Truth*. Our beloved country—yours and mine—now faces TOTAL DESTRUCTION!"

"A third of our people—white English-speaking people and minorities with us—will die in a disease epidemic such as the world never experienced—resulting from imminent FAMINE! I do not know whether in two or three years—or in another decade or more—but sooner than people think!"

"Why do not theologians, doctors of divinity and of theology, evangelists, religious leaders shout this warning to you? THEY SIMPLY DO NOT UNDERSTAND God's prophecies! They do not preach what God's Word says—they take a piece of a sentence or a paragraph here or there out of context—yet leave about 98 percent of the Bible unread and unpreached!"

"WAKE UP! Readers of *The Plain Truth*! If they have not the courage to tell you, I HAVE!"

"The lamentations and woes of the message to be carried to Israel *never occurred in Ezekiel's time or later. They are to strike America and Britain in our time.*"

*"America the Beautiful. America the Condemned,"
PT, June-July 1980*

"In OUR TIME, God showed me in the New Testament where He sent His disciples FIRST to the same 'lost sheep of the House of Israel' (Matt. 15:24). And so it was that Christ, the Head of this Work, caused me during the first 20 or 25 years of this Work, to put SPECIAL emphasis on Ezekiel's warning to OUR PEOPLE, IN OUR DAY."

"The Apostle John in his vision is told to take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel, and eat it up.

"HOW LIKE EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY!

"It was sweet as honey in his mouth but BITTER in his stomach.

"The message of the little book seems to be what the angel next said, 'Thou must prophesy [proclaim-preach-foretell] again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues and KINGS!'

"Now WHEN?

"The message of the little book written on both sides of a roll, to be eaten and swallowed, takes us directly back to Ezekiel's prophecy. Ezekiel himself, as I have shown, NEVER WENT TO ISRAEL, NEVER DELIVERED THAT MESSAGE. It was not a prophecy for the Israel of his day—but for OUR DAY, NOW. Ezekiel's prophecy was NOT a message to MANY NATIONS, speaking different languages, and to their KINGS. It was to the REBELLIOUS PEOPLE of the House of Israel and

it was emphasized to Ezekiel they were NOT of strange speech—NOT foreign Gentile nations.”

“Could it be possible, after proclaiming the Gospel of THE KINGDOM OF GOD, as well as Ezekiel’s warning to the people of Israel, that, beginning January, 1972, when my PRESENT CAMPAIGN of walking through the doors God said He would open (Rev. 3:8) to KINGS, and many NATIONS of DIFFERENT LANGUAGES commenced, that it is the FULFILLMENT OF THIS PROPHECY OF REVELATION 10?”

Co-Worker Letter, November 19, 1976

Even After His Death

The following quote does not come from Mr. Armstrong, but rather from his successor. This man had instructed the Editorial Department to write a tribute to Mr. Armstrong seven months after his death. It demonstrates that the apostates clearly understood who Israel was and the overall framework of prophecy at least for this long after Mr. Armstrong died. This necessarily would have included the need to continue the Ezekiel Warning.

Here is how this was listed and described in the *Worldwide News* as number 15 of what they called the “18 truths” restored under Mr. Armstrong. The part in bold is as it originally appeared:

“(15) Prophecy can be understood only if you know that we are the Israelites, and what prophecies apply to us and which do not. Others who do not know Israel’s identity can’t understand, for example, the 30th chapter of Jeremiah and scriptures like that, which show the Great Tribulation will be the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

WN, August 25, 1986

This article carried both a photo of all of Mr. Armstrong’s major books on prophecy as well as another of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong, with a caption stating, “In the early 1930s, God began to use the Armstrongs to restore these 18 essential truths to His Church. Could we, today, lose sight of them?”

Many Did Forget

At this point, we need to return to the subject of the liberal years of the mid-70s. Among the many wrong ideas that people drifted into, because they had forgotten even some of the biggest of the *very basics*, was the need to fulfill the watchman responsibility.

Mr. Armstrong saw this relaxation of urgency, and the memory loss that followed it. He decided to write an article to the entire ministry about it, because he saw that *they* also were forgetting or had completely forgotten the history behind how he came to understand the watchman duty, what *was* the duty, and what was *at stake* for the watchman and for all who were to support him—if they did not carry out their God-ordained responsibility.

The following quotes are all excerpts from the same article by Mr. Armstrong, "Now God Speaks to You Ministers," published in the October-November 1979 *Good News*. These quotes are included so that the reader can appreciate from Mr. Armstrong's own words how he felt that he needed to completely reconstruct a vision even in the minds of the ministry about this commission so that they could back him up before the brethren from pulpits around the world. I offer only a few comments because Mr. Armstrong's words form my reminder to you. He begins with a look back (all emphasis his):

"Years ago I proclaimed on the air a great deal from the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives of the 604 to 585 B.C. captivity by Babylon of the kingdom of Judah. This was more than 125 years after the kingdom of ISRAEL had been invaded, conquered and moved from Palestine to Assyria on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea.

"But both the Assyrians and their slave Israelites had long since migrated northwest into western Europe and Britain when JUDAH was made captive by Babylon."

After presenting this brief history, Mr. Armstrong continues by explaining that the watchman commission could not have applied to the prophet Ezekiel, but rather had to refer to a "modern Ezekiel," and Mr. Armstrong explains how no one else had been fulfilling the duty. Notice the "all caps" to conclude this portion. The subhead within the next quote is Mr. Armstrong's:

"...Yet the message Ezekiel was inspired by God to write was written primarily to ISRAEL, not Judah.

"Ezekiel's message is NOT to the Jewish slaves among whom Ezekiel was living. It was to the HOUSE OF ISRAEL (Ezek. 2:3 and 3:1). The prophet Ezekiel was never able to break loose from Babylonish slavery and proclaim his message to the kingdom of Israel, by then dwelling in western Europe and Britain.

"THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL IS GOD'S MESSAGE *TO US TODAY* – FOR WE *ARE THE* PEOPLE of the ancient house of ISRAEL, of the

tribe of Manasseh. (See – and you’d better *BELIEVE* – our booklet on the U.S. in prophecy.)

A Modern Ezekiel Raised Up

“Since the original writer, Ezekiel, was not able to go to the people of the house of ISRAEL, God showed me years ago that it remained for God to raise up ‘modern Ezekiel’ to carry this prophetic message to the modern Israel of today – and that means, primarily, the English-speaking people.

“I have proclaimed the Ezekiel messages to our peoples by radio, television and by personal appearance and in print for more than 40 years. *NO ONE ELSE HAS!*”

Mr. Armstrong briefly returns to more history before continuing. Notice that he begins to emphasize at the end how *all the ministers* were to stand behind him:

“THEREFORE EZEKIEL’S MESSAGE IS FOR US TODAY! That is, for GOD’S CHURCH to proclaim to the English-speaking nations.

“First, God prepared me in a special way, then called me in a manner to wipe my mind clean of every other or previous belief, and to come to HIS TRUTH in a manner experienced by none other in recent times, CONQUERING ME, completely submissive to HIM and His Word.

“He started His Work and His Church in a very small way – BUT IT GREW AND GREW and became a large WORLDWIDE Church.

“God in due time added you ministers to 1) feed the local flocks, and 2) to stand staunchly and loyally *WITH ME* in carrying Christ’s Gospel to the world.”

In addition to thanking them, notice how Mr. Armstrong explains that there cannot be division among the ministry, with different men having different opinions about this subject, apart from “the mind of Christ.” Also note again the last sentence in this excerpt:

“I constantly THANK GOD for you loyal ministers and your faithful wives, and for the way Christ is using you in furthering HIS WORK! God has called us, that we must all ‘SPEAK THE SAME THING’ (I Cor. 1:10) in perfect harmony and love, that we be of ONE MIND – the MIND OF CHRIST!

“But now I do feel we must seriously consider God’s warning message to our nations and to the ministry of HIS CHURCH through Ezekiel. This is of CRISIS importance right now.”

As Mr. Armstrong often did, sometimes within the same article or sermon, he repeats certain things for critical emphasis, using different words. Notice also the urgency:

"I proclaimed much of Ezekiel's message to Manasseh and Ephraim during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. But I was ahead of my time – or else God has deliberately slowed down prophesied world events. We are now coming into the TIME for proclaiming Ezekiel's message."

"This prophecy NEVER TOOK PLACE IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES! Continuing into chapter 6, 'In all your dwellingplaces THE CITIES SHALL BE LAID WASTE' (verse 6). This could be accomplished only by NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION. The TIME of this prophecy is now JUST AHEAD OF US!...but we cannot set dates."

The next portion appears under the subhead "Speaking to the clergy." Mr. Armstrong could just as easily be speaking to the collective ministry in the splinters *today* when he references some still in the WCG at the time who had actually rejected the "watchman" truth:

"To continue through Ezekiel, expounding it, would take a hundred pages. But, speaking especially to the ministry of God's Church, I want to include some of chapter 34, where it speaks of the clergy of the American and British peoples.

"LET US BE CAREFUL LEST ANY OF THIS APPLY TO THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S CHURCH!"

"Continue, verse 4, 'neither have ye sought that which was lost' – here speaking of the 'LOST' 10 TRIBES. Certainly the clergy of 'traditional Christianity' have not sought to locate the 'LOST' house of Israel. God revealed their identity and location to me before the present era of God's Church was started, and it has always been a PRIMARY DOCTRINE of this Church. Yet some few of our ministers have rejected this truth, and even tried to destroy it from the Church.

"While I was overseas and did not know they were doing it, some, under my son Garner Ted, REDUCED the booklet *U.S. in Prophecy*, eliminating vitally important parts of it. A new full edition of this important book is now in process of being published, full size. This book was one of the two or three that did more to BUILD THIS CHURCH than any others."

The article concludes with the following as the first paragraph under the final subhead "Dire punishment is ahead." As you read this

single closing paragraph, ask yourself who else that you know today is willing to speak to other ministers, or anyone else for that matter, with such powerful, blunt language. Try to think of those you know and reflect on their words and tones. No further comments need to be added by me after such a statement:

“I will break off there, for lack of space. But chapters 5 and 6 of Ezekiel, combined with Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, and other scriptures such as Matthew 24:21-22, Jeremiah 30, show the United States and Britain are going down, *down, DOWN*, into utter defeat, slavery and dire punishment for our national SINS.”

“Now God Speaks to You Ministers,” GN, Oct.-Nov. 1979

Forgotten—Again!

Tragically, many more than the apostates, referenced a little earlier, lost sight of even the basics—never mind the great urgency—of prophecy, and thus the need to continue the WARNING MESSAGE to Israel before her “trouble” (Jer. 30:7) began.

Mr. Armstrong’s warning long forgotten, history *has* repeated itself! What happened to cause this? Why do so few today discuss something so central—so bedrock fundamental!—to what was understood to be an inseparable part of the Great Commission? How did they *forget* all the kinds of statements that we have just read?

The answer is that Satan’s spirit has entered into and is confusing the splinters, slivers, and those who are alone at home, and causing memory loss on a matter he wants de-emphasized and *permanently forgotten*. The devil knows what this warning means to *his future*. It is much more attractive to him if God’s people can be diverted into, and become preoccupied with, fixing *this* world—HIS world!—through *his* “gospel,” with *his* “Jesus” included in it, rather than announcing the arrival of the WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW, when Scripture states he will be bound and the KINGDOM OF GOD will be ruling. The facts are that most of the splinters and slivers have moved into alignment with the social gospel of professing Christianity and its “Jesus” (II Cor. 11:3-4). And this is *directly related* to the fact that their fouled-up governments, led by self-appointed deceivers, will not permit them to SEE the *need* for a warning and to search for the watchman commissioned to issue it!

Remember that it is the devil who seeks to thwart God’s Work in every possible way, and he is not particular about how he does it. He does not care if he destroys the Work outright—or merely destroys

people's understanding of what it is. He knows that once either has happened, he can divert those who still believe *something* should be done into other priorities, including a re-engineered definition of what *is* the Work!

In the year 2003, I spoke for many hours and several visits with one of the most senior evangelists from the early years. I was appalled that he did not even *remember* the term "Ezekiel Warning." He had no recollection—none!—of Mr. Armstrong having used this term. I could not believe my ears, and that I had to carefully explain this to him *several times* in the same conversation before he could get it straight. Now deceased, this man was living proof that complete spiritual amnesia can strike anyone. But then this is the same man who found it possible to forget that he could not reinstate himself to the rank of Evangelist.

Jesus promised His disciples that "the Holy Spirit...shall teach you all things, and *bring all things to your remembrance*, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). If you have forgotten how Jesus Christ, through Mr. Armstrong, taught this colossally-important doctrine (the Ezekiel Warning *is* a HUGE DOCTRINE!) *and* its vital importance to the Church, ask God to help you remember both.

He will—and He will also help you understand how John 14:26 is a crucial part of the larger process of anointing your eyes to all other matters, including the government of God. (One of the most important books I have ever written, and one of the most important outside the Bible [with this one] that you could read from now through the rest of your life, is "*Anoint Your Eyes*" – *Christ's Warning to His People*. If you have not read this book, I urge you to do this as soon as possible. It is among the most crucial in our *Splinter Explanation Packet*.)

The Meaning of "Watchman"

As with the different New Testament offices, we need to look at the meaning, in this case, of the Hebrew word translated "watchman." You will find it to be interesting to the point of fascinating. The word for watchman is *tsaphah*, and it means "to lean forward, to peer into the distance, by implication to observe, await – behold, espy, look up (well), wait for, (keep the) watch (-man)." It is of interest that the word *espy* means "to catch sight of (something distant, partially hidden or obscure); glimpse."

This definition becomes a description of a responsibility that involves intense scrutiny—the term "to lean forward" paints a picture of one taking a very serious look at what lies ahead "in the distance." He is

one intently interested in “catching sight of” what is obscured to the view of most or all others.

The man who is to carry out this role would be one who understands all that this definition includes. He must understand that this involves an enormous undertaking—reaching very diverse nations with a combined population of over 600 million people in 22 nations and territories. One could scarcely conceive of a more daunting task. This man would then have to have all of the means necessary to be able to effectively carry out this staggering responsibility. God would never require the blood at the watchman’s hand if He did not give this man the wherewithal to fulfill the charge. Carrying out God’s command would also necessarily involve not only enough *time* in advance to prepare all the *TOOLS* to do this, but—and see this!—enough time to give all of His people in the scattered organizations of the seventh era an opportunity to accept or reject personal participation.

To coin the phrase, you can be assured that I “leaned forward” and “peered into” who held the duty of watchman. Will you do the same?

A Conclusive Statement

The final statement that we will read from Mr. Armstrong describes how God’s Church will remain a “little flock, persecuted, despised by the world.” However, this will not deter it from continuing to announce the kingdom of God and to warn the Israelite nations until the Tribulation. Remember as you read that *doing God’s Work* has always been the Church’s responsibility—and the Church is *STILL HERE!* Jesus said that the “gates of the grave” would never prevail against His Church, and that He would “never leave nor forsake it.” So, the Church will be here until He returns, meaning until the Tribulation arrives! Only when the punishment *begins* will the special warning end.

This chapter has carried examples of clear statements from Mr. Armstrong that people distort to their own purpose. Ultimately, and I repeat, so many do this in order to conclude that they need no longer exert the *effort* to do the Work. But others seek an excuse to keep for themselves—to plain *STEAL*—God’s tithes and offerings!

A key rule of Bible study is being forgotten in all of this. Every one of God’s people was taught as a basic rule of studying His Word to *always* start with and study the most *basic, clear* scriptures on a matter to understand an *entire* doctrine. The same must be done when understanding *ALL* of what Mr. Armstrong taught about carrying on with the same Work—not just announcing the kingdom of God, but also warning

Israel—until the age ends. The age has not ended, therefore *both* components of the Great Commission must be continued until it has!

Keep It Simple!

Notice how this final quote incorporates virtually all of the critical elements we have discussed so far, including the all-important tie-in of what is the true Body of Christ, the purpose of that Body or Church, and what is the only true gospel that Church will be taking to all nations.

While this particular final quote does not directly mention the Ezekiel Warning, you have seen that it is also a part of the message behind this last statement by Mr. Armstrong:

“God *started* His Gospel WORK—proclaiming the Gospel (good news) of HIS KINGDOM—through the individual human BODY of Jesus. But after His resurrection, Jesus sent the same HOLY SPIRIT on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, and thereafter, to enter into the COLLECTIVE BODY of those constituting GOD’S CHURCH.

“The CHURCH, then, is the COLLECTIVE BODY Christ uses as HIS INSTRUMENT, empowered by God’s Spirit, to carry on GOD’S WORK. Jesus Christ heads and directs it from heaven!”

“But WHAT is the divine MISSION of that Church? What is its PURPOSE? The answer is to *do* the WORK OF GOD, which Jesus started and now continues *through* His Church.”

“Wherever God’s true Church is—the ONE Church that is CHRIST’S—it will be preaching THAT GOSPEL to the whole world—over *all continents*—today. For we are *near* the END! That is the Gospel of the *living* Christ! It is the GOOD NEWS of the *coming* KINGDOM OF GOD to *RULE THE WORLD!*”

“But wherever that ONE *true* Church is, it will be named *the Church of God*.

“But that is not all. Many have appropriated God’s name, but are not proclaiming the KINGDOM OF GOD...”

“That true Church is preaching the imminency of the coming of CHRIST as King of kings and LORD of lords, to RULE all nations for a thousand years on earth.”

“There is only ONE such Church!

“It is doing THE WORK OF GOD. It is, as Jesus said it would be, a ‘little flock,’ persecuted, despised by the world.”

“*Personal,*” GN, Aug. 1983

The reader simply *must* see that the subject of the “watchman” cannot be fully understood without listening to the referenced two-part sermon series explaining this role. It is titled “*Watchman to Israel—Messenger to Laodicea!*”, and includes various aspects of Ezekiel’s and also Jeremiah’s prophecies, where parallel points apply. These sermons cover a host of other extremely important and closely-related points.

Two chapters—ten and thirteen—of *The Work of God* take the reader into an incredible, and fascinating, New Testament prophecy, described in Revelation 10:11. Tied directly to the Ezekiel Warning by Mr. Armstrong, it has to do with the responsibility to “prophecy again”—to *repeat* the Work fulfilled by Mr. Armstrong—as a 21st-century sequel to his work.

You cannot afford to miss these sermons—or the understanding explained in the book above!

Although less known to the brethren, there is another duty, indicated in the title of this series, that the very last watchman, the one following Mr. Armstrong, would automatically be responsible for performing. This role is actually carried out by seven different men, spanning 2,000 years of Church history. And the final watchman to the *physical* house of Israel is seen to have a parallel responsibility to *spiritual* Israel...

“MESSENGERS” TO ERAS

This is one of the book’s most crucial chapters. In fact, its subject directly overarches *your life*. The special duty it describes all comes straight from just one section of the Bible. Therefore, this means that what you will read is largely above criticism and “interpretation,” at least to those who still believe in the truth of Church eras. It is also because less needs to be said about it, since it is covered in much greater detail within the sermons referenced at the end of the last chapter.

You must recognize that the subject of messengers to Church eras is one that carries tremendous weight of importance in this age. Because the final era arrived, and because it is in full state of development, and because the last era is much worse than all previous eras, possibly combined, the subject at hand grows even greater in importance.

Virtually every member of the Worldwide Church of God was familiar with the seven “messages” of Revelation 2 and 3. This is still true of most who survived the apostasy, although many of these no longer grasp the absolutely crucial nature of Church eras as they once did. However, most have never stopped long enough to notice specifically *to whom* the messages were written.

Mr. Armstrong did not write or speak much about the seven messengers of Revelation. (In fact, I never heard or read his thoughts on this subject until just before he died.) This is at least in part because he did not come to fully understand or focus on his own role as the messenger to the sixth era until the end of his life.

Written to Whom?

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recorded the words of Jesus Christ—the Revelator—who presented seven distinct messages to seven different *entities*. I might ask: Are you familiar with whom or what these are? Have you ever heard a sermon or sermonette about them? Ask yourself how much thought, if any, you may have given them in the past.

This subject needs to be understood if the reader is to fully comprehend a critical element of how the government of God is to carry out a vital function today.

Let's begin an examination of the messages with the first one in Revelation 2:1: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; these things says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks..." To whom was Christ writing? Do you know? Was it to all of the *brethren* of the Ephesian era?—or to someone or something else? What does "angel" reference?

Now notice verse 8, almost identical to verse 1: "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; these things says the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive..." Again, to whom was Christ giving His message? And also again, was it specifically to all of the brethren alive during the Smyrna era?

Five more times the messages begin exactly the same: "And unto the angel of the church..." Each time this lead-in is followed by an important element in Christ's description of who and what He is, followed by the name of a particular city among seven on a mail route in Asia Minor (southwestern Turkey today) that were all to be types of the seven eras of God's Church through the next over nineteen centuries.

What followed the name of the city was simply the specific message each of these eras was to receive. Several verses follow each introduction with what Jesus Christ, the Head of each era, wanted that era to know. But the messages were not specifically written *to the eras*.

Get this straight! These are not messages to the actual eras themselves. Each is written to one described as an "angel." I repeat: They are *not* actually written to the people (the brethren) living during the eras. (If necessary, take the time to read each introductory phrase yourself – 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14.)

This requires some additional clarification. Obviously, whoever these "angels" were (we will see them more correctly to be "messengers"), they were in some fashion to deliver the messages to the respective eras mentioned—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis,

Philadelphia and Laodicea. The messages were obviously not written exclusively to just seven different individuals and no one else, meaning, just as obviously, they would not be merely something for either seven angels or seven human beings to contemplate. Of course, no one believes this. But most do not grasp their significance.

To summarize, Revelation 2 and 3 present seven *messages* that seven MESSENGERS were to deliver. What was recorded was written directly to the messengers, not to the eras. The seven eras were to *receive* the messages from the *appointed messengers*. This much becomes unmistakable.

If the reader wants to know more about the fascinating history of God's Church over the last nearly 20 centuries, and learn a host of facts about each era, including some further explanation about the seven messages, you will want to read our book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* It is simply the most interesting that you will find on the subject of Church history.

What Does "Angel" Mean?

The Greek word translated "angel" in these seven passages is *aggelos*, pronounced ang'-el-os. It means "to bring tidings, a messenger; by implication a pastor, angel, messenger;" and this word can also mean "agent." Note that *Vine's Dictionary* adds to this meaning that it involves "one sent." So we see that there is no unusual or mysterious meaning hidden in the term.

It is interesting that these messengers are not designated as bringing either good or bad tidings—good or bad news. They are seen to simply bring "tidings." A closer examination of the seven eras reveals three different types of messages are presented to the eras: Smyrna and Philadelphia receive only good news. Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira and Sardis receive a mixture of good and bad news. Laodicea is given only bad news, and this becomes the greatest reason every reader should get straight in his mind the truth about messengers to eras.

You are involved!

Let's reason together for a moment. Those who bring these messages—and we will see that they are human beings (although angels may be involved in some way behind the scenes)—must be able to bring *bad news*, in the case of Laodicea the worst possible bad news or warning. We saw earlier that this eliminates evangelists or those holding lower offices as candidates to fulfill these responsibilities. Although prophets more often brought bad news, they *could* bring good news, and did, as some mes-

sages here require. (Of course, prophets announce the kingdom of God in Scripture.) But God would surely not use prophets to be messengers in the New Testament era because they would only be present if there were an apostle leading the Church, and God would likely use the apostle to deliver the message. In any event, the Two Witnesses will soon bring a “world” of bad news to *all nations*, and, again, we will see clearly in the next chapter that there *must* be a living apostle during their time of service.

In summary, think of it this way: Pastors are to remain stationary, basically in one location. Evangelists were able to speak within a somewhat wider area, but are commissioned to bring good news. Prophets virtually always were sent to deliver bad news. Apostles can do both—they can announce the good news of the kingdom of God, *and* they *could* warn the nations of Israel of impending calamity. Thus, it becomes obvious that, in at least most cases, apostles would be the most natural candidates as messengers to eras.

What Mr. Armstrong Taught About Messengers

Eventually, Mr. Armstrong did write about the subject of messengers to eras. However, most brethren today would probably not remember that he addressed the subject in *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. He did, and what he wrote was neither difficult to understand nor extensive. In fact, he said very little. But the nature of the confusing age in which God’s final era exists does require some additional explanation be given beyond what Mr. Armstrong covered. There is only one place in the book in which Mr. Armstrong specifically discusses these seven messengers, but there is one other in the introduction to the book where he alludes to a moment when his understanding opened on this subject—to the time when he seemed to recognize his role in this regard.

If you have never read *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, you may wish to get it and read some of the additional history surrounding the quote that Mr. Armstrong adds. Now let’s read:

“But who can understand the Bible? I certainly never had understood it. And even if one does, can one believe the Bible? Does it speak with any authority? That question puzzled me and is the mystery to be cleared up in this volume. How I came to understand began at age 34, in the year of 1926. But it only began there. The final crystal-clear reason that impelled me to write this book did not fully reveal itself to my mind until December of 1984. It was a mind-boggling realization—a pivotal truth—that will be made clear in this book.

"The beginning of opening my mind to the truth covered in this book began in the summer of 1926.

"I asked myself: 'Who am I? WHAT am I? WHY am I?' I tried to reason out the answer, but I couldn't. It was a mystery. Then, that very autumn I was confronted with a mind-disturbing challenge on a biblical question and the theory of evolution. This resulted in opening my mind to amazing vistas and depths of knowledge and understanding.

"It all started with the question of the theory of evolution and the religious question of Sunday observance."

pp. viii-ix

This second quote, also from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, begins under the subhead "Restoration of God's Truth to Church." Here is where his understanding is seen to have opened:

"From the year 1931, exactly 1,900 years (a century of time cycles from the foundation of the Church, this small remnant of the original true Church of God began to take on new life as the Philadelphia era. It had come to the 'time of the end.' A new spiritual vitality was infused into it. The time had come for Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24:14 to be fulfilled—'this gospel of the kingdom shall be [proclaimed] in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' Such vital truth that had been lost was gradually revealed and proclaimed.

"This Philadelphia era is described in verses 7 to 13 of Revelation 3. The Sardis era (Rev. 3:1-6) was by this time spiritually dying and had become impotent in spreading the true gospel of Christ. Indeed they had by this time lost knowledge of the true meaning of that gospel. They knew they were approaching the Second Coming of Christ, but they had no knowledge of what would happen during the thousand years millennium, further than the fact Christ would rule.

"Of the Philadelphia era of God's true Church we read: 'To the angel of the church...' This word *angel* translated from the Greek *aggelos* means messenger or agent. This is not necessarily always referring to a spirit angel but can refer as well to a human agent. It is possible that God's principle of duality may apply here. It may apply to an actual spirit-composed angel that has been assigned as an overall agent or helper of this particular era of the Church. Or it may also apply to the human messenger or agent God has raised up to lead this era of his Church.

"At the same time another principle of duality may apply to verses 7-13. It may apply to the Church of this era as a whole, and also it could

apply to the human leader God had raised up to this era of his Church.”
 [Author’s note: The principle described here obviously could not refer to Laodicea and whoever is its “leader” in the same way. Also, Mr. Armstrong’s unique role as Moses presents the special circumstances for such possible duality.]

“Continue with verse 8: ‘I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.’

“This era of the Church was to produce fruit. To this era—or to its human leader—God had set before it an open door. It is recorded in II Corinthians 2:12 and also Acts 14:27 how Christ opened the door for Paul to go into other countries to preach the gospel. This Church and/or its leader had but little strength. Neither were of great and powerful stature in Satan’s world but those of this era were faithful to the Word of God. Though much of the original gospel truth, imparted to the original apostles by Jesus in person, had been lost, it was restored through the Bible to this era of God’s Church who were faithful in keeping it.”

pp. 289-290

Could any possibly doubt that Mr. Armstrong was the special messenger to the sixth era—Philadelphia? Who else is even a remote possibility for this assigned designation? It seems most obvious, in fact, that *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* was itself the FINAL SUMMARY MESSAGE to all who would choose to keep themselves in the Philadelphian condition. Anyone who has read this book recognizes that it is a wonderful summary of many major and minor doctrines of the Bible, re-established during Mr. Armstrong’s ministry. Regarding this role, humility kept Mr. Armstrong from stating emphatically what could, in fact, have been no other way! (However, I have sometimes wondered if he also was sent to Sardis. But there is no way of knowing.)

On the other hand, we saw that the messenger to Laodicea could not possibly come from inside an era that is BLIND—and this problem stands above all others within its appalling and deplorable spiritual condition! So the man carrying this designation would have to be *certain* of his office. He would have to be *certain* of his responsibility to warn “beyond the perimeter” of where his authority among God’s people ended, meaning still within the jurisdiction of the government of God. This would be similar to the watchman who would warn “beyond the perimeter” of his confines, in this case to the physical nations of Israel, obviously outside the Church.

Always Human Instruments

All through His plan, God has chosen to work through physical human instruments. While He could have chosen another way to communicate with human beings, He did not. Every office of the New Testament ministry is held by human beings. And every major message that God wanted to communicate to a king of Judah or Israel, or a Gentile king, or to either the nation of Judah or Israel, was always sent through flesh—a human being—usually a single person commissioned—charged!—with the responsibility to “get the message to Garcia.”

The point? There has to be *someone* alive at the end of the age through whom Christ would deliver His message to the final era. Get this straight in your mind! In addition, recognize that in this age, because no one has previously either understood or taught the meaning of Christ’s “counsel” to Laodicea to “anoint your eyes,” someone had to be sent just to explain this, if nothing else.

You must come to grips with the fact that, as with Mr. Armstrong to the sixth era, there has to be one person—one leader—somewhere on earth today who delivers the message to the seventh era. God had to designate and inspire a man to this task.

Do not let yourself dismiss this reality, and its relationship to YOU!

One or Two Men?

For illustration, we have seen that the watchman takes a warning to the physical nations of Israel. The warning to Laodicea involves *spiritual* Israel—the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Let’s see.

Revelation 12 and several other New Testament passages reveal that the Church, Old Testament and New, is identified as Israel. Most know that the carnal ancient Israelites constituted the “congregation” of Israel or, as it is referenced in Acts 7:38, the “church in the wilderness.” The Church of the New Testament is clearly seen to be *spiritual* Israel. She is pictured as a woman in Revelation 12, with verses 1 to 5 describing Old Testament Israel, and the rest of the chapter (verses 6-17) depicting the New Testament Church. (Compare Galatians 4:26 with Hebrews 12:22-23 and II John 1, 5.)

Therefore, there are *two separate warnings* that must be issued during the same period prior to the Great Tribulation. The stakes for both groups—physical and spiritual Israel—are *in part* the same. Those who will not heed will be sent into the worst punishment of all time. Thus, a

fair, just, loving and merciful God would send an unmistakable warning, explaining there is a way of escape for those who heed, before bringing the punishment. In every Bible account in which punishment was to take place, God warned well in advance—the Flood, Nineveh, Israel and Judah before captivity came, and sometimes individual kings within Israel and Judah. This is God’s established pattern.

It should now be easy to see why the final Church era—Laodicea—which is in the worst spiritual condition of any in 2,000 years, and this despite receiving the FULL TRUTH through a special restoration, must receive a very special and MOST POWERFUL WARNING from God’s designated servant!

While God could use two different men before the Tribulation, one to warn Israel and one to warn Laodicea, is this what He would do? We have seen that it is not what He did when Mr. Armstrong was alive, and the sixth era was involved. This then is also seen to be God’s pattern at the end of the age.

But consider further. The task involves WARNING in both cases. And in both cases it involves trying to AWAKEN people to certain biblical truths that have been ignored. It also involves, again in both cases, speaking in a spirit and tone reflecting Isaiah 58:1.

Why would God prepare and train two separate men—and both would have to be within His ONE Church—to deliver two such interrelated warnings? Yes, the Two Witnesses will work together, but they do not hold the highest office in the Church, and an apostle—one man—must be alive in the background.

Remember, God’s pattern of government is that He always works through one chief servant and leader at a time. This is why I cautioned in the INTRODUCTION that the reader could not go on to the *other* questions about God’s government having left *this* aspect of the government of God dangling, unresolved.

You Will Decide

It will be up to the individual to decide whom he believes that Jesus Christ has sent as messenger to warn an era described as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.” If those of this era are blind—and this is what Christ states!—their condition would also reflect the rest of the description. Blindness prevents all there from *seeing* what needs to be addressed.

I repeat: You must also ask yourself if one from *inside* the seventh era could even remotely be a candidate to warn people about a condition

applicable to himself. The messenger to Laodicea must be able to SEE—he must have the same capabilities as the watchman—one who must be *capable* of watching—of “peering ahead.” In other words, you will need to come to grips with whether the messenger to the seventh era is part of his era. If so, how would this work? He would be in one doctrinally-compromising, government-of-God-rejecting splinter trying to get people in other splinters of similar condition to heed his warning.

Who would listen to him? Proverbially speaking, “he would not have a leg to stand on”—and would be “the pot calling the kettle black.” God would know this, and of course would never use one in such a terrible spiritual state himself for such a crucial service. Also, the reader must ask if anyone in the Laodicean condition would ever even be *motivated* to issue such a warning. And similarly, would such a one really ever be *motivated* to issue a POWERFUL WARNING to great nations—again, to no less than 600 million people throughout many nations and territories?

Then there is the obvious!—the fact that there is no one else on earth fulfilling this role. Be honest. Admit this to yourself. (Some will say the bizarre-thinking, blaspheming false prophet claiming many offices of Christ is. But no serious person would dignify that suggestion.)

Who else is truly doing these things? How many other people are writing books like this and others, as well as producing so many special sermons in the *Splinter Explanation Packet*?

No one!

How many other leaders (or organizations) have prepared anything remotely close to the awesome mass of material that we have prepared to warn the nations of Israel?

None!

Grasp this. The Christ of the Bible would never use one like the Pharisees—*hypocrites* in that they were guilty of the very things for which they indicted others—for such a duty! Certainly none of the messengers are perfect human beings (Rom. 3:23), but they cannot be *known* for the things about which they are warning!

The only remaining possibility is that the final messenger is the leader of the remnant of Philadelphia and, therefore, in position to be used of Christ! From this perspective, the messenger to Laodicea would also have to *know* his own identity—that he *was* the watchman and messenger. (In which case, if he were Laodicean, his first order of business would have been to anoint his eyes and *leave Laodicea*!)

He would also have to *know* how the government of God works, and that Christ is heading a people who do *not* believe *they* rule, judge and decide matters in *their* Church.

Message From Me?

In this regard, it has not been my task to *create* the message or warning to the seventh era. That is Christ's job. Mine was to understand my role under His rule, to get out of the way, and to allow the patient, merciful, loving Jesus Christ to explain *His* message—*His* instruction—to *His* people. I did not seek or ask for the job. Like you, I was *drafted* to be a Christian soldier (II Tim 2:3-4). The appointment came and, as with Paul, "necessity was laid upon me" (I Cor. 9:16). And no other messenger will come. The message is not something *I* want the splinters to hear through "my" books. In a sense, the messengers are just "delivery boys," except that they are not bringing newspapers or pizza.

In a way, the same is true of you if you truly desire the living Christ to work in you. One of the first things you must "see" upon anointing your eyes is what and where is God's government. Your job is to get your own will out of the way and to let Christ work in your mind. This is the case with every person who reads this book—whether individual member, deacon, elder, pastor or evangelist. The first and greatest order of business after your sight has been restored is to seek out where Christ is at work.

What could be more important?

Yet again, you are strongly urged to listen to the sermon "*Watchman to Israel—Messenger to Laodicea!*" and prove to yourself who holds these responsibilities at the end of the age. Pointedly ask yourself: Is The Restored Church of God *Splinter Explanation Packet*, including the books *THE TRUE CHURCH*, "*ANOINT YOUR EYES*" and this one—with seven others—a DIRECT MESSAGE from Jesus Christ *to you* through His messenger about *where* you need to be and *what* you need to do—and *what* you must leave behind? (I delivered perhaps the most crucial sermon series that I have ever given. You must hear it. Titled "God's Church: Who Is Coming—and Why!")

But there is still another extraordinary and final duty to be performed in this age. It will last three and a half years and will be carried out by two chosen and specially-trained men...

THE TWO WITNESSES

In Chapter Ten, we covered the office of Prophet. The Two Witnesses are prophets. However, we did not seriously address them at that point because this subject commands its own chapter and, as you will see, demands a more direct approach.

Certain inescapable conclusions present themselves in regard to the Two Witnesses, and there can be no proper discussion of these men if we must dance around important conclusions. Therefore, what comes in this chapter will be unambiguous. You will not wonder “what does this mean?” Actually, this will be true of all the book’s latter chapters because we are drawing closer to when the reader must be presented with reality and hard choices. In fact, this begins now.

Similar to the final watchman and messenger, the Two Witnesses will not, and could not, arise to their task from any of the splinters. You must see that all the organizations—which have lost sight of how God’s government works, including the roles of different offices within it, and the connection of these offices to the unified Body of Christ—could never be candidates from which the final two prophets could arise!

Let’s learn more about why.

A Question Arises

Over time, a variety of questions have arisen about the Two Witnesses. Perhaps none is bigger than how they are able to report to a living apostle.

We saw that in Revelation 11:10, the apostle John refers to these two men as “these two prophets.” We also saw that the Greek word there is *prophetes*, and it plainly means *prophets*. So these men do, in fact, hold the second highest office in the Church. This re-introduces, “Where is the apostle with whom the Two Witnesses interact?”

This question did not arise prior to 1986, because the entire Church had thought for many years that Mr. Armstrong would be alive when the Two Witnesses appeared. Since he is gone, and almost all would assume there will be no other apostle to whom the Two Witnesses can report, this question arises: “How can these men carry out this duty?”

But when discussing the Two Witnesses, certain other fundamental questions arise *collectively*. It is not really possible to address even the most basic ones about these men without some background—some additional, helpful information. This allows us to answer several questions at the same time.

Offices in Christ's Body

The subject of the Two Witnesses is naturally one of near endless speculation. Almost everyone enjoys talking about these men. With the passing of time this only increases, because their arrival becomes more imminent. But very few, however, seem to understand—more like, any longer understand—exactly how they will appear, let alone how and where they will receive their office.

This should not be. Let's understand—exactly!

First, some basic review from earlier: Recall that the office of prophet is the second highest New Testament office IN THE BODY OF CHRIST! It must be understood that Christ's Body is not divided (I Cor. 1:10, 13). It is still found today as one, *unified*, organized, uncompromising Church, where God's form of government is restored. If this is not understood, the reader will never be able to understand the identity and function of the Two Witnesses.

Many seem to have the idea that the Two Witnesses will suddenly appear “out of nowhere.” It is as though they will appear one day having grown up “like mushrooms overnight”—or they will fly in like astronauts from outer space—or they will have been hiding in a cave waiting to be revealed! Of course, no one believes they will come from among the Protestants or today's popular televangelists. Still, no one seems able to unravel the puzzle of their origin.

There is much *unnecessary* mystery about a subject that should be understood as clearly as it was when Mr. Armstrong was alive.

Why Not From Laodicea?

Because God's people are today still scattered into many organizations, there is the question of whether the Two Witnesses will come from one or two of the *splinters*—in other words, from “Laodicea.” Like either the watchman or final messenger, but also for additional reasons, this is not possible. (If the reader is not yet convicted about the identity of Laodicea, and that it is still primarily the splinters and slivers collectively, it will be impossible to understand what follows.)

One of the Witnesses being of Laodicea is completely out of the question—IMPOSSIBLE!—and there are a host of reasons.

Remember once more that Christ describes Laodicea as “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked,” and “lukewarm,” without zeal and puffed up with too many “goods” and “riches.” He would NEVER put two men into the second highest office in His Church who were in this kind of DEPLORABLE SPIRITUAL CONDITION—and send them off to such an incredibly important task!

These must be men of great spiritual depth and strength!

The living Jesus Christ would also NEVER select instruments to be given such enormous miraculous power and authority as the Two Witnesses *if* they were not doctrinally sound. These will be men who must speak the truth and the truth alone, and who would have built the *courage* to do this under tremendous pressure. They must be men of great strength and conviction, able to stand *completely alone* in a hostile world that not only wishes them dead, but will eventually achieve this end, at least for a short while. Namby-pambies and weaklings “need not apply”! Besides, men of compromised doctrinal understanding would no doubt issue the *wrong message* to both the nations and leaders whom they must confront.

In short, these will be men who recognize that “to walk among lions, one must BE a lion.”

Remember once more that Laodicea is the place where the people rule, because they have rejected Christ's government. This has put them outside the Body of Christ. Would Christ use men who have rejected His form of government over them? These men have to tell the *whole world* that they should have submitted to the government of God 6,000 years ago—and that this government is coming very, very soon to smash all of *their* governments—and that this is because all those governments have FAILED! How many would fit this “job opening”?

Are we describing men here who will be unclear about the nature of the government of God—in all its exactness, precision and detail?

Related to this is the matter of whether such men then must truly understand the scope and magnitude of their *own office*. Of course they would. And they must comprehend that their role involves submission to the authority of the one higher human office above them.

All of this summarizes why the Two Witnesses must arise from *within* the Body of Christ. They will have been men who understood where Christ was the “Head” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18)—where He is leading, meaning where His government is present. They will be men who have *submitted* to His government, and who will have been doing this for some considerable time! In other words, the Two Witnesses will be men that Christ has been ruling. These men will have had to return to doctrinal soundness in all points *long before* they begin their commission!

Then there is this: Such high offices—and every high office of the ministry—would never be given to untrained or inexperienced men. God has *never* worked this way, particularly with the highest offices in the Church. He does not hand out great authority and power willy-nilly. The Two Witnesses will, no doubt, have been faithfully serving in God’s Church for some time before they are ready to be given the office of prophet, one we have learned has not been given for almost 2,000 years.

(You probably better grasp by now the enormous importance of the book in our *Splinter Explanation Packet* titled *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* Repeating, if you have not yet read this book, you will be unable to really comprehend the magnitude of most of these points made. Take time to read it as soon as possible.)

Mystery Removed

Let’s bring this to conclusion. The speculation and confusion about “point of origin” of these men ought not be. The mystery shrouding the identity of these two final servants can be removed.

Let’s strip it away! Let’s speak plainly.

Christ is not divided—and The Restored Church of God IS the ONE, UNIFIED, organized, uncompromising true Church and Body of Christ on earth today! This Church is the *only place* Christ’s government can be found. This means that the Two Witnesses will be given (Eph. 4:11) their office by Christ from WITHIN THIS CHURCH! He simply would not do it any other way—to do so would work against Himself, including the entirety of I Corinthians 12, among many other scriptures. It would also work against everything you have learned about the government of God.

Let me repeat for emphasis: I state without apology and with God’s authority that *both* of the Two Witnesses will be members of The Restored

Church of God. Of this there is no doubt! (The popular theory that one will be Philadelphian and one will be Laodicean is silly at best, ludicrous at worst. Amos 3:3 declares this much!) It cannot be known whether these men are here yet, but if not, they will have to *come here*, and they will have to do this well before the Tribulation, and well before learning they have been selected for great responsibility. I Corinthians 12:27-28 makes absolutely clear that they will not—actually *cannot!*—be given their offices when they are OUTSIDE the Body of Christ!

Think for a moment. During the period when the Worldwide Church of God was on track, none ever doubted that the Two Witnesses would come from inside it. No one thought for a second that they would come from *any place outside* where Christ was leading. No one *ever* speculated that they would come from Sardis, an era outside Philadelphia, let alone from any of the WCG's many little earlier offshoots that had developed over time. Laodicea is in at least as bad and possibly worse shape than was Sardis when Mr. Armstrong left.

Yet, as we have seen, these two final prophets must also report to an apostle to be consistent with what the Bible reveals and Mr. Armstrong understood. This means that there *must* have been another apostle trained and sent at the end of the age, and that he must be in The Restored Church of God.

That is the case! This is a bold statement. Is it true? Make absolutely no mistake in this, regarding your *personal* responsibility to get the facts in this matter. It is for the reader to examine and determine the TRUTH of this—to see whether Christ has given the office of apostle, based on the FRUITS, or if I have TAKEN this office and authority to myself. What are the *facts*, the *evidence*, the *proofs* of such an office? You should demand such. God's people once professed to know an apostle when they saw one. What, if anything, has changed your thinking? (You are yet again encouraged to carefully examine the series in the *Splinter Explanation Packet* titled "21st-Century Apostle," as well as those explaining the Watchman and Messenger roles.)

A final thought may be helpful here: Circumstances have forced me to research and come to much more fully understand the office of prophet than anyone else today. And there is no doubt of this. This extensive process has allowed me to teach *you* the truth of that office—from what Mr. Armstrong taught and from the Bible. All of this has helped prepare me to understand how my office will someday interact with the two final prophets Christ will select and train *within this Church!*

The reader now has some studying to do.

Work With Christ in a Unique Way

We may ask: With whom do the Two Witnesses work once the Tribulation begins, when the Philadelphian remnant is at the Place of Safety? Remember, the Great Tribulation is when these men receive extraordinary power in order to represent God—visiting, addressing and warning nations of the world. To whom do these men report *during* the Tribulation? In all likelihood, although we cannot know for sure, the Two Witnesses will probably *not* interact much, if at all, with the human apostle during the Tribulation. Let's examine this to see why.

We must recognize that John 9:4 describes the end of the Work of Philadelphia—the “night...when no man can work.” World conditions will become so bad that the Work of God simply cannot continue—the “door” must be “shut” (Rev. 3:7-8)—and the Church will have to be taken to a place of safety for its own survival and protection. It will be so persecuted by this time that powerful miracles—no doubt many—will be necessary just to get to that place. The “baton” of the Work, so to speak, *must* then be handed to the Two Witnesses, who in turn must be imbued with a level of supernatural power never seen in any other servants of God, except for perhaps the original prophet Elijah and the end-time Elijah. This will be necessary for them to carry out their task unharmed, until the appointed time of their death and resurrection with the whole world watching (see Revelation 11).

Old Testament Prophets Reported to Whom?

A related question arises. What about the Old Testament prophets? Who was the apostle with whom *they* interacted?

Again, the Bible reveals that all true prophets report to an apostle. Two of the greatest prophets ever would hardly be exceptions, or Christ would break His pattern. How does this teaching harmonize with the above questions? Apart from the fact the office of apostle had not yet appeared, because the New Testament Church of God had not yet appeared, there is another simple answer!

Consider! How did God *always* work with prophets (and all of His greatest servants) throughout the Old Testament? The God of the Old Testament (long understood to be Christ) generally spoke face-to-face—communicated directly!—with those He was using. With few exceptions, there is a pattern throughout the Major and Minor Prophets. Each of these books starts with a phrase to the effect of “The

Word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel..." or "The words of Jeremiah...To whom the Word of the LORD came..." or "The Word of the LORD that came to Micah..." etc. You may wish to turn and read several of them.

The One who became Christ worked *directly* with all these prophets. Sometimes He also appeared as Melchizedek when He spoke to the Patriarchs and others *face-to-face*. Most in the past would have at least been somewhat familiar with how Christ dealt directly with His greatest Old Testament servants.

Recall Hebrews 3:1: "Consider the *Apostle* and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." We know God's Old Testament servants looked *forward* to Christ's sacrifice as their Savior. They also *looked forward* to Him as their High Priest—as well as their Wonderful Counselor, King of kings and Prince of Peace, among other titles He will hold (Isa. 9:6). The Church has long known this. Would these prophets have not also looked forward to Jesus Christ as God's New Testament Apostle? He has probably always held the role of Apostle, since the Father had been "sending Him" (remember, an apostle is "one sent") to earth with messages for thousands of years prior to His First Coming.

Whether Christ has *always* been an Apostle or became one at the birth of the New Testament age may not be absolutely clear, but we do know that He "is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8) and He "changes not" (Mal. 3:6). Here is the point! All Old Testament prophets reported directly to an Apostle—Jesus Christ!—who *would* one day be just as much *their* Savior, High Priest, Apostle, etc., as ours. This is consistent with what the Bible teaches and Mr. Armstrong taught.

Now we may ask again: To whom do the Two Witnesses report through the Tribulation? In Revelation 11, Christ calls these prophets "MY two witnesses" (vs. 3). Combine this with Zechariah 4:14. This chapter refers to these men several times and culminates with verse 14: "These are the two anointed ones, that *stand BY the Lord of the whole earth.*" (Revelation 11:4 confirms of whom Zechariah 4:14 speaks.)

This passage reveals these two men have a special, *direct* relationship and proximity to Christ. All three stand *together*. It seems obvious that the Two Witnesses report *directly* to Christ in carrying out their duty. If you consider this role, it should be even clearer *why* they must report to Him. Their circumstances are unique in all history. Consider: Fire comes from their mouths to devour their adversaries. The power Christ gives them is so great they cannot be killed by anyone or anything for 3½ years. This alone makes them unique. But consider further.

Their role also differs from all previous prophets in several additional ways. No other prophets lay unburied for 3½ days. No others were resurrected, or perceived by the *entire world* to “torment them” (again, Elijah is a possible exception). These points alone demonstrate these are not ordinary prophets, for which the usual governing “rules” apply. Still, they *do* work directly—face-to-face—with a living Apostle—Christ! And they may still, in some way, report to the human apostle at the Place of Safety. This is something as yet unknown.

Witness(es) Also Apostle(s)?

I recognize some believe one of the Two Witnesses may be an apostle. The idea is that this would solve the problem of to whom the other can report. When Mr. Armstrong was alive, we thought this was a possibility because most could not imagine he would not be one. I certainly thought this, and did so for a long time. But I had not really thought through what it meant in this regard that he was an apostle.

Again, an apostle is “one sent” or “a messenger.” I felt that men God calls “*MY* Two Witnesses” are certainly *HIS* “messengers”—and they certainly are directly SENT by God. This was a reason it did not seem a stretch to believe at least one witness *could* be an apostle. But Jeremiah, in his commission “to the nations,” and Ezekiel, in his commission to “the house of Israel,” were both specifically described as “sent” by God. Of course, they were not apostles. Therefore, it is correct to say all prophets were directly sent by God. However, prophets were never sent to the world as a whole with the gospel as Christ’s designated ambassador.

This becomes another reason it is evident neither of the Witnesses will be apostles. If they were, why does God specifically reference them with use of their *lower* office “Prophet”? If they were apostles, God would say this.

But there are other interconnected and extraordinary differences between the highest and second highest offices in the Church. There is a reason the Two Witnesses will carry tremendous power and authority, with ability to perform great miracles...

POWER AND AUTHORITY

There are few things more frustrating than a government having authority, yet lacking the power to carry out its policies. This applies either to its administration or to the citizenry that it serves.

Consider for a moment the American president with his policies regarding war, domestic matters, Social Security, abortion, tax cuts and judicial appointments. No matter what his administration tries to accomplish within these areas, there are various constitutional “checks and balances” in place that often spell “checkmate” to the president (or prime minister) in a democracy. Of course, America has always proudly trumpeted to the world that it practices “controlled power,” meaning with the consent of “the people” through their elected representatives, and with this the case on governmental policies and matters of almost every size.

Teachers in schools and worldly ministers in churches are additional examples of authority without power. They can teach and preach, but generally lack the “teeth” to tell their students and parishioners, respectively, what they *need* to hear, rather than what they *want* to hear, let alone actually *enforce* school policies and church teachings without enduring miles of red tape due to the cumbersome mechanisms of bureaucracy. But they are still unfairly held accountable—kept under the gun—to educate students or “feed” their churches.

Ask any president or chief executive officer of a corporation who faces important decisions for which he must give account if he can do his

job without the power to carry out those decisions. He will tell you, “No!” Ask the coach of a football team the same question, and you will get the same answer. Husbands in marriages, as well as parents with children—and leaders of almost any kind of organized endeavor—will say the same.

So there can be the very frustrating circumstance of *AUTHORITY* without sufficient *POWER* to administrate it.

However, there can be a worse problem, and it is probably the greatest problem with men’s governments. There can be governments possessing complete unbridled *POWER*, but without proper, responsible authority and control. This is a description of dictatorships or totalitarian forms of government at the other end of the political spectrum from democracies.

Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany demonstrate what can happen when power is unrestrained. So do Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein—and so did Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan. Without control, nations can be destroyed. So can economies. And millions can die in the crossfire of world wars. Of course, this is the legacy left by most of the governments of men.

The problem of *UNRESTRAINED POWER* without *CONTROL* is easier to understand. So there must be control, the properly channeled use of authority in the function of any governmental entity—or disaster can result.

When understood, these are the greatest problems plaguing the splinters and slivers today. Surely, complete understanding of the government of God would not leave the questions surrounding power and authority unaddressed.

It does not.

“Authority and Power”

So then, what about the Church of God? Does God’s Church have power without authority, authority without power, neither or both? There can be no more important questions about God’s government that must be answered than these. And does anything seal the matter—make it conclusive?

In Luke 4:36, it states that the highly political Scribes and Pharisees “were all amazed” at Christ’s ability to cast out demons, remarking, “What a word is this! For with *authority* and *power* He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” Here are both terms together, and those observing recognized both at work.

Five chapters later, in 9:1, Christ transferred this capability to his disciples. Notice what they received: “Then He called His twelve disci-

ples together, and gave them *power* and *authority* over all devils, and to cure diseases.” Again, both terms, together. Obviously, Christ understood as much as did the Pharisees.

Shortly after, in Acts 1:8, ten days before Pentecost, as Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, He told the disciples, about to formally receive office as apostles, “But you shall receive *power*, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Note this most important passage.

Later, in Acts 4:33, it confirms, “And with great *power* gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord...” In fact, the apostle Paul wrote regarding *all* spirit-led minds, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of *power*, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7).

That Jesus gave His disciples special supernatural power is evident from just these passages. But what about *authority*? Did He follow through later and give this also? Let’s ask: Would Christ unleash the greatest power in the universe—vastly beyond what human dictators possess—without putting it under strict control—AUTHORITY? Surely He would realize the danger that totalitarian governments of every age have taught society.

This is the great question facing the Church of God in the twenty-first century: Has God given *authority* to His Church today? If He has, then this is a Church that also has His *power* behind it! Conversely, we could ask: Has God given His Church POWER today? If so, similarly, this is a Church that carries His AUTHORITY!

One Statement From Mr. Armstrong

Before examining a number of scriptures, here is a quote from Mr. Armstrong recounting what Christ told His disciples not long before the Acts 1 statement promising them power. Read it carefully for what Christ had received from the Father, and would shortly give to these soon-to-be-apostles:

“‘Now the eleven disciples’ (Judas already had left them) ‘went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them...’ To WHOM? Not the Church as a whole! Only to the disciples who were to become the original APOSTLES! ‘...“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *GO*, therefore, and make disciples [learners – those taught] 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; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:16-20, RSV).

“Notice carefully. This GREAT COMMISSION to be SENT FORTH with Christ’s Gospel Message was given only to those who were apostles – and the word ‘apostle’ means ‘one sent forth’ with the Message!”

The Incredible Human Potential, p. 117

“All Authority in Heaven”

The end of Jesus’ statement explaining that authority would come to the disciples—He had “all authority,” and thus could give it—carries a promise that He would be with them *always*. Not only would His authority be with them, but there is clear evidence that very real POWER would accompany it. The Greek word translated “authority” in this passage is *exousia*, and it means BOTH power and authority. In fact, the *King James Version* states, “All POWER is given unto Me...”

It is certainly consistent then that in more of the Matthew 28 conversation, found in Acts 1, Christ explained that “power” would be given to the apostles. He was simply reiterating the equation of POWER accompanying AUTHORITY, and vice-versa, referenced in Luke 4:36 and 9:1.

Both of these most crucial elements in the apostles’ ministry were to be given to them on the day of Pentecost. This was the Holy Day in which the Holy Spirit was to be first given to large numbers of people. Of course, this meant that there would be an immediate need for responsible authority with power to be in place over the governance of the Church, as well as in the preaching of the gospel to every nation. The day of Pentecost symbolized this remarkable beginning, as Jesus built His New Testament Church. He had to *simultaneously* give it the *two* most important *keys* to its survival through the ages—POWER and AUTHORITY! Imagine the administrative challenge of managing 3,000 converts (plus children) arriving on just the Church’s first day.

Jesus instituted, actually *re-instituted* from the Old Testament, a special ordinance that would symbolize forever the transmitting of authority and power from one person to another. In fact, it happened 3,000 times that same first day of the Church.

“Laying on of Hands”

All power within the Church of God *is* governed under strict authority, and this is revealed through the doctrine of “laying on of hands.” It is not

a strange thing that this doctrine finds its place in Hebrews 6:1-2 among the six most basic doctrines of God. You may read them.

It has always been understood—or should have been understood—by all in God’s Church that the physical ordinance of the laying on of hands represents or symbolizes the *transferring of authority, with power*. At the same time, this ceremony shows that all who may be involved in it—for any reason—are coming *under authority*. In addition, this ordinance shows that God *works through human servants*, and that His people are to obey and humbly submit to Him through these human instruments. In fact, Pentecost, when truly understood, pictures God’s perfect balance between power (the Holy Spirit) and authority (His government) through the laying on of hands.

It is no accident that this physical ceremony would have been witnessed so many times that day (with the other 3,000 converted). The point would have been ingrained to all observing.

In the Pentecost account, when the Holy Spirit entered all those present (the initial 120), it states, “Cloven tongues like as of fire...*sat* upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:3-4). This was, in effect, God’s own supernatural laying on of hands, probably on the heads of the recipients.

Ordination

Beginning in this section, we will examine how the laying on of hands is seen to be the way God transfers government or authority within His Church. In fact, we will see that this physical ceremony can involve the transferring of gifts, special status, blessings, and even curses.

One of the most important functions of the laying on of hands occurs with appointment into Christ’s ministry. In fact, Christ privately ordained the disciples as apostles (Mark 3:14). There are a number of New Testament passages where ordination occurred with this ceremony involved. But the ceremony first appears in the Old Testament Law.

In Numbers 8:9-11, the Levites were ordained by the entire congregation of Israel through the laying on of hands. Later in Numbers, as Moses was nearing the end of his life, he laid hands on Joshua (27:18-20), with God instructing Moses to “put some of your honor upon him.” Later, the first seven *deacons* in the New Testament era received even this physical office of service through the laying on of hands (Acts 6:5-6). Earlier, we saw that Paul and Barnabas were ordained as apostles by “prophets and teachers” under authority from the apostles in Jerusalem.

In I Timothy 5:22, Paul instructs Timothy to “lay hands suddenly on no man,” but this is better rendered in the *Revised Standard Version*, “do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.” With so much at stake when one is to be vested with power and authority upon ordination, it is easy to see why Paul would give such instruction. Where there is a *true* minister of God—an apostle or one under that apostle—there is *real* authority and *real* power.

As a side note, we have seen that Mr. Armstrong carefully explained that his only ordination through laying on of hands into the ministry in 1931 was sufficient for Jesus Christ to later use him in the highest office. This included any amount of power and authority that he would need to be given to carry it out. Of course, it became very evident later that extra, unusual power had been vested in Mr. Armstrong’s office, as evidenced in the fruit of his ministry.

This will be explained momentarily.

Transferring Sins, Curses and Blessings

Immediately after the Levites were ordained in Numbers 8, the context continues explaining that these priests carried the authority to “lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks” for sin and burnt offerings (8:12-15; also Leviticus 4:13-15). In Leviticus 24, the young man who “blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed” was stoned to death, but only after all those who heard him “lay their hands upon his head” (vs. 10-15). Of course, the Azazel goat of Leviticus 16, representing Satan on the Day of Atonement, had the sins of Israel—a cursing—confessed over him during the laying on of hands by Aaron and high priests who followed.

But *blessings* were also accompanied by the laying on of hands. When Israel (Jacob) blessed Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48, it records that he laid his hands on these young grandsons and passed both the birthright blessing and his name to them.

Mark 10 records, with similar accounts in Matthew and Luke, that the blessing of little children in the Church of God occurs with the laying on of hands.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

It goes without saying that every baptized person understands that receiving the Holy Spirit follows the ceremony of the laying on of hands, which follows repentance and baptism. Acts 8:14-18 records the

account of the apostles laying hands on the Samaritans (who had been baptized by Philip) so that they could receive the Holy Spirit—and power! The apostle Paul received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands in Acts 9:17, and Paul himself is shown in Acts 19:1-6 to have baptized and laid hands on those who had received John the Baptist’s baptism, but had not yet heard of the Holy Spirit.

Healing

The miracle of healing also involves the laying on of hands. Mark 16 records that Christ explained of His servants “they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (vs. 18). This statement is in accord with James 5:14, which describes how the elders of the Church are called to “anoint the sick” for healing. Finally, Acts 28:8 speaks of a man who “lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux, to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him.”

While most of this may not be new understanding to most brethren, it is good to recount the basics of how the laying on of hands was involved in the direct transferring, through ministerial authority, of God’s power into a human body that required healing. The larger point is coming.

Gifts and Special Miracles

The Bible also records—in both Old Testament and New—that certain special gifts came by the laying on of hands.

God’s Word records that Joshua “was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him” (Deut. 34:9). I Corinthians 12:8-10 lists “wisdom” as one of the nine *gifts* of the Spirit (not the nine spiritual *fruits* of Galatians 5:22-23, which also includes faith as a fruit, something different from this).

Immediately after the ordination of Stephen to deacon, with the other six, God’s Word states that he was “full of faith and power,” which involved doing “great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:6, 8).

We see that even a deacon was able to perform extraordinary miracles, but only because there was special power vested in the office of the apostles—remember the definition of *apostolos*—for God through them to confer it upon Stephen with the laying on of hands. But he also received the gift of faith. Also, Philip, ordained with Stephen to the same office, was granted special power under the authority of the apostles

(8:6-7). Further, Paul stated that Timothy had received a gift, probably that of prophecy, “with the laying on of hands” (I Tim. 4:14).

Another fascinating account has to do with “*special* miracles” done “by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:11-12). This is where it explains that “handkerchiefs or aprons” (anointed cloths), which Paul’s hands had anointed, were sent to people so that “diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” I have many times sent cloths to people who were then healed, and who were demon-possessed, and the demon spirit left them.

Marriages between believers involve the laying on of hands during the prayer at the end of the wedding ceremony. During this prayer, the minister asks God to not only bind the marriage, but to bless it and to grant the couple children, happiness, and so forth.

It is evident that the ceremony of laying on of hands carries special meaning within God’s Church and government. This service always relates to the receiving of power and authority in some way. In every case, it was seen to confer something important from God through one human instrument to another.

At Christ’s Return

All of God’s people know that when the kingdom of God arrives, and the saints begin their rule with Christ, the government of God will be established over all nations. Truly, *this* government will have ALL power and ALL authority under it. The Feast of Trumpets pictures this event, with the other fall Feast days picturing other events from this point forward that occur through the rest of God’s Plan over the next 1,100 years.

All of God’s people realize the governments of men will soon be replaced by the governing Family of God, called the kingdom of God. But Paul describes this in a way that puts all that we have just examined in a very different light. And it has everything to do with *how* the government of God works—both from the outset of the Millennium forward, and within the Church that Christ built 2,000 years ago!

Here is what was written to the Corinthians in the “resurrection chapter” about the first order of business with the arrival of the kingdom of God. Note well this extraordinary passage: “Then comes the end, when He [Jesus Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all *rule* and all *authority* and *power*” (I Cor. 15:24).

This is a fascinating verse, and it introduces the final sections of the chapter. It reveals that Christ, with the newly resurrected saints, must

dispel or “put down”—Daniel 2 states, “break in pieces”—all the ruling governments of men, wherein rests power and authority derived solely from human origin (backed by Satan).

We will focus on the words “rule,” “authority” and “power.” The word translated “rule” comes from the Greek word *arche*, from which comes ARCH. Of course, an arch is a bridge above something. The word translated “authority” is *exousia*—and the word translated “power” is *dunamis*. This is the same word translated “power” in II Timothy 1:7, describing what Christians receive at begettal. It is also the same word translated “strength” in Revelation 3:8, within the description of Philadelphia. In summary, it is certainly true that the overall rule of men, with their governments, does “arch” above every form of human authority and power held today.

All of men’s governments, whether over nations (including the United Nations) or religions, the returning Jesus Christ and the glorified saints will “put down,” meaning to “abolish, cease, destroy, do away, make of no effect, bring to naught, vanish away and make void.” From that time forward, there will be no more authority ever again in the universe other than God’s government. Unlike competing supposed “churches of God” in the Laodicean age today, confusing and deceiving so many about where is the government Christ is leading through His ordained servants, there will only be God’s marvelous, wonderful government across the world.

Signs, Wonders and Miracles

A vital point of instruction must be introduced at this point. Christ understood there had to be an *additional* special means that distinguished His servants holding the highest office in the ministry from all imposters, counterfeits and deceivers. The Bible reveals there *is* such special evidence, and the chapter will only be complete after covering it. This forms some of the evidence of where God’s government is found—and at work.

First, there is not space to cover all that the Bible says about signs, wonders and miracles, in both the Old and New Testaments. I again urge the interested reader to listen to the series on this subject: “Understanding Signs, Wonders and Miracles—True and False!” In the light of prophecy, and the role of the final false prophet, it may be one of the most important you could ever hear. But I will cover it at least briefly here, because the subject is inseparable from the government of God. Coupled with the series “21st-Century Apostle,” a thorough picture is painted.

The serious student of these matters will find the time to hear them all!

We read earlier about the signs of an apostle, and how they were connected to “SIGNS and WONDERS and MIGHTY DEEDS” (II Cor. 12:12) in Paul’s ministry. Again, the Greek words in this text are fascinating to understand, and become even more fascinating—and deeply sobering—when we tie them in a moment to the greatest time of deception the world will ever see, now just ahead.

The word translated “sign” in the passage is *semeion*, and it means “an indication, especially ceremonially or supernaturally: miracle, sign, token, wonder.” The word translated “wonders” is *teras*, simply meaning “a prodigy, omen—wonder.” (A prodigy is a phenomenon.) The word translated “mighty deeds” is *dunamis*, with this longer definition than that given earlier: “force...specifically miraculous power (usually...a miracle itself): mighty deed, (worker of) miracle(s), power, strength.”

Since these words seem to overlap in meaning, a question presents itself: Why are all three used to describe the signs of an apostle? The answer can only be that God wants it absolutely clear to all who are attentive that He gives *special power and authority* to men of this office, and in some cases to those directly appointed under their authority (even to deacons, such as Stephen and Philip). Multiple kinds of supernatural evidence are manifested in and under the office.

Mark’s account of what was said to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20 clarifies and strengthens what Paul had said about the “signs of an apostle.” Let’s look: “And He [Jesus] said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...and these *signs* shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:15, 17-18).

The picture is clear—and so are to be the signs when God has sent an apostle! In fact, here is how Mark concluded his gospel: “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word *with signs following*. Amen” (vs. 20).

These “signs following” do not necessarily mean that every apostle performs miracles and healings and casting out of demons on a daily basis. Remember, Philadelphia was only prophesied to have “little strength (*dunamis*).” Even the greatest ministry of any apostle who ever lived, surely that of Mr. Armstrong during the Philadelphian era, did not witness a large number of miracles.

A brief side note belongs here: The protection promised to the apostles in Mark 16 extended to the offices below them in Christ's Body. There is a message here. Some ministers in the splinters today have died tragically—and unnecessarily—of exposure to terrible diseases because they were outside Christ's promised circle of protection. These were not evil men, but their deaths illustrate how these points of understanding must at all costs not be lost or blurred in an age when deadly diseases will explode around the globe.

But all of the promised signs, wonders and miracles Christ explained *were* present in the Worldwide Church of God—I saw them. So did many of you. In fact, as previously mentioned, I have cast out any number of demons myself, besides involvement in a host of obvious healings. These things were *all* evident when the Church of God was on track under Mr. Armstrong. And the only reason they occurred is because there was an apostle present!

All of these things are facts of history. They did happen. Yet, there was, relatively speaking, only the evidence of a “little” of these things. But that is what Revelation 3:8 said, and that is what should be expected in Philadelphia's remnant.

There are many more passages that could be included here, and they are covered in exhaustive detail in the sermons about true and false miracles. But you have been given enough to see the signs, wonders and miracles, and the power and authority vested solely in Christ's government over His one undivided Church, beginning with the highest human office.

You are left to finish remaining homework on these matters!

Do Not Miss This!

All of this is critically important to comprehend for every true Christian on earth today. One reason is that the Bible, remember, foretells imposters—false teachers, false prophets, false apostles and even false christs—coming as “angels of light,” who will deceive those who “received not the LOVE OF THE TRUTH, that they might be saved” (II Thes. 2:10). This will then result in countless millions—some of God's people among them—being sent “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” It becomes more serious.

All of this is connected to falling under the seduction of the one called the “man of sin,” who works miracles and influences the masses in the presence of the Beast “after the working of Satan with all *power* and *signs* and *lying wonders*” (vs. 9).

The *power*, *signs* and *LYING wonders* referencing the man of sin here tell a chilling story. They are all translated from the very same Greek words—*dunamis*, *semeion* and *teras*—used to describe the power, signs and wonders connected to the office of apostle or those appointed under him. Do you see the point?

How is one to know when a counterfeiter is performing *false* signs, and lying wonders and miracles from those who are true servants of God doing the *exact same things*?

I Corinthians 12—Yet, Again!

One more time we find ourselves inside I Corinthians 12, confronting yet again the SUPREME IMPORTANCE of identifying and being part of the one unified Church and Body of Christ. How is this?

Healings, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues, discerning of spirits (for the purpose of casting out demons), among others, are all listed as gifts given by Christ exclusively within His Body, the *only* place where He is infusing power and authority!

In chapter 1 of I Corinthians, Paul had already established with unimpeachable clarity (this is long before the reader gets to chapter 12) that Christ is not divided (vs. 10, 13). Therefore, Christ would no more give these gifts (vs. 8-10) outside His Body, than He would give offices within His ministry to anyone outside His one Church and Body!

The reader must see this. While human beings might do this a different way—and people are only too happy to do *everything* differently from what God tells them—Jesus Christ would not! He would certainly not do anything against His own Body, in effect, cutting off His own “body parts.” And His spiritual Body is a type of His human body when He walked the earth. Christ would never work against Himself in how He invests power and authority in His human servants.

What is the point of all this? Just this: There will be two kinds of supernatural events occurring on planet earth through the end of the age. They will both involve signs, wonders and miracles, and they will often look alike to the untrained observer.

Then how is one to know if they are *true* or *false*? Certainly not in the definition of the Greek words, which indicate that these things are basically the same, I repeat—whether true or false! Obviously, Satan cannot perform healings, which are the forgiveness of sins (he *can* certainly counterfeit them with gimmicks—“lying” healings), but he is very much capable of a whole variety of *other* miracles. The coming false prophet will soon prove this, and close the mouth of every doubter.

So I ask again: What is the point here? The answer begins with one more question. How will you know whether coming miracles—anywhere on earth, including the splinters—are true or false?

There is only *one way*—ONE THING that will protect you from the final strong delusion that will soon strike the whole world, including half of all Laodiceans—the foolish virgins—who will be too weak to repent at the last. You must know where the government of God, with Christ as Head, is leading the one unified Body under His chosen servant “sent forth”—with many in support—to finish the true Work of God, with all necessary *true* “signs following after.” Miracles occurring outside the Body of Christ are false!—all of them!—period!

A side note: This does not mean God would never heal—and this would be *very* rare—even one person in a splinter. But this would always be, as with the occasional valid baptism in the splinters, accompanied by soon leading that person to Christ’s Body. But everyone knows there are virtually no *genuine* healings occurring, or being reported, anywhere in the splinters. And the evangelists and others there are literally *shut out* of the miracles they covet.

Dangerous Obsession

All those attending LCG, beware. Your leader’s long-standing obsession with “miracles,” and his emphasis on “restoring apostolic Christianity” with miracles in mind, places you directly in HARM’S WAY. This organization is sliding into overt Pentecostalism, where the emphasis has long been on miracles. This is because this splinter does not understand what really happened on the original day of Pentecost, how that power and authority were vested exclusively in Christ’s chosen *apostles* for the purpose of doing His Work.

Remember again, Simon Magus coveted the Holy Spirit because, in his mind, it meant *power* to do miracles. Where there is true apostolic authority, in Philadelphia or its remnant, there will be signs, wonders and miracles—indications, phenomena, healings, demons cast out, special miracles, signs that God is present, miraculous open doors, astounding blessings—and they will ALL be of God. Christ’s Church is not continually asked to fast and pray for a gift that Christ revealed 2,000 years ago are “signs of an apostle.” There are many other verses in the New Testament, covered in the above sermon, that make this clear—PLAIN!

You are left to ask yourself why an *evangelist* remains so fixated on receiving the signs of an APOSTLE!—and is *he* one who has arisen “speaking perverse things” in this and other matters?

Could LCG one day receive miracles?—real supernatural intervention? It could, and possibly or even probably will, because of its reckless—and relentless—pursuit of that which it understands no more than do Pentecostals. (But try to tell a Pentecostal that what he sees and feels is not of God!)

Therefore, if signs, wonders and miracles arrive with this splinter or others, they will *not* be of God! This means they can only be “after the working of” just one other possible “god” (II Cor. 4:4). Such supernatural intervention from Satan is a direct by-product of accepting “another gospel” and “another Jesus,” connected to “another spirit” (II Cor. 11:3-4)—the “*spirit* of error” (I John 4:6).

Most of the other splinters and slivers are not gripped by an obsession with miracles. While this danger is not as imminent for them, it is very real, and it will grow with time and the “changing of the guard” in Europe. For instance, COGaic, which broke away in 1998 from UCG, has an obsession with intellectualism, and a need to appeal to the elite of the world—through “vision”—almost the opposite of the splinter described above. And Gerald Flurry, who claims to hold a dozen titles of God, is obsessed with prophecy, yet a different problem, and so forth.

Once the elements demonstrating where Christ is at work are understood, including how He backs up His chosen leader, the individual member is left to wonder about his or her role...

THE MEMBER'S ROLE

What we will cover in this short chapter is again almost entirely from Mr. Armstrong. It involves oft-repeated knowledge from the past, familiar to all God's people who read his books and regularly read his Co-Worker Letters. Of course, sermons by Mr. Armstrong and others, and an endless stream of articles and other publications, carried the same theme to be covered now.

There have also been statements in other parts of the book about the role of the individual Church member. But this subject needs some special attention. Returning to God's government means *knowing* and *doing* YOUR PART within it! But what is that?

You may have supposed that the government of God more or less ends where the ordained offices and specially-appointed duties and responsibilities end. This is not true. Actually, it could not be further from the truth. In fact, this thinking leaves out the vast majority of people—the brethren—who are bedrock within God's government. We must be clear on their role. We may be speaking of you.

Two Parts

First, we saw that God's people *practice* His government every day that they rule their individual lives. In this way, we have seen that they are qualifying to be part of the kingdom of God later ruling with Christ. There are several aspects of this. When God's people live His way of

life, they are: (1) examples of His government to those around them in the world, (2) a reflection of it in their lives to others inside the Church, (3) within their marriages and families, and (4) within the local congregation, meaning (5) within every specific activity in which they participate. These points cannot be overstated in importance.

But in a different arena—and the focus here—is that God’s people have a direct role in the chain of command within God’s organizational structure. Mr. Armstrong will make that clear. The brethren of God’s true Church are certainly to be much more than “dumb sheep.” Their role, just from the previous paragraph, is obviously more than just to “pray and pay” as the apostates sneered in their effort to denigrate the true biblically-prescribed role of individual Church members within the Church and Work of God.

Sadly, the apostates were able to subtly alter the thinking of large numbers who went to the splinters. We saw earlier that so many of these “grew a voice” and came to believe that they were put into the Church to get involved in local evangelism, participate in community service and, in the wake of disasters, help with relief efforts through worldly organizations. These must be re-educated.

Of course, this is a completely wrong focus. In *THE WORK OF GOD* book, I explain that this view was *never* the case in the past when the Church was on track, and explain how and why the Bible records, and Mr. Armstrong instructed, very differently. Those who are still confused on this should carefully study this thorough book, giving extra emphasis to the “Local Evangelism” section. My sermon “Do Christians Give to Relief Organizations?—What Jesus *Actually* Taught!” adds a great deal more.

What Mr. Armstrong Taught

There is almost no need to add anything for the rest of the chapter. Mr. Armstrong is so thorough that he leaves no doubt in his statements. The first quote reiterates that God’s people must be practicing His government in their personal lives. The other three address their role within the Work of God:

“The very purpose of the Church of this present time is to provide God’s training school or teachers’ college to train in spiritual knowledge, education and godly character, to supply all the positions at the beginning of this wonderful 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.”

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, p. 351

“Now we come to the purpose and function of the Church of God.”

“Notice here an important function of the Church. The Church lay members did not go forth with the Message – they *backed up*, unitedly, the apostles who were charged with THE GREAT COMMISSION. Notice: ‘And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together’ (Acts 4:31).

“These Church brethren were able to stand solidly and loyally back of the apostles, because they ‘were of one heart and of one soul [mind]’ (verse 32).”

“So let us clarify once for all time that the purpose of the Church is definitely NOT to preach or persuade the whole world into a spiritual salvation, now – before Christ’s second coming!”

“‘Now the eleven disciples’ (Judas already had left them) ‘went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them...’ To WHOM? Not the Church as a whole! Only to the disciples who were to become the original APOSTLES! ‘...“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. GO, therefore, and make disciples [learners – those taught] 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; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age”’ (Matt. 28:16-20, RSV).

“Notice carefully. This GREAT COMMISSION to be SENT FORTH with Christ’s Gospel Message was given only to those who were apostles – and the word ‘apostle’ means ‘one sent forth’ with the Message!”

“Notice now the King James translation: ‘Afterward he [Jesus] appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat,...and he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...’ (Mark 16:15-16). Of course NONE could believe and be baptized EXCEPT those God the Father specially called. So there is NOWHERE ANY CONTRADICTION. The GREAT COMMISSION was given to the APOSTLES – those ‘sent forth’ with the Message – NOT the lay members of the Church.

“What, then? Did not the lay members have any part in proclaiming the gospel? Definitely they did, as we have seen. Their part was to *back up* the apostles – stand behind them with their prayers, encouragement, tithes and offerings. They are PART OF A WELL ORGANIZED TEAM, as we shall show in more detail.”

“Jesus Christ specially called His disciples, trained them to become His apostles. To THEM – the apostles – the ones ‘sent forth’ with His

Gospel message – He gave THE GREAT COMMISSION – *not* to the laity of the Church as a whole.

The Incredible Human Potential, pp. 115-118

The next extensive quote appeared under the subhead “True Christians: Draftees—Not Volunteers” and is the first of two from *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*:

“It is only through Christ that sinning humanity may be reconciled to God the Father. They must first come to Christ. But no person can come to Christ except God the Father selects and, through his Holy Spirit, draws them.

“That may come as an astonishing new truth, but the more you study the New Testament, and how this truth is constantly borne out throughout the New Testament, the more clear this will become to you.

“No wonder the Church and its purpose has been a mystery. Satan has blinded the minds of a deceived and counterfeit Christianity.

“Anyone who ‘joins the church of his choice’ has not come into God’s true Church. One cannot just ‘join’ the TRUE Church of God. One is first selected and drawn by God the Father through his Spirit, brought to a complete heartrending repentance, and changed in his total life-style, and has also not only believed in and accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, but also has believed Christ. Remember Christ is the Word of God. Jesus was the Word of God in Person. The Bible is the same Word of God in writing. To believe Christ is to believe what he says—in other words, to believe God’s Word the Holy Bible.

“So, once again, WHAT and WHY is the CHURCH? The Church is the called out (from this world) begotten children of God. It is the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23). It is the spiritual organism that shall be the ‘Bride of Christ’ after its resurrection to immortality. Then it shall be married to Christ! It is the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ shall come at his second appearing (Eph. 2:21).

“The Church could not be actually founded *UNTIL* Jesus had ascended and been glorified (John 7:37-39). But in a sense God began calling out some to form the foundation of the Church with Abraham and the prophets of the Old Testament—even, perhaps, with Abel, Enoch and Noah (Eph. 2:20).

“And Jesus, immediately after qualifying by overcoming Satan, began calling out his future apostles. They were to form, with the prophets, the very FOUNDATION of the Church, under Christ who himself is the real foundation and HEAD of the Church (I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 5:23).

"The average person has no conception whatever of the *tremendous, supreme* supernatural achievement Almighty God has undertaken in REPRODUCING HIMSELF—ultimately into billions of spiritual GOD BEINGS! Or of the many-faceted stages of development necessitated in this pinnacle of all divine accomplishments!"

pp. 229-230

The final quote is one of the longest in the book, as well as one of the most powerful. It is certainly the most comprehensive in all that it covers. The quote begins under Mr. Armstrong's subhead "Real Purpose of the Church." What he writes speaks for itself:

"NOW MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL—what is the REAL PURPOSE for the Church? WHY did God have Christ raise it UP?

"The CHURCH is the spiritual MOTHER of human converts. They are the spiritual embryos and fetuses as yet UNBORN, although begotten by God's Holy Spirit—already children of GOD.

"The CHURCH is God's spiritual ORGANISM, well organized, for feeding on spiritual food, training and developing in spiritual righteous CHARACTER the future GOD BEINGS—sons of God the Father!

"For that training—that spiritual development of God's CHARACTER, God has given his Church a DUAL responsibility:

"1) 'Go ye into all the world' and proclaim the GOOD NEWS—announcement—of the coming kingdom of God.

"2) 'Feed my sheep.'

"But in FEEDING the 'sheep,' developing in them God's spiritual CHARACTER, God has given them THEIR PART in supporting, backing up, the great commission: 'Go ye into all the world.'

"This first and great commission was given to the apostles. To a lesser extent evangelists were used in carrying forth the message. Other leaders—ordained ministers—were stationary, yet even the local pastor of a church may hold evangelistic services in his area—not the 'soul-saving crusade' type, but lectures ANNOUNCING and PROCLAIMING as a witness the coming KINGDOM OF GOD (the true gospel)!

"This ENTIRE GREAT COMMISSION—proclaiming the GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom, and 'feeding the sheep'—is a COMBINED administration and function of the Church.

"The individual lay member HAS HIS VITAL PART in proclaiming the GOOD NEWS (gospel) to the world. How? Not by going out and himself proclaiming Christ's message to the neighborhood or to the world. That is done primarily by the apostles, to some extent by evangelists, and to

even a lesser extent in local areas by local pastors. (The chief responsibility of local pastors is supervision of and preaching to the local church.)

“But the ENTIRE CHURCH OPERATION is one WHOLE, organized into various operations and administrations (I Cor. 12:5-6).

Part of the Lay Member

“For example, what part does the individual local member have in taking the gospel message to ALL THE WORLD? This is done primarily and directly by the APOSTLE. In this latter half of the twentieth century it is done also by radio, television and in PRINT!

“In the first century it was done by personal proclamation. Then WHAT PART did the individual lay member have in it?

“MUCH! Without this larger body of lay members the apostle could do nothing!

“Notice a scriptural example: Peter and John had been proclaiming the message at the Temple in Jerusalem. A miracle had been performed by Peter and a large crowd had gathered. As a result Peter and John were thrown in prison overnight, and severely threatened. Their lives were in danger. They were unnerved.

“They went immediately upon release to the lay brethren (Acts 4:23). They needed the backing, support, encouragement of the brethren. They fervently PRAYED! Peter and John sorely NEEDED this loyalty, backing and the prayers of the lay members. THEY WERE ALL A TEAM TOGETHER!

“Take a recent modern example.

“The office of the attorney general of America’s most populous state—California—had made a sudden, unexpected massive armed assault on the headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God at Pasadena, California. They claimed, in violation of the U.S. Constitution, that all church property and assets belong to the State, and a court had secretly appointed a receiver to TAKE OVER, RUN AND OPERATE the Church of the living GOD!

“But when the receiver was about to enter with his staff and deputy sheriffs the Hall of Administration and other headquarters buildings, some 5,000 lay members, with children and babies, crowded these buildings in extended and continuous prayer services. The doors were locked. The armed officials did not quite dare to break down the doors and disturb these massive and orderly prayer services. After three days they gave up. The receiver, an ex-judge of a non-Christian faith, resigned. The

civil lawsuit went on 'the back burner.' And the OPERATION OF THE CHURCH CONTINUED! The higher appellate court later ruled that this lawsuit was without foundation and never should have been started.

"The author, Christ's apostle, can say emphatically that the apostles, evangelists, pastors and elders could not carry on the work of God without the loyal backing and continual encouragement of the lay members.

"Neither can the individual lay member develop and build within him God's holy, righteous and perfect CHARACTER without the operations of the apostle, evangelists, pastors and elders. All these various members GOD HAS SET in his Church are interdependent—mutually dependent on one another. They form a TEAM—an ORGANIZED SPIRITUAL ORGANISM—utterly different from any secular and worldly organization!

"How, more specifically, does this mutual dependency operate?

God Has Provided Modern Methods

"In general, the whole operation of the Church costs money in this late twentieth century world. Facilities and methods are available to the Church for performance of its commission that did not exist in the first-century world. Without the tithes and generous freewill offerings of lay members the Church commission could not be performed in today's world.

"Without the fervent and prevailing continual prayers of all members the work could not be accomplished. Without the continual ENCOURAGEMENT of lay members and those over them locally, those of us operating from headquarters could not bear up under the persecutions, oppositions, trials and frustrations.

"Also in reverse, the lay members need just as urgently the encouragement, teaching, counseling and leadership from headquarters and local pastors.

"An example of the former: I frequently receive large cards—often beautifully illustrated or decorated—signed by the hundreds of local members of churches, giving encouragement and assurances of loyalty, backing and support. Lay members scattered over the world simply cannot conceive fully how much encouragement and inspiration this gives the one Christ has chosen to lead this tremendous worldwide activity, God's CHURCH! The assurance of the earnest PRAYERS crying out to God continually from these thousands from all parts of the earth inspire the confidence of FAITH to persevere in the direction and oversight in this great work!"

I promised these statements would be comprehensive and leave no room for possible misunderstanding. You can see why. Now see the big picture today.

The living Christ put thousands of “laborers in the harvest” (Matt. 9:36-38) during the Philadelphian age. Today, most have left the field and “looked for other jobs” or “gone fishing.” They forgot why they were born and the great purpose of the Church. And this is largely true of many thousands in the splinters who assume they are continuing as they did when Mr. Armstrong was alive. They are not—and if you are in a splinter or sliver, or at home alone, YOU are not!

God called you to back up His apostle for the rest of the age in the most awesome responsibility one could imagine. This has been made clear—absolutely plain—through 19 chapters.

You are left with *hard questions...*

HARD QUESTIONS

The book opened identifying and asking the *great* questions about government. It warned that the *hard* ones would come at the end. This was to plant the seed in the reader's mind that the final chapter would involve another entirely different series of questions—the *personally* difficult ones. God expects each person with His Spirit to face and *correctly* answer central questions—*very* HARD QUESTIONS!—before the age is complete! This concluding chapter hits hard. It is my hope that it will hit you with the force of a hundred-car coal train!

This has been a lengthy book, but it has been extremely important, and frankly, one that could not have been shorter. I consider it to be an absolutely vital component of the *Splinter Explanation Packet*, beside *THE TRUE CHURCH*, “*ANOINT YOUR EYES*,” *THE WORK OF GOD* and *Why The Restored Church of God? – Should You Join?*

The Bible states, “The way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). The splinters and slivers lie in *self-inflicted* misery—truly “destruction and misery *are* in their ways” (Rom. 3:16). Yet this has all been by choice. They *could* return to the picture described in Chapter Two, but will not, at least not collectively. You can be an exception. You can have everything described there returned to you. In fact, a great many now experience all of it every day!

The God of the Bible is a fair, just, loving and merciful God. The One who became Jesus Christ always works patiently with His flock. He gives His people *every* opportunity to do the right thing. Christ wants every one

of His sheep to return to His fold, His Church and Body—so they can be branches connected to the Vine—so they can fellowship with God and Himself—so they can fellowship with others of the same temperature—so they can hear the unadulterated truth—so they can be properly fed, receiving unparalleled pastoral care—so they can participate in His all-important Work of announcing the kingdom of God and warning great nations—so they can enjoy hearing incredible reports of spectacular growth and productivity, non-stop—so they can hear of unity and peace between departments and within the ministry—so they can enjoy the blessings of His government—and, most of all, so they can continue *preparing* to be part of that government one day, sitting on thrones with other faithful servants beside the same Jesus Christ who heads His Church today.

In fact, here is how Mr. Armstrong put it:

“The CHURCH, then, is that body called out from Satan’s world *being prepared* to restore, with and under Christ, the GOVERNMENT of God. That shall be a time when Satan shall have been REMOVED. It shall be a time when all living shall be called to repentance and salvation with eternal life through the Holy Spirit of GOD! The CHURCH, immortal, shall be RULING with Christ—replacing the present rule of Satan!

MYSTERY OF THE AGES, pp. 255-256

We have seen that every organization and group has altered or discarded various New Testament ministerial offices and special duties, as the Church once understood them, but done so in different ways. We have seen that a host of different kinds of approaches to government have replaced the correct pattern restored by Christ to the Church. The picture was graphic. I do not know how it could have been more graphic. While you did not realize it at the time, it was telling you something beyond what almost any could imagine.

Once you hear it, will you believe?

“Enemies”—“Against Christ and God’s Church”

True brethren of God reading this—those who are SPIRIT-LED!—those who still have oil in their lamps!—those who will hear the TRUTH!—the next quote is terribly—TERRIBLY!—serious to you, and at least one of the most important in the entire book! It summarizes the last 19 chapters, and contains a message that should sound like a TRUMPET BLAST—like CYMBALS CRASHING—two feet from your ears! And even this analogy is understated.

If you are truly anointing your eyes as the living Head of the Church commands, then your returning vision will lead you to the following picture—the only conclusion you can draw. This is the last time you will hear formally from Mr. Armstrong, so note well his words. The date of publication tells you how long the points contained have been understood in the Church. What he writes originally appeared under the sub-head “God ALWAYS Ordains by Hand of Man.” Notice how the word “enemy” comes into use:

“That ONE BODY of Christ, carrying on HIS WORK, must function as a UNIT. It must work in harmony and unity, with teamwork, for God is not the author of confusion. There must be no pulling off in different directions by different men *in* that one Body. There must be no competition or division. And anyone who knowingly promotes, or encourages anyone in promoting, such disharmony, competition, and division, becomes the enemy of God, and is serving the devil and not God!

“In order that this ONENESS—this UNITY of purpose and action—this HARMONY and co-operative teamwork, be maintained and preserved in GOD’S WORK, God has ordained GOVERNMENT IN HIS CHURCH. And He has empowered His Church with DIVINE AUTHORITY.

“That government in God’s Church is government from God, thru Christ, thru apostles, thru evangelists, thru pastors, thru other elders, *in that order!*”

“Either the Church of God with headquarters in Pasadena is the ONE AND ONLY true Body of Christ, thru whom Christ carries on HIS WORK, or else it is deceived, or it is a fraud. There is no other possibility. YOU MUST FACE IT, and DECIDE WHICH ALTERNATIVE IS TRUE. If it is the Body thru whom Christ works in carrying on HIS WORK to the world for this time, then it is THE ONLY BODY that is being used of Christ. *Christ is not divided!*”

“This is the time when the ‘Philadelphia’ era of God’s Church has been reached. Somewhere in the world today is this true CHURCH of GOD, fitting the description of the ‘church in Philadelphia’ of Rev. 3.”

“There is no example in the Bible where God carried on HIS WORK under the New Covenant by any single individual OUTSIDE OF, *independent of*, HIS ORGANIZED CHURCH AND HIS ORDER OF GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH. Anyone outside of God’s Church is AGAINST God’s Church!

“Jesus said: ‘He that is not with me is *against me*; and he that gathereth not with me *scattereth abroad!*’”

“*Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?*”,
GN, May, 1954

You were warned that the last chapter would hit hard. You are beginning to understand how hard. No true Christian doubts that the *apostates* have been “against God and His Church,” “serving the devil”—and, in effect, the worst enemies of Christ and His flock, now for over 20 years (and maybe for all time). This is because the false ministers of this world are not *yet* very much attacking God’s people.

But the splinter leaders have supplanted the apostates. *These* NEWER enemies—yes, Mr. Armstrong has, in effect, called the splinter and sliver leaders GOD’S ENEMIES—are more dangerous than most could believe. Over time, most of the gap between them and the apostates disappeared. When truly understood, by *every* standard, they are *more dangerous* to God’s people today than anyone else. While the false leaders of the WCG are fading into the *past*, the deception, compromise and rebellion of the splinter leaders is PRESENT! (Reread II Timothy 3:13.)

Best put: This danger is REAL—it is HERE—it is NOW—and it surrounds YOU!

We earlier referenced how Romans 16:17 instructs brethren to mark leaders who teach false doctrines. When this passage is placed with Philippians 3:17-18—which connects to avoiding those who are marked by labeling them as ENEMIES—the equation is complete! The same Jesus Christ inspired Romans 16:17, Philippians 3:17-18, and Matthew 12:30, quoted by Mr. Armstrong.

Understand. *I* did not say the splinter leaders are enemies. Neither did Mr. Armstrong. JESUS CHRIST DID! Mr. Armstrong merely confirmed this, and explained what Christ meant. I confirm Mr. Armstrong!

Do you find yourself thinking Mr. Armstrong overstated this for effect? If so, why does Jesus’ own statement at the end of Mr. Armstrong’s quote not apply? Surely no one with God’s Spirit believes that Jesus overstated the facts. Surely Jesus knew who is with Him and who is against Him—and how to explain the difference so we can know.

“Against Me” means AGAINST GOD! It means that leaders who are pulling away from where Christ’s government resides are GOD’S ENEMIES. An enemy is an enemy, and it would mean that such men ARE serving the devil, not God.

Some will protest, “But the scattering of today was *foretold* in Daniel 12:7.” Yes, and now you see WHY. Christ’s enemies are scattering His flock. How? By undermining, attacking and trying to *destroy* His government. Thousands are following them, and therefore assisting them. What does this make such people?—or make you? You cannot follow Christ through *His* servants (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1)—*and* follow one of His enemies!

Choose one or the other!

Let's speak plainly. All doubt must be stripped away. The leaders of the splinters and slivers are ENEMIES of the living Jesus Christ, whose Church and Body—and GOVERNMENT—they reject, oppose and FIGHT!

Yes, these are fighting God—are against Christ! May they repent before it is too late!

(Again, I urge the reader to listen to my crucial sermon “The ‘Synagogue of Satan’ Identified—and *Marked!*”)

“The Gates of the Grave”

Let's review Matthew 16:18 one more time. Christ promised His disciples, “The gates of the grave shall not prevail against [the Church].” I first heard that over 45 years ago. I believed it then—and still do!

Be honest! If the devil could enter and destroy the Church's government (I am not speaking of corporate governance)—the only means and structure of authority and power by which Christ guides His Body and Work—he HAS DESTROYED THE CHURCH! Admit this to yourself. All that Satan really must do is convince God's people, through a series of clever, seductive arguments from his agents, that God's government is no more. When this is accomplished, he has effectively removed the ability of God's people to REMAIN TOGETHER, to practice teamwork and to continue the Work of God.

This would mean the devil holds power sufficient to defeat the purpose of the Church!

Do you believe that possible? If so, then you believe the gates of hell *can* prevail against the Church. You also believe that when Christ said to the apostles that He would be “with [them] always, even to the end of the world,” He had some other meaning in mind than what the Church always thought was the obvious one. Remember, this was said in the context of Christ's own authority, and how power and authority were to be given to the apostles. He explained to them that the Father had given Him all power, and that He would give it to them in order that they could baptize and teach all things to all nations. Has the devil greater power than the power of God?

I ask again: Do you believe that the living Jesus Christ—the same Person who made 30 billion trillion stars (the current estimate)!—can be pushed from leadership over His Church and Body by men, or by the devil? In fact, prophecy reveals that it is Satan who will soon be pushed off his throne, with this to occur at the same time all rule, power and authority of men is put down *by Christ*.

Why do—how could—so many forget the power and authority—and certainty!—of Christ and His government?

Faith Required

It requires FAITH to believe that God works from the Head of the Church down, and not from the people up. Betrayed people—those whose trust has been violated one or more times—do not easily trust again! All of God's people once knew that the devil is the author of doubt, and this toward *everything* of God. Comprehend again this reality, once so well understood by 150,000 people, but now seemingly so completely missed by nearly the same number.

I have often said that the greatest aspect of the devil's assault on the Church of God was his nearly universal success in destroying the trust that God's people all once had in Christ's ability to lead them through His chosen leader and Headquarters. Where faith was once strong and also nearly universal, doubt has entered—and become nearly as widespread. Brethren came to feel that they had to "take matters into their own hands" so that the Church could be "governed properly." No, Satan cannot defeat the all-powerful Christ, but he can defeat the *faith* of those who will permit him.

Has he such power over *your* faith?

If you have doubts about anything to do with the government of God, the Church and Body of Christ, or anything related, identify *why* you have them—and address them! Do not permit yourself to leave them unresolved. (My splinter book on *THE TRUE CHURCH* covers this in detail.)

By now you have heard me say that many have come to believe that the apostasy was spawned by the *system* of government Mr. Armstrong taught, rather than by the *men* who infiltrated it. They think it was a *false system* that permitted carnal leaders to capture the Church—or corporation. This is ridiculous logic, but it has caused people to compound the problem, exchanging a *good* system with bad leaders for a *bad* system with bad leaders—whom you now know to also be GOD'S ENEMIES!

Which is worse should be obvious.

In fact, the apostasy was foretold—and therefore permitted—by God for the all-important purpose of testing whether people would remain submissive to Him and His government—whether they would continue daily preparing themselves under that government—whether they would finish His Work all the way to the Tribulation—whether they would compromise *any part* of God's truth—whether they would fellowship only with people of like mind—whether they would divert His tithes to His enemies—whether they would collapse in confused disbelief!

More Wrong Decisions

Jesus declared, “For the children of *this world* are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8). Even in “this world,” no successful corporation of *any size* is run by a committee. Mr. Armstrong despised committees. In the Church, “councils” and “boards” holding final authority are just nice words for *committees*! But will you in UCG exchange frustration with its top committee to follow another form of false government?—a Pentecostal false apostle?—a false prophet?—a local church elder?—a man who says the Work is over?—an intellectual “evangelist,” because he speaks of “vision,” but does not have enough himself to write a single book or booklet in over eight years, except one that costs \$65? And we could ask: Will those following a false prophet or false apostle go on to exchange him for democracy?

A great many people are playing musical chairs with organizations that are *all* wrong. The fruit of *all* of them is rotten—shot full of worms. Changing “chairs” or floating between these groups does not address the problem. Since Christ called the Pharisees and Sadducees vipers—poisonous snakes—I will ask what is the point of exchanging a rattle-snake for a cobra?—and then later the cobra for an adder?—and so forth.

Understand! The main reason every humanly-devised government does not work in the Church is that Christ cannot, and will *never*, lead a system other than HIS OWN! This would be tantamount to changing the gospel, which, at its core, is a message about *hierarchical government* led by God. Remember, the gospel is about *God’s government*—how He will soon rule earth through the *only right form* of GOVERNMENT!

Sadly, in a remarkable parallel with Jeremiah’s prophecy (5:31), where “the priests [ministers] bear rule by *their* means,” most of God’s people now seem to “love to have it so.”

Such is the age of many “lords” who “rule, judge and decide.”

Understand completely. Men are not authorized to establish a “re-design” of God’s form of government, and then notify Christ that He will need to modify His thinking. Most cannot even seem to remember all “notification” works the other way. The all-powerful Christ notified the Church through His apostle about His form of government, then restored it, and tells brethren that they only decide whether they will do what He commands. Men are not spiritual architects authorized to work up new blueprints for Christ whenever they think He needs them.

Such blind delusion!

God's form of government has always been *from the top down*. No church, leader or committee can change His system of government, and then, *by simple assertion*, declare that God is working through him or them! Make no mistake—either God rules, or the people and ministry do! It must be one or the other. It cannot be both.

You either follow Christ or one of His enemies.

Are you prepared to refute the quotes, principles and scriptures throughout this long volume, reasoning they no longer have application because *false leaders* held the power to *permanently destroy* God's government in the Church FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE AGE? Or are you unsure God's government was *ever* restored to the Church?

Finding Another Man “Sent”

I repeat for critical emphasis: The committees leading UCG and COGwa believe that God has not raised up one man to follow. They declare that if He had, they would follow him—and that if He does, they will yet follow him. Such hypocrisy!

I have asked before on this matter, who is kidding whom? Many HARD questions arise—for them and for you: Have they sought that man? Have they examined the fruit of any possible candidates in their thinking? Do they know what to look for? Where do they think this man will *come from*? If they are eliminating various possibilities—ministers or organizations—are they doing this on the right basis? Do they concern themselves with, or *ever* think about, the DOCTRINES this man would be teaching—and how many they would have to change to follow him? Do they realize that this man could not—and would never—compromise government as they do? Is there a working plan in place for how to close down their corporate organization and follow him when he arrives?

I ask a final time: Who is kidding whom?

Most important, have they sought *God's guidance* to find this man, perhaps collectively praying *and fasting* in their search? Then, have they considered that God would never condone their “waiting” for this man under a completely *unbiblical* form of government? Do these men actually believe that they will suddenly be willing to come under the authority of one man again after more than a decade of following leadership by “consensus”—where they had a voice? (Perhaps they have *planned* in advance to “repent.”)

But such incredible hypocrisy is fooling thousands!

No serious person—one who really thinks this through—could possibly believe the elected 12-man committee professing this is actively

doing ANY of these things! Like the researchers seeking a cure for cancer, these people know that if they actually *find* one they will be out of a job. Do not let God's enemies deceive *you* into believing that you can safely trust them to "let you know" when they have located this leader. They are not looking for him. They have no plan or process in place to find him—and are not about to devise one! In fact, they know well of this leader today—and their response is to besmirch his character and to lie about and misrepresent the doctrines he teaches and the Work he continues, doctrines and Work they *knowingly* compromise!

But following a false apostle or false prophet is actually worse. You do not even have the "safety" of democracy—where *one false man* could not convince everyone to follow him over a cliff!

Blindness has covered the eyes of so many. But most reading this book at least have had an "excuse." Let's understand. Like the committee in UCG, if a great many brethren were, in fact, looking, they would be inclined to seek one of whom men speak well. Forgotten would be Christ's instruction, "*Beware* when all men speak well of you."

This excuse is now removed. Be sure YOU do not still look to follow one who "played the game," rose to the top, and has the general approbation of men.

Will you follow the weak, compromising, politically-driven splinter leaders? Is their shallow, self-serving (now long past) promise to follow "God's future chosen servant" good enough for you? Are their broken, unworkable governments, their compromised doctrines and feeble, misdirected efforts to do the Work good enough for you to send them *God's* tithes and offerings?

How could those who no longer remember and know who and what the Church and Body of Christ IS possibly remember and know how it is governed? Is it even a little surprising that leaders who no longer understand what is the Church also no longer understand its government? Of course not.

These men do not, and really cannot, approve of whom Christ selected. Remember, these are the same men who thought that high office came through effective trolling—"fishing"—for it in high places. When politicking could no longer bring high office (after the apostasy), they seized office through self-appointment. How marvelous that they could now bring "improved" redesigned government to the (ex-WCG) "suffering masses."

Like evolutionists who reject the mountain of obvious scientific facts in favor of Creation, these leaders are *willingly ignorant* of the scriptural and historical facts in favor of God's government!

The true Jesus Christ simply has no place or role in their thinking! Men who know how to construct “better” forms of government than the all-powerful Christ would certainly know better than Him who should lead them. And, in fact, since these are humanly-devised governments—governments of men—Christ is perfectly comfortable allowing their *authors* to select *themselves* to lead their own *inventions*!

The splinters today have lost track of GOD’S GOVERNMENT. Sardis had also long since lost sight of correct government by the time Mr. Armstrong came into contact with it. Like Laodicea today, they also had become divided, competing and disagreeing! He left them, and which of us is not glad that he did? And this is but one more proof that only the sixth era—PHILADELPHIA—sandwiched in between these two eras of appalling spiritual condition—experienced the restoration of God’s wonderfully unified government!

Jesus Christ, and He alone, selects and installs the one *He* has chosen. *His* leader reports to Him and none other—and if Christ wants to remove that man, *He* will do it. How many will still believe, as Mr. Armstrong stated, “The government of God is of necessity government from the top down. It cannot be ‘government by the consent of the governed’” (*MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, p. 49)? Yes, how many will believe God still appoints His leaders?

All *other* leaders and brethren following the many *top* leaders referenced lack the most basic faith in God’s ability to direct His Church, beginning with *one sent*.

Appeal to Ordained Men Revisited

The INTRODUCTION carried a special appeal to deacons, deaconesses, local (church) elders and pastors in the splinters that must be briefly revisited as an inset here. First, a distinction must be made between the *leaders* of the splinters and *slivers*—I have carefully used this term—and the deacons, elders and pastors who *may* be following them because they have not yet seen where Christ is at work.

A man who is confused and lukewarm is very different from one who is a *leader* in the spirit of all the wrong that this book describes. It is the *leaders* whom Christ most indicts. Those under them are deceived and obviously must repent of permitting this to happen. But they do not carry the same level of culpability as do the *top* leaders. Certainly, however, if lower-ranking ministers, elders and deacons *willingly* and *knowingly* “sign on” to what their leaders are doing—in other words, at some point, they *understand* the steps they are taking—the path they are

choosing—Christ will make no distinction between the “top” enemies and those below who knowingly support them.

But some encouraging words of real hope need to be offered to those in the “middle management”—pastors, deacons, elders—of the splinters.

Ordained men and women who are coming out of these groups and back to God’s government must know how they will be received. If they have anointed their eyes, a truly extraordinary program of special instruction, communication, assistance and support—unlike anywhere in the splinters (which could not remotely compare) and unlike anywhere on earth!—awaits them. Some explanation.

Nothing Can Compare

FIRST, the Church’s educational institution, Ambassador Center, has a sophisticated and growing curriculum. Its many courses feature focused, practical, helpful and inspiring lectures covering a wide range of both theology and liberal arts-oriented topics. This program is used to develop leaders for Headquarters and the field.

SECOND, we offer a thorough *Host Information Manual*, which covers a great many details in a way that permits all of our congregations to remain on the same page at all times. This carefully-thought-out manual greatly helps leaders to do their job, and has been wonderfully helpful to the elders, deacons, hosts and scattered brethren who receive it. (Also, unlike *every* other organization, RCG Headquarters produces an extensive, interesting and fact-packed *Announcement Bulletin* for all churches and brethren worldwide—EVERY WEEK! Sent with the weekly sermon, this has been done for years. It becomes its own statement about how committed God’s Church is to communicating with the brethren as much and as regularly as humanly possible. And what it contains is neither boring nor ho-hum. Brethren across the world report that they cannot wait for the next one to arrive. The entire bulletin is usually read aloud in services.)

THIRD, we have an exciting, annual *Ministerial and Leadership Conference*, which virtually *every* ordained man (with wives) has attended *every* year, deacons included. Of course, each year these grow larger in size because more and more ordained people are joining us, taking their place beside others who are growing into offices of service from within RCG. These are being trained and ordained.

FOURTH, we monthly produce for all leaders, and we have done this for several years, a *Pastor General’s Report*, filled with additional

instruction and other departmental news of the fastest-growing, most powerful Work on the face of the earth.

FIFTH, our *Church Administration Department* has many full-time people within it (four ordained), plus several other employees, some also ordained, who directly assist in the all-important department in charge of the *commission* to “feed the flock of God.” These people will truly “spend and be spent” in the service of leaders and brethren around the world. I have watched all of them for years. Frankly, I never saw such an unselfish dedication in those I knew from the past. You will find them to be kind, patient, responsive and helpful. They are probably *very* different from what you are used to.

Finally, SIXTH, this special volume has been prepared and offered to you by only one Church—this one! For those who truly grasp its contents, it acts as a formal, one-of-a-kind *textbook*, speaking for itself in regard to the detailed information, instruction and overarching understanding that we are committed to upholding, and to dispensing among God’s leaders (but also to all of God’s people across the world). Of course, I hope every ordained man (and wives) will see the big picture presented just in the sheer size and scope of the tools that RCG offers to leaders, families, teenagers, children and every one of God’s people—but also the vast array of literature RCG offers for those being called and learning the truth for the first time. But it has been a particularly satisfying “labor of love” preparing this book to the splinters. May it especially inspire the leaders we hope and pray will rise to the occasion of their true calling under Christ’s leadership, and take their place within His team—*after* warning the endangered flock they care about!

Special Staff

You saw the inset about the enormous Headquarters *staff* that was once in the Worldwide Church of God. The Restored Church of God is today rapidly hiring skilled, qualified people who fit a wide array of needs at Headquarters in a *very* fast growing Work. These are brethren who have either anointed their eyes or have been called out of the world into RCG, with the government of God now clearly in their view. With income now also rapidly increasing month after month, we can generally freely hire experienced people as our priority of needs becomes clear.

This said, almost certainly, many now serving in a splinter office cannot possibly be happy where they are. Many have already given up. Some, having worked previously at the WCG Headquarters (and this

could apply to any number) also have unusual experience. All of you to whom this applies are urged to consider carefully your skill, training and background, and whether God may yet want to use you again at *His* Headquarters. *This* is where you can be of infinitely greater service—because you will have been placed back into Christ’s Body where *He* desires to use you (I Cor. 12:18).

As with ordained people, those with special training will be held accountable for what they do with what they have been given!

It is our hope that every leader, of whatever ordained office, and every trained staff member, of whatever skill and experience, will fervently pray about this even greater decision *they* are facing. This could lead you to find yourself among a remarkable staff of happy, wonderful, truly unified people, who have to be seen to be appreciated. (All who take these points seriously will recognize these statements would never be a kind of *carte blanche* job offer to those who are unproven, and whose sight remains unrestored.)

Colossal Decision—Which Government?

All of the splinters and slivers are absolutely filled with every kind of division, confusion and disagreement. Instead of getting better—instead of these hundreds of organizations coming to, or at least toward, agreement and unity—things only grow worse. Problems and bad fruits only spread their rot.

Yet, in all of this, almost none seem to ask: WHY? *Why* all the fighting, competing and multiplying splinters, slivers, associations, affiliations, organizations, “communities,” church-hoppers, stay-at-homes, and even an inside-WCG underground?

If the *devil’s* fingerprints are found wherever there is DESTRUCTION—competition, confusion, division, disagreement, disorder, frustration, failure, politics, accusation, ugliness, error and regression—as God’s people, we are supposed to recognize *he* is present.

Similarly, if *God’s* “fingerprints” are found wherever His GOVERNMENT is—beauty, peace, unity, harmony, agreement, happiness, progress, growth, productivity, achievement, fulfillment and true success—we are supposed to see *His* presence.

Of course, because all human beings make mistakes, there can be traces of imperfect fruit even where God and Christ are present and leading and, because organizations of men do not miss the mark in *every* matter, there can at least seem to be a little “okay fruit” where Christ is absent. (We may say of blind Laodicea, “Even a blind squirrel occasion-

ally finds a nut.”) However, for those who know what to look for, it will not be hard to see the wide chasm of difference between the governments of men and the GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

How many will look?

Basic Cause and Effect

There is *cause* and *effect* in virtually all aspects of life, and this book has at least indirectly spoken to this greatest of principles. With so many BAD EFFECTS plaguing the splinters, why does no one ask the CAUSE? Why do so few seem to ask: Do we have the RIGHT GOVERNMENT? Could it be that we “have it wrong,” rather than Mr. Armstrong? Why are thousands of brethren not approaching their ministers—and ministers approaching their leaders—to demand answers? Why do so few seem to care? Why are so few able to, or even interested in, “connecting the dots,” and on something so vitally important to ETERNAL LIFE?

Again, Jesus taught, “You shall *know them* by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16), and shortly followed this with a repeat: “Wherefore by their fruits you shall *know them*” (vs. 20). The fruits of the splinters are deplorable—absolutely terrible—or more correctly, they are “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.” If we are to believe Jesus Christ, and be willing to *know* what He said we CAN KNOW, these governments are exposed as having AWFUL FRUITS—terrible in the extreme. On the basis of fruits alone, none should want to follow them for ten feet—never mind to the kingdom! Yet, thousands do!

Realize that rejecting the government of God not only involves *false teaching*, and this on the Bible’s very *greatest doctrine*, it is REBELLION, pure and simple (I Sam. 15:23). Why do thousands look the other way?

I repeat—again: Many will oppose this book, to the point of vehemently attacking it. Some of *your friends* will probably be among them. This is because truth, when it disagrees with accepted norms, is invariably relegated to cult status. Many today in these groups *have* come to believe Mr. Armstrong led a cult, but one that has finally now come to *enlightenment*, even though split into hundreds of groups!

How blind can people be?

Therefore, look out for deceivers, those who must—and will!—try to counter this book’s contents because their own security is threatened. Remember, it exposes them, and they must suppress the truths it contains at all costs. Having *forgotten* God’s government, some will choose to *remain ignorant* before they will release the reins of power. And others,

who *remember* God's government, but have chosen to *reject* it, must assault its memory for the same reason.

The warnings you will hear against all that you have read amount to seducers warning about "seduction."

"Why call you Me 'Lord, Lord'...?"

Jesus asked of some who professed to follow Him, "Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). *Lord* means "master, ruler, supreme in authority, controller." Christ asks the same question of all who profess to follow Him today.

Will you yield to—submit yourself to—the government of God now, or not? Go stand before a mirror and tell yourself that you *will* or *will not* do this.

If you have read *THE TRUE CHURCH* book to the splinters, and have been noticing references to how all those with God's Spirit will eventually be led back to His Church or lose God's Spirit, you realize that at some point the splinters and slivers—all of them!—will come to be devoid of God's Spirit. Sobering to think about, this means that at some point not one person who stays in *any* of them will be converted. What remains will be groups that are entirely cold, dark, and dead spiritually—and who hate God's Church in an almost indescribable way for what they will come to believe has been "done to them" by all those who left for The Restored Church of God. Again, sobering thoughts!

And hold no illusions. It is not in any of the splinters to wake up and turn around *wholesale*. THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN! But what others do or do not do, and in whatever numbers, is not related to you—to what YOU do! The entirety of the Bible thunders that there is no safety in numbers, but rather that each person "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). If you will not come to the truth—of government or anything else—you do not LOVE truth (II Thes. 2:10). No matter the phony "theology" one uses, or psychology, or philosophy, or emotion, or any other self-justification that one offers for inaction, if he will not *come* to the truth—he is kidding himself and simply does not love Christ above all else (Luke 14:26)! God's Spirit will leave ALL such people.

Strong—fatal—delusion awaits all these (II Thes. 2:11)!

Knowledge Brings Responsibility

You have no doubt heard Mr. Armstrong say that knowledge is of no purpose unless it is used. This book is no exception. You have been given

much truth—much knowledge—in the most extensive and thorough book you will see on the subject. Surely nothing like it has ever been written.

The prophet Hosea summarized ancient Israel's greatest problem, which is the same as with so many of God's people today. The following passage presents itself to you. Let's read it, because it lays the foundation for other vitally important final scriptures:

"My people are destroyed for LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: because you have REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to Me: seeing you have FORGOTTEN the law of your God, I will also forget your children" (4:6).

Many today *have* forgotten and now lack vital knowledge. Others remember, but have rejected it. So many have forgotten or rejected almost everything that they once knew about the marvelous government of God, given by a loving Creator to His begotten children. So many have "not held the Head"—have forgotten "Christ is not divided."

But this need not be true of you—unless *you* now REJECT knowledge *given a second time!*

In all probability, if you were in the WCG, much or most of what you have learned from God's Word through this book is not new to you. But it is truly EXTRAORDINARY KNOWLEDGE, completely unknown to you before you heard it from Mr. Armstrong. You have received knowledge of a government that only a relative tiny few have understood throughout history. Your mind has been re-opened (opened for the first time to some few readers) to understand precious information. With such a privilege comes responsibility.

Consider for a moment all that you now know and can call to memory: the many chaotic, unbiblical governments of the splinters—the convoluted logic of leaders today who are causing this chaos—the origin and history of the doctrine of God's government—when its restoration occurred and what it looked like under Mr. Armstrong—the seven offices and special duties within it—the overarching importance of identifying the true Church and Body of Christ—how truth enters the Church—the meaning, fruit and duties of an apostle—how power and authority work together—how the signs and seal of an apostle intertwine—the danger of false apostles and false prophets—why the Advisory Council of Elders—the role of the watchman—the role of the final messenger—the de-mystifying of the Two Witnesses—your personal role—that God will not accept mixing the true and the false—the unparalleled productivity God's government brought—and so much more!

You no longer "lack knowledge," but are now left with the question of whether you will accept or, like Israel in Hosea's time, REJECT this

knowledge and God's extraordinary—literally abundant, good-fruit-laden—GOVERNMENT. Jesus stated, "For unto whomsoever much is *given*, of him shall be much REQUIRED" (Luke 12:48).

Again, with knowledge comes responsibility. This usually means that CHOICES must be made as a result of receiving it.

Must Always Choose!

Now notice several examples of how God REQUIRED the nation of Israel to make a decision with the knowledge He had given them.

Just before Moses died, and before giving the reins of leadership over to Joshua, he spoke this to all Israel on God's behalf: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore CHOOSE life, that both you and your seed may live: that you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey *His voice*..." (Deut. 30:19-20). You have seen this voice plainly defined.

Similarly, just before Joshua died, he spoke these words to all of Israel, assembled before him: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in SINCERITY and in TRUTH: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve you the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, CHOOSE you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD" (Josh. 24:14-15).

Of course, in another well-known biblical account, the prophet Elijah presented a stark choice to Israel shortly before putting to death in the people's presence the 450 prophets of Baal. Let's read the passage: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long *halt you between TWO OPINIONS*? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people *answered him not a word*" (I Kgs. 18:21).

Also, in the New Testament, Jesus declared, "No servant can serve TWO MASTERS: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Luke 16:13).

On God's authority, His servant tells you now that you cannot serve the government of God and at the same time participate in, or even attend with, any government of men. In truth, however unwitting, all of those following these "church" governments must look very hard at this: Could they—could YOU—be guilty of REBELLION? Whenever this happens, *deep REPENTANCE* is required!

On the other hand, if Mr. Armstrong had government wrong, meaning he was also wrong about all of the things that he taught were connected to it, then you are in the clear—because he could not have even been God’s servant. But if he was right, you have reached one of the great crossroads of your life!

Moment of Decision

The moment of decision has arrived. What faces you today is essentially the same thing that Israel faced over and over again millennia ago. And it is what many thousands before you have faced since Jesus built His Church.

God tells you that He does not accept indecisiveness—that you cannot serve two masters—that you cannot halt between two opinions as Israel did. God does not permit you to “answer Him not a word.” To make *no choice* is to make the **WRONG CHOICE**!

You must decide whether you will implement or reject knowledge—you must decide which master you will serve—and you must decide, in net effect, which *God* you will serve!

Will *you* serve the God who authors and leads only **ONE GOVERNMENT** on earth, or a government devised by men whom Christ calls blind, and where it is painfully evident that the author of confusion—the **DESTROYER**!—is present and leading?

God and His government—or His enemies and theirs. **CHOOSE!**

In the book of Acts, Luke recorded this after describing Paul’s reference to the “unknown god” on Mars’ Hill: “And the times of this **IGNORANCE** God winked at; but now **COMMANDS** all men everywhere to repent” (17:30). Ignorance is the state of being without knowledge. Once knowledge is given, ignorance is no longer an excuse. God commands the one who has received knowledge to decide what he will do—how he will employ that knowledge. This means you—and it means deciding to humbly submit yourself to God through His duly-constituted, authorized hierarchy—**THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD**—and to do your part from now on to faithfully back it up.

God’s government was restored to the Philadelphian era of His Church. It is that simple. Mr. Armstrong taught that “government is everything.” So does the Bible. No apostate leaders, nor *any* human being or group of them, nor the devil himself, carries the authority to permanently banish or remove it from Christ’s Church. Neither can they alter its form. This is also that simple. The government of God is found where His full, restored truth is taught and practiced, where the kingdom

of God is being preached to the whole world, where the special warning is being given to the nations of Israel, where the flock is being properly fed, where every New Testament office and duty is understood and recognized, and where God's appointed leader is found—and where the entire Church collectively “holds the Head.”

The time has arrived. The evidence is in. The facts are plain. The proof is obvious—you *must* return a verdict! You must *acquit* or *convict* those perpetrating fraud!

This towering question cannot be dismissed, and will not go away: What will you **DO** with this knowledge? Will you disregard it?—reject it?—and merely move on with your life? Will you think about it at some more “convenient time”? Or will you *act* on—put to *use*—what you have learned and go on to serve and grow *again* under God's government—and to fulfill your INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL within the true Church and Work of God?

Now, God awaits your decision...

Other Splinter Explanation Packet Literature

THE TRUE CHURCH – One Organization, or Many?

Jesus Christ built His Church nearly 2,000 years ago—and promised it would never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18)! Is this Church and Christ's Body still a *single* unified organization? Or, after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986, and the prophesied “falling away” (II Thes. 2:3), did it split into *multiple* organizations, groups and scattered individuals? Christ is not divided, but can circumstances divide His Church and Body? Do—or can—the actions of men make this possible? The Catholics, the Protestants, the WCG apostates and the splinter leaders all have clear teachings on this subject. What did Mr. Armstrong teach—and does it align with the Bible? This book presents facts, history and the proof of Scripture. It brings PLAIN ANSWERS!

“ANOINT YOUR EYES” – Christ's Warning to His People

Christ warns Laodiceans to “anoint your eyes”—WHY? What did He mean? WHO did He mean—and how can you know? This all-important instruction, to *all* Christians living in the last days, *must* be understood. This extensive book—the most crucial written to the WCG splinters—thoroughly covers things never before explained, and in extraordinary detail. For those hoping to escape the Great Tribulation, it reveals *exactly* what Christ meant and how to apply this most critical warning!

THE WORK OF GOD – Its Final Chapter!

Herbert W. Armstrong ANNOUNCED the kingdom of God to the world and proclaimed the special warning to the modern nations of Israel for 52 years! Did he teach that his death would end this commission, believing both duties to be his own “private work”? How did he instruct his successor? Does “the kingdom shall be preached in all the world” (Matt. 24:14) before the “end come” still apply? What of “go...and TEACH all nations...ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20)? What about “prophesy again” in Revelation 10:11? What is the gospel? Is Christ part of it? Did Mr. Armstrong teach—or does the Bible—that God's people should give to relief organizations and disaster victims? What did Jesus say? Also, what about “local” or “personal evangelism”? Why has The Restored Church of God rewritten *all* the literature of the Worldwide Church of God? What was our STRATEGIC PLAN? What are our two OPERATIONAL PLANS? What does prophecy say about the final Work of God?

WHY THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD? – Should You Join?

There are over 300 offshoots of the Worldwide Church of God. Most believe there are much too many groups—and already “something for everyone.” Was another really necessary, particularly when many are trying to “get the groups together”? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” This short book introduces The Restored Church of God by answering the most basic, commonly asked questions about us. We have carefully produced this material for all who want to understand the Worldwide Church of God apostasy—and what to DO about it!

SHOULD ACCUSERS BE ANSWERED?

Christ described our time as the age of hatred, betrayal, offense and lawlessness (Matt. 24:10-12). Many today use and promote innuendo, rumors, outright lies and other forms of deception to confuse and divide God's people, and defeat their confidence in Christ's ability to govern His Church. When presented with such information, what do—what will—you do? Christ said, “If they have persecuted ME, they *will* persecute YOU!” This means attacks, sometimes vicious, are a fact of life for God's people. The true Church and especially its leaders stand squarely in Satan's crosshairs. It will receive the brunt of persecution *prior* to the Tribulation, when Satan will turn on the “remnant” of Laodicea (Rev. 12:17). Certain

questions arise: Should accusers be answered? What spirit motivates them? Did Jesus answer His accusers? Mr. Armstrong was attacked throughout his ministry. Did he answer accusers? Should I? What did Mr. Armstrong teach about this? What does God's Word say? This book reveals the answers—and is the policy statement of The Restored Church of God about persecution and accusation, and our response to them.

SURVIVING “PERILOUS TIMES”

Civilization has entered the “last days”—II Timothy 3:1. The context through chapter 4, verse 4, reveals that “perilous times” have come upon both the world *and* the Church. There are now many kinds of deception and “sleight of men” (Eph. 4:14) being foisted on unsuspecting and gullible brethren. This volume addresses some of the worst of those deceptions, and assists in helping you survive them all!

THERE CAME A FALLING AWAY

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God for 52 years, teaching hundreds of true doctrines. He proved them from the Bible and told us to do the same. His successors changed them *all*. Do you think *some* changes were right? Do you realize ALL were wrong? Have you recognized them? Here they are!

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