


When Should You Follow Church Government?



Global Church of God

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Is it rebelling against the
“Government of God” to worship
with a different group of
Sabbath-keepers whom you see
as believing and teaching more
of the Truth of God’s Word?

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Literally tens of thousands of our Sabbath-keeping brethren are in a state of utter confusion. Following the 55-year, Spirit-led ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong, nearly every major doctrine and approach in doing the Work of God which Christ led him to teach or employ has already been or is presently being abrogated, abandoned or watered down. **Many of God's people are in a state of shock.**

Yet most of these people—even though they profess loyalty to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's teachings—they continue to follow, to worship with and to support by their presence, the men who have systematically dismantled most of the legacy which Mr. Armstrong left us at the time of his death.

WHY?

Because too many brethren have a confused, sadly unbiblical understanding of exactly what their responsibilities are when it comes to being truly loyal to "God's church government." That is the main reason most of our "separated brethren" are still affiliating with an organization whose public pronouncements "honor" Mr. Armstrong while their doctrinal positions and private actions dishonor and undermine the understanding that Jesus Christ gave Mr. Armstrong.

It is that complete MISunderstanding of church government which I wish to address in this booklet. Frankly, the basic truth of this matter was summarized in a sermon (which we have the tape of) that Mr. Armstrong gave in Tucson, Arizona, December 6, 1980.

In Mr. Armstrong's own words:

We must all speak the same thing! The thing is, whoever is the apostle, whoever is guiding and putting the Truth into the Church must be honest with the Word of God. Now, if you ever find me dishonest with the Word of God, *you REJECT ME as God's Apostle.*

Using Mr. Armstrong's "plain," easily understandable logic, you should *reject* ANY spiritual leaders who are dishonest with God's Word. Herbert W. Armstrong told us repeatedly, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1 KJV). You should also remember to OBEY the Apostle Paul's admonition to "note" and AVOID those who cause divisions "CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YOU LEARNED" (Rom. 16:17).

This booklet is NOT intended to be a thorough discussion of all the details and ramifications of church government. Please understand that. Rather, it is intended to help honest and courageous Christians know what they *should do* when the controlling leadership positions in their church organization become hijacked or corrupted by evil men whose agenda is to turn that church from the Truth!

What should you do? Read on, for this booklet makes it *very clear* what one should do in the circumstances facing God's people at this time! Consider these two remarkable, historic situations.

SCENE ONE: At the Nuremberg war crimes trials after the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II:

* Nazi SS officers are shown to have been

guilty of the torture and murder of tens of thousands of civilians.

* Their reply: "We were just following orders."

* Analysis: In certain militaristic, authoritarian organizations, people are *expected* to "blindly" follow orders and do and believe *whatever* they are told. *Right* or *wrong*, they are expected to follow the current "government." But in God's Word we are told, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). "*Prove all things*; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV). The Apostle Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 KJV).

SCENE TWO: At God's Throne in Heaven, millions of years ago:

* Lucifer, the Archangel, has been put in charge of the "Government of God" on earth. But word comes in that he is *misusing* and *perverting* his post in "government." Will those angels under him blindly follow this brilliant Lucifer in his rebellion? Or will they see through what is happening and have the faith and courage to obey GOD *in spite of* what this clever Lucifer says?

* Result: About one third of all the angels were deceived by Lucifer and joined with him in his rebellion against GOD, their very Creator! (Rev. 12:3-4).

* Analysis: Those angels were just "following government." But they *should have known* that one must *not* follow "government," *any* government, if it is contradictory to the ways and laws of GOD. Since they *should have known better* but followed Lucifer anyway, God has them "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

A Misunderstood Subject

One of the greatest and most serious misunderstandings that has developed in the Church in recent years concerns church government. It is not really a complicated subject, but somehow we have had our collective minds “set” on a certain approach to this topic.

Why?

Herbert W. Armstrong often said that many of men’s ideas are “carelessly assumed and taken for granted.” In today’s religiously confused world, for instance, people just “know” that good people will go to heaven when they die. They carelessly *assume* this because they are told so, and because the Bible talks about the kingdom of heaven. So people just suppose it must mean the Kingdom is *in* heaven and that Christians go there at death. Similar careless assumptions have been made concerning the church government issue.

In his *Autobiography* (Vol. I, 1986, pp. 557-558), Mr. Armstrong wrote of his experiences with the “Sardis” Church in 1933:

In those days one biblical subject I was completely befogged on was the matter of church organization and government. I *knew* the “Stanberry” pattern of a general conference was not scriptural. I *knew* that voting by human preference was unscriptural. I saw plainly that Christ *chose* His Apostles—that they and the evangelists, in turn, chose and ordained elders in local churches. Consequently, in the church

now meeting at Jeans school house, since I was the evangelist God used in raising up this church, I chose and appointed Mr. Elmer E. Fisher as deacon, remaining as Pastor myself.

But just what truly was the biblical form of organization I did not at that time see clearly. I was really confused on the question.

Our Early Discussions

Even after several years of guiding the college, Mr. Armstrong still did not clearly understand church government, and said so openly a number of times. Consequently, in the early to mid-1950s, Herman L. Hoeh and I were studying the subject and were inspired to write articles along this line. As hundreds of our older brethren remember, I wrote the article, "Judging and Discipline in God's Church," and later, "Whose Opinion Counts?" and one or two other similar articles.

Herman Hoeh wrote articles dealing with the pyramid structure of government—from Christ down through apostles, evangelists, etc.—revealed in the Bible. He also wrote other articles along this line.

Mr. Armstrong accepted these articles and immediately published them in *The Good News*. The three of us and others discussed this topic and realized that, **although there is no one exact way of organizing a church revealed in the New Testament, the principles of government from the top down, of office by appointment based on the "fruits" of a man or woman's life, and of order rather than confusion, were all revealed in the Bible.** We realized that church "politicking" and voting were *not* God's way and that

VOTING, as such, was NEVER employed in the Bible!

Mr. Armstrong always stressed that we should follow him only *as* he followed Christ. He always urged us to *study* our Bibles. He reminded us that we would be judged by **what the Bible said, not by following him or any other man.** But he hoped we would always follow him *as long as* he truly followed Christ and did His Work. To this we all agreed.

Mr. Armstrong Respected the Other Seventh-Day Churches of God

Often over the years and even into the *last few years* of his life, Mr. Armstrong acknowledged that the Churches of God, Seventh Day—headquartered in Stanberry, Missouri, and in Salem, West Virginia, WERE part of God's Church—though perhaps of the "Sardis" era—as we came to understand it. He just felt that he had to LEAVE these people because they *refused to grow* into the full truth God was revealing.

When some of the Ambassador College students worked summer jobs up in Oregon in the early 1950s, Mr. Armstrong suggested more than once that since "we" had no churches nearby, those students should *worship with* the Sardis churches meeting at Jefferson, Oregon and elsewhere. College students Owen Smith, Kenneth Herrmann and I did attend the Jefferson church during the summer of 1950. We were cordially received, and found sincere fellow Sabbath-keepers there.

During discussions with some of the college graduates in those years and later, I learned that—although the Sardis people did have a lot of "politicking" and

divisions among them, they did treat with respect and understanding anyone who left Stanberry to join the Salem, West Virginia, group, etc. **People were virtually never disfellowshipped when they left to join another group of fellow Sabbath-keepers!**

They perhaps “fussed” at them a little bit about leaving, or were even temporarily upset that they had “gone off to follow Dugger.” (Andrew Dugger was the one who left Stanberry and founded the Salem, West Virginia, group.)

BUT, my friends told me they merely regarded them as “departed brothers,” but *still* “brethren” and fellow Sabbath-keepers and fellow worshippers of the true God of Creation. Virtually *no one* felt that those people were “rebellious against GOD” by shifting from one Sabbath-keeping group to another.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong felt that way also, though he always exhorted us that we should *stay together* “in order to do a really BIG WORK.” Yet he always acknowledged that if this or any other church were somehow taken over by leaders unwilling to preach the Truth, we should ALL leave!

Herbert Armstrong's Own EXAMPLE

The fact of the matter is that Herbert and Loma Armstrong themselves “shifted” from one Sabbath-keeping church to another on two different occasions. First, they left the Stanberry group to worship with the Salem, West Virginia, Church of God. Years later, they *severed* all ties with that group and the “Radio Church of God” developed into a full-fledged, completely separate, church organization.

In Mr. Armstrong's *Autobiography* (1986 ed., pp. 556, 561), he writes of his decision to leave the Stanberry organization:

At the biannual General Conference meeting of the Church at Stanberry, Missouri, which probably was held in August, 1933, Elder Andrew N. Dugger had lost his previous iron control of the church by one vote. Thereupon Mr. Dugger promptly bolted the Conference and organized a competing "Church of God" under what he termed "the Bible form of organization."

He managed to induce half or more of the ministers in the church to join him in this new "Organization," on the argument that they were now re-establishing the Bible form of organization.... Thus we of the Church of God meeting at the Jeans schoolhouse, along with our brethren of the Oregon Conference, decided to go along with it in cooperation, but we of the new local church near Eugene did not "join" in the sense of becoming an integral part of it.

I then began to send in regular minister's reports. We cooperated fully, as brethren in Christ. But I did not accept salary or expense money from them. None in our local church put himself under their authority. We kept ourselves free to obey God as set forth in the Scriptures, should any differences come up. And they did later come up!

After the experience of being ordered to baptize contrary to the Scriptures and the

renouncing of the \$3 weekly "salary," we were firm never again to be placed in a position where we might have to obey men rather than God.

Notice how Herbert W. Armstrong kept himself "free" to obey God as set forth in the Scriptures! If you knew Mr. Armstrong intimately as I knew him for the last 36 years of his life, you would deeply understand that **he would NEVER agree to being under a so-called "Government of God" which prevented him from preaching the full Truth of the Bible!** If you doubt this, please read the section of the *Autobiography*, 1986 ed., pages 505-563. Then you will *never doubt again!*

The MISUSE of Church Government

As the Church developed, however, all of us leading ministers began to emphasize the need for UNITY. We realized that, unlike the Sardis church which kept splitting, we needed to stay together to *do* the Work. And that was certainly vital *as long as* a dedicated man of God (like Herbert W. Armstrong) was guiding a Church of God where the **full Truth could be taught and preached.**

But, we unwittingly went too far. We began to compare Mr. Armstrong with Moses—a *special prophet* God talked with face to face. **God gave Moses direct commands which often became part of the Scriptures!** We confused the position of Herbert Armstrong with Moses—through whom God *spoke directly* and who was the supernaturally appointed leader of the ONE physical nation on earth God was

directly working—with ancient Israel.

Many ministers began to use the example of Korah's rebellion and similar examples to imply that—if anyone ever left this Church even in hurt or confusion—they were **REBELLING** against the "Government of God" just as surely as Korah and his followers. Everything seemed to become the "Government of God."

Some students or graduates leading baptizing tours would admonish their assistants that they were violating the "Government of God" if they turned up the car radio without thinking to ask permission! Wives were violating the "Government of God" if they did not have their husband's suits pressed on time! Such examples illustrate a wrong understanding of Christian leadership.

From God's perspective, does anyone really believe that Mr. Armstrong "rebelled" in leaving the Stanberry Church, and again "rebelled" in not submitting to the "Government of God" through A. N. Dugger of the Salem, West Virginia, Church of God? Certainly, the human leaders of those two organizations didn't like Mr. Armstrong starting up a new church organization, but what was God's opinion?

Why did Herbert and Loma Armstrong leave these two church organizations? From carefully reading his *Autobiography*, and from hearing Mr. Armstrong describe it personally many times, it became clear to me that he left these two churches:

1. To teach the *full Truth* of God's Word, as he understood it at that time, without hindrance.
2. To do a really **BIG WORK** preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world.
3. To try and arouse the slumbering peoples

of the United States and British Commonwealth to their covenant duties to God and to warn them of their impending punishment if they continued to disobey Him, preaching powerfully the Ezekiel warning message.

If Mr. Armstrong had preached only what was “acceptable” to the governing boards of the Stanberry- or Salem-based Churches of God, most of us in the Church would probably have remained BLINDED in the Protestant or Catholic churches we grew up in!

What Kind of Church Administration in the New Testament?

The Church’s leadership structure was not founded for the benefit of its human leaders. Rather, it was to further the Church’s goals and mission—preaching Jesus Christ’s Gospel and feeding His sheep. Jesus emphatically taught His disciples that those who wished to lead must be imbued with the spirit of service. “He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all’” (Mark 9:35 NRSV). This was a totally different approach to government from that of the Roman Empire then ruling in Judea. That carnal, pagan-dominated government only selfishly sought its own enrichment and ego inflation.

If we look into the New Testament with an open mind, we find a warm, brotherly, service-oriented approach to church administration. This different approach affected the way the early brethren and minis-

ters interacted with each other, and the way they handled disagreements.

Perhaps, before plunging into Scriptural examples, I should first set the stage. Was there in the New Testament Church any example of a human leader acting as a “Moses figure” or a “Pope Peter,” who towered over the other apostles and elders, giving them orders, threatening to “fire” them? I cannot refer you to any Scripture illustrating this style of “church government” because it IS NOT THERE!

You *do* find that Peter took the lead among the original twelve apostles and was acknowledged—although this is never directly stated—as the main speaker and leader. Jesus Christ used Peter to preach the main sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2), heal the crippled man outside the Temple (Acts 3), and open the “door of faith” to the Gentiles (Acts 10). But you *do not* find him giving orders to the other apostles, sending them out on missions, or in *any* way “lording it over” them. However, Peter was entrusted with the administrative supervision of preaching Christ’s Gospel to the “circumcision” (Gal. 2:7-9).

As you read Acts 6 carefully, notice that “the twelve” summoned the multitude of the disciples for counsel on appointing deacons. “They” wanted advice, they said, about whom “**we may appoint** over this business.” It was a collective sort of leadership. The responsibility for directing the Church was not then invested in a sole individual on earth.

The decision was clearly through “multitude of counsel” (Prov. 24:6 KJV), and then by “appointment”—*not* voting. ALL the apostles listened to this counsel and then decided, together, whom to appoint. Peter was *not* the

Pope! He NEVER unilaterally decided ANY of those basic matters in the New Testament Church!

Think about it!

Now notice Acts 8:12-25. Here we find the inspired record of how the apostles “sent” Peter and John to Samaria. No “Pope Peter, pontiff maximus,” here, either!

Having the dominant personality, Peter did take the lead over John in dealing with Simon, but “they” returned to Jerusalem and evidently BOTH of them preached the Gospel along the way.

I would encourage all who read this to really STUDY Acts 15 with the above thoughts in mind. It is the inspired record of what was undoubtedly the MAJOR Ministerial Conference—if we may call it that—of the Apostolic Age. If there were ever a time when Peter would sit in the chief seat, give orders to the other apostles, and totally dominate, this would have been it!

The Jerusalem Conference

In Acts 15:1 a doctrinal controversy got started when, “Certain men came down from Judea.” They had ideas that seemed wrong to the local church leadership. Did Paul and Barnabas blindly yield to them—thinking they came from “headquarters” or from Peter or James!

No way!

And that is the point, brethren. The *entire approach* of the original apostles AND ELDERS was NOT: “Who’s in charge here? I’d better go along or they may fire me!” Rather, the administrative style

was—as Peter himself later wrote, “**All of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility**” (1 Pet. 5:5).

When these men from Judea came, Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension and dispute with them.” Paul, as you know, always fought for the TRUTH even when he “rattled the teacups” in doing so!

Notice what happened then. “They”—evidently the local church’s consensus-building leadership—determined that Paul and Barnabas, *with others*, “should go up to Jerusalem.” **Note that Paul did not unilaterally make this decision!** It was obviously made—in a brotherly manner—in concert with the other ministers and leaders of the local church. And so Paul and others were to go up to the apostles (plural) and ELDERS (plural) about this question.

No hint that they were to go and present themselves before “Pope Peter” and get HIS decision. For, again, there WAS NOT A MOSES in the New Testament Church! God guided *many* apostles and elders to work in a brotherly, non-threatening atmosphere, and *no single one* of the apostles or elders towered over the others at that conference!

Many Elders Had Input

In fact, the account in Acts 15 several times indicates that the “elders” had a vital part and significant impact in that conference which was not a “rubber stamp” meeting set up to perfunctorily ratify a decision made by a supreme pontiff! Because of the open, brotherly atmosphere inspired by the Holy Spirit in

this conference, the elders were *not* intimidated by the apostles and obviously were listened to with respect.

“So being SENT on their way by the *church* (*not* Paul’s *own* decision)... And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the *church* and the apostles and the ELDERS” (vv. 3-4).

When some of the believers that had been Pharisees rose up to demand that even Gentile Christians be circumcised and keep the rituals of the Mosaic law, “The apostles and ELDERS came together to consider the matter” (v. 6). And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and reminded them of how God, through him, had acknowledged the Gentile converts and given them the Holy Spirit *without keeping all these rituals*, because it was not necessary for the Gentiles to become physical Israelites in order to be saved.

But notice that Peter did *not* issue some decree, or make the final decision. He merely expounded what God had done and appealed to them to consider this. Then, Paul and Barnabas spoke up and backed up what Peter had said by reminding them of the “miracles and wonders” God had used to show that He was calling the Gentiles *directly*—not *after* they had been circumcised and become Jewish proselytes.

Finally, the presiding apostle and pastor of the Jerusalem Church of God, James, spoke up. It was fitting that he should summarize and state what was obviously the decision of this conference, because it was from “certain men” at Jerusalem that the whole matter started. Thus, it was James (*not* Peter) who said, “Therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God” (v. 19). And James proceeded to explain the four

idolatrous practices which they warned the Gentiles to avoid.

“Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the **WHOLE CHURCH**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas” (v. 22). Notice, the elders and the “whole Church” were involved in this! How *utterly different* is the flavor of this meeting as compared with modern times!

“They [*not* just Peter or James] wrote this letter by them: the apostles, the **ELDERS and the brethren**, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings... It seemed good to US, being assembled with *one accord*, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul” (vv. 23-25).

Remember, this was the humble, brotherly approach—obviously inspired by the Holy Spirit—in what was the **MAJOR Ministerial Conference** of the Apostolic Age. **There is no hint of any authoritarianism, highhandedness or threatening behavior on the part of ANY of the apostles.** The inspired account notes that Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James all gave what may have been major addresses. All were apparently listened to and received with the same respect. And it was James, not Peter or Paul, who issued the summary conclusion of the matter.

When Barnabas “Rebelled”

Some time after they returned to Antioch, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they re-visit the churches in Asia Minor (Acts 15:36). It is obvious that Paul

was the leader and the leading apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7). He “insisted” that Barnabas *not* take his young nephew, John Mark, with them on this trip. Nevertheless, Barnabas was “determined” to take him along (vv. 37-38).

“Then the *contention* became so sharp that they parted from one another” (v. 39). But did Paul ever threaten to fire Barnabas over this?

Not even a hint of such a thought! For we find in Acts 15 and in many other passages the obvious fact that these ministers were truly CONQUERED by God. They were humble and *not* trying to pull rank on anyone. They respected the direct calling and spiritual fruits that Christ produced through their fellow-ministers. **And no one ever threatened to fire or disfellowship their fellow ministers except in the cases of plain heresy, directly causing division or moral turpitude.**

Notice the dramatic incident recorded in Galatians 2:11-21. Here the Apostle Peter perhaps feared some “political” repercussions from eating with the Gentiles, and Paul, a relatively new minister in comparison, openly REBUKED him to his face!

Did Peter pull rank, threaten to fire Paul or any such thing? Never! The obvious conclusion is that Peter humbly *took the rebuke*, learned from it and forgave Paul *if* there was any unnecessary harshness. In his final letter before his martyrdom, Peter refers to “our *beloved* brother Paul” and clearly indicates that Paul’s epistles were now regarded as “Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:14-16). Peter didn’t bear a grudge.

What is Your Loyalty Priority?

Unfortunately, many of us have been sadly careless in using the term “Government of God.” This term *never* appears as such in the Bible, and certainly not in connection with New Testament church organization or government. Yet, in the Church, most of the ministers and brethren seem to think that the awesome mantle “Government of God” rests on *whoever* happens to get in charge of any local church congregation, or the larger Church organization.

To a degree, *any* high office should be “appropriately” respected. We are to pray that God guides ALL men in civil authority “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:2). At the time this was written, Paul was referring to the sometimes ambivalent, sometimes hostile Roman authorities and their deputies.

However, regarding “authorities” in the Church, Paul warned, “For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things**, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30). Members of God’s Church have been warned *for decades* that sinful men might try to take over God’s Church someday, pervert the doctrines, water down the truths and the Gospel we have learned.

Should we, then, follow leaders who speak “perverse things?” Obviously NOT!

The KEY is that our *first loyalty* is to GOD and the inspired Word of God which we all need to be studying much more zealously! Though they were sitting in

"Moses seat," Peter and the inspired apostles told the Jewish religious leaders of their day, "We ought to obey GOD rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

When the leaders of the Sanhedrin, Judea's governing religious body, told the apostles *not* to preach the full Truth God had revealed to them, they answered, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **For we CANNOT but speak the things which we have seen and heard**" (Acts 4:19-20).

Herbert W. Armstrong repeatedly told us, **"Blow the dust off and prove these things in your own Bible."** The older brethren will remember how he always said, **"Follow me AS I follow Christ!"**

Remember, I have already pointed out that Herbert and Loma Armstrong *refused* to take orders from the human church leadership in *two different* branches of the Sardis church. If the Armstrongs submitted to either the Stanberry or Salem organizations then they would have been UNABLE to fully obey God and preach the full Truth of the Bible as they understood it! They said in effect, "We must obey GOD rather than men!"

You see, God will *not* back up ANY human being including church leaders—if that person deserts the truths of the Bible or forbids that the Truth be preached. If it were otherwise, God would have severely PUNISHED Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong and their Work would have come to NOTHING.

So let us understand. If dedicated brethren in God's Church build an organization and direct it according to biblical principles, they will have God's overall guidance and blessings. **But God governs only through the inspired laws and principles of His Word.** Any

church organization that preaches contrary to those principles is *not* the “Government of God,” but the government of *men*.

Is God’s Church a “Mother”?

At this point, I would like to address an analogy that often confuses many people. We have sometimes taught that the Church is the “Mother of us all.”

On the surface, this is a nice sounding idea. But, in reality, the Bible does *not* say any such thing! If it did, then your “Mother,” the Church, would have led you into the “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” if you had lived back in the Pergamos era (Rev. 2:15). If you had lived in the era of Thyatira, you would have had church leaders who “allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols” (v. 20).

The key passage some people use (though many scholars do *not*) to prove that the Church is a “Mother” is found in Galatians 4:26: **“But Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”**

Note that it is “*Jerusalem above*” that is “Mother” of us all, *not* the human-composed Church here on earth. The “*Jerusalem above*” certainly refers to our Father, God, to Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Living Head, and to “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23). Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20) where the spirits of just men, from righteous Abel clear up to the present time, await the resurrection from the dead. At that future time, the “*Jerusalem above*” will have thousands of children!

For now, we see church government run by imperfect

humans who are sometimes misguided or influenced by false teachers. They are NOT always doing the job of a good “Mother” according to the Bible.

An Inspired WARNING

God has granted us free moral agency—even in His own Church! Leading men have turned aside and perverted doctrines, or watered down Scripture and mistreated fellow Christians. Jesus exhorted the Ephesian era, “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. **And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars**” (Rev. 2:2).

Notice that when people tested those who claimed to be apostles, they found some of those so-called apostles to be LIARS! “Nevertheless,” Christ tells these Ephesians, “I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent” (vv. 4-5).

Christ exhorted that church era to *recapture their ZEAL*, or, as Mr. Armstrong said, “Get back on the track!”

Every single church era, except Philadelphia and Smyrna, is described as having various *sins* and *weaknesses*. It is clear that Christ did not plan to govern His Church in a way so as to prevent heresy and sin—or just a lack of zeal for the Truth—even among the leaders. **That is WHY Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong had to LEAVE the Sardis organizations!**

Now notice an inspired warning in the third letter of the Apostle John—the “apostle of love.” “I wrote to the

church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, **putting them out of the church**" (3 John 9-10).

Let us analyze this passage carefully. Clearly, Diotrephes was one of the *main leaders* of the developing church at that time—if not *the* main leader. I say "developing" because at that time they were slowly but surely deserting the foundation of true Christianity. They were "growing," but in the **WRONG** direction! History is clear on this, and this very passage corroborates that fact.

Diotrephes *refused* to see and hear the last remaining original apostle! He used "malicious words"—perhaps implying that John and the earlier apostles were not "up-to-date," had made mistakes, or were lacking in other ways.

This Diotrephes would not even receive honorably the old-timers—the brethren still loyal to John and to the original **TRUTH** they had been taught. Using his position in the "Government of God," Diotrephes *disfellowshipped* these faithful old-timers.

Would **YOU** follow Diotrephes if he were in charge today? Think about it!

WHAT Church History Reveals

Early church history is replete with examples of some of the "Ebionites"—the early Jewish Christians who remained faithful to the Truth of God. In Jesse

Lyman Hurlbut's *Story of the Christian Church*, they are described as follows: "A small section of Jewish Christians endured for two centuries, but with ever-decreasing numbers, the Ebionites, a people by themselves, scarcely recognized by the general church and despised as apostates by their own race" (p. 43).

Notice that these zealous Christians, who basically *retained the teachings of Jesus*, were "scarcely recognized by the general church." In other words, the majority, the *main body of people*, regarded the Ebionites as "outcasts" who refused to "grow" into the developing *pagan teachings* and customs that slowly and subtly began to take over the "Christian" church. Often, these faithful followers of Christ were "disfellowshipped" or even persecuted by the "new age" teachers of their time!

In his excellent book, *The Incredible History of God's True Church*, Ivor Fletcher also describes this situation:

Clement of Rome, writing at about the same time—A.D. 95-96—expressed deep concern over a similar situation which was developing at Corinth. The Corinthian Church, less than thirty years after the Apostle Paul's death, **was ejecting from the ministry men who had been ordained by the apostles.**

By the closing years of that century, Christians who faithfully continued in the teachings handed down to them by the immediate followers of Christ were rapidly finding themselves to be in a minority position.

Mosheim, in his church history, relates that

“Christian churches had scarcely been organized when men rose up, who, not being contented with the simplicity and purity of that religion which the apostles taught, attempted innovations, and **fashioned religion according to their own liking**” (pp. 119, 129).

So where *was* the “Government of God” in all of this?

HOW Christ leads His Church

In the past, we (and I include *myself* in this!) have mistakenly assumed that Christ *directly guides* His Church so that no serious errors will ever be made and no serious doctrinal deviations will ever occur. This misunderstanding arose partly because in the 1950s and 1960s everything seemed to be going so well, and God was obviously BLESSING His Church in every way.

But, of course, this was also obviously in the “Philadelphia era” of God’s Church—one of the **ONLY** two of seven church eras about which Christ gives *no criticism whatever!*

Of other eras, however, we have seen that Christ prophesied in advance that errors—even **SERIOUS ERRORS**—would be made and at times obviously **compromise the leadership and the brethren alike** (Rev. 2, 3).

Christ, the Living Head of the Church, specifically prophesied that the Ephesians would *leave* their “first love” (Rev. 2:4). Later, He said that there would be those in the Pergamos era who would “hold the doctrine of Balaam” (v. 14). Then, He said, “You also have those who hold the doctrine of the

Nicolaitans, which thing I HATE” (v. 15).

Christ hates these false doctrines, yet He obviously *allows* them to come into His own Church. It is partly to test His people, to see where they *really* stand before He gives them great GLORY for all eternity. Who will persevere and remain faithful in our days (Ps. 94:16-23)?

The Thyatira leadership allowed “that woman Jezebel” to seduce their fellow servants. At this time, there was tremendous pressure to conform to the great false church (Rev. 17), and for the Waldensian Sabbath-keepers and similar groups to attend mass and to have their children baptized by the priests.

Through fear and weakness, the leadership and the majority of people in these groups eventually “went along” with the false religious practices. But many times there was a small minority who insisted on obeying Jude’s exhortation **“to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3).

As we have already seen from history, the faithful brethren were *often* disfellowshipped by the apostate “church government” of the time. But they were faithful to God and His Word!

Where, then, is CHRIST in all of this?

Christ Does NOT Micro-Manage the Church

Christ, like His heavenly Father, guides world events only in an *overall* way. He is not trying to micro-manage world affairs except in a very few specific cases. In contrast to the world, Jesus intervenes in the personal lives of His saints as they seek Him in prayer, according to His Word and will. Regarding the

Church, Christ makes sure that there always *is* a Church of God on earth (Matt. 16:18). He makes sure that the Bible is preserved. And **He inspires and stirs up faithful ministers and brethren to do a POWERFUL Work during certain key ages.** However, He also prophesied in advance that in other ages the *human leadership* and the Church as a whole would be virtually “dead” spiritually, bearing little fruit (Rev. 3:1-2).

“This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High RULES in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men” (Dan. 4:17). So, although God “rules,” He also obviously allows weak and misguided men to be in power much of the time **so the world can write the lesson in human suffering that man’s ways lead to death** (Prov. 16:25).

In the true Church, Christ directs the overall pattern of things *more directly* than God does in the world at large. Yet, according to Christ’s *own words* in Revelation 2 and 3, it is obvious that He allows His Church’s leadership a lot of rope to get entangled in or even to hang themselves! He allows the Church to be *influenced* by the world around it. And this often *heavily affects* the approach and atmosphere of each church era and its leadership.

For instance, just before, during and after World War II there was a spirit of zeal, patriotism and respect for authority in much of the Western world, particularly in America. The growing, zealous “Philadelphia era” of God’s Church reflected this atmosphere.

But, now, we see the influence of the rock music, dirty speech, “free sex”—the social rebellion of the

1960s and 1970s—and the crass materialism and hedonism of the 1980s. The “me” generation of the United States, Canada and much of Europe wants to take it easy, have fun, and do their own thing. Today’s Western world reflects the Laodicean era. The Church as a whole has been heavily influenced by the prevailing spirit of the times.

But does this “worldly” atmosphere give God’s faithful people any *real* EXCUSE to water down the doctrines and the entire *way of life* revealed in the Holy Bible? None of us can seriously expect God Almighty to excuse us if we let down in our holy calling just because some lax or apostate persons in some “Government of God” give us their “permission.”

Follow Men Only as They Follow Christ

Herbert W. Armstrong said many times, “Follow me only *as* I follow Christ!” Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4). **You and I will be JUDGED by how zealously we have lived by the words of the Bible! Remember this key.**

We should appropriately *honor* all men in a high office. We should, in the Church, follow them *as* they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). We *should* always be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

However, the Apostle Paul warned, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30).

About two years after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, things began to CHANGE. This pace of change has picked up dramatically in the last several years. The deep respect for the Sabbath and Christ as our HEALER is rapidly disappearing in many congregations of our former affiliation. The fervent preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God based on *God's law* is gasping its last breaths in that church's organization. It is being replaced with a LIBERAL Protestant gospel about the PERSON of Christ—not the Gospel which He Himself preached!

Also, the ultimate good news—the final culmination of the Gospel in “bringing *many sons* to GLORY” (Heb. 2:10) has been cast aside by our former association in their effort to be accepted by “mainstream” Christianity! And if you read their literature carefully, it is easy to discern that they are no longer emphasizing the *development of character* and the preparation to become kings and priests, under Christ, in the soon-coming Kingdom of God on earth (Rev. 5:10). Rather, they indicate, Christ's righteousness is “imputed” to us once we accept Him and there is very little else that we need to do—a classic Protestant doctrine.

Sadly, the whole concept of overcoming and preparing to **rule this earth under Christ** (Rev. 2:26-27) has been virtually OBLITERATED by these false leaders. *No wonder* the Living Christ tells them, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and REPENT” (Rev. 3:19).

In their rush toward being acceptable to the “mainstream” religionists of today, these false shepherds have reverted back to an old concept of God as a *hypostasis*—a concept originating in pagan Greek

thought and introduced into Catholicism later on. In this perverted theory, Jesus and the Father are not really persons at all, but only emanations from one spirit essence in a theory that is so complicated that few can understand it.

In addition, according to this “new age”-flavored, philosophical reasoning, Christ DID NOT really die. Since He was always part of the triune *hypostasis*, He *could not* cease to exist—even for three days and three nights! Therefore, **only His physical body died, but He did not.** This is just plain HERESY and is a direct repudiation of the special sign Jesus gave identifying Himself as the Messiah (Matt. 12:39-40).

The stench of HERESY lies heavy in the air, folks! Can you smell it? How can *anyone* who knows better conscientiously belong to, support financially or **uphold by their presence** an organization that obviously rejects point after point after point of the TRUTH of the Bible which we *all* used to believe and teach?

We are commanded to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2). About one-fourth of the Bible is prophecy. Yet the ministry of our former affiliation is commanded *not* to preach about any power bloc or its fulfillment of prophecy. Do you remember the “Personal” in the November 19, 1990 issue of *The Worldwide News*? Notice these specific instructions to the TV presenters and ministers:

Prophecy programs will not highlight which individual, which nation or which group of nations currently may be fulfilling specific end-time prophecies. Prophecy programs will present a balanced, overall perspective of the

purpose and value of prophecy, instead of attempting to interpret specific prophecies.

Prophecy programs will not lose sight of the Gospel message by trading the true Gospel for a 10 nation/save-your-skin gospel (Gal. 1:6-10). This was never the gospel. It was an interesting "hook" to get people interested in the true Gospel....

To preach that if you repent and obey God, you will not be killed in a war, taken captive, go hungry or get a disease, is to preach "another gospel," not the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:12).

Obviously, the wording of that "Personal" is a *direct insult* to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the approach Christ inspired him to use in getting out God's message to a carnal world!

Whoever wrote that "Personal" seems to have forgotten Jesus' *direct promise*, **"Watch, therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man"** (Luke 21:36).

Mr. Armstrong's Legacy Destroyed

One of the main booklets on prophecy—a booklet that has inspired *multiple thousands* to see God's hand in human affairs, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, has been "shelved" for years now by the church organization which holds the copyright. Every indication is that neither it *nor anything like it* will ever be printed by that group of men in this age.

The Eternal God built this present Work primarily through Herbert and Loma Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong was ordained in 1931 and served God faithfully (though, like all of us, he himself admitted having had personal faults) for about 55 years! God had plenty of opportunities to get rid of Mr. Armstrong during those 55 years—but **He did not.**

During the 1970s, God's Church was afflicted with a mild version of today's gross apostasy which we then called "liberalism." This happened at a time when Mr. Armstrong was away from Pasadena traveling a great deal. But, God used him to *reverse* this wrong trend and "put the Church back on the track!" Back then, the brethren had a choice between the liberals' theology or Mr. Armstrong's understanding of the Bible. Most brethren then stood with Mr. Armstrong.

Today you are again faced with a decision. **Which "Government of God" will you choose to follow?** The one that holds to the same doctrines Christ used to build a vibrant, growing Work that was BLESSED? Or one that is "watering down" and DESTROYING virtually everything that Christ brought into the Church through Herbert W. Armstrong?

As I said before, one of the most VITAL truths that Mr. Armstrong introduced to the Church was the prophetic Truth of the identity of the so-called "lost Ten Tribes of Israel." The booklet on this was a vital key to understanding literally dozens, even scores, of prophecies directly affecting the American and British Commonwealth peoples. These prophecies from God's Word are POWERFUL warnings from our Creator about what is going to happen to our nations *and the entire world!*

Yet, the teaching of these prophecies has been suppressed at our former affiliation! “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who *suppress* the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).

God COMMANDS all His faithful servants to *warn* our peoples of what soon lies ahead: “But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; **but his blood I will require at the WATCHMAN’S HAND.** So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me” (Ezek. 33:6-7).

Most older brethren and ministers realized we were helping the “watchman”—holding up his hands. We were part of the watchman’s “staff.”

And we knew God’s warning included us *if we failed* to do the job. “His blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.” In plain language, the DEATH PENALTY is required of those who know this vital truth and yet REFUSE to preach the “Ezekiel warning” to our peoples!

This is SERIOUS business!

How long can you hide behind the skirts of the “church government” issue, trying to pass the buck, *refusing* to warn the American and British Commonwealth peoples of the prophesied coming Great Tribulation!

How long?

Let us read what now seem to be prophetic words from the 1986 edition, Vol. I, page 528 of the

Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong:

I know of evangelists who probably are sincere in supposing they are serving God—and who would *like* to be free to proclaim many truths they now hold back. They reason something like this: “If I go farther, and preach those things, I’ll lose all my support. I’d be cut off from the ministry altogether. Then I could preach NOTHING. Better to serve God by preaching as *much* of the biblical truth as possible, than to be prevented from preaching anything.”

They are relying on the financial support of MEN, or of organizations of men. Anyone in that predicament is the SERVANT OF MEN and NOT OF GOD, whether he realizes it or not.

The teachings of our former association make it much easier to belong: work on the Sabbath if you need or want to; donate what you want because tithing is only a nice idea not a command; blend in with “mainstream Christians” by accepting their doctrines on the Trinity, “born again,” Kingdom of God, etc. Are you a servant of men?

Christ DOES Govern His Church

We are in the Laodicean era! Most of the church members like it the way things are at our former affiliation. Christ will simply leave that branch of the Church the way it is: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own

desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and **they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables**" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

So, although *not* cleaning up that human government of the Church, Christ has intervened to SEPARATE the faithful servants. He has given us a chance, once again, to **teach the full Truth and do the Work of WARNING our people Israel and of preaching the full message of the coming Kingdom of God based on His laws!**

All of you who are deeply converted, *studying your Bibles*, and deeply sensitive to God's will—you should examine and see if Christ has raised up the **Global Church of God** to carry on the Work of God. **Pray for the COURAGE to stand up for the Truth!** You need to say as the apostles did to the leaders of the Great Sanhedrin, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard**" (Acts 4:19-20).

Yes, Christ *governs*. But He leads those yielded enough to OBEY His inspired Word. When faithful men and women yield to God, to His laws and ways, the Living Christ *will guide* them in "feeding the flock" and in doing the Work.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18).

Paul was inspired to write, "And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him

who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

"And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:11-14).

Faithful ministers must stand up for the Truth. When necessary, they will WARN the flock about the "trickery of men" if false teachers creep in with false doctrines. Christ will always inspire His faithful ministers to help the flock grow to "the stature of Christ."

Remember, the Spirit Personality who emptied Himself to become our Savior was definitely and absolutely the "God of the Old Testament." "And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

The author of Hebrews wrote, "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). So what form or pattern of government did Christ use in governing the "congregation in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38)?

Global Follows God's Pattern of Government

Listen to the inspired instruction which originated from the One who became Jesus Christ, "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such*

over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you” (Ex. 18:21-22).

Later, King David of Israel—the “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22)—was led by God to use the *same form of government* (2 Sam. 18:1). Remember that in the soon-coming resurrection David will be back in *his same job* as king of all Israel (Jer. 30:9). And then—understanding more fully the SPIRIT of the law—King David will again administer the people using God’s LAWS. “David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them” (Ezek. 37:24).

What is the basis of any human organization in which God is actively involved? Christ instructed Moses to select or APPOINT “able men...men of TRUTH” (Ex. 18:21). In the present apostasy it is easy to see why God’s true shepherds must be men of “truth”!

Turning to the New Testament, we read that Jesus “CHOSE twelve”—the twelve original apostles (Luke 6:13). Later, Jesus “APPOINTED *seventy others also*” (Luke 10:1) to go out and evangelize.

In the book of Acts, we find that the Apostle Paul “chose” Silas (Acts 15:40)—whom we later find being used as an evangelist. He also obviously selected Timothy as a very young man (Acts 16:1-3) and *trained him* to do the Work of an *evangelist* which he later became (2 Tim. 4:5).

Now notice Paul’s instruction to Titus: “For this

reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you" (Titus 1:5). So the young evangelist was to "appoint" elders in every city. And Paul proceeded to give Titus instructions and guidelines on the *type of men* he should "appoint."

But notice there was NEVER any voting or any "politicking." God-fearing evangelists and apostles were to "appoint" those under them. They were to correct and rebuke those who sinned and so preserve the UNITY of the Church (1 Tim. 5:19-21). But the brethren were always directed to look to Christ—to judge *where* God was working by the "fruits" and even then to follow men only AS they followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

NOTE: Let it be known to all our friends and foes alike that the Global Church of God has ALWAYS—*since its very inception*—followed the *same pattern* of church government as Herbert W. Armstrong did (as described above). *However*, we are aware that some of the men *under* Mr. Armstrong incorrectly administered that government. Some abused their positions of authority. We have tried to improve on church administration and avoid practices which our former affiliation has used *since* Mr. Armstrong's death to frighten people into following apostasy!

But to say that we have "repudiated" God's form of church government is just ridiculous! ALL of our members know that we have continued to practice the **same form of church government that Mr. Armstrong did!** But we are trying to grow personally in administering that government and in a more kind, thoughtful, humble and "brotherly" manner. Is there anything wrong with that?

Speaking of those long-time faithful apostles and ministers who have preached the TRUTH and built God's Work over the years, God does admonish us, "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:7-8). Note even here the implied warning that Christ is the SAME—*always*. Christ wouldn't build His Church and lead His servant Herbert Armstrong one way for 52 years and then dramatically "reverse gears" and lead His True Church back into Protestantism! That should be obvious to those who are willing to think with the minds that God has given them.

But does a kind, thoughtful, humble and "brotherly" manner of administration mean there is no structure or discipline?

There are times when the ministry is also commanded to discipline wayward brethren for gross immorality (1 Cor. 5) or for causing division. Yet it is significant that in the latter case we are warned to "*note* those who cause divisions and offenses, CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YOU LEARNED, and *avoid* them" (Rom. 16:17).

The current apostasy in our former affiliation is absolutely based on departing and going CONTRARY to virtually *every major doctrine* which Jesus Christ inspired Herbert W. Armstrong to *stress* during the 52 years he faithfully led God's people. WHY has that church's leadership departed from most of the "18 Truths" written about so glowingly in the August 25, 1986, *Worldwide News*?

That apostate administration is leading many

brethren "CONTRARY to the doctrine which you learned" under Herbert W. Armstrong! The best way to deal with a situation where an entire church's leadership is either apostate or compromised or weak is to obey God and AVOID those people even if that means leaving a Laodicean branch of the Church. You should worship with brethren of like mind who are trying to preserve and teach the TRUTH. Do not let humanly devised theories of church government keep you from *fully obeying God's Word!*

"Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD says: '**Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed**'" (1 Sam. 2:30).

Right Approach to Church Government

What God *has* revealed, after all the administrative problems in our former association, is that the approach to government should *always be* in brotherly LOVE and *outflowing concern*. Peter commanded the elders: "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

The right church government should be truly "brotherly." That is, **it should include a broad representation of all the elders and ministers of the Church as the account we read from Acts 15 makes clear.** And correct church government

should always be based on *multitude* of counsel (Prov. 15:22).

Given that, the KEY FACTOR that we have been pointing out in this booklet is that **the human church administration must NEVER attempt to override or supersede the DIRECT Government of God through His written Word and the inspired guidance of His Holy Spirit!** Human church administration must *never* be allowed to water down or do away with basic truths or any part of the basic commissions given the Church in regard to preaching the full Gospel and the vital prophetic warnings that we in this generation are COMMANDED to proclaim.

Anytime *any* humanly administered church government attempts to do any of the above things, it should now be perfectly clear that this is *not* a divinely approved "Government of God" and should *not* be followed.

All of us whose minds and hearts God opens to these things should courageously respond to Mr. Armstrong's letter written to our brethren way back on September 3, 1936.

Nero fiddled while Rome burned! Many churches and religious broadcasts are today giving the people a *sleeping potion* in the form of nice, soothing, pleasing, comforting programs—lulling the people to sleep—while the JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE FAST COMING UPON THEM! Why, in Jesus' name, do they not wake up and fearlessly SHOUT THE WARNING? This is no time for soft and smooth platitudes. It is time to AWAKEN people! It is time to WARN

THEM! (*Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Vol. I, 1986 ed., p. 616).

Brethren, when I read these inspired words of Herbert W. Armstrong, my heart “burns” within me to zealously preach the *full Truth* of God’s Word and *warn* the 350 million or so fellow Israelites of the coming Great Tribulation, as well as the rest of my fellow humans on earth—that this civilization will not endure. Things are going to dramatically change.

Most of us know of fine, upstanding, well-meaning relatives and friends in the world who NEED to be warned! **Time is short** (Rom. 9:28). Much work needs to be done.

Thousands of brethren have banded together, establishing the Global Church of God and the Work that published this booklet you are now reading. More than 7,000 people hear the sermons from God’s ministers in the Global Church of God every Sabbath! Over sixty ministers and elders from our former association have now joined with us from all around the world. In the Autumn of 1994, we conducted our second inspiring Feast of Tabernacles at six North American feast sites plus one each in Guyana, Belgium, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines. We are growing *every single month!*

This is God’s doing! He is blessing us because we are seeking to do His will in a genuine, heartfelt manner.

Need for FAITH and COURAGE

Has your mind and heart been blinded by a *wrong concept* of church government so that you have been

Under What Conditions Should Church Members Be Disfellowshipped?

Although the word "disfellowship" does not appear in most Bible translations, the concept appears in several passages. There are three reasons why a member may be disfellowshipped:

Flagrant personal sins. People that openly and carelessly sin, encourage others to sin: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." Removing these people from the Church serves to show the sinner the consequences of his sin, prevents the sinner from spreading his "leaven" to others in the congregation, and shows the public that the Church does not condone sin (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Serious doctrinal errors. The Church is to put out people that practice or teach heretical doctrines or refuse to obey the apostolic epistles. This preserves truth and unity in the Church (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 10). No scripture says a member should be disfellowshipped for hearing or reading the words of another teacher. Indeed Mark 9:38-40 shows the Church should not interfere with other groups teaching in the name of Christ. If a Church of God assumes their present doctrines are correct, they have a biblical reason to disfellowship *ministers* for teaching different doctrines, but an organization that disfellowships *members* for trying to determine which teachers are of God (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15-20; Rev. 2:2) must have something to hide.

Causing division. If either ministers or members bring in different ideas in a way that causes DIVISION, then they must be disfellowshipped (Rom. 16:17). To privately and humbly present new concepts to the ministry is one thing, but to allow self-appointed teachers to flagrantly propagandize the brethren about all kinds of new and often "quirky" ideas is WRONG. Such individuals *will* cause division and must be removed from the Church's fellowship if they will not desist from this practice.

afraid or unwilling to step out and get God's Work going again? Some may fear that such an action would be like the dissidents who left in the 1970s.

Do you realize that there is a HUGE difference this time? Then, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was still alive, still faithful to God's Word, the *full Truth* was being preached and the Work was being done even if some of the leadership were turning aside!

Now, however, the faithful heritage of the man through whom the Living Christ built this Work is being denigrated and subtly ridiculed. The Work of our former affiliation is going *down*. Their income is *down*. Their church attendance is *down*. Their baptisms are *down*. The Pasadena college is *closed down*. *The Good News* magazine is *closed down*. *The Plain Truth* circulation is only about *one fourth* of what it was few years ago. And their television program has completely gone off the air! "By their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20).

He must indeed be a blind soul who cannot see that something is *terribly wrong* with the leadership of our former association.

Of all the seven churches of Revelation, *only* Laodicea is so disgustingly insipid that Christ says, "*I will spew you out of My mouth*" (Rev. 3:16). The obvious indication is that these smug, self-satisfied people will be cast into the GREAT TRIBULATION soon to fall upon an unsuspecting world!

If you stay among such people, you will begin to think like they do and agree with them. And you **WILL** receive their reward! Is that what you want for your wife or husband or children or yourself? As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts

good character.' 'Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:33-34 NIV).

Think about it!

I say with urgency to all who read this, please do not allow a *false concept* of church government to blind your eyes! Do not use it as a cop-out or excuse for not personally *proving* and **DOING** what the Bible says.

Down through history, Christ has guided His Church. Oftentimes, there were different "branches" of the true Church co-existing at the same time. Sometimes it was a geographical necessity. But often, as in the Sardis era, Christ allowed His people a certain freedom of choice. Which Seventh-Day Church of God would they worship with? The branch administered from Stanberry, Missouri? The one located in Caldwell, Idaho? Or the one headquartered at Salem, West Virginia? Or one of the others?

In talking with Mr. Herman Hoeh over the years, Mr. Raymond McNair, and with Mr. Armstrong himself, I found that we *all agreed* that *all* these groups were "branches" of God's Church. And as Mr. Armstrong often said, among them were *many* sincere people who will be in the Kingdom of God.

Again, remember that Herbert and Loma Armstrong ended up leaving *two* of these branches! If they had not, the Work as we have known it might never have existed.

May God grant *all* of us the true understanding—and the *faith* and *courage*—that He granted to them to, once again, get the Work going. Our desire should not be just for *self*—to have "stability" or to

be "comfortable." "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:24).

A whole world is waiting out there. It is in dire need of *powerful, direct, inspired* preaching of the *soon-coming* Kingdom of God, the *true* name of Jesus Christ, and the Ezekiel warning message. May God grant us the privilege of reaching these people with the full Truth while there is still time. ◇

For those of you interested in "reviving" the Work of God, please note that significant numbers of God's people have come out to form the Global Church of God. We are faithfully preaching the truths proclaimed by Herbert W. Armstrong. If you are interested in learning more about us, please write us:

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