

The Rise of a Ministerial Hierarchy in the Church of God

As Documented in:

***Good News and Plain Truth* Articles,
Worldwide and Global Church of God Booklets,
The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong, and
Against the Gates of Hell by Stanley Rader**

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The Spiritual Body of Christ as Taught in 1953

Those who listened to the *World Tomorrow* broadcast in the early years will recall Herbert W. Armstrong stating over and over again, "The true Church of God is a **spiritual organism--NOT a physical organization.**" This Scriptural view of the true church was clearly taught in sermons and articles by Mr. Armstrong and other ministers in the Radio Church of God. It remained a dominant theme down to the mid-50's, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

"The TRUE church which Jesus built is **NOT an organized denomination which you join.** The TRUE church is composed of those *individuals* who submit themselves to the authority of God, who repent and believe in Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom which He preached. **The TRUE church is that body of individuals filled and led by the Holy Spirit--**it is the body of Christ, a scattered church which keeps all the commandments and believes the gospel of the kingdom (Rev. 12:17)" (Hoeh, "Which Is the True Church?" *The Good News*, May 1953, emphasis added).

"Jesus Christ the Revelator made known to John that the true church would be a scattered and persecuted church that would have to flee for over a thousand years from the persecuting sword of a great false church. Compare Revelation 12 and 17.

"The church that Jesus promised to build, **which is COMPOSED OF THOSE WHO ARE FILLED AND LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD,** is to be guided into truth through all ages **despite enemies from without and apostates from within** who would *profess* to teach the truth.

"His church is a commandment keeping church, **NOT A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION [all corporations are political organizations].** It faithfully retains the testimony of Jesus Christ recorded in inspired Scripture (Rev. 12:17). **This church recognizes CHRIST as its HEAD** and it is subject to His government.

"It is *the Holy Spirit* that puts us into the one body or true Church. You do not join some denomination after being 'saved' (I Cor. 12:13). Jesus even told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem till the Holy Spirit, which the Father promised to send, would come (Acts 1:4)" (Hoeh, "Was the New Testament Church Founded on SUNDAY?" *The Good News*, 1953, emphasis added).

The Commission of the Church as Taught in 1955

True to Scripture, the **Church of God** was defined in the early years as **ALL THE MEMBERS** of Christ's Body--**NOT as a legal organization with a corporate headquarters**. Equally important, Christ's commission to His church was understood and taught in those early years. The "work of God" that is described in the following excerpts was not merely to deliver a warning or witness, but to preach **the gospel of REPENTANCE**:

"While most people today suppose that the true CHURCH was rapidly to grow BIG, to become a powerful organization, exerting powerful influence on the world, making this a better world, becoming the stabilizing influence of the world's civilization, actually *Christ founded His Church for no such purpose!*

"Christ's instruction to His Church, thru the New Testament, was NOT to participate in this world's politics and affairs in an effort to make this world a better world. Instead, His command to His Church is, *'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.'*

"Jesus did command **HIS BODY--the COLLECTIVE BODY thru which the Spirit of God does THE WORK of God--to go into all the world and preach and publish His Gospel.** But those of His Church are described as being strangers and foreigners in this world--**AMBASSADORS** for Christ--ambassadors representing HIS Kingdom which is *foreign* to this world--yet never being OF the world!

" Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. **Go ye therefore, and TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM** [which requires **repentance** and **faith** in Jesus Christ] **in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU** [This CANNOT be accomplished by visiting their leaders.]: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen' (Mat. 28:16-20).

"Nowhere is there any prophecy that the One True Church should become great and powerful, exerting influence in this world. Rather, Jesus called it the 'Little Flock' (Hoeh, "Why So Many Denominations?" *The Plain Truth*, 1955, emphasis added).

Hierarchical Church Government Condemned in 1955

In the same *Plain Truth* article, Hoeh quotes Paul's warning to Timothy of the corruption of the ministry that would take place in the churches of God in New Testament times. Paul states that some of the churches would lose their love of the Truth and would install ministers who would teach fables. This *would not have been possible* unless the New Testament churches elected their own pastors. And indeed, election of elders was practiced in the churches of God in New Testament times. (As evidence of this practice, see notations at the end of Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus as translated from the Greek text in Berry's *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*.)

The New Testament reveals that election of ministers was the original practice of the churches of God. In the early years, this practice safeguarded the churches from organized deception and apostasy. But when the churches lost their love for the Truth, they elected ministers who preached false doctrine, opening the door for false apostles to gain control and set up a hierarchical ministry. In his article, Hoeh shows how the establishment of hierarchical government over the churches of God led to the formation of the Catholic Church.

"Although numerous deceivers, called Gnostics, left the church [Jude 3, I John 2:19], drawing away disciples after them, there was an even more dangerous apostasy which has deceived this whole world.

"In instructing the evangelist Timothy, the apostle to the Gentiles instructed him to 'reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts' --**the congregations wanting to do what they please**--'shall they heap to themselves teachers'--**elect ministers who will preach what they want to hear**--and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables' (II Timothy 4:3-4).

"This was **in the days of the apostles and evangelists**, not at the Protestant Revolt! MANY who fellowshipped in the local congregations of the early church, after about two generations, **DID NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE** because they had not repented and received the Holy Spirit. **They** [the members of local congregations] **elected teachers** [later in this article these teachers are called preachers] **who, for the sake of money, pleased their wishes by preaching fables--doctrines assumed to be Christian, today!--the enticing fables of mysticism and sun-worship that were engulfing the Roman Empire.** The

letters of Paul were twisted by them to give another meaning than intended (II Peter 3:15-16).

"But instead of leaving the local congregations and forming their own sects, as some Gentiles did at first [Simon Magus], the false preachers remained within the congregations and *soon began to expel the true Christians*.

"In the letter of the apostle John to Gaius, we read: 'I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, **who loveth to have the pre-eminence** [the minister "in charge"] among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, **AND CASTETH THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH**' (III John 9 and 10).

"**THE TRUE CHRISTIANS, WHO ALONE COMPRISED THE TRUE CHURCH, WERE BEING PUT OUT OF THE VISIBLE, ORGANIZED CONGREGATIONS.** They were the SCATTERED ones of whom John said: 'Therefore the world knoweth us not' (I John 3:1). In the Western Roman Empire, where Paul died, the state of Christianity was even more advanced along the paths of error. The name Christian was being borne away by leaders who crept into the fellowship of the Church of God and who, in the name of Christ, *deceived the MANY into following their false teachings and into ORGANIZING WITH HUMAN GOVERNMENT a universal or CATHOLIC CHURCH over the whole Roman Empire.*

"As the false ministers were seeking prestige and converts for themselves, **their natural tendency was to alter Christianity** to meet the prevailing desires of the spiritually sick multitudes of the Roman Empire. Hence, apostatizing Christians developed, very early, **doctrines that were parallel to the mystery religions** which were pagan counterfeits of the way of the true Savior of the world. There were now pagan and 'Christian' mysteries to deceive every class of people.

"Notice how many features of paganism were adopted by Catholics in order to gain members for their church. Mithraism 'had so much acceptance that it was **able to impose on the Christian world its own Sun-Day in place of the Sabbath, its Sun's birthday, 25th of December,** as the birthday of Jesus ... **and various of its Easter celebrations.**' This revealing extract is from page 74 of *The History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge*.

"It took those original false teachers centuries to weed out all the inspired practices of the early church. They gradually rejected the Holy Days of God and substituted the centuries-old festivals of paganism, calling them by Christian names. **They REJECTED THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD** [through the Holy

Spirit, which imparts gifts to every member of the body as God chooses] **and slowly organized A DICTATORIAL FORM OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT** [which bestows power and rank through a hierarchy of human leaders]. They twisted the commandments of God, and perverted the gospel of the Kingdom.

"Instead of the churches coming nearer to the FAITH of the Bible, each new 'reformation' has **brought more error into the world under the guise of 'restored' truth**. Today the Christian world is in hopeless confusion, not a single one of the churches being able to agree exactly what constitutes the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each has a slight portion of truth in its doctrine, but a great deal more error that is deceiving the MANY" (Hoeh, "Why So Many Denominations?" *The Plain Truth*, 1955, emphasis added throughout).

Herbert Armstrong Admits Confusion over Church Government in Early Years

Because he did not understand the New Testament pattern of church government, Herbert Armstrong came to believe and teach that it was a hierarchical form of government. Notice:

"In his Autobiography (Vol. I. pp. 557-558), Mr. Armstrong relates 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 [a false conclusion]. I saw plainly that Christ *chose* His apostles--that they and the evangelists, in turn, chose and ordained elders in local churches [a misunderstanding of the New Testament practice--elders who were chosen by their brethren to serve were confirmed or "commended to God" by the apostles and evangelists]. 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** " (Meredith, *Church Government and Church Unity*, pp. 2-3, 1993, emphasis added).

Promoting a Hierarchical View of Church Government

June/July
1958

Claiming that it was the Scriptural pattern of church government, the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God began to promote the hierarchical form of government. Only three years after his *Plain Truth* article condemning the dictatorial government of the Catholic Church, Hoeh wrote a *Good News* article promoting a hierarchical view of how Christ's government functions in His church. In this article, Hoeh confuses the *moral* responsibility of the ministry with *administrative* authority:

"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* [to teach His doctrines]. 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 [by exercising moral oversight, not by establishing a hierarchy].

"Among the twelve apostles, **Peter was pre-eminent**, although they all held *equality of office*. [Peter was more equal.]

"**Next in GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY**, we find the *evangelists*--Timothy, Titus, Demas, Silas and many others--who directly assisted the apostle Paul as he was directed by Christ. **Paul had the authority when necessary to command** Silas and Timothy to go wherever he designated (Acts 17:15); although in other instances when duties were not imperative, Paul sometimes left it to the convenience of the evangelists (I Cor. 16:12). Paul was not a dictator.

"**Those who EVANGELIZED had AUTHORITY OVER LOCAL CHURCHES, whereas the PROPHETS had NO GOVERNMENT OFFICE OR AUTHORITY.** [Both exercised moral oversight in the New Testament churches.]

"**The evangelists**, under the direction of Paul the apostle, preached--*evangelist* means an announcer of good news--made converts, **established local churches and appointed elders and deacons** (Titus 1:5), and visited established churches (Phil. 2:19-20) *with AUTHORITY over local officers* (I Tim. 5:19-20). The evangelists ministered to the brethren, corrected them and encouraged them [*moral oversight--not administrative control*] whenever and wherever it was

impossible for the apostle Paul to do so personally.

"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).

"Peter called himself a *fellow-elder* (I Peter 5:1) even though he was also an apostle [meaning "one sent"--not a title of rank]. Paul designated himself as a *teacher* of the Gentiles (I Tim. 2:7) though he was also an apostle [meaning "one sent"--not a title of rank].

"The term **elder or teacher** is used to designate the general **OFFICE OF AUTHORITY** *in the local congregations*, in which the apostles and evangelists spent part of their time. **Acts 20:7 and 28 plainly prove that there were often several elders (called also 'bishops' or 'overseers') in a local church.** [Yes, and they were *chosen by their brethren* to exercise moral oversight.] **It was their duty to preach, teach and rule BY EXAMPLE [NOT by administrative control]**, as shepherds and not lords, not for 'filthy lucre' but out of love.

"In I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 we find only the mention of pastors and teachers rather than bishops, elders, presbyters or overseers, but they represent the same general OFFICE OF AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES.

"But over the local church congregations there is also a local pastor directly under the apostles and evangelists who is **the presiding elder or bishop over other elders in a local congregation.** Notice that in the gathering at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, there were *many elders* in Jerusalem, together with the apostles. [The **whole church** at Jerusalem participated in this assembly--see Acts 15:4, 22.] Yet it was James--*not* one of the original twelve apostles, but the brother of Jesus--who, in the capacity of apostle and *pastor of the Headquarters Church* in authority over the other elders, voiced his decision (Acts 15:14).

"The congregations are admonished to *submit* to the elders (I Peter 5:5).

"The members do not elect and dismiss elders [The New Testament contradicts this statement.] nor do they vote on doctrines which the elders are to preach. [Members have a God-given responsibility to test each doctrine by the Scriptures and to reject those that are contrary to the teachings of Christ.] Rather, **elders are chosen by the APOSTLE, OR, as he directs and authorizes, BY AN EVANGELIST** [Stephen and Philip, who became evangelists, were first chosen to serve by their brethren--see Acts 6.], according to the qualifications given in the letters to Timothy and Titus. *Elders must first be proven* before they are to be

ordained by the laying on of hands with prayer and fasting (I Tim. 5:22).

"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** [This is an assumption.], usually with **other elders** [The Scriptures speak of the elders as a body--not stacked one above another.], who taught the members. There was no membership politics, **NO VOTING on church offices or doctrines.** **THE ELDERS RULED THE LOCAL CHURCH, but were not ruled by the congregation or lay boards.** [If government in the New Testament churches was "from the top down," and brethren had no voice in doctrinal matters, how could the Ephesians have "tried those who say they are *apostles*," and rejected the teachings of these false ministers in the churches of God?]

["Divine Authority" Claimed for Church Officials]

"All **offices in God's Church** are gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is God Who created us with our natural talents and Who adds to those talents, portions of His talents through the Holy Spirit. Many of the gifts are **offices with authority**, but others are purely spiritual gifts which belong not only *to the ministry* but to others also.

"Down through the ages Jesus has chosen directly those who serve in the capacity of apostles--His **direct representatives bearing His authority** [the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession]. The world does not use **the title APOSTLE for the HIGHEST OFFICE** [This is Hoeh's view of the term "apostle." Paul viewed it as a divine calling to preach the gospel--not as a title of rank (Rom. 1:1)] **in the Church under Christ.** [Paul, an apostle directly chosen by Christ, allowed teachers and prophets to lay hands on him (Acts 13:1-3) although they, according to Hoeh, had "**no government office or authority.**"] Instead, it has invented other lofty titles--primate, archbishop, pope, all offices of men's devising.

"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** [a calling--not an office] **carries with it DIVINE AUTHORITY** [It is the Word of God that carries the authority of God.] **backed up by the power of God.** [Mr. Armstrong was "backed

up by the *power of God*" only as he spoke and acted according to God's Word.] **Jesus has sent him TO SPEAK IN HIS NAME AND BY HIS AUTHORITY** [Authority to speak the Truth does not impart authority to exercise dictatorial rule over those whom God calls.], and has given testimony to it *by the fruits which only God can produce.*

"In our local congregations today, there are elders pastoring the local flocks, and deacons and deaconesses, who serve the congregations. In every way it is the government of God. ***Those who are the greatest in authority serve the most.*** [Those who were greatest in the Worldwide hierarchy *were served* the most.] **It is not a rule by the will of man, but by the will of God.** [HWA later appointed Joseph Tkach, Sr., as his successor. Was that decision inspired by God? What do the fruits show?]

"The critics who *think* God's government is man's government DO NOT KNOW THE POWER OF GOD. God's ministers know only too well that God will DESTROY those who seek to devour the Church by leading away disciples after them. [God did not prevent the apostasy that devoured the Church in the first century, nor did He prevent the present apostasy that has devastated the Worldwide Church.]

"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! [According to Christ, all are brethren, and all are to be ruled by the Word of God.] **All offices are appointive, by a SUPERIOR OFFICE.** [This is the Catholic view of church government.] **It is government from God down to each individual member in the Church** [making the ministry a priesthood between the members and God]" (Hoeh, "GOVERNMENT in Our Church," *The Good News*, June/July 1958, emphasis added throughout).

Three short years after condemning the "dictatorial form of human government" of the Catholic Church, the Radio Church of God (now Worldwide) was teaching that Christ rules His church through a hierarchical ministry, and that this pyramidal structure is "the government of God." What were the circumstances that led to this dramatic change of view?

What Happened Between 1955 and 1958?

The new hierarchical approach to church government was a direct result of significant events that took place in 1956/1957. At that time, the Internal Revenue Service was threatening to remove the Radio Church of God's tax-exempt status, which would have sent the church's finances into a tailspin. When the church's attorneys were unable to resolve the problem, Herbert W. Armstrong sought the help of a young C.P.A. named Stanley R. Rader. Here is Rader's account of his first meeting with Herbert Armstrong:

"Early in January 1957, I saw Ambassador College for the first time.

"I had driven out from Beverly Hills after receiving a telephone call from an advertising man whose business I had managed to rescue from the brink of bankruptcy. 'There's someone in Pasadena with a big, big problem,' he had said. 'Runs a small college of some kind and he wants me to buy him some radio and television time. But he's got financial worries. I told him what you did for me and that you could help him too. He wants to meet you.'

"Reluctantly, I agreed to go. As a [junior] partner in a successful accountancy firm in the Los Angeles area, with clients in the communications fields, work was piling up and my time was becoming sharply limited.

"I called for an appointment and, on a bright morning, drove to Pasadena. Leaving the Freeway, I turned into South Orange Grove Boulevard and searched for Grove Street, the address I had been given.

"It was here that I saw Herbert W. Armstrong [Stan was about 25 years of age and Herbert was 64]. It was a meeting that would lead to a strong, continuing, and still enduring relationship.

"A secretary led me into a sixteen-by-twenty-foot room tastefully decorated with handsome, traditional furniture, not in the current height of fashion favored by business executives of those years, but solid and dignified. A fine rug covered the broad flooring and drapes were hung over the casement windows. The room gave the appearance of an upstairs bedchamber doing double duty as a home office.

"Seated behind the desk, wearing a dark suit, white shirt and neatly knotted striped tie, sat Herbert Armstrong. He was then sixty-five years old [Herbert was not quite 65, as he was born July 31, 1892] but looked much like he still does

today, a small, somewhat portly man with rimless glasses that had gone out of style thirty years before, and white hair that he combed straight back. He greeted me courteously and invited me to sit down.

"I felt, at first, that I was in the presence of a kindly, grandfatherly sort of man, but one who was also somewhat reserved and even diffident. This was soon dispelled as our talk began. Then Herbert Armstrong's warmth and personal magnetism, conveyed by his rich baritone voice and beaming smile, was almost palpable.

"He leaned toward me and, in his deep, musical voice, said: 'I have a problem. Can you help me?'

"I have never been easily impressed. But I felt myself strangely drawn to this smiling man. I had met many people, dealt with many types of clients, but I knew almost at once that Herbert Armstrong was a special kind of person.

"We got down to business.

"He told me about the Church and the Work of God he was carrying out, but added there was now **a threat from Washington that could not only block further growth but even imperil the future of his entire movement. The federal authorities, he explained, were seeking to take away the tax-exempt status** held by the Church, and neither his attorneys in Washington nor local counsel had been able to clear up the matter.

" 'There's a great deal of information there.' He paused. 'But we have grown rather rapidly in just a few years and perhaps our paperwork has not kept pace with our work for God,' he continued. 'Could you come back tomorrow and tell me what you can do to help us?'

"I glanced at the heavy folder and rifled the contents. I'm afraid I smiled a little. That single look told me the file was not the most professional one I'd seen. 'Oh,' Armstrong said quickly, 'of course, I'll pay you for your time.' I nodded and he walked with me to the door.

"... Having worked with nonprofit institutions such as churches, colleges, and hospitals, I felt I could be of help. At the same time, my experience had given me a down-to-earth recognition of the difficulties these organizations could face. They could be formidable, though not insurmountable.

"I said goodbye to Mr. Armstrong, drove back, and began to study his file.

"It was, to put it bluntly, a mess.

"I could discern no pattern in the massive number of documents he gave me. Before any solution could be found the file had to be sorted and broken down into other files, with each separate paper analyzed. There would be no quick, easy answer. I put the file back in my briefcase and decided to see Armstrong the next day, to tell him frankly what needed to be done.

"He came to the point quickly. 'Well, do you have a solution for us?'

"My answer was just as forthright.

" 'No, I haven't. In fact, I don't even know what the problem is yet. But obviously it's one with some history behind it and one that is very important to you. I like what I see here, and I like you. I think I could probably help, but no guarantees until I really dig into the facts and figures.'

"He brought up the question of a fee for my services. There was surprisingly little discussion and certainly no haggling. The immediate problem of taxes had to be settled, followed at once by tidying up the fiscal disarray. I suggest he set the figure for a monthly retainer, to continue as long as he was happy with my work, and he did. I accepted it promptly although I knew the effort involved would be prodigious.

"I've worked with Herbert Armstrong ever since. In some ways, it has been almost like a father-son relationship, something I regret to say I never was able to maintain with my real father."

"After I had agreed to work with Herbert Armstrong on the Church's fiscal affairs, I assigned several staff members to organize and collate the mammoth file he had given to me.

"Meanwhile, the first priority was to tackle the problem of tax exemption. I decided on a bold plan.

" 'I think I should go to Washington,' I told him one day. 'Communicating by mail is tedious and roundabout and phoning no help at all. I plan to fly there and remain until it's adjusted.' Mr. Armstrong agreed enthusiastically and gave me the name of the attorneys representing him in the nation's capital.

"In Washington I bypassed his lawyers and, without prior request for an appointment, I appeared at the office of a Mr. Worley, chief of the Tax Exempt Section. I stressed to his secretary the urgency of the matter, explaining how I had

come directly from California without delay, and asked to see Mr. Worley.

"Worley was in, and I was ushered in to see him. I apologized for the inconvenience I was causing him, but I stressed how important my matter was both to my client and to his brethren around the world. After we reviewed the matter in general terms, he admitted to a lack of personal knowledge of the case. But because I was there at his office, he expressed his willingness to accommodate me as best he could. He called for the files and for two government lawyers who were familiar with the case.

"It soon was apparent to me that much of the problem was caused by a **misapprehension on the government's side of the very NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION known then as the Radio Church of God, and of its operations in general.** The government had obviously confused Herbert Armstrong with the likes of Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, or on the other hand, with A.A. Allen, a well-known radio evangelist with whom the government had been at war for some time.

"Thus I knew how to solve the problem. I explained in detail what the Radio Church of God was, what it taught, how it promulgated its message, and, indeed, everything relevant and material about the organization and its operations that I had learned from several weeks of intensive study of the facts. **The Internal Revenue Service has developed a list of fourteen characteristics that it uses in determining whether an organization qualifies as a church.** [These qualifications were patterned after the organization of the Catholic Church.] **I simply demonstrated how the Radio Church of God satisfied these requirements.** [At that time it actually did not.]

"Within forty-eight hours the matter had been, for all practical purposes, resolved. The government's file was full of an abundance of facts--all easily verifiable--about **a well-established church, a church with ministers in attendance around the nation and, in fact, around the world, who were ministering to a flock, congregation by congregation,** as the flock increased from year to year through Herbert Armstrong's dynamic leadership. I stressed how the Church had grown from its humble antecedents in Oregon in 1934, and I enumerated as carefully as I could its major doctrines in order to underscore how it could be distinguished from other groups. Because its tax exemption was also being attacked, I also reviewed the history and development of **Ambassador College,** emphasizing the college's **curriculum,** its full-time **faculty and student body,** its **physical plant,** and its overall purpose of recapturing the true values in education and thus instructing young people how to live abundant and happy lives as well as how to earn a living" (Rader, *Against the Gates of Hell*, pp. 55-59, emphasis added).

When Stanley Rader assured IRS officials that the church met their requirements for tax-exempt status, he was falsifying the facts. At that time, the church was not "well-established" with ministers "around the nation" and "around the world." The truth is that the Radio Church of God was still basically a radio ministry, and had only sixteen churches nationwide with about seven ministers assigned to them. London was the only church overseas. The following list names every minister employed by the Church in 1958. **Ministers in bold type served at Pasadena headquarters** and did not work full-time ministering to congregations.

1	Herbert Armstrong	1931
2	Herman L. Hoeh	1951
3	Raymond Cole	1952
4	Richard D. Armstrong	1952
5	Roderick C. Meredith	1952
6	Dr. C. Paul Meredith	1953
7	Raymond F. McNair	1953
8	Norman A. Smith	1954
9	Herbert Burk McNair	1954
10	George A. Meeker, Jr.	1954
11	Dean C. Blackwell	1954
12	C. Wayne Cole	1954
13	Jimmy L. Friddle, Jr.	1955
14	David Jon Hill	1955
15	Garner Ted Armstrong	1956
16	Gerald D. Waterhouse	1956

Radio (Worldwide) Church of God congregations in 1958:

United States:

Overseas:

Pasadena
 San Diego
 Fresno
 Tacoma
 Milwaukee
 Chicago
 St. Louis
 Corpus Christi
 San Antonio
 Houston

London

Dallas
Gladewater
Minden (La)
Lyons (Co)
Pueblo
Garden City

Stanley Rader's representation of Worldwide as a well organized and traditionally structured church succeeded in gaining the approval of the IRS--and the admiration and gratitude of Herbert W. Armstrong:

"The tax exemption for the Church was renewed and I was regarded as somewhat of a miracle worker, although there was nothing really mysterious in what I had done. I had pulled no political strings--I had none to pull. All I did was unblock the bureaucratic process by going straight to the individual in charge, who quickly understood that the Church was entitled to its exemption" (Rader, *Against the Gates of Hell*, pp. 69-71).

The Crises of 1956/1957

The Prodigal Son

The Radio Church of God's trouble with the IRS in 1956 was not the only crisis that led Herbert Armstrong to welcome Stanley Rader with open arms. Ongoing conflicts between Herbert and his son Garner Ted had intensified that same year, threatening a rift that could do great damage to the church. In his autobiography, Rader describes the hostility that erupted between Herbert and Ted:

"In 1956, a disagreement erupted while they were discussing a biblical passage in Paris. The specific point is irrelevant; what matters is that Garner Ted stubbornly insisted that his view was correct while Mr. Armstrong patiently attempted to convince him of his error. But Ted would not yield. He became hostile and antagonistic, speaking angrily to his father. Mr. Armstrong went to his room, knelt and prayed to the Lord to make his son repent. Then, more deeply upset than he had been in years, he walked the quiet streets of the city trying to puzzle out a solution **to what he called 'one of the most serious and crucial' crises to strike the Work.**"

"Hours later, there was a soft knock at the door of Mr. Armstrong's hotel room.

Ted stood outside, his eyes wet with tears. He admitted he had been wrong, and asked forgiveness. The elder Armstrong, who above all else wanted his son beside him, working and praying with him and helping to spread the message of the Gospel, forgave at once" (Rader, *Against the Gates of Hell*, pp. 107-108, emphasis added).

The crisis was over, but Ted's reconciliation with Herbert was only temporary. Tension between father and son repeatedly plagued their relationship during the following years. In the midst of this turmoil, Herbert leaned more and more heavily on Stanley Rader as counselor and confidant.

Herbert Claims Direct Revelation and Apostleship December 1956

Even before his first contact with Stanley Rader, Herbert Armstrong laid claim to divine authority as the direct representative of Jesus Christ. In December of 1956, he published an article in which he asserts that he, like the apostle Paul, was taught solely by Jesus Christ and that he spoke with divine authority. Here are his bold claims:

"I learned God's TRUTH direct from GOD--thru His WORD--the Holy Bible. I did not learn it from *any* sect or denomination. But **I say unto you, as the Apostle Paul said:** 'I certify you, brethren, that the GOSPEL which is preached of me is not after man. **For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, BUT BY THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST....**But when it pleased God, who...called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him to' THE WORLD; 'immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood'--neither went I to any sect or denomination or organized 'church,' but I went directly to the WORD OF GOD, and on my knees asked God thru His Spirit to open my understanding--to correct me, reprove and rebuke, and instruct in His Truth and His righteousness;...then after three years I went to some of the humble of God's people in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, and preached to them. (Please compare with Galatians 1:11-18.) My ambition and zeal was *not* persecuting God's true Church, as was Paul's, but climbing the ladder of business success and making money. God struck me down three times successively, by taking out from under my feet the businesses I had started, wiping me out, financially.

"Then God brought me to the study of His Word by causing me to try to refute the eternal validity, and good of **God's spiritual Law, which He had revealed to my wife [who taught him the truth about the Sabbath]**, and which I at first

bitterly opposed. During that six-months' study of more than fourteen hours per day, I read very little literature favorable to the Law, but I read everything I could find which opposed it--but mostly I studied--just the BIBLE! After six months' intensive study I was forced, in honesty before my God, to swallow **the most bitter pill of my life**. It literally 'killed' me--and *I* died--surrendered wholly to God, gave my life henceforth to Him to use 'if He could.'

"... I had just passed age 30 when God forced me into this study of His Word, and total surrender to Him and His rule over my life. **From then on, I studied the Bible ON MY KNEES**. Time after time it corrected me. Repeatedly I had to suffer reproof, and acknowledge I had been wrong in my beliefs and desires. God chastened and corrected me repeatedly, not only thru revealing His Truth in this way, but by continual circumstances. I had been conceited, proud. But now by bitter experience, by suffering, by circumstance, and by God's Word, I was brought low and humbled. But also I began to experience the unmatched joy of learning truth NEW to me, as God little by little, more and more, revealed TRUTHS so wonderful they produced spiritual ecstasy. For the first time in my life I found what HAPPINESS really is.

"...That process of being corrected, of GROWING in grace and KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, has continued, now, lo these 30 years [1926-1956]--more than a quarter century. *And it is still continuing!* **NO, MEN DID NOT TEACH ME WHAT I PREACH TO YOU. I was not taught of men but of GOD! I DO NOT SPEAK TO YOU BY THE AUTHORITY OF MEN, or any politically organized church of men [He did speak as the head of a church corporation that was organized by men.]--but in the name, and by the AUTHORITY of JESUS CHRIST, the living HEAD of the true CHURCH OF GOD [a spiritual body--not a corporation]!** The words of Christ, which He received from the Father--the very words and Gospel of CHRIST which I speak and write to you--they are SPIRIT, and they are LIFE!" (Armstrong, Herbert, "NO! I Never Was a 'Jehovah Witness,' or a Seventh Day Adventist!" *The Plain Truth*, December 1956, emphasis added.)

In this 1956 article, Herbert Armstrong claims that he was taught directly by God and emphatically declares, "No, man did not teach me what I preach to you." An elderly church member of the Worldwide Church of God recalls hearing the opposite from Mr. Armstrong in the earlier years of his ministry. Notice:

"Mr. Armstrong ALWAYS MENTIONED THOSE BOOKS (with the correct title), recommended them AND SAID THAT'S WHERE HE LEARNED MUCH OF WHAT HE WAS TEACHING...not claiming that it was revealed to him alone by God" (Doll, Personal Letter to Fred Coulter, August 1995).

Obviously, Herbert Armstrong's view of his calling had changed since his ordination in 1931 by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God. By 1956, Mr. Armstrong had written and published the following booklets, professing to have received all his understanding by direct revelation.

Does God HEAL today?	1952
The <i>Key</i> to the Book of REVELATION	1952
HAS <i>Time</i> BEEN LOST?	1952
Which <i>Day</i> is the SABBATH of the New Testament?	1952
What <u>is</u> Faith?	1952
<i>The</i> PLAIN TRUTH <i>about</i> CHRISTMAS!	1952
What <i>kind</i> of FAITH is required for <i>Salvation</i> ?	1952
<i>How often</i> should we partake of the LORD'S SUPPER?	1952
<i>The</i> RESURRECTION <i>was</i> NOT <i>on</i> Sunday!	1952
LAZARUS and the RICH MAN	1953
All About WATER BAPTISM	1954

Herbert Armstrong's claim to apostleship may have been prompted by several articles that Herman Hoeh and Roderick Meredith had written concerning "the pyramid structure of government." Dr. Meredith relates the circumstances that led to these articles, which were published in the mid-50's. The following account is excerpted from a recent Global Church of God booklet on church government.

"Our Early Discussions"

"Even after several years of guiding the college, Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about Church Government, and said so openly a number of times. Consequently, in the early mid-1950's, Herman L. Hoeh and I each 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' [which appeared in *The Good News*, August 1958] and, later, 'Whose Opinion Counts?' and one or two other similar articles ["How *Church Government* Really WORKS," *The Good News*, March 1964].

"Herman Hoeh wrote articles dealing with the pyramid structure of government--from Christ down through apostles, evangelists, etc.--revealed in the Bible. [It was Herman Hoeh who first cast Herbert Armstrong in the role of an apostle, forgetting that Christ forbade His servants to adopt the hierarchical form of government (Luke 22:25-26).] He also wrote other articles along this line.

"Mr. Armstrong accepted these articles and immediately published them

in the GOOD NEWS. [Excerpts from some of these articles are given below.] 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 way IS revealed in the New Testament! See I Pet. 2:5, 9; I Cor 3:7-9, 21, 23; 12:5-11, 18, 25; 13:1-8; 14:1, 12, 24-31, 39-40.], the principles of government from the top down [from Jesus Christ the Head to every member of His Body directly through the Holy Spirit--not through a ministerial hierarchy], of office by 'appointment' [not title or rank, but a specific charge and commission to serve] based on the 'fruits' of a man or woman's life [as determined by the brethren whom they are serving--see Acts 6:3], and of order rather than confusion [See I Cor. 14:23-24, 31-33.] 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.** [If voting is unscriptural, then Rod's ordination and the ordination of every elder in the Worldwide Church of God is invalid. As Mr. Armstrong reveals in his autobiography, he was selected by lay brethren for ordination, his ordination was approved by elected representatives of the lay brethren, and the lay brethren participated in the laying on of hands at his ordination. If church government is "from the top down," then Mr. Armstrong's ordination was invalid, and he had no authority to approve anyone else's ordination!]

"In talking to 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. [Worldwide failed to show the same understanding.]

"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.) [Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong were among those who left the Stanberry Conference and followed Dugger in the Salem Conference just before leaving to found the Radio Church of God, later named Worldwide.]

"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. [The brethren in the Church of God Seventh Day did not have a hierarchical government at that time.]

"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' [through a centralized

corporate church organization]--which he felt they were unable to do. **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!**" (Meredith, *Church Government and Church Unity*, pp. 3-4, emphasis added.)

In the Image of the Beast

As long as the ministers of the Worldwide Church continued to "preach the truth," the membership continued to submit to its hierarchical form of government. For decades, Herbert Armstrong was revered as *the chosen apostle* of Jesus Christ, just as the pope is revered by his followers. In his autobiography, Stanley Rader draws a striking comparison of the two:

"The Church's internal organization is **hierarchical** rather than congregational, **comparable to that of the Roman Catholic**, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches. **Authority proceeds from the top down** in temporal as well as ecclesiastical matters. Herbert Armstrong appoints the members of the board of directors and is the temporal and pastoral head of Church affairs. **His position and authority are COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF HIS HOLINESS, THE POPE**; the board of directors is the equivalent of the papal curia" (Rader, *Against the Gates of Hell*, p. 283, emphasis added).

Instead of being molded in the image of Jesus Christ, the Worldwide Church of God was molded in the image of the Roman Catholic Church. The spiritual priesthood that the apostle Peter described, in which every member of the Body of Christ shares, was replaced by a select priesthood of ordained ministers. Stacked in a pyramid of ascending ranks, this corporate priesthood claimed to speak with "divine authority." Any church member who dared to question their decisions was "rebellious against the authority of God" and was in danger of eternal damnation.

Establishing Centralized Control

Hierarchies thrive in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. The article which follows is a classic example of fear mongering, directed toward the membership of the Worldwide Church of God in 1957:

"When the **PURPOSE** of assembling in a local group departs from God's purpose--when **the method of conducting the local assembly** departs from the

Bible instructions and example, members often are driven away from God and into **loss of eternal life!**

"For the safety and welfare of all, I must speak plainly and candidly. God commands His true ministers: 'Them that sin rebuke before all [Paul was speaking of elders who sinned. This Scriptural command was often applied to church members, but rarely to elders.], that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before the other, doing nothing by partiality' (I Tim. 5:20-21)" (Armstrong, Herbert, "Local Assemblies Are NOT Social Clubs," *The Good News*, 1957, emphasis added).

The context of I Timothy 5:20-21 presents a very different view of the ministry than that portrayed by Herbert Armstrong. When Paul wrote these words, Timothy had just been **elected (Greek *cheirotomia*--meaning chosen by the people) *episkopos*** of the Ephesian *ekklesia* by the brethren of the Ephesian *ekklesia*. Notice Paul's subscript to II Timothy in George Ricker Berry's *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*: "2To 3Timotheus 1second, 8of 9the 11of [12the] 13Ephesians 10assembly [5the] 6first 7overseer [*episkopos*] 4chosen [a cognate of *cheirotomia*], written from Rome, when a second time 2was 3placed 4before 1Paul Caesar Nero."

Beginning in Verse 17 of I Timothy 5, we read, "Let the **elders that rule well** be counted worthy of double honor, especially **they who labor in the word and doctrine**. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. Against **an elder** receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. **Them that sin [elders] rebuke before all [before the entire assembled *ekklesia*], that others [other elders] also may fear**. I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one [elder] before another, **doing nothing by partiality**. Lay hands suddenly on no man [referring to an elder who had been rebuked for sinning; not until he had clearly demonstrated his repentance was he to be welcomed back into fellowship by the laying on of hands, in which the entire assembly participated], neither be partaker of other men's sins [To fellowship with an elder who had not repented would be partaking of his sins.]: keep thyself pure" (II Tim. 5:17-22). Herbert Armstrong forgot Paul's command to "do nothing by partiality" and repeatedly failed to apply this Scriptural principle when the sinning elder was his own son!

Local Fellowships Stripped of Personal Participation

"Some who have attended a **local congregation** [the legal term used by the IRS for local fellowships or assemblies] have gradually succumbed to the influence of Satan and the pull of the flesh, until they have come to look on the purpose and function of the local church something like this (and I summarize *their unscriptural view* as a warning to ALL!):

" 'We just want to have peace,' they protest, justifying their departure from the Bible ways [viewing an authoritarian approach to church government as Biblical]. 'We just want to attend church every Sabbath, and enjoy the fellowship, without having any preacher [appointed "from the top down" as required by the IRS] lambast us, or tell us what's wrong with us, or use the Scriptures to hit at us. We want a pastor who will show LOVE toward us, by letting us do as we please [viewing any objection to ministerial dictates as carnal self-will], and as each of us sees it for himself. We don't want a pastor to use the Bible to strike out at us, and tell us we're wrong, and make us feel uncomfortable.'

" '**And another thing,** this attitude continues, **'we want to have the "say-so" in what we do, and HOW OUR SERVICES ARE CONDUCTED.** [Paul gave the Corinthians instructions on how to arrange their own services, and encouraged them *all* to participate (I Cor. 14:26-31.) We don't want any part in what our pastor calls 'God's Work' [viewing all objections to centralized control as disloyalty to "God's Work"]--that's just *his* own personal work, and we're not interested, and we don't want to hear about it--we want no part in it. We don't care anything about going into all the world and proclaiming the Gospel. We don't care anything about whether people in Florida or Maine or Britain are being brought into the Truth and converted--they live too far away for us to enjoy fellowship with them, and so we have no interest in them, and don't want to be bothered or made uncomfortable even hearing about them.'

"Rather astonishing, isn't it, that people who have heard God's TRUTH preached for many years--people who at first accepted it in the love of God, professed it, started out practicing it--should, through the years, ***fall away from the Truth*** [classifying any resistance to centralized control as apostasy from "the Truth"], reject *new* truth as it is uncovered [implying that the new approach to church government was "new truth"], begin to embrace false doctrines and errors, and finally come to such an attitude as above quoted?

"But I assure you, my brethren, that such has happened! I do not here accuse any individual. I say to those concerned, look down deep into your own hearts! If the shoe fits, either put it on and wear it--INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE, TO BE

BURNED [Catholic doctrine]!--or else REPENT before it is everlastingly TOO LATE [Catholic doctrine]! But to those who do *not* share this degenerated, carnal attitude, I say, 'I *don't* mean you!'

"To these people, the minister who **properly uses God's Word** as God commands, to correct and reprove, is not showing love. [Many ministers used God's Word improperly to threaten and intimidate their brethren.] The preacher who will twist the Word of God to lull them to sleep in their sins--actually condemning them to everlasting DEATH--is showing what *they* call love!

"Some of them derive **a certain satisfaction out of a disagreement with God's CHOSEN SERVANT** [implying that all objections to ministerial dictates were totally unjustified]. Instead of feeling guilty where the Bible condemns what they are doing or believing, **it seemingly elevates their ego**. If they can **convince themselves that God's CHOSEN SERVANT is wrong, and they are right in various points of Scripture, then they feel superior** [implying that those who question a church doctrine are egotistical rather than seeking truth]. This helps them ride right over their sins. But they are riding straight into the jaws of ETERNAL DEATH!

" 'It is IMPOSSIBLE for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, *and have tasted the good word of God ...* if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh' (Heb. 6:4-6).

"Let it be a warning to ALL, and let all FEAR, and TREMBLE before the All-powerful Word of God. [The present leaders and ministers of the Worldwide Church should read this!]

"It happened in the churches God raised up thru the Apostle Paul. Leaders rose up and turned brethren against Paul. To the elders from Ephesus, Paul said:

" 'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. [How true of Worldwide!] Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them' (Acts 20:29-30).

"It happened to Paul. It happened in our experience. But never fear! **All such shall be dealt with, by the power of God. God is showing His servants what they must do.** [It was Stanley Rader--not God--who led Herbert to conform to IRS requirements that were based on the structure of the Catholic Church.] And we shall know by the fruits--the RESULTS--whether **the power and the AUTHORITY OF GOD IN HIS CHOSEN MINISTERS** is the stronger, and

master of the situation, or whether perverted and disgruntled human self-will can triumph! **God will DEMONSTRATE His power thru His servants! The gates of hell shall not prevail against God's Church!** [The apostasy that has devastated the WCG since Herbert wrote these words shows the grievous error in claiming that God works through hierarchies of fallible human beings who are subject to vanity, greed and lust.]

"Yes, it is GOD who has set Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors and teachers in His Church. [In Scripture, these are not hierarchically ranked. In Worldwide, they were made into hierarchical offices to conform to IRS requirements.] **The call must come from GOD.** [In Scripture, individuals are personally called by God; in Worldwide, the hierarchical ministry determines who is "called."] These men are merely HIS INSTRUMENTS [The "fruits" of many ministers have showed otherwise.] He trains them and prepares them. [In Worldwide, physical presence and polished speaking were primary factors in ordination.]

"And WHY? TO FEED the Church of God, as Paul told the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20). 'For the PERFECTING of the saints,' writes Paul in Ephesians 4:12-13; 'for the work of the ministry, for the edifying ["Edifying" means "building up"-not "tearing apart," as some Worldwide ministers interpreted it.] of the body of Christ: TILL we 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.'

"And HOW does God instruct his ministers to preach? He says, 'Don't tell them their sins'? Does God say to the ministers, 'You are sinners yourselves, so you can't tell others their sins--instead, show love by ENCOURAGING them *in* their sins'?

"God commands, 'CRY ALOUD, SPARE NOT,...and SHOW MY PEOPLE THEIR TRANSGRESSION.'

"God's instruction to ministers of local churches is this:

" 'I charge thee therefore before God...**PREACH THE WORD**; keep at it in season, out of season; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT with all patience and doctrine' (II Tim. 4:1-2). [Notice that the reproving, rebuking and exhortation is to be done with all *patience* and *doctrine*--i.e., continually **preaching the Word.**] He said the time would come when some in congregations ministered by GOD'S TRUE MINISTERS 'will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lust **shall they heap to themselves** teachers...turning away their ears from the TRUTH.'

[This would have been impossible if the New Testament churches were hierarchical. The fact that it could happen shows that elders were elected by their brethren. Those who were lovers of truth elected elders who preached the Truth; those who lost their love for the Truth elected elders who preached false doctrines.]

"Brethren, do you realize what that means?"

"In God's True Church, **GOD has set His ministers in charge.** [In reality, Herbert did--to satisfy IRS requirements.] **He has given them AUTHORITY.** He has authorized them **to bind and to loose** [Catholic doctrine]. **He has told them to RULE** [He is confusing the future rule of all saints over unconverted nations with the present rule of a few saints over their converted brethren.]--to preach the WORD which, like a sharp two-edged sword cuts both ways and is profitable for correction, reproof, instruction. [Paul wrote these words to Timothy, who was *elected* by his fellow brethren in the Ephesian church.] But this shows the people would try to SELECT THEIR OWN pastor [the accepted practice in New Testament times]--'heap to *themselves* teachers.' Not the teachers God set over them--those of THEIR choosing, who would show their kind of perverted 'love' by turning them away from the TRUTH, pleasing them with what they *want* to hear!

"God's true ministers *will never do that!* [Many of the ministers that "God set" over Worldwide congregations have done just that!]

"We learn by experience. In past years your Pastor [Herbert W. Armstrong] tried to show 'love' by not acting drastically or harshly with such people. God has punished him, and brought him to see how such people **MUST** be dealt with, for a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. [What about his own son?] And **hereafter God's ministers will demonstrate IN POWER, if necessary, the AUTHORITY God has given,** and carry out His instructions, that the love and the spiritual growth of THE MANY shall not be perverted and destroyed by a FEW!

"If, in any local church, one member, or a few, offend and endanger the spiritual health of the whole body, Jesus' teaching is to '**CUT IT OUT**' [**Any who resist centralized control are threatened with excommunication.**], for it's better to enter into the Kingdom with one arm, or one foot, than to perish in *gehenna* fire!

"In this way, it shall be possible in the future for ALL the membership to be FILLED with the true LOVE and the JOY of God the Father [In the years that followed this article, most members were filled with the fear of Herbert Armstrong and every ordained minister under him.]--and, rejoicing together, we may PRESS

FORWARD toward the mark for the prize of the HIGH CALLING of God in Christ Jesus!" (Armstrong, Herbert, "Local Assemblies Are NOT Social Clubs," *The Good News*, 1957, emphasis added throughout).

We Must Submit to Bureaucratic Ordinances

In the same year that Herbert Armstrong's article on church government was published, Herman Hoeh wrote an article on submitting to the authority of the federal government. Was this perhaps an attempt to justify the restructuring of the Radio (Worldwide) Church of God to conform to the requirements of the IRS? The following paragraphs are excerpts from Hoeh's article "GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY: Should You Submit to It?"

"Is it your duty to reform the government or to resist bureaucratic ordinances [which include IRS regulations]? Do you really have to show respect and pay taxes to political office holders even when they abuse their high offices? Are officials responsible 'to the people' or to God? Which?"

"The apostles devoted many verses in their epistles to explain the relationship of Christians to human governments. Paul wrote at great length because he knew how easily this subject would be neglected, as it is today in nearly every denomination. Here is what he said in Romans 13:1-7:

" *Let EVERY soul be subject* unto the higher powers [Greek *huperecho exousia*]. For there is *no* power but of God: the powers that be ARE ORDAINED OF GOD. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: AND THEY THAT RESIST SHALL RECEIVE TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION [judgment]!

" 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject*, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause PAY YE TRIBUTE ALSO [showing that Paul is referring to the Roman government, which held dominion over the land of Israel and the entire Mediterranean region]: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. RENDER THEREFORE TO ALL THEIR DUES: TRIBUTE TO WHOM TRIBUTE IS DUE; CUSTOM TO WHOM CUSTOM; FEAR TO WHOM FEAR; HONOR TO WHOM HONOR.'

"This is not just Paul speaking. It is Jesus' directive to His church for all times and generations. It is very important--let every person be *subject to higher authority*. [Paul wrote these words in the context of the Roman dominion, which had been prophesied by Daniel and was decreed by God. Paul warned that to resist this foreign power would be to oppose the revealed will of God. Paul's words of caution may have been prompted by the actions of Christian Zealots, who were constantly stirring up insurrection against Rome.]

"Instead of preaching this truth from the Bible, most ministers preach their own words about 'getting out the vote' and 'supporting a Christian candidate.' 'It is your duty,' they say. This is not what Jesus or the apostles taught. **The real Christian duty is NOT to mix with the political affairs of this world, but to be subject to authorities** [so that we may live in peace (I Tim. 2:2); but NOT when civil law is *contrary to God's way* (Acts 4:19, 5:29)]. You are to be *separate from* the world, although living in it (John 17:15, 16).

"Contrary to the common teaching, the Bible proves that government **authority and power** is ORDAINED OF GOD. **It is not derived 'from the consent of the governed'--the people.** [Romans 13 is NOT speaking of national government but of *foreign dominion*. Of course, the Roman dominion was "not derived from the consent of the governed."]

" 'There is NO authority but of God.'

" 'The authorities that exist are ordained of God.' [Paul could truly speak this of the Roman Empire, because it was prophesied in Scripture. That is true of only a *few* human governments.] Human beings seem to reason that because men may be elected or appointed or may seize power, that their only authority proceeds from the people that supported them. How untrue this assumption is!

"This is an age when men don't know who rules in earthly affairs. Almost everyone is as ignorant of this matter as was Pontius Pilate because the clergy is failing to preach the truth. **Jesus had to tell Pilate that the authority vested in him came from the Almighty.** [No--it came from Rome, which was a government of the god of this world; but it was "ordained," or decreed by God, because it was prophesied in the Old Testament.] Notice how similar Pilate reasoned compared with people today: 'Then saith Pilate unto him, Speaketh thou not unto me? knowest thou not that **I have power** to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?' Jesus answered, 'Thou couldest have **no power at all against me, EXCEPT IT WERE GIVEN THEE FROM ABOVE**' (John 19:10-11). [As God allowed Satan to afflict Job, so God allowed Satan's government to condemn his Son, in order to fulfill the prophecies concerning Him.]

"Since ALL AUTHORITY is ORDAINED OF GOD [taking Paul's words in Romans 13 entirely out of context] we are to be subject to it. Anyone WHO RESISTS THE AUTHORITY OF HUMAN GOVERNMENTS IS ACTUALLY REBELLING AGAINST GOD WHO ORDAINS THAT AUTHORITY. [He now expands the term "authority" to include educational institutions and corporations, which would include Ambassador College and the Worldwide Church of God.] **This applies equally as well to ANYONE in a position of authority, whether a school teacher or a foreman in a factory.** [A foreman or employer has authority only over those who agree to work for him; thus his authority is based on "the consent of the governed."]

"God ordained rulers to punish evil works, not good works. Even though officials may be elected or appointed by the people, rulers are actually *accountable to God who permits them to exercise authority*. Persons in responsible positions may fail to execute the commission of their offices--to punish wrong deeds and to preserve order. They may corrupt the government. But as long as God permits them to be in authority and to retain their office, you are *commanded* to REMAIN in subjection to the divinely ordained position which they hold. [According to this reasoning, a student having difficulties with a teacher could not transfer to a different class, and an employee having problems with a foreman or employer could not seek another job.]

"You pay respect to God by respecting the men who hold their offices by God's permission and authority. Until He removes them, you would be **rebellious against the will of God** by refusing to honor the position which **such representatives** exercise. [This reasoning assumes that every federal, state and local official (and every teacher and foreman) is God's representative, and that God is directly responsible for installing and removing them.]

"Human beings in any position may be serving themselves and the devil [Then

how can they be representatives of God?], but the OFFICE is *ordained of God!* **You honor the person because of the office which he holds, even though his deeds may be evil**" (Hoeh, "GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY--Should You Submit to It?" *The Plain Truth*, August 1957).

This erroneous view of the government of God was also applied to church officials, as demonstrated in a second article by Herman Hoeh, which appeared in *The Good News* in October of 1957. It was articles such as these which led the membership of the Worldwide Church of God to submit to gross corruption and abuse of ministerial authority. Many members are *still* waiting on God to remove corrupt WCG officials from their positions in the church organization. They have not learned from the apostasy that occurred in the first century, when the churches of God were taken over by the ministers of Satan, and the faithful followers of Jesus Christ were forced to leave.

The Ministry Becomes a Priesthood

In his October 1957 article in the *Good News*, Hoeh teaches that church members must not assemble for Bible study without a minister. Thus the ministry was established as the sole channel through which truth was revealed. This practice is based on Catholic theology, which teaches that the Holy Spirit is limited to the priesthood, and that only the priests are able to understand and interpret the Scriptures. In effect, it is a denial of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every member of the Body of Christ. It allows no room for members who are seeking truth to question and discuss doctrines, and nullifies the Scriptural command to every believer to "prove all things." The following excerpts from Hoeh's article show the great emphasis that was placed on submitting to the ministerial hierarchy:

"Many feel the necessity of *social* contact with brethren. They equally desire to learn more about the Bible, What could be better than meeting each Sabbath for Bible study, it is reasoned! And think of the *social* fellowship!

"Is this *God's way* of feeding the flock?

"Paul did *not* establish churches without pastors! EVERY local church had its pastor [not when they first began to assemble; it required time for "fruits" to be manifested before elders could be selected]. Jesus called His people sheep. They need a shepherd. [Jesus said that **He** is our Shepherd.] Paul therefore gave them pastors, or shepherds, who would feed the flock. [Paul did not assign pastors when he raised up churches; he returned months later and laid hands on those who had

borne the required "fruits" and were recommended by their brethren.] We are NO different today. God's people still need pastors to lead them into truth. [The Spirit of God leads us into all truth; the function of pastors and elders is to help us stay on course.]

"And notice, too, that they were *ordained*, with prayer and fasting, by the *apostles*. [The apostles "ordained" or appointed those who had been selected by their brethren, as recorded in the book of Acts. Berry translates Acts 14:23, "And having chosen for them elders in every assembly...." However, the **pronoun "them"** (Greek αυτοις *autois*) is a pronominal adjective in the dative case. A more accurate translation would be, "They [Paul and Barnabas] helped them [referring to the members of each congregation] select elders [who met the qualifications (I Tim. 3, Tit. 1)] in each church" (Williams, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People*). **God did not leave it to the brethren to gather together and to follow anyone who had a desire to become an elder.** [Of course not. The brethren in each church examined the "fruits" of those who desired to be elders, and selected those who met the qualifications. Paul and Barnabas confirmed those who were chosen by accompanying the brethren in the laying on of hands.] In these cities, where hundreds were being converted, Paul established local churches and ordained elders for EVERY church! [Elders were not ordained when the churches were raised up, but only after some had grown spiritually and had proved that they were qualified. This was generally a year or two later.] But before ordaining elders, Paul's practice was to teach them personally, both in public and in their homes. [Paul taught in their homes because that is where many of the local assemblies were held.] He said so in Acts 20:17, 20.

"This is God's pattern--God's WAY.

"If we are to enter the Kingdom of God, we must come under the government of God [referring to the hierarchical ministry]. **We must learn to conduct ourselves God's WAY** [representing the hierarchical government of the Catholic Church as "God's way"]. **Christianity is a WAY of life.**

"To many people, a local congregation becomes a place of social rather than spiritual fellowship. People join themselves together, instead of *being joined to Christ*. [Remember, he is writing to baptized Christians who are already joined to Christ, implying that if they assemble together to fellowship they will sever themselves from Christ.] In John 15:5, Jesus said: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' What would you think if the branches say to themselves, let us bundle ourselves together? [Christians who are joined to Christ are already joined to one another.] Yet that is exactly what you are doing when you meet *of your own accord without ministers!* [This same argument was used by St. Ignatius, the early

Catholic father of Antioch in Syria in 115-117 A.D., to justify the priesthood of the early Catholic Church!]

"To be a Christian you need to 'abide' in Christ--you need to *live* by **His** instruction [implying that this instruction comes only through the hierarchical ministry, just as Catholics are taught that only their priests can interpret the Scriptures]. Do the branches of a grapevine receive their sap from each other? Or do they receive it from the central stump? You need to receive your spiritual power from Christ--the vine [implying that the Holy Spirit is funneled to us through the ministry]. Not from a branch--an individual who thinks he would like to hold a study group on the Sabbath. [This entire analogy is faulty because ministers (if they are truly converted) are also "branches" and must also be nourished by the vine.]

"Your *spiritual* fellowship is not merely with one another, but 'with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ' through the Holy Spirit [which Dr. Hoeh implies is dispensed through the ministry] (I John 1:3). Notice what John writes in verse 6: 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we lie, and *do not the truth*.' If you claim to have real fellowship with God, and 'walk in darkness'--disobey the instruction of the Bible [implying that Christians who assemble without a minister are disobeying God]--you are not doing the truth. You are actually cut off from real fellowship with the Heavenly Father.

" 'But if we walk in the light'--if we obey the Biblical instruction--'we have fellowship with one another' [implying that the Bible instructs us not to assemble without a minister] (verse 7). How plain! In order to have real fellowship with one another, you need to abide in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles [implying that Jesus forbade His followers to assemble without a minister]--you need to follow the example and the instruction of the Bible, which is ABSOLUTE and FINAL AUTHORITY!

"The common misapplication of this text [Matthew 18:17] comes from careless reading. Christ was discussing with His apostles the matter of making binding decisions in the church (Mat. 18:17). [This Scripture has been grossly misinterpreted. Christ gave His disciples the authority to bind and loose **what has already been bound or loosed in heaven, as revealed in His Word**. He did not give them "blanket authority" to make decisions and render judgment based on an office or position.] He promises to back every decision--even where only two or three are gathered together IN HIS NAME!

"What does '**in His name**' mean?

"**It means 'by His authority'**! [Christians are commanded to "do ALL in the

name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). Hoeh's interpretation of "in His name" would require a minister's presence for *everything* a Christian does.] We baptize 'in the name of Jesus Christ'--'by His authority.' But Jesus never gave authority for His converts to hold meetings by themselves without a pastor! [It was common for early converts to assemble in homes without a pastor.] Any who do so are not acting according to Jesus' commands [a totally erroneous view of Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20]. They are going contrary to Christ's authority. He does not promise to be in their midst. Besides, according to the pattern laid down in Lev. 23:2-4 [The laws of the Levitical priesthood do not apply to the New Testament ministry. This view turns the ministry into a priesthood standing between God and His people.], *God orders His ministers* to convoke assemblies--to order meetings. God tells us upon which days we must meet [In Old Testament times, God spoke directly to Moses and Aaron to communicate His will; today, God speaks to us through His Word.], and He orders His ministers to tell the people when and where He wants the assemblies held. [This was true in Old Testament times when Israel was a unified people under God; in New Testament times, the believers were scattered in small groups and generally met in homes.] It is God's doing, not man's [likening a centralized ministry to the Levitical priesthood which God established]. Ministers are God's bond-servants and the shepherds of the flock. [True, but when no minister is available Christians are still free to assemble for fellowship. The context of Paul's command to the Colossian believers shows that Christians have **Scriptural authority** to assemble together to encourage and exhort each other, to sing songs of praise to God and to study His Word together. See Col. 3:16.]

"Now we can also understand clearly other New Testament passages. In writing to Philemon, Paul spoke of 'the church in thy house' (Philemon 2). This is not speaking of brethren gathering for discussion groups or Bible studies. **It is speaking of a church--an organized body of saints--over whom Philemon presided.** ["Church" (*ekklesia*) simply means "assembly." Of course, Philemon would act as "host" since the group met in his home.] Notice that Paul addressed him as 'fellow-laborer' (verse 1). In verse 24 Paul lists 'Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my *fellow-laborers*'--a minister. [Paul refers to women who "labored with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:3). Does that mean these women were "ministers"?) Paul even calls him 'a partner' (verse 17). The church in his house was NOT without a pastor. [What about the churches that met in the homes of women like Phoebe of Rome?]

"... True fellowship comes by obedience to God's WAY. Even though many of you are scattered and have no regular Sabbath service, yet be thankful that you are being instructed through The PLAIN TRUTH, and The Correspondence Course. [What happened to the Bible?]

"You can hear the daily broadcast--you actually hear Mr. Armstrong and his son on the radio *in your own homes!* When 'The World Tomorrow' broadcast is on the air, you are attending, in a sense, a church service *with a minister.* This is how God is feeding His flock" (Hoeh, "Should You ASSEMBLE Without a Minister?" *The Good News*, October 1957).

Centralizing the Church of God

The following year saw a flurry of articles dealing with church government. The groundwork was being laid for centralization of power in a corporate church hierarchy. The following excerpts are from a 1958 article by Herman Hoeh. Although he correctly defines the true Church of God as a "spiritual organism," he portrays it as a single organization:

"You can't join the true Church; *only God can put you into it by His Spirit,* 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into [put into] one Body' (I Cor. 12:13). *God makes you a member of His Church--if you surrender your life to Him--even if you have no local church with which to fellowship.* [He wrote these words not long after the article forbidding them to assemble without a minister.]

"The Church is called the body of Christ because it is a spiritual organism whose LIVING, ACTIVE HEAD is Jesus Christ, in the same sense that the husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:23, 31). [Dr. Hoeh has always viewed marriage as hierarchical. I have personally heard him use this analogy in sermons of past years to justify hierarchical structure within the Church of God.] How does one enter this true Church of God?--this spiritual union? Notice:

"The true Church--the "Church of God" (I Cor. 1:2)--is not many divided quarreling denominations, but ONE Church [organization], composed of many scattered members, ONE Church united in Spirit, mind, attitude and heart because its members have totally surrendered their wills to God and have yielded to correction and reproof from the Word of God--the Bible.

"Nowhere is there any prophecy that the one true Church [organization] should become great and powerful, exerting influence in this world. Rather, Jesus called it the 'Little Flock,' despised, persecuted, scattered BY the world--separate FROM the world! Scattered, but NEVER DIVIDED! Always ONE Church [organization], speaking the SAME thing--*never* many differing sects!" (Hoeh, "Where Is the TRUE Church Today?" *The Good News*, 1958.)

In the above article, Hoeh's subtle references to a central church organization

could easily be overlooked. In another article by Hoeh, also published in 1958, the references are unmistakable. The following excerpts are from that article, titled "GOVERNMENT in Our Church":

"Jesus gave his disciples the true form of government for **His church--our Church** [limiting the spiritual Body of Christ to the corporate organization known (at that time) as the Radio Church of God, later Worldwide].

"The true gospel is the good news of the kingdom--the *government* of God. God is Supreme Ruler. From Him proceeds ALL authority and power.

"**The true Church--our Church** [again limiting the spiritual Body to the corporate organization]--is *subject* to God. **The authority of God must be carried out in our Church** to which the gospel of the kingdom or *government* of God is committed (Hoeh, *The Good News*, June/July 1958).

"What some have failed to grasp is that not *all* government is wrong, but that **human government--of man ruling man--is wrong**. When we repented of breaking God's laws and surrendered to obey Him, *we were putting ourselves under God's government* [to be governed by the Word of God and by His Holy Spirit--not by a corporate church organization], His power and authority, whether or not we realized it!

"The whole issue confronting the world at this very crucial moment in history is whether it will obey God's government **OR** man's government. [He is contradicting his *Plain Truth* article two months earlier, in which he stated that all human governments are "ordained of God" and that human leaders are "representatives" of God.]

"The very fact that there IS human government in the churches proves that **there is also DIVINE government--theocracy**. [Human government neither proves nor disproves divine government. Hoeh is reasoning by anthropomorphic philosophy.] If there were no *divine* authority, there would have been no need for numerous forms of counterfeit human administrations. [Who decides whether a human administration is "counterfeit" or is "backed up by the power of God"? Must the members of a church take the word of their leaders? Or are the members themselves to judge by the fruits?]

"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** [meaning church authority], in this lifetime" (Hoeh, *The Good News*, June/July 1958).

Hoeh uses the word "theocracy" in reference to the government of God's church. Theocracy is defined as "government of a state by the **IMMEDIATE direction of God; hence government by priests or ministers as representatives of God**" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "theocracy", 1946). Thus Hoeh implies that the hierarchical ministry of Worldwide is comparable to the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel.

An article by Ted Armstrong, which appeared in *The Plain Truth* magazine several weeks before this *Good News* article by Hoeh was published, makes it explicitly clear that all references to "ONE true Church" meant only **one organization**. Here are Ted's revealing statements:

"There is only ONE CHURCH [organization] on the face of this earth that has been consistently, through *many years* of labor, preaching the ONE true gospel of the Kingdom of God, telling you exactly what these times MEAN!

"There is only ONE CHURCH [organization] that has DARED to tell you in DEFINITE, SPECIFIC, POINT-BY-POINT, DETAILED ORDER the events that are yet to occur, whether or not RUSSIA will strike the United States--what *will happen* in Europe, what WILL happen here in our country, and all over the world, what IS SURE to happen in the Middle East!

"Where is that ONE Church Jesus built?

"It is where the WORK of that Church is being done!

"And THIS WORK that you are reading of *right now*--that you *hear* over *The World Tomorrow*--**this work is THE ONLY GENUINE WORK** that is carrying out Jesus' very commission just as He said it would be doing!" (Armstrong, G.T., "Should You Join a Church?" *The Plain Truth*, May 1958.)

How the Concept of "The Work of God" Changed Over the Years

The "Work of God" in Apostolic Days

Jesus said, "The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached..." (Luke 16:16).

John was the first to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This same gospel was afterwards preached by the apostles of Jesus Christ. In his gospel message at Pisidian Antioch in 46 A.D., Paul shows that John preached **a gospel of repentance** in anticipation of the salvation that would come through Jesus Christ. Paul preached that same gospel, warning his listeners not to reject the salvation that was now being freely offered to them through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here is Paul's message:

"Paul rose, made a gesture with his hand, and began: 'Men of Israel, and you who worship our God, listen to me! The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers. When they were still living as aliens in Egypt he made them into a nation and brought them out of that country with arm outstretched. For some forty years he bore with their conduct in the desert. Then in the Canaanite country he overthrew seven nations, whose lands he gave them to be their heritage for some four hundred and fifty years, and afterwards appointed judges for them until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. Then he removed him and set up David as their king, giving him his approval in these words: "I have found David son of Jesse to be a man after my own heart, who will carry out all my purposes."

" This is the man from whose posterity **God, as he promised, has brought Israel a saviour, Jesus.** John made ready for his coming **by proclaiming baptism as a token of REPENTANCE** to the whole people of Israel. And when John was nearing the end of his course, he said, "I am not what you think I am. No, after me comes one whose shoes I am not fit to unfasten."

" 'My brothers, you who come of the stock of Abraham, and others among you who revere our God, we are the people to whom **the message of this salvation** has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him, or understand the words of the prophets which are read Sabbath by Sabbath; indeed they fulfilled them by condemning him. Though they failed to find grounds for the sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that the scriptures said about him, they took him down from the gibbet and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and there was a period of many days during which he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem.

[The Gospel that Paul Preached]

"They are now his witnesses before our nation; **and we are here to give you the GOOD NEWS [the gospel] that God, who made the promise to the fathers, has fulfilled it for the children by raising Jesus from the dead**, as indeed it stands written, in the second Psalm: "You are my son; this day have I begotten you." Again, that he raised him from the dead, never again to revert to corruption, he declares in these words: "I will give you the blessings promised to David, holy and sure." This is borne out by another passage: "Thou wilt not let thy loyal servant suffer corruption." As for David, when he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, he died, and was gathered to his fathers, and suffered corruption; but the one whom God raised up did not suffer corruption; and you must understand, my brothers, that it is through him that forgiveness of sins is now being proclaimed to you. It is through him that everyone who has faith is acquitted of everything for which there was no acquittal under the Law of Moses. Beware, then, lest you bring down upon yourselves the doom proclaimed by the prophets: "See this, you scoffers, wonder, and begone; for I am doing a deed in your days, a deed which you will never believe when you are told of it" ' "(Acts 13:16-41, *The New English Bible*).

The "Work of God" Until 1957

The following excerpts from a 1955 *Plain Truth* article show the church's original position concerning the commission to preach the gospel to the world:

"While most people today suppose that the true CHURCH was rapidly to grow BIG, to become a powerful organization, exerting powerful influence on the world, making this a better world, becoming the stabilizing influence of the world's civilization, actually *Christ founded His Church for no such purpose!*

"Christ's instruction to His Church, thru the New Testament, was NOT to participate in this world's politics and affairs in an effort to make this world a better world. Instead, His command to His Church is, '*Come out from among them, and be ye separate.*'

"In His final prayer for His ONE Church, Jesus prayed: 'I pray for *them*: I pray not for the world....Holy Father, keep *through thine own name* those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be ONE*, as we are. I have given them thy word, and *the world hateth them*, because *they are not OF the world*, even as I am not OF the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. *They are not OF the world*, even as I am

not OF the world' (John 17:9-16).

"Jesus did command HIS BODY--THE COLLECTIVE BODY THRU WHICH THE SPIRIT OF GOD DOES THE WORK OF GOD-- TO GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH AND PUBLISH HIS GOSPEL. But those of His Church [all true Christians] are described as being strangers and foreigners in this world--AMBASSADORS for Christ--ambassadors representing HIS Kingdom which is *foreign* to this world--yet never being OF the world! (Hoeh, "Why So Many Denominations?" *The Plain Truth*, 1955, emphasis added.)

The "Work of God" After 1957

The organizational changes that were initiated in the Worldwide Church of God in 1957 led to a very different view of Christ's commission to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. The following excerpt illustrates the church's new interpretation of "preaching the gospel to the world." In this new view, the ministry was assigned all the preaching, and the members of the church were assigned all the paying. (Was this "rightly dividing the Word"?)

"Brethren, if we are to continue to grow--and to grow SPIRITUALLY as well as in number--we must remember that the **PURPOSE of the church** is, first, to GO INTO ALL THE WORLD and preach Christ's GOSPEL. The **FIRST** commission to the church [the entire Body of Christ] is just that. Anyone who looks on that great commission of Christ as 'Armstrong's private work' is just not a member of GOD'S one, True Church.

"Anyone who does not have his whole heart in that Work IS NOT A MEMBER OF GOD'S TRUE CHURCH, and has no right whatsoever to attend or fellowship in any of its local congregations. **The very FIRST PURPOSE, then, OF EACH LOCAL CONGREGATION is the FIRST purpose of God's Church as a whole--TO ENCOURAGE, PRAY FOR, HEAR REPORTS ABOUT, AND HELP** [In the following years, financial support was heavily emphasized.]--**in whatever manner may be possible--the great Work of God in preaching and publishing the true GOSPEL to all the world**" (Armstrong, Herbert, "Local Assemblies Are NOT Social Clubs," *The Good News*, emphasis added).

In a booklet published in 1970, Herbert W. Armstrong clearly states the church's new view of "preaching the gospel to the world." In this booklet, he emphatically denies that the gospel message is a call to repentance (although he appears to contradict himself at times) and claims that the church's commission to the world is intended to be strictly "as a witness." Notice:

"The Church of God had never been a proselyting church. Jesus Christ set the example. He *never* urged people to 'get saved,' or 'be converted.' When the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria asked Him to give her of God's Spirit, which He had referred to as 'living water,' He made no effort to convert her.

"He did proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God, saying, 'Repent ye [Was this not a call to salvation?], and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:1, 15). He chose His disciples, and simply said, 'Follow me.' [Did He not lead them to salvation?] They followed unquestioningly. He made no emotional appeals for converts. He made no pleading 'altar calls' accompanied by sentimental hymns. Nor did the apostles. [But they did preach repentance with power and conviction.] The Church of God follows the example they set.

"Therefore it has no evangelistic program or missionary activities [unlike the New Testament Church]. Instead, its commission is first to proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God--*not* to convert the world [Read Paul's words in I Corinthians 9:22-23.], but merely 'as a witness' to the world [ignoring Christ's commission in Matthew 28 to baptize and make disciples in all nations].

"This actually is AN EDUCATIONAL message of THE WAY OF LIFE to be lived in the Kingdom of God--THE WAY that leads to success, to peace, happiness, to the full, enjoyable abundant life. It involves the KNOWLEDGE of the PURPOSE of human life on this planet--the real meaning of life--the knowledge of the TRUE VALUES in a world pursuing the false--the knowledge of what man is, why he is, and **the WAY to his transcendent potential.**

"Since the **first commission** of the Church is actually an **educational**--not an evangelistic--one, **this entire operation became the activity of Ambassador College.**

"THE DIVINE COMMISSION TO THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD [representing the corporation as the Body of Christ] IS TO PROCLAIM THE COMING WORLD OF PEACE UNDER THE SOON-COMING DIVINE MESSIAH. [No--it is to preach Christ as the way to enter the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 1:23, 2:1-2).] It is merely in the role of a reporter, reporting events of history as ADVANCE NEWS REPORTS, reported as ACTS OF GOD, not of this Church" (*This Is The WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD*, 1970, pp. 17, 18, 22).

The "Work of God" in 1980

The apostle Paul states very clearly that the "testimony"--or witness-- which he

preached to Jews and Gentiles alike was "Christ crucified." (See above references to I Corinthians 1:23, 2:1-2.) This is the "gospel of the kingdom" that was preached by all the apostles of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of Christ's command in Matthew 28:19-20. Losing sight of this great commission, the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God focused on a "traveling evangelism" to heads of state around the world. Secular organizations classify such activity as "public relations," but in Worldwide it was labeled "preaching the gospel."

Stanley Rader, who accompanied Herbert Armstrong in this "traveling evangelism," describes the philosophy on which it was based. Notice how he ignores the great commission that Jesus Christ delivered to His disciples before His ascension:

" 'And this **gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world **for a witness** to all nations; and then shall the end come' (Matthew 24:14).

"So Jesus, seated upon the Mount of Olives, said to His disciples almost two thousand years ago, as they approached Him privately and asked for signs of His coming. He warned them dread events lay ahead--that nations would rise against each other and famines, pestilence, and earthquakes would ravage the earth. False prophets would deceive multitudes, and because wickedness and sin would flourish in the world, there would be many who would cease to love and to believe.

" 'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved,' Jesus said, as He commanded the disciples to go forth into the world [Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14 are not a command. Jesus simply stated a fact.] to preach the Gospel **ANNOUNCING the coming Kingdom of God** [a subtle shift from Christ's direct command in Matthew 28:19-20].

"And that, in all its beautiful simplicity, is the heart of the Church's work.* **It is written into the CORPORATE CHARTER**, understood by all members, and faithfully followed by its leaders. Everyone in the Church knows deep in his or her soul that preaching the Gospel is the primary reason for our existence.

"We come to all nations and all people with **AN ANNOUNCEMENT**, awesome and transcendent, yet at the same time, pure and uncomplicated:

"In 1966, a new phase was begun [just before Mrs. Armstrong's death]. Mr. Armstrong decided that the Work had reached the point where the Church must reach out its arms as far as it could in an intensive effort to bring the message of His next Coming to all of humanity.

"A **traveling evangelism**, unprecedented in the history of world religion, was launched. Since that watershed time, Herbert Armstrong has gone to virtually every corner of the planet by many types of conveyance, endured hardships and risked his life many times over to obey the commandment of Jesus Christ. **I have been privileged to accompany him on most of these travels** and to share in the joys and satisfactions, not to mention the dangers, of this unique globe-girdling effort.

"From 1966 to the present we have journeyed almost continuously, interrupted for Mr. Armstrong only by an illness in the summer of 1977.

"From the beginning, Mr. Armstrong received astonishing welcomes from kings and presidents, prime ministers and cabinet members, legislators and educators. These summit and near-summit sessions are of overriding importance because, as Mr. Armstrong has stated: 'When I get Christ's vital message of the Kingdom of God [This was not the gospel of the kingdom that John and the apostles preached.] to the king, president, prime minister, and others high in the government of such nations, I have, in God's sight, gotten His message to that nation or kingdom.'

"Mr. Armstrong's method of carrying out the commission is unique. The audiences, whether few or many, are not exhorted to come forth and accept the Lord" (Rader, *Against the Gates of Hell*, pp. 151-154).

" * The 'Work' of the Church is defined as **announcing the news of the coming Kingdom of God** through all means and media of communications that are available."

A Humanistic Gospel

Rader goes on to describe the founding of A.I.C.F.--the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation--through which a substantial portion of the church's resources were diverted for humanitarian projects. Notice how obviously he promotes the philosophy of humanism:

"In his travels, Mr. Armstrong had become sharply aware of the gigantic problems erupting on the world scene, problems eroding the very foundations on which civilization as we know it rests. Everywhere he found life's ugly visage: crime that imperils man's safety, inflation that threatens his economic welfare, lowered moral standards that undermine the stability of his family and his government. Worst of all, he found hatreds--deep, abiding hatreds that cause

nations to leap at each others' throats and murder each others' people by starvation, torture, and the horrors of war, made more terrible by the misuse of scientific achievement.

"Man need not hate, need not rebel, need not hurt himself and his fellows. Man, Mr. Armstrong knew through his visionary insight, had **a mind infused with a spirit that was God-given, God-implanted.** And that **THIS MIND with its DIVINE SPIRIT** [referring to the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit] **had a potential--an 'incredible human potential,' he calls it--to LIFT HIMSELF above baseness, cruelty, and all the other ills that beset the human race.**

"**Out of this RELIGIOUS-PHILOSOPHICAL understanding was born the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation,** whose guiding principle is wonderfully simple yet far reaching. The Foundation's goal is to initiate and carry forward **cultural, educational and HUMANITARIAN projects** that can be of specific service to the peoples of this sadly imperfect world. By lending its support--mincing no words, **I am talking of SPECIFIC FINANCIAL AID--TO ALL KINDS OF HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL CAUSES,** the Foundation believes it can create in men and women an awareness of their individual and collective potential for good" (Ibid., pp. 184-185).

This was a radical change from the Church's original perspective of preaching the gospel to the world! Remember the words written by Herman Hoeh in 1955?

"While most people today suppose that the true CHURCH was rapidly to grow BIG, to become a powerful organization, exerting powerful influence on the world, **making this a better world,** becoming the stabilizing influence of the world's civilization, actually *Christ founded His Church for no such purpose!*

"**Christ's instruction to His Church, thru the New Testament, was NOT to participate in this world's politics and affairs in an effort to make this world a better world.** Instead, His command to His Church is, '*Come out from among them, and be ye separate.*'

"In His final prayer for His ONE Church, Jesus prayed: "I pray for *them*: I pray not for the world....Holy Father, keep *through thine own name* those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be ONE,* as we are. I have given them thy word, and *the world hateth them,* because *they are not OF the world,* even as I am not OF the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. *They are not OF the world,* even as I am not OF the world' (John 17:9-16).

"Jesus did **command** [a direct reference to Christ's commission in Matthew 28]

HIS BODY--the collective Body [not a hierarchical ministry under one "apostle"] **thru which the Spirit of God does the WORK of God**--to *go into* all the world and preach and publish His Gospel. But those of His Church are described as being strangers and foreigners in this world--AMBASSADORS for Christ--ambassadors representing HIS Kingdom which is *foreign* to this world--yet never being OF the world!" (Hoeh, "Why So Many Denominations," *The Plain Truth*, 1955, emphasis added.)

How the Concept of Ordination Changed Over the Years

Just as the original gospel of repentance was replaced by another gospel, so the Catholic concept of ordination replaced the original New Testament practice. Ordination from "the top down" was firmly established as part of the Worldwide system of church government, which is patterned after the Catholic Church. This hierarchical approach to ordination is vastly different from Herbert Armstrong's own ordination by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, which was composed of Sabbath-keepers who had separated from the Church of God Seventh Day in Stanberry, Missouri. In those years, the Seventh-Day brethren elected elders in each church to serve both locally and as evangelists. The brethren of the Oregon Conference also elected representatives from each local church to serve at combined meetings. This was the practice in all the Seventh-Day churches in those early years.

"In June of 1931, Mr. Armstrong was ordained to the ministry **by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God** [made up of elected representatives], thus beginning a ministry that lasted almost 55 years!" (Ogwyn, *God's Church Through the Ages*, p. 63.)

Herbert describes his ordination in the first edition of his autobiography. (His personal account of this event was deleted in the later edition.) I believe this to be the only time Herbert Armstrong was ordained. Here are his own words:

"In early summer of that year a former S.D.A. minister, a Robert L. Taylor, came to Oregon from California. It was practice among these Church of God people to hold all-day meetings about once a month. It was at one of these meetings that Mr. Taylor preached. We were all quite impressed.

" 'He's a better preacher than any of the leading ministers from Stanberry,' seemed to be the common exclamation. Indeed we were all rather 'swept off our feet' by his preaching.

"After a few weeks, **the brethren** of this 'Oregon Conference,' which had been formed the preceding November, wanted Elder Taylor to hold an evangelistic campaign. They [**the brethren**] were becoming anxious to see a little 'life' in the work of the Church.

"They [**the brethren**] found Elder Taylor very receptive to the idea. By this time a modest balance had accumulated in the new Conference treasury. You will remember that the object in forming this State Conference was to create a local state treasury and keep their tithes and offerings in the state, instead of being sent to Stanberry, Missouri. These were days of rapidly descending economic depression, but several of these brethren were vegetable gardeners. They were doing very well financially.

" '**Brethren,**' said Elder Taylor, 'I will be glad to undertake this evangelistic campaign, and I suggest holding it in Eugene. But **I want to request** [He was **asking for their approval.**] that Brother Armstrong be put full time into the ministry, and join me in the campaign. We can speak on alternate nights, and the one who is not speaking can lead the song service.'

".... **The members of the Conference [the brethren] agreed instantly with Mr. Taylor's suggestion. [They expressed their approval--that is, they voted on the matter of Mr. Armstrong's appointment to the full-time ministry.]** I had been well liked and loved by **these brethren**. In fact, I always continued in the affection of **the lay brethren** except when, later, other ministers got to them behind my back in my absence.

"Mr. Taylor's suggestion meant a complete change in my life. In former years the idea of becoming a minister was the very last thing I should have wanted to do. But by June, 1931, I had been preaching a great deal for three and a half years [**before his ordination**]. By this time my whole heart was in it.

"...It was decided by the officers of the Conference [all of whom had been **elected by the lay brethren** and were thus acting as representatives of those brethren] that on the next all-day meeting I was to be ordained, so I could join Elder Taylor in the [evangelistic] campaign in Eugene.

"I shall never forget that moment of my ordination.

"The meeting was being held outdoors. I do not remember where--except it was in the general rural area of Jefferson. I do not remember other circumstances, except that one or two other ministers were there in addition to Elder Taylor.

"But I do remember the ordination itself. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime

experiences like being married, and being baptized. Only this seemed to me to be **the most momentous event of my entire life.**

"Not only the ministers present, but ALL THE BRETHREN--as many as could get their hands through to my head--laid their hands on me--on my head, my shoulders, my chest and my back" (*The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Vol. I, pp. 397-399, emphasis added).

Forty-six years later, Mr. Armstrong published an article which presents a *very different view* of ordination into the ministry of God. This hierarchical approach to ordination was practiced for four decades after his article appeared, with devastating consequences for the Worldwide Church of God and its membership.

Herbert Armstrong on Ordination 1957

"In God's True Church, **GOD has set His ministers in charge.** He has given them **AUTHORITY.** He has authorized them to bind and to loose [Catholic doctrine]. He has told them to **RULE**--to preach the WORD which, like a sharp two-edged sword cuts both ways and is profitable for correction, reproof, instruction. But this shows the people would try to **SELECT THEIR OWN** pastor [This New Testament practice was followed by the brethren in the Oregon Conference who had selected him.]--'heap to *themselves* teachers.' Not the teachers God set over them--those of **THEIR** choosing, who would show their kind of perverted 'love' by turning them away from the TRUTH [Ministers who were selected "from the top down" have also turned many away from the Truth.], pleasing them with what they *want* to hear!

"God's true ministers *will never do that!* [Recent years have seen many of "God's true ministers" do just that!]

"God's ministers will never allow local assemblies to become mere social clubs!" (Armstrong, Herbert, "Local Assemblies Are NOT Social Clubs," *The Good News*, 1957.)

God Selects His Ministry Through Herbert W. Armstrong

In a 1958 article in *The Plain Truth*, Garner Ted Armstrong represents his father as God's direct instrument for the selection and ordination of His ministry. The following paragraphs are from that article:

"It is GOD who chooses and calls His servants (Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:38). The WAY he calls them needs to be definitely understood!

"Notice, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I *have chosen you, and ordained you...*' (John 15:16). When He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He said to Peter and Andrew, 'FOLLOW ME, and I will make you fishers of men' (Matt. 4:19). Notice, NOT ONE of Jesus' disciples whom He called and ORDAINED to the ministry CHOSE THEMSELVES! [Scripture reveals that the twelve who were chosen by Jesus were given to Him by the Father. Later, others were offered discipleship (Mat. 19:16, 21; Mark 10:17, 21; Lk. 10:1).]

"I want you to think *very carefully* about this next statement! It constitutes a great principle of God's word--and a vitally important KEY to be used in God's true ministry!

"THERE IS NOT ONE SINGLE EXAMPLE--ANYWHERE IN THE BIBLE, WHERE A CALLED AND CHOSEN SERVANT OF GOD CAME *forward and VOLUNTEERED* for THE OFFICE. [Paul wrote to Timothy that one could desire and seek to serve as an elder (I Tim. 3:1).]

"Jesus *called and appointed* His true disciples. Paul was *struck down* by a miracle. Paul 'took' Timothy unto him [after the brethren had chosen him and given him to Paul], and so it is *throughout* the history of God's Church. My father *fought vigorously* against the truth of God before He was finally called.

"But Jesus said, 'Wherefore *by their fruits* ye shall know them' (Matt. 7:20). The Scriptural QUALIFICATIONS imposed upon any person whom God is calling to the ministry are so absolutely RIGID. [Ted should have remembered this during his years in the ministry.]

"One great principle that seems so difficult for some few to understand is that the Creator who gives us every breath of air we breathe accomplishes His plan here below--yes, and even *governs His Church--THROUGH HUMAN BEINGS--HIS INSTRUMENTS!*

"God is now sending the Gospel of His soon-coming Government into many parts of this darkened world. But He is not yet shouting with His own booming, earth-shaking voice--He is sending the Gospel over the airwaves by the voice of HIS HUMAN INSTRUMENT [Notice how Ted shifted from "instruments" to "instrument."], Mr. Armstrong!

"God's Holy Spirit directed the minds of His praying, fasting servants [Acts 13:1-3]--His HUMAN INSTRUMENTS! For example, the Holy Spirit led Mr. Armstrong to separate Herman Hoeh, Roderick Meredith and others unto the work whereunto God had called them! He directly REVEALED to Mr. Armstrong [In the example in Acts 13, the direction of the Holy Spirit was confirmed by a plurality of elders; since Mr. Armstrong acted unilaterally, there was no confirmation.]--who could see by the FRUITS being borne of these men, by their consecration and dedication to God's work, by the need of the work--by their spiritual leadership and qualifications that *God* was doing the calling!" (Armstrong, G.T., "Who Should GOD'S Ministers Be?" *The Plain Truth*, October 1958.)

Perpetuating the Concept of Hierarchical Church Government

The doctrine that the Scriptural pattern of government is hierarchical was deeply ingrained in the minds of ministers, as well as members, of the Worldwide Church of God. Most ministers who have separated from Worldwide still have this false concept of God's government firmly fixed in their minds. They view any form of government by election as contrary to both New Testament and Old Testament teachings.

This grievous misunderstanding of Scripture is being perpetuated by former Worldwide ministers who have formed their own church organizations. The following transcript from a taped sermon by Roderick C. Meredith shows how this teaching is being perpetuated in the Global Church of God:

"Now let's turn back to the Old Testament briefly; let's turn to Exodus, Exodus chapter 18. And before we do and as we do, I want to comment on this: Who was the God of Israel? I Cor. 10:4--that Rock was Christ. Christ was the one who was speaking and leading back there. And Hebrews 13 verse 8--Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. His basic approach to these things would be the same; so here is what Jesus Christ led Moses to do, and most of you know the story back here. Moses was, uh, judging all these people and getting worn out. His father-in-law said, 'You'll get worn out if you keep doing this and they come to you one by one and ask you to decide this and that,' and so he says in verse 19--

this is Exodus 18, verse 19 --'Listen now to my voice, I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God: and you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk, and the work they must do.' As the leader, you give them the principles, you give them the overall **BIG PICTURE**, you give them the guidance. **MOREOVER**, though he said, 'You shall select from all the people,' he didn't say **VOTE**. They had no **POLITICKING!** Men didn't get up on stumps, say, 'I'm running for this, and I'm running for that, and vote for me.' He said, '**MOSES**, you get your wi... you use your wisdom,' and no doubt Moses knew the principle God later guided Solomon to write, 'In multitude of counsel there is **WISDOM**,' and by their fruits you know them, and so on; but he says, 'You **SELECT** or **CHOOSE**, or **APPOINT** from all the people **ABLE MEN**,' and God had **MEN** and not **WOMEN**--you know, a lot of churches are starting to ordain **WOMEN** now to various functions and the ministry and so on, and God does not do that-- '**...appoint able men, such as fear God**'--men who have a real **FEAR** of God, **an AAAAAAWE of GOD**--not a fear of God as a monster, but a very **PROFOUND RESPECT** for God and God's Word. 'Men of **TRUTH**'--boy, that's a key thing, isn't it, we've found in the last few years--'men of truth,' who are willing to stand up for the truth--'hating **COVETOUSNESS**; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens.' You see, **MOSES APPOINTED THEM**, and one man would rule over a thousand, and he would a ruua...appointa we a...a reebada...report directly to Moses, and then a man under him or several men under him, would be rulers over hundreds, ten men under him, of course, and then under those men would be rulers of fifties and rulers of tens, each one reporting above.

"Yes, **IT IS** a **HIERARCHICAL** system. **YES, IT IS A PYRAMID SYSTEM.** And **PEOPLE MAKE FUN OF THAT!** There is one guy out who is banging the drum against that. Ah course, as some of you have maybe heard, some of you may not have heard of that guy. Hope you haven't, thaeet...the better if you haven't, as far as that is concerned. But he is always making fun of God's form of government. But of course this **IS** God's form of government--that's the whole point! That's the way God always **DID IT**, and He **NEVER EVER DID IT ANY OTHER WAY**, and you can't show me any other way in the Bible where He ever had voting or politicking or anything like that. In fact, if you can show me that, I will give you one thousand dollars, and I mean it. Because it would be worth that to the church if we found that we're wrong on church government, wouldn't it? Mr. Pope is kind of worried there, but huh, I'm kidding, huh. But anyway, no, I'd be glad to learn that. But there isn't any place in the Bible that you are going to find any other kind of government that's s...imup;le, that's directed by God. This is God's form of government throughout--rulers of of hu...thousands, hundreds--that form of government from the top down. And if you can find any other form of government except government in

that way, uhh, then of course, I'll give you one thousand dollars; and I'll not have to pay, because is not there" (Meredith, Sermon at San Diego headquarters of Global Church of God, November 5, 1995).

Dr. Meredith is absolutely convinced that the government of ancient Israel was hierarchical. He does not realize that his words show a grievous lack of understanding of Israel's government in Old Testament times. **From the beginning, the tribes of Israel were ruled by the elder system of government.** It was to the elders of Israel that Moses was sent by God, as recorded in the book of Exodus. Moses had to obtain their consent before he could serve as their spokesman before Pharaoh. It was to the elders that Moses reported after each visit with Pharaoh. And it was to the elders that Moses communicated God's commands for the children of Israel.

A correct understanding of the government of ancient Israel shows the utter fallacy in claiming that it was hierarchical. It was a **REPRESENTATIVE** government--not a hierarchical form of government. The appointing of the judges in Exodus 18 was **NOT** carried out entirely by Moses "from the top down," as Dr. Meredith claims. To the contrary, every clan in Israel participated in the process. (A detailed explanation of the account in Exodus 18 is presented in my response to Dr. Meredith's sermon, which was published in 1995 and is available upon request.)

God's *true* government has always allowed freedom of choice. As human beings, God has made us free moral agents and has given us the right to make decisions and choices. When God calls a man or woman, he or she must *choose* to repent and live by His Word. Everyone who chooses to serve God is faced with daily decisions that must be made, based on his or her knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. To help each believer, God imparts the gift of His Holy Spirit, enabling him or her to discern truth from error. Individual believers are **COMMANDED** to "exercise their senses" in this manner continually. Those who neglect to fulfill this Scriptural command cannot grow spiritually--and that is exactly what happens under a ministerial hierarchy.

Church members who are subject to a ministerial hierarchy are stripped of freedom to exercise personal discernment in spiritual matters. That is why so many members of the Worldwide Church of God remained as spiritual babes, even though they faithfully attended Sabbath services week after week for many years. In Worldwide, as in every hierarchical church organization, the ministry makes every doctrinal decision, deciding which doctrines are Scriptural and which are not. Supposedly, this practice ensures that the members will not be subverted by false doctrines. But hierarchical church government does not prevent church members from being led astray. Quite the opposite is true, as the history of the

New Testament church and the present condition of the Worldwide Church of God so clearly show.

Hierarchical church government is **NOT** the Scriptural way and was *never* practiced by the *true* apostles of Jesus Christ in New Testament times. It was brought into the churches of God by *false* apostles, who set themselves up as dictatorial overlords, claiming to be the direct representatives of Jesus Christ. When their hierarchical authority was firmly established, these false ministers slowly but surely led the New Testament churches down the road to apostasy. That is the end result of submitting to hierarchical church government. Let us reject this unscriptural form of government and exercise our senses to discern the truth of God from the false doctrines of this world.

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