

Seven Proofs of
God's
TRUE CHURCH



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Seven Proofs of
God's
TRUE CHURCH

by
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Seven Principles
of
God
THE TRUE CHURCH

By Pastor J. L. ...



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Jesus said, "I will build my church"! And He did build it! No one in the Christian world denies there is a true Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head somewhere on this earth right now! Many imagine that Church is to be found in the hearts and minds of multiple millions who may represent dozens of different "faiths." Others claim it is one great organized and political body. Others may feel it is a tiny sect with heavy emphasis on charismatic practices. Many churches claim to be "number one," meaning they claim to be the true Church! But can you prove which church is the true Church? There is proof available! This booklet presents the seven major proofs which represent incontrovertible evidence of where God's true Church, of which Jesus Christ is the literal living Head, is working on this earth today!

INTRODUCTION

MY FAVORITE argument, used against my mother in the days of my naval service, was: "Mom, surely all these other churches can't be wrong!"

Since that time I have heard many people use the same argument on me.

It never occurred to me until many years later, following baptism and induction into Christ's ministry, that an opposite statement would work equally as well to answer that cherished argument of so many: "Surely all these churches can't be *right!*"

That's right. I was wrong!

If any one church professing to teach and preach a method of salvation to its parishioners is "right," then all others are automatically "wrong" since they are all so different!

In this confusing world of "churchianity," with dozens of differing beliefs, practices, tenets of doctrine and approaches to the Bible and Christian living, you need to face squarely the practical fact that the old argument that "surely all these churches can't be wrong" is totally inadequate and illogical as an excuse to reject the truth of God when it comes to you!

Great Deception to Arise

Jesus warned of a great deception to arise soon after His death and resurrection, which was actually only a continuation of the great Babylonian Mystery conspiracy which had had its root beginnings in the lives of ancient

apostates such as Semiramis and Nimrod. But Jesus said, "I will build *my church*" (Matt. 16:18), and promised He would be with that Church *always* — it would *never* die out! (Matt. 28:20.) You need to come to *know* where that true Church is working today.

It doesn't seem to enter the minds of most of the people of this world today, as they gullibly pursue the religion of their youth, that there really *could* be only one *true religion* — and that all others are false.

If you had a whole room full of crisp, new, counterfeit, one-hundred-dollar bills — such perfect counterfeits that perhaps only a very special investigator in the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. would be able to tell the difference — and you had, in your pocket, a dirty, crumpled one-dollar bill — which would you choose?

Would you take the counterfeit — regardless as to "how close" it might appear alongside the original — or would you take the real article?

Jesus warned: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For *many* shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [saying that Jesus is the Christ — not that 'they' are Christ]; and shall *deceive many*" (Matt. 24:4-5).

The Church Exists!

Remember, before we begin these major proofs about the true Church of God — that God's Church *does exist!*

Almost never do you hear any of the large, "respectable" Protestant bodies claiming to be the *one*, the *only* true Church, to the exclusion of all others. This, they know, would offend their "sister organizations" in the rest of American and British Protestantism. So, rather than make such a claim outwardly, or in any evangelistic sense — they may *privately* "believe" this to be true — but keep it quiet among themselves. In this way, they can all reason in their own minds that perhaps every "Christian," *regardless* of his beliefs and practices, can somehow be a member of the "true Church."

But this reasoning is totally false!

God's true Church *exists!* Jesus said He would build it. He *did* build it — and it exists *today*.

So now, sweeping your mind free from all pre-conceived opinions, prejudices, or "ideas" you may have had in the past — let's realize that in your Bible are plain, impossible-to-misunderstand statements identifying the true Church of which *Jesus Christ is the Head* (Eph. 5:23; 4:15; 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

Let's read these many scriptures, and come to thoroughly and totally understand them — and let's *prove* where the true Church of God is today.

GOD IS THE RULER

ALMOST no religious organization on this earth really believes that God is the absolute *Ruler*. Many sects and denominations of organized “churchianity” try to straddle the fence between belief in a Creator and belief in evolution. Others, while claiming to believe in God as the Creator, believe in Him more as a “First Cause,” or a vague, unreal ethereal “force” which may have had something or other to do with the creation of matter — but which did not actually bring life, as we know it today, into existence.

But God’s true Church knows Him to be the *Creator*. “I am the *Almighty God*; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1), God said to Abraham.

God revealed Himself as the Creator, and the *Ruler* of His creation, to Adam. God revealed Himself as the Ruler of all the universe, the great, divine One who *interferes* in the course of petty, human nations of ancient kings. The ancient nations of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Syria and Phoenicia knew of the “God of the Hebrews” as a great Ruler who directly interfered in the affairs of human kingdoms, on behalf of His people.

When God expelled Adam from the Garden of Eden, God was *in charge* — He was the Ruler. God had to *intervene* in the course of the whole world at the time of the Flood — interrupting the course of humankind and

the earth itself with the most truly gargantuan, awesome, monstrous, unimaginable and fantastic miracle — the great, *worldwide* Flood of the time of Noah.

God came down to this earth, shortly after the Flood, to *interfere* in the course of human affairs — scattering the people and confusing the tongues at the Tower of Babel. In spite of petty, human plans, of noble and lofty aspirations, of the grandiose plotting or the ferretlike chicanery of carnal man — God, who is the RULER, *interfered!*

God *intervened* in the personal life of Abraham — *saved* Joseph from death, and *met* Moses “face to face” in the wilderness.

He divided the Red Sea, led His people into the Promised Land — and revealed Himself to them as their Lord, their Master, their Boss — their *Ruler!*

Nebuchadnezzar Learned God Rules

Notice. “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever,” wrote Daniel, on the occasion of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream being revealed to him, “for wisdom and *might* are his: And he *changeth the times and the seasons*: he removeth kings, and *setteth up kings*: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” (Dan. 2:20-22).

Later, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: “But there is a God in heaven that *revealeth secrets*, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar *what shall be in the latter days*” (verse 28).

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the greatest nation of that time, had to learn that “the God of heaven hath given thee [Nebuchadnezzar] a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (verse 37). Later, when Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up in his pompous, human vanity, refused to acknowledge God, Daniel revealed to him that he would be driven from among men, to live like a beast, “to the intent that the living may know that the *most High ruleth* in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

Still later, Daniel repeated this tremendous revelation to Nebuchadnezzar, saying: "... And they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, *till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*" (verse 25).

The God of the Old Testament, who is the Jesus Christ of the New (Heb. 1; John 1; I Cor. 10:4; Col. 1:16-17), revealed Himself as the RULER to humankind.

Amazing, isn't it? Ancient "ignorant" Nebuchadnezzar — the man who was the king over the supposed "ancient" Babylonian Empire — knew far more about the true nature of God than most "learned" theologians of today. He knew God was the RULER!

If you have not yet read and thoroughly studied the booklet *Does God Exist?*, then you need to write for it immediately — and not let one more week go by before you thoroughly study, research and come to understand the great and awesome fact that our God — the God who looks into, supervises, leads, guides and directs His Church, is the *Creator* of heaven and earth, the *Ruler* of the entirety of the universe!

Most "Christians" Don't Know God as Ruler

Many of the false churches of this world, even though proclaiming to believe in a God who is in at least *some* way "authoritative," believe God has gone way off somewhere — either unable to intervene in their personal lives, or else totally disinterested and unconcerned with this present world, and people in it. The average churchgoing professor of modern "churchianity" sees God as a type of "divinized father-figure" into whose arms he may creep in times of duress and peril. He visualizes the "grandfather-like figure" painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo, or a vague figment of his own imagination.

What if an individual came to you and said that your name was *not* your name? Would you be shocked? What if a researcher, in nattily attired businesslike respectability, complete with portfolio — arrived at your door, came into

your living room, and proceeded to unfold from his portfolio the remarkable, fantastic story that you are not really who you think you are — but someone else. Wouldn't it be incredible?

Think of it. What if your name *had* been confused at the hospital when you were born? What if you had been "mixed up" with someone else's baby? What if — all these years — you had gone through life thinking yourself to be the offspring of one family — but actually the offspring of another?

This would certainly be one of the most overwhelming and remarkable shocks to ever come to a person in human experience — wouldn't it?

Think again. Multiple millions of professing Christians have heard, pronounced, sung, talked of, or even used in profanity the name "God." And yet these same millions have never even *known* that God!

They have not known who He is, what He is, what He is doing — have not known His qualities, His attributes, His character, or His great plan. Professing Christians have not known His intent and purpose in their lives — His great plan and purpose in this earth and the universe — have not known of His unlimited *power*, and His ability to intervene in the course of human affairs.

They have not known how He appears — how He speaks — have not known His expressed will!

They have *not*, in short, *known God!*

God Is Known to the Elect

It is only the members of the true Church of God who truly *know* God. Almighty God inspired Isaiah to describe those individuals who make in "their own images" a "god" according to the figment of their own imaginations.

Speaking of the devices of the carpenter, or the goldsmith, God says, "he falleth down unto it, and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they *cannot see*; and their hearts, that they *cannot understand*" (Isa. 44:17-18).

God says man is a *worm* (Isa. 41:14), and says: "All

nations before him are as *nothing*; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa. 40:17-18.)

Can we come to understand?

Unless a person has truly been called (I Cor. 1:26) of God, has repented, and been begotten of Him — he has not known Him.

We, of the true Church of God, *know* God to be the Creator, the Designer, Author, Architect, Beginner, of the *whole universe*. We know Him to be the RULER *over all!*

God Rules His Church

God has set *His* own government in His true Church. "And *he* gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the *work* of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

Remember, Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18), and it is He who ordains His true ministers, appointing them to the offices and responsibilities of *His* choosing.

God's true Church will *never* follow the practice of the false churches of this world who "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts [selfish preferences, favoritisms, and personal choices] shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

God says, through the pen of the apostle Paul: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, *governments*, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28).

Never forget that "*God* set the members every one of them in the body, *as it hath pleased him*" (verse 18).

The Purpose of Authority

The only use and purpose in authority is simply because there must be government, rule, order — even

when it is not always "acceptable" to the majority.

The reason God gives His true ministers authority — the reason God *rules* through His true ministers — is that He knew that rule, that *authority* would *not* always be agreed with!

The apostle Paul said: "For though I should boast somewhat more of our *authority*, which the Lord hath given us for *edification*, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed. . . . For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that *commend themselves* [think themselves to be of greater capacity and responsibility than they actually are]: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the *rule* which *God* hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (II Cor. 10:8, 12, 13).

Notice it. The apostle Paul said he had authority given him directly of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, for the express purpose of the upbuilding, the *edification* of the true Church of God! He called it a definite *rule* — position of *government*.

Was it then Paul's *personal* rule? Was it Paul, acting on his own, without real authority directly from Jesus Christ?

Decidedly not! He said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ lived *in* the apostle Paul!

It was *Christ* ruling *through* the apostle Paul — not Paul doing something "on his own."

There is no clearer proof, no more concrete demonstration of the fact of the rulership of God in and through His human servants in His Church than the letters of the apostle Paul to the young evangelist Timothy, and to Titus. These epistles are called the "Pastoral Epistles." Had the Holy Spirit not inspired them to be written, the direct *qualifications* (I Tim. 3) for deacons and elders would not have been contained directly in the Bible. These

letters, by the very fact of their existence, *prove* God *rules* in His true Church!

What if You Can't "Find It in the Bible"?

Many decisions Christ's ministers must make cannot be found directly quoted in the Bible.

Did the apostle Paul ever order his congregations, or those serving directly under him, to do certain things, follow certain orders or admonitions, for which he had no direct scripture in the Old Testament?

Certainly! Read I Corinthians 7, where Paul plainly said he had no direct commandment from Christ, but that he, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave his judgment in the matter. Remember, the "letters" of the apostle Paul were regarded by lay members of that time as just exactly that. They were "letters" — personal, friendly, warm, often-times filled with rebukes and admonitions — but letters, nevertheless.

We now know that they were inspired of the Holy Spirit. However, many of the lay members of that time did *not* look upon these letters as being directly *inspired* of God's Holy Spirit!

If they had, they would have obeyed more implicitly. The apostle Paul had written *many* additional letters which are not a part of the Bible. His first letter to the church at Thessalonica was totally misunderstood by many. Had they stood in fear, trembling in awe of this letter as if it were directly from the Holy Spirit of God — they would have *feared* to misinterpret, or misunderstand!

God Rules Through Human Instruments

But notice how Paul encouraged the members in his care to *obey* the *rule* of Almighty God — *through* His human instruments: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are *over* you in the Lord, and

admonish you; and to *esteem them very highly* in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:12-13).

The apostle Paul referred *back to verbal commands* he had given to the church at Thessalonica, and the Holy Spirit inspired him to write: "For even when we were with you, this we *commanded* you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thess. 3:10).

He continued: "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we *command* and *exhort* by our *Lord Jesus Christ*, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread And if any man *obey not our word* [notice this was a direct command from Paul, in the form of a personal letter, directed to one specific church] *by this epistle*, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (verses 11-14).

There are *many* other scriptures proving beyond a shadow of a doubt the rule, authority and the *government* which Almighty God *Himself*, and *Jesus Christ*, who is the direct Head of the Church, exercise *through* their chosen and called human instruments.

Yes, God does literally *rule* in His true Church!

And how thankful — how joyously thankful, grateful, and happy we should be that He does!

It is the *only* way for preserving unity, for keeping God's true Church together, for keeping it protected from the wolves without, or from the roots of bitterness which creep up from within.

Our God is the Ruler of the whole universe. He is Ruler on earth, interfering and intervening in the course of human governments and affairs whenever necessary. He rules — governs, guides and leads in His true Church.

Members of God's true Church not only recognize these prime factors, not only have they proved these major points directly from the inspired Word of God, but they *know* God as their direct, *personal Ruler*.

They have come to know it is God who has set definite offices, authority and *government* in the *home*.

Each member of God's true Church recognizes that

God's rule comes directly from God the Father, through Jesus Christ, to His apostle, and right on down through all the evangelists and other ministers in God's true Church to each lay member.

But, further, and even beyond recognizing the rule and the authority of God in the Church — each member thoroughly realizes and understands that God rules in his own private heart, his own private moments, his very thoughts, impulses, and his whole being.

“For ye are *bought with a price*: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (I Cor. 6:20). God says: “Ye are bought with a price” (I Cor. 7:23) — that you are *owned*, body, soul and spirit. That is, you are owned in your fleshly body, your very life (soul), and your spirit (attitude, will, volition).

If you have truly repented and given yourself to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2), then you are literally OWNED — just like a *slave* of God. You will be saying, just as Jesus Christ did, “Nevertheless not my will be done, but thine.” You will be saying, “Correct me” just as Jeremiah did. You will be saying, “Search me and try me, O God,” as David did.

You will realize — and realize it thoroughly — that your God is your personal, private, direct Ruler — your Boss, your Lord, your Master, who tells you what to do for your good and well-being. The true Christian knows he has been literally conquered of God. He has surrendered to a *conqueror* — to a Ruler!

Does Christ Rule You?

Instead of the insipid, effeminate, tremulous, spineless “way of the world” of “*receiving*” Christ, *appropriating* Christ, *taking* Christ to be “yours” — the true Christian has accepted the fact that Christ died for his sins — and along with it, the fact that Christ's death paid for the repentant sinner in full. The true Christian knows Christ purchased HIM. He doesn't “take Christ” to be his very own — as a private, selfish, *inward* something which is *not* true Christianity — but he gives *himself* — UTTERLY, to Christ.

Have you done this?

Are you so totally bought, so purchased, so completely conquered, so absolutely given to Christ that you are His literal slave? Do you look on your Savior as your personal Ruler? Does He rule you? Does He order you around? Does He direct your energies, actions, thoughts? Does He demand certain things of you?

Do you always *like* His demands? Do you always agree with Christ?

You would be a *perfect* Christian if you did — but most are *not* perfect! That is why Christ *rules* in His Church, and in our individual lives.

Notice again the scripture we read in Ephesians the fourth chapter: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists . . . For the *perfecting* of the saints [because we are not yet perfect], for the *work* of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: TILL we all come in the unity of the faith . . ." (verses 11-13).

Yes, *until* we are all willing to obey implicitly, immediately, *perfectly*.

God rules in the universe. He rules in nations. He rules His Church. He governs in the home and family, and He rules in our own personal lives.

God is our Ruler!

THREE DEFINITE SIGNS

THIS second major proof of God's true Church is composed of three important parts.

Part one concerns the true name of the true Church; part two is the understanding and observance of God's seventh-day Sabbath; part three is the understanding and observance of God's annual Holy Days.

Part I — the True Name of God's Church

Wherever Almighty God speaks of *His true Church*, identifying it by name — that name is almost always the same.

Jesus prayed, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world [but not *of* the world], and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). Jesus prayed the Father to keep His own true people in and through *a particular name!* Jesus prayed that name would be the name of the Father.

Did the Father honor this prayer? Notice Acts 20 and verse 28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves," wrote the apostle to the Ephesian elders, "and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed

the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

God did honor the prayer of Jesus Christ. He did give His own name to the true Church.

Wherever the actual name of the Church as an organized body is given in the New Testament — it is called the Church of God.

Often times the geographical location was added to the legal name of the Church, “The Church of God.”

There were then, just as there are today, many local congregations of that one true Church, which is a spiritual *organism* composed of those members who have been granted the gift of God’s Holy Spirit as a begettal.

Addressing the congregation at Corinth about internal contentions concerning hair length, the apostle Paul said: “We have no such custom, neither *the churches of God*” (I Cor. 11:16) — showing that there were many local congregations. When the apostle Paul addressed any one of these local congregations, he often included its *geographical location* — just as you, when receiving a personal letter, read not only your name on the address, but also your street or box number or rural route.

Paul had addressed this letter to “the church of God [which is the true name of the Church] which is at Corinth” (I Cor. 1:2).

Notice a few more examples:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto *the church of God* which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia” (II Cor. 1:1). “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted *the church of God*, and wasted it” (Gal. 1:13).

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted *the Church of God*” (I Cor. 15:9). “For ye, brethren, became followers of *the churches of God* which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus . . .” (I Thess. 2:14). “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of *the church of God?*” (I Tim. 3:5.)

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou

oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is *the church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of the truth . . ." (I Tim. 3:15). In this example, the apostle Paul adds the descriptive word "living," just as he went on to describe the Church as the "pillar and ground of the truth."

The apostle Paul also addressed the "church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (II Thess. 1:1), and "the churches of Galatia . . ." (Gal. 1:2). But he did not intend these to be designated as the one name of the true Church of God to continue down through the ages.

Why "Worldwide" Church of God?

Some few of the world's churches have discovered this doctrinal point of truth about the true name for the Church. They have adopted this name, and call themselves "The Church of God."

But a name is to *convey meaning*. And if these various "Churches of God" of this world are not recognizing God as their Ruler, are not completely subject to Him, are not obeying Him, do not keep His weekly Sabbath, the annual Sabbaths, and do not have any of these other seven major proofs — then, even though possessing the name authorized in Scripture, they are *not* the true Church of God.

Because of a substantial number of organizations of men laying claim to the name of the true Church — just as millions of "professing" Christians have laid claim to the name of Jesus Christ — my father, when wanting to incorporate the fledgling beginning of this phase of the true Church of God, for the purpose of conducting the business of God on this earth, was unable to incorporate it as, simply, "The Church of God."

Realizing the doctrinal truth of God's Word that the various churches were also identified as to their geographical locations, Mr. Armstrong was led to incorporate the name "The Radio Church of God," using a descriptive adjective.

God says of His Church: "Behold, I have set before thee *an open door*" (Rev. 3:8). The apostle Paul said: "For

a great door and effectual is opened unto me . . ." (I Cor. 16:9). This is speaking of *the door* God opened before him for the preaching of the gospel. And in another place he said: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord . . ." (II Cor. 2:12).

One of the main doors that God has opened before His true Church today is the door of radio. For years there was only the one small local congregation up in Eugene, Oregon — but a radio door had been opened, which was growing by leaps and bounds — fast becoming national and soon to become *worldwide*.

In recent years congregations of God's Church have been raised up *all over the world* — so the name is now *legally* "The Worldwide Church of God." "Worldwide" is an apt descriptive adjective which accurately describes the global proportions of God's Church today.

But the actual biblical name of the true Church has always been, and always will be — *the Church of God!*

What the Church Really Is

God names things, or people, what they are. There is real meaning in a name. When God writes of His Church, He calls it *His*. It is the Church — and the only Church — that truly belongs to Him. His true Church is directly owned by Him; it is His instrument, His own property, to perform His Work on this earth.

The English word "church" merely means "congregation." Wherever you find the word "church" in the New Testament, it is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, from which such English words as "ecclesiastical" or "ecclesiastics" are derived. The word simply means "group" or "collection" of people. There is nothing holy, nothing sacred, about the word *church*, by itself. It is only when you further identify which group of people, with the name of God, that there is anything holy about the name!

"I will build my Church," said Jesus Christ. And it is His. Jesus Christ is the direct Head of the Church (Col. 1:18) — which is described as *His own body* (Eph. 1:23). The only ones who are truly members of that one body are

those who have been put into it by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Notice: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized *into one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the receiving of God's Spirit at the time of the laying on of hands — after repentance and water baptism.

Notice, then, it is only those who have received God's Spirit that are in the true Church. The Church is not a physical building, or a rented hall or even an organization. (Technically, organization is what the Church *has* — not what it *is*.) The building is NOT the Church — but simply a building. It is that group of converted people in whom is the very Spirit of God, which makes up the Church.

Jesus said we must repent (Luke 13:3, 5). Peter said repentance *must precede* baptism (Acts 2:38; 3:19). God inspired Paul to say: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ," God inspired Paul to write, "he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Yet it is only through obedience to God, through total repentance and complete surrender to God — symbolized by figuratively laying down your life and your whole being in water baptism (Rom. 6:3-6) — that you may receive the Spirit of God.

It is only those who have really been conquered of God, who have unconditionally repented, been baptized, and have really received of His Spirit who are members of His Church.

They are then joined to Him. They do not join themselves together, becoming a "group" of human beings known by a certain name. Rather, they become directly joined to Christ!

Notice it: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," said Jesus. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in

him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:1-5).

The newly begotten child of God becomes *directly joined to Christ*. He is the Vine supplying the life-giving sap from the roots which produces the fruit on the branches. The branches, or the individual members of the Church, are joined *only through the vine*. If any member is not truly in Christ, and Christ living in Him, then he is *not* a member of the true Church.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" wrote John, "that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

The true fellowship of one member of the Church to another is in and through the Father and the Son. Any worldly organization of men, banding themselves together in their own fellowship, is just like a group of branches lying in a pile. Not joined to a productive, life-giving vine, they are unproductive; they are lifeless.

Do you see? The name of the true Church of God is a vitally important proof of the Church. It is not to be taken lightly; it has real meaning.

God names things for what they are.

Parts II and III — The Sabbath and the Holy Days

You have *never* heard a sermon really proving Sunday is to be observed by Christians as "the Lord's day." You have never heard a sermon going "right down the line" from one scripture to another, from one book of the Bible to another — proving, demonstrating, clarifying, showing the history of, the development of, the approval by Christ and the apostles for the various "holidays" sanctioned by the churches of this world!

You never have — and you never will! Why?

Because these days are not questioned by anyone in this world's churches. They are "par for the course" — they are carelessly taken for granted. "Doesn't everyone observe these days?" ask deceived people in the world's churches.

No — not everyone — only those who have never proved it, never looked into it, never researched it, never sincerely tried to find the real truth about which days are to be observed.

Hundreds of "Excuses"

These churches appear to feel guilty about their pagan holidays, and their "Lord's Day." They know certain churches have made a fair amount of noise concerning the weekly Sabbath, and seem to write prodigious literature claiming to prove and absolutely substantiate their beliefs in observing this day.

This leads to feeble attempts by many denominations to point to their vast numbers, the universal custom of all "Christians," or vague references to the time of Christ's resurrection.

Every angle and method of attack against God's true Sabbath day and His annual Holy Days is used. One method is to freely admit the days were never changed by the authority of Christ or anyone else — and that they are a part of the "Law." Then, however, those who are not familiar with the Bible are unsuspectingly led through a labyrinth of twisted scriptures which supposedly "prove" that all of God's law is done away. This includes the Sabbath, claim such deceivers.

Failing this method — numerous other excuses are given. People reason the Sabbath can't be kept except in Jerusalem, or that it must be kept on Jerusalem time. People reason that you cannot keep a Sabbath if you live in a cave, or deep in a canyon, since your "sunset to sunset" would last only a very few moments.

People reason in their own carnal minds about Eskimos at the North Pole (there are no Eskimos at the North Pole), or about the International Date Line, or that perhaps time could have become lost. Some claim that the whole world could have been off the weekly cycle ever since God revealed His Sabbath day.

These are only a few of the many arguments against obedience to God in the observance of His weekly Sabbath day and His annual Sabbaths as well.

You need to really know the answer to all these "arguments." You need to know (and know that you know) that God's weekly Sabbath must be observed faithfully, and that His annual Holy Days must be observed as well.

The Many Proofs

First you need to recognize that the Sabbath was firmly established and *sanctified* at creation (Genesis 2:1-3). Then you should prove carefully that the Ten Commandments were in full force and effect even prior to the time of Moses — that they are not now, never were, and never shall be "the law of Moses."

They are the laws of Almighty God, the one Lawgiver and Judge. An article on the subject is available for any of you who have not yet read it. It's entitled "Were the Ten Commandments in Force Before Moses?"

Next you need to thoroughly prove that God's law is firmly and positively established — today. You need to prove that grace does not mean license, or permissiveness, or having your own way — being free to disobey the law of God (cf. Rom. 6:1-2). If any of you feel the slightest amount of insecurity on this point of "law or grace," then write for our free reprint article — "The New Testament Teaching on Law and Grace."

You also need to prove the weekly time cycle has never been broken — and can do so by writing for our free booklet *Has Time Been Lost?* You need to absolutely, infallibly, irrevocably, and once and for all prove that the resurrection was not on Sunday — and that even if it remotely, faintly, possibly could have been (which is a foolish assumption in the first place) there is still *no command*, nor any example, to perpetuate its observance. Write for another free booklet titled *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*.

Additionally, the Worldwide Church of God publishes two major booklets on these subjects. One — *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* — goes thoroughly into many of the arguments religionists have concocted against observing the Sabbath over these many centuries since the time

of Christ. The other one — *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days — Which?* — not only shows why these biblical festivals should be observed today, but also their vital meanings in explaining God's overall plan of salvation. Write for your free copies of both of these fine booklets.

You should study thoroughly — not only from the booklets and magazine articles made available to you through God's Church, but also in your own public library and from your own individual research — the true origin of Sunday observance and the observance of the pagan holidays of this world.

In this way, when you thoroughly and totally saturate yourself with the many thorough proofs about God's weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days, and when you thoroughly disprove the pagan observances of this world — it is unlikely that you will ever have any doubts on this subject again.

So remember — and never forget — that in one or two remote cases, some pagan churches of this world may have appropriated to themselves one part of one proof (which used in this respect is not proof at all), but that there is *no church* on the face of the entirety of this earth that could lay claim to one complete proof out of the entire seven major proofs of the identity of God's true Church.

This second major proof of God's true Church is composed of three parts: the name the "Church of God"; the weekly Sabbath day, which is God's identifying sign of His true people; and the annual Holy Days, which God gave to His true Church — and which are still observed by His true Church today.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PAGAN DOCTRINES

LOOK AT the darkened superstitions around you. In the modern world, we seemingly take for granted the various bizarre “doctrines” and “beliefs” of the many religions. We’re not even especially alarmed at the almost fantastic varieties of “belief” held by the average passersby on the streets of our modern cities.

A Plethora of Paganism

Some believe in “going to heaven.” Others believe there is no God — that evolution is true. Still others believe in various interpretations of pantheism, polytheism, deism, dualism, theistic evolution, and, give or take a few hundred, about a thousand more shades and colorings of “belief.” Fast friends in many social circles believe widely different things about religion.

Sitting across from each other at the bridge table may be one person fully expecting to be “raptured” away secretly some day — while another believes there is no living Christ. One thinks only his body dies, and his “soul” goes off to heaven, while another believes he will reappear in the form of a gnat, or a mosquito.

Still another believes he isn’t even there! He is only a transitory thought, progressively coming into cosmic con-

sciousness, or some other empty, totally meaningless phraseology.

The true Church of God *firmly believes* God when He says: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:9). God's Church shows that *Satan* is the god of this present world: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4).

All nations have been deceived. They are in spiritual *darkness*. God said, through Isaiah: "Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Eternal hath poured out upon you the spirit of *deep sleep*, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed" (Isa. 29:9-11).

The great *false* religion, the great whore of Revelation, described in the 17th and 18th chapters, has made the nations spiritually drunk on false religious doctrines. "... The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine [false doctrines] of her fornication And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" (Rev. 17:2, 5).

Think, for a moment, of the almost fantastic superstitions so many in this spiritually darkened world believe.

Many believe they have a soul that is immortal, and that they are destined to go to an ever-burning hell because of Adam's sin. Many probably think of God as a vague, nebulous sort of "Trinity" way off somewhere — not much concerned about the here and now on this earth!

Some believe they might someday go to "heaven" and sprout wings — to shuffle endlessly through pipe organ music, or play on a harp, as they stroll down streets of gold and silver!

To them the devil has horns and a pitchfork, Adam "fell," angels have halos, and all "good" Christians go to church on Sunday.

Christmas and Easter are two of the most important "holidays" (watered down from *holy-days*).

Does it sound familiar?

And yet when you really come to understand them — how confusing, how utterly empty and senseless, are the pagan "doctrines" held to be true by the blinded peoples of this present world.

The third great proof of the true Church of God is knowing the *truth*. Knowing the truth about the *pagan* origins of the "doctrines" of this world — and knowing the real truth of God.

What Is a "Doctrine"?

Do people actually *learn* anything from the various "doctrines" they believe? Is there any actual sense, any continuity, any theme or plan to them? Do people learn something vitally important about their own salvation, for example, at Christmas time? Do they understand thoroughly and deeply about the definite, provable, practical, workable *solutions* to this world's problems?

Do they really *know* what the world will be like in the twenty hundreds, in Century Twenty-One? Do they really understand what man is, why he is, where he is going?

Are they taught the *truth* about the very nature of man — the *purpose* in that nature — and its ultimate *destiny*? No! They certainly are not.

A *doctrine* is just one more point of truth about the purpose and plan of God.

A "doctrine" is not an utterly disconnected "idea" or philosophy about some completely irrelevant and vague-sounding sanctimonious something!

A doctrine is not a cherished *argument* — a *weapon* one uses with which to fight against some other doctrine!

A doctrine is a simple *truth* from *God's Word*.

It is a *fact*, a *truth*, which further explains the whole purpose of God, and the great plan He is using to work out that purpose here below!

John wrote: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the *doctrine* of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the *doctrine of Christ*, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (II John 9-10).

"This doctrine" is the doctrine of Christ; it is *not* various doctrines *about* Christ — quaint little "stories" and traditions about His birth, or sentimental teachings using His name for window dressing — but the very *truth* which *He* brought!

Christ is the *Word*. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2).

He *is* the Bible, personified.

The real truth, then, the *true* doctrine of Christ, is the truth which He reveals through His Word — *not* a pagan superstition, ancient tradition, or "idea" about Christ or the Bible manufactured by men.

God says: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, *one faith* . . ." (Eph. 4:4-5).

One faith — meaning one body of beliefs, one set of doctrines, one perfectly harmonious truth believed and practiced by the true Church of God. Unless a point of truth you may believe fits perfectly and harmoniously into the whole of the doctrine of Christ — unless each truth you have learned only further serves to elucidate, clarify and further explain the whole of the plan of God — then it may *not* be a "truth," but error.

The Truth About the Pagan Doctrines

The great third proof of the true Church of God is knowing the truth about the pagan doctrines masquerading as truth in this world, and knowing the real truth about the true doctrine of Christ.

This proof is a *huge* proof — embodying every scrap and shred, every bit and fiber of understanding concerning

the rank paganism that has crept into every nook and cranny of false religion.

Look at the *major* doctrines of the professing world.

Millions fully expect to "get to heaven" someday. Having been told about heaven as the reward of the saved since they were little children, they have come, without any shred of real proof whatever, to really *believe* this pagan doctrine. Perhaps they actually saw and heard a "deathbed repentance" of a departed loved one. Perhaps, just as their grandmother died, she claimed to have seen a "vision" of heaven. And, whether they had ever seen any real biblical proof or not, thousands of deceived human beings would take such an experience as this as absolute proof positive that the loved one "went to heaven."

Notice how professing Christians cling to this vague hope of heaven with a fervent tenacity — just as Satan the devil became finally obsessed with the same idea. Lucifer, the great archangel who had been given *this earth* to rule, wasn't willing to "settle" for just this earth. He wanted to get to heaven! He wanted to *leave* this earth, and get up to heaven — usurping the very throne of God.

Satan's desire was a *selfish desire* to *get* for the self. He has instilled this same tenacious, grasping, selfish desire to "get to heaven" in the minds and hearts of millions of people.

One independent preacher wrote at the end of a pamphlet, "Dear Reader: Are you willing to settle for earth?" This minister was trying to attack the plain truth about *this earth* being the inheritance promised to all Christians.

Do you see? Do you understand his attitude? Millions of people who think they are "Christian" are absolutely filled with the selfish concept of *getting* for the self. They have a belligerent, set-jawed, steely eyed determination to have their own way — in spite of what God says in the Bible!

But heaven is not the reward of the saved! God's truth is that the saints shall *reign on the earth* (Rev. 5:10) and shall rule here below, with Christ, for one thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall

inherit the *earth*" (Matt. 5:5). He said those who are overcomers will rule the nations on this earth with Him (Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

And these are only a small few of the literally dozens of plain scriptures, and sometimes whole chapters, in the sacred Word of God which absolutely *prove* that the "get-to-heaven" idea of this darkened and pagan world is of purely Satanic origin. If you have not read the booklets *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* and *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?*, then you need to write for them. You need to really prove God's truth — and prove the error of the pagan doctrines of this world.

The Trinity

God's true Church knows the fact of the *duality* of the Godhead.

But the world believes in the Trinity. So deliberate has been the pagan attempt to foist this doctrine upon the world that a copyist in the eighth century A.D. inserted totally and completely spurious words into the Bible, attempting to "prove" this major doctrine of paganism.

Turn, in your own Bible (King James Authorized Version), to I John 5:7. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

But do you know not a *one* of these words is in *any* of the original manuscripts? Did you know not one of these words ever appeared in the manuscripts until after the invention of printing?

Comparison with many of the more modern texts and simple research will absolutely prove this important point to you. Verse seven should be composed of the last half of verse six. The seventh verse of I John 5 *originally* read: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Our free booklet entitled *Is God a Trinity?* explains in detail.

Who was a member of a great "Trinity"? Lucifer — who became Satan the devil! There are only three great archangels mentioned in the Bible: Lucifer, Michael and Gabriel. *Lucifer fell* (Luke 10:18), not Adam.

But God is *dual*! There is the Father and the Son. In all creation, God made *pairs* of humans, pairs of sexes. A man has two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two hands, two feet, two legs, two arms.

There was the first man Adam, and the second man Adam (or Christ). There is the Old Covenant and the New Covenant; the Old Testament and the New Testament; the former prophets and the latter prophets. Prophecy is often *dual*. God is one, in two persons — not three.

Jesus said, "I and my Father [just the two of us!] are one" (John 10:30).

The Soul

God's true Church knows the real truth about the physical, mortal, fleshly, material soul.

God says: "... The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20).

Solomon wrote: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast..." (Eccl. 3:19). God's true Church knows that the wages of sin is *death* (Rom. 6:23) — *not* eternal life in a different location — an ever-burning hell. Satan is immortal — and will be *tormented forever*. (See the booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*) But he has the world believing these doctrines *about himself*.

Belief in the "immortality" of the soul is one of the basic and *beginning* errors of all modern professing Christianity. Have you really proved the truth about the soul to yourself? Do you have many proof texts on this subject carefully marked in your own Bible? Could you prove it to someone else? We have a comprehensive booklet on the subject. Write for your free copy of *Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*

God's true Church also knows the truth about the Gehenna fire of the Bible — the one of which Jesus Christ solemnly warned. He said: "... Fear him which is able to destroy *both* soul and body in hell [Greek, *Gehenna*]" (Matt. 10:28).

The incorrigible sinner shall be *burnt up* (Mal. 4:1), and shall become *ashes* under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:3).

Toally ignoring the many plain scriptures of the Bible, which even become quite specifically detailed (such as those in Malachi which I just mentioned, describing how human beings when burnt become as ashes), the pagan philosophers have seized upon a vague (to them) parable in Luke the sixteenth chapter.

Undoubtedly, thousands of lurid, frightening, raving and shouting sermons have been based on the account of Lazarus and the rich man.

God's Church knows the real truth about God's punishment for the wicked — and about a hellfire which is a lot hotter than the pagan concepts of this world. This, too, is something you should have carefully proved to yourself — and have thoroughly marked and noted in your Bible. If you have not carefully studied our booklet *Is There a Real Hellfire?* then write for it immediately.

God's true Church knows the truth about creation, about the *purpose* of God, and the great *plan* by which He is working out that purpose. God's true Church knows the real truth about the nature of God, of angels, and of man. God has revealed the almost incomprehensible truth of just what salvation is to His true Church.

You need to be so thoroughly grounded and rooted in these great truths that you have not only proved them to yourself — but you can completely and irrevocably *prove* them to others.

GOD'S POWER

WITH A throaty roar, like the deep rumble of several locomotives, the giant 747 Boeing jet thundered down the runway. I felt a surge of power as I was literally pushed back into the seat by the full force of those four huge fan-jet engines turned up to maximum power. Almost instantaneously, it seemed, the giant metal bird was thundering into the skies over Los Angeles.

That's power!

Many times in many parts of the world, I've experienced the thrill of takeoff of a giant jet airplane. I'm still not so blasé about jet travel that the takeoff of a giant jet fails to impress me.

When I personally witnessed the huge Saturn 5 at Cape Kennedy, I couldn't help but be awed by the surging *power* of those huge rockets as they soared straight up into the blue sky like gargantuan bullets.

That's real power!

My brother, Richard D. Armstrong, went to Las Vegas many years ago, while still a student at Ambassador College, and was able to witness with his own eyes (though through heavy, special dark glasses) the explosion of an atomic bomb.

He described it to me. With a brilliant flash, brighter than the morning sun, an awesome, mushrooming cloud began to form, instantly rising several thousands of feet above the Nevada desert floor. Then, moments later, a huge rumbling, ear-splitting shock struck the onlookers

with actual physical force, just like a blow from some superhuman hand.

This atom bomb blast was only a tiny bomb, a mere "pip" compared to the giant multimegaton hydrogen bombs of today. Actually, it takes the explosive force of an atom bomb to set off a hydrogen bomb.

An atom bomb is just a "match" to ignite a hydrogen bomb.

Air Force planners have considered developing a "Tril-loton" H-bomb, named for being equivalent in destructive force to one trillion tons of TNT.

Do you grasp what a trillion tons of TNT really is? One million is a thousand thousand. But it takes one thousand million to make a billion. A trillion is one thousand billion!

If one hundred ten-ton trucks had been laboring mightily, dumping their maximum load of TNT once each minute since the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, over 1900 years ago, there would still not be a pile of TNT big enough to represent the destructive force contained in just this one bomb.

If all the tractors, trucks, loaders and earthmovers on earth were to labor together for the next century, they couldn't amass a pile of earth big enough to represent a mound of TNT weighing a trillion tons.

But that's just the beginning. Compared to even smaller, unnoticed storms on the surface of our sun — even this destructive force is almost *nothing* in comparison.

And our sun is but a dwarf when compared to other great "suns" or stars in the great universe.

That's real power!

But all this man-made power is nothing compared to the awesome, giant, all-encompassing, unlimited, irresistible, magnitudinous, gargantuan, overwhelming, supreme, absolute power of God! . . . *Our* God, the God who rules His Church, who sustains it, who listens to your personal, private prayers.

Think of it. What a fantastic amount of power God has. In the first of these seven great proofs of the true

Church of God, we saw how God is the great Ruler of all.

And God maintains and guards His great position of Ruler by means of His great power.

The power of God is the force by which God made all things. It is the power by which He made the universe. It is the force, the energy, the unlimited power by which He *sustains* and *upholds* all things.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his [a] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the *brightness* of his *glory*, and the express image of his person, and *upholding all things by the word of his POWER*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high . . ." (Heb. 1:1-3).

That is a glimpse of the power of God.

And that power is available to you. That power is in God's Church. That power is another of the great proofs of the true Church of God.

Piquant Signs and Wonders

People want a sign. They desire a piquant "wonder."

But Jesus said: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a *sign*; and there shall *no sign be given* unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 16:4).

Yes — the world seeks a sign.

God says: "When thou art come into the land which the Eternal thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth *divination*, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an *abomination* unto the Eternal . . ." (Deut. 18:9-12).

Charlatans parade before deceived people, claiming great healing powers, or claiming power to produce special signs. These "signs," however, are always in the realm of witchery, of divination, of familiar spirits!

This is *not* the power of God!

Your Bible predicted there would be *many* false prophets, and that they would "shew *great signs* and *wonders*; insomuch that, *if* it were possible, they shall deceive the *very elect*" (Matt. 24:24).

Simon Magus was reputed to be the "great power of God" (Acts 8:10). Yet his was the power of the devil and his demons. Simon kept his followers deceived by thrilling piquant signs and wonders. "And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had *bewitched* them with *sorceries*" (Acts 8:11).

Make no mistake about it. The false claims about the power of God are perhaps going to be some of the greatest events to yet affect your life. The false miracles — the false signs and wonders of the future — and some of them in the very near future — would deceive even the very elect, if God would permit it.

Don't be deceived. This great proof of the true Church of God is not by any means a minor point you can afford to take lightly. Rather, it is vitally important — whether or not you really, deeply and thoroughly understand it could affect your eternity.

What Is God's Power?

Being human — we are impressed with *human* power. We see the swelling muscles of a weight lifter, the straining efforts of a pole vaulter, the terrific dexterity of a gymnast, or the smashing right of a boxer — and we're impressed.

Passersby stop to gawk at a giant crane swinging a huge steel ball to smash buildings, or a huge bulldozer shoving tons of material, or the giant bites of earth a huge scoop shovel devours as it excavates for a new building. Seeing these man-made machines, humans are impressed.

But what really *should* be impressive is the manifestation of God's power.

Compare, in your own mind, the soaring might of a giant Sequoia or Redwood tree to a tiny man. Compare, for a moment, the thundering roar of Niagara, or Victoria on the Zambezi, to a mere man.

Compare the majesty of mighty mountains — the sweep and scope of this vast earth — the surging, tossing expanse of the ageless sea.

And then realize that this whole earth is but a tiny speck when compared to our sun, and to other stars in the milky way, or our own galaxy.

But that's only the remotest beginning. Our sun, the only star of our solar system, is but a "white dwarf" star in comparison to some of the other huge stars of awesome proportions. Betelgeuse, the supergiant of Orion (as the pagans dubbed one of the distant constellations) is fully five hundred and thirty times larger than our sun — and yet our sun is so gigantic in comparison to the earth as to defy our powers of comprehension.

For example, of the total composition of the entire solar system — that is, the sun, all the nine planets, their thirty-one moons, thousands of asteroids, billions of comets and all other matter in the solar system — the sun comprises nearly 99.9 percent!

Our sun, which, remember, is but a dwarf in comparison to many stars in many galaxies, is 864,000 miles in diameter. "Sunspots," or solar storms and eruptions, appear as dark, sculptured holes in the "skin" of the sun — and are from five hundred to as much as fifty thousand miles wide!

Other disturbances on the surface take the form of huge, spiraling loops, or solar prominences and arches. Often these arches reach to a height of thirty thousand miles, and bridge a span of more than one hundred twenty-five thousand miles — half the distance separating the earth from the moon.

Leaping, fiery tornadoes — tongues of fiery hydrogen — shoot up as far as one hundred thousand miles into space! An eruptive arch, one of the largest solar explosions ever recorded, was actually photographed in June of 1946. It remained visible for over two hours — and stretched more than a million miles into space before it disappeared!

But to your human eye these unusual features of the sun's surface remain obscured behind superbrilliance you can't look at without special, heavy dark lenses. These

prominences must be photographed by the means of huge, specially constructed solar telescopes.

Think of it! Our sun, operating on the exact same principle as the hydrogen bomb, is fantastically *huge* beside our earth.

Yet, the sun is but a dwarf star in comparison to others. Look at the fathomless, limitless universe. That's power.

That's real power!

The Power of Christ

Jesus Christ was the Word (John 1:1) who *did* wield all this vast power of creation. "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his [a] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, *by whom also he made the worlds*; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his *power*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high . . ." (Heb. 1:1-3).

Jesus made Betelgeuse, the spiral andromeda, the vastness of the limitless universe, with the billions upon billions of blazing suns and stars. He made this earth, with the huge mountains, the surging seas, the vast prairies and deserts.

But, even possessing this awesome power, He emptied Himself of every bit of it — and came down to this earth — to be born as a totally helpless little child. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God [counted not equality with God a thing to be grasped at, clung to, or jealously and tenaciously held]: but made himself of no reputation [emptied Himself], and took upon him the form of a *servant*, and was made in the likeness of men . . ." (Phil. 2:6, 7).

Then, as a human being, Jesus Christ showed us how utterly and totally *powerless* He was.

He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). He was utterly unable, so far as any physical strength or ability was concerned, to accomplish the great Work God had sent Him to do.

He was powerless.

He said, "The Son can *do nothing* of himself..." (John 5:19). Yet Jesus had tremendous power. He conquered Satan the devil — He turned the water into wine, healed thousands, cast out demons, fed the thousands, withered the fig tree, paid taxes with a coin from the mouth of a fish.

He walked on water, calmed storms, performed hundreds and hundreds of miracles.

But these signs Jesus performed were only a part of the great works to which He pointed. Notice: "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do *hear* and *see*: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the *gospel* preached to them" (Matt. 11:2-5).

Notice — Jesus said the *gospel* was being preached. The preaching of the message He brought, to even a few hundred, or a few thousand, was one of the great works which Christ said directly proved His Messiahship.

But He did nothing by Himself!

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

There was the source of Jesus' great power. The Father in heaven worked through Jesus as a human instrument.

Jesus Gave Power — But Why?

Jesus Christ not only demonstrated the tremendous power source He had, but also gave that power to others. "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them *power and authority* over all devils [demons], and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1).

But was this power only for healing — and for casting out of demons?

Notice: "And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (verse 2).

When Jesus said the works He performed bore witness of Him, He emphasized the gospel He brought — the truth of God.

After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, *All power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). He told them that great power He had possessed was now His to wield.

Now He was no longer human — no longer weak, physically able to do nothing of Himself — now He was a veritable power source — a dynamo of spiritual power. Now He had the same power that molded the fantastic sun, that compacted the awesome forces into the universe — the power that hurled the giant stars into the blackness of endless trillions of miles of space! Now Jesus was power personified.

What was the big job He intended to accomplish through this power?

"Go ye therefore [in the light of this tremendous power I now have], and *teach* . . ." (Matt. 28:19). His first command was to teach, to preach (Mark 16:15) the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

He said: ". . . *Teach all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have *commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus said His great power would always be there — dependable power, constant power, sane, safe, guided, directed power — to accomplish the great commission He was giving His true Church.

You can *depend* on the rising of the sun — and you know you can. You can depend on the vastness of the power of this gargantuan universe — just as the common, everyday forces, the energies we take for granted are dependable. You depend on inertia, on the law of gravity, on heat, light, and the myriad laws that Christ upholds by the Word of His power.

He said His Church would be imbued with this same power. We can depend on it.

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive *power* [not an empty, meaningless, emotional ‘sensation,’ or some satanic counterfeit, designed to conceal the great meaning of the real power of God], after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8).

Notice — the power was so they could carry His message to the uttermost parts of the earth — not as a sensual thrill to decorate their own persons.

Jesus said we, today, would be accomplishing even greater works than He accomplished through that great power He supplies.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater* works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12).

Jesus was able to reach only a few thousands at any one time, at the most, with the truth of the gospel. But through the power He supplies (and He does supply it — it depends on His power, the miraculous power of the transmission of electrical force and energy, bouncing electrical impulses off the mantle of the ionosphere) Christ uses twenty-five million watts of power to preach His gospel to the world today.

But that power is only the beginning.

You Are To Inherit Power

The reason you live is to learn to use power — and use it rightly.

When you first begin to become educated to the powers of this modern, electronic, machine, jet, space age — you learn the dangers of misguided power.

There are safety precautions to be observed. Every child must be taught the dangers of fire, of gas, of moving automobiles, of falling, or of colliding with objects.

Much of all scientific endeavor — and, as a matter of fact, practically all of it — is either a study of, or learning how to harness power, force, energy.

Science knows how to store power in a battery, to convert atomic energy to useful purposes — but science does not know how to control the greatest potential power of all — the human mind.

You are a potential dynamo!

You are a potential power!

You can come to be sheer force — compacted together into huge, limitless, driving, surging, energizing, irresistible, immovable, *omnipotent power*.

You can become God!

The four living creatures around the throne of God said: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). John said he heard every creature in earth and in heaven saying in unison: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (verse 13).

Jesus Christ is going to share this limitless power with us. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I *give power* over the nations: and he shall *rule* them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26-27).

The universe belongs to God. He is going to give it to His children — when they qualify to control its powers.

It defies our limited minds to comprehend the height, the length, the breadth, the scope of God's power. We can only understand but a small fraction of the immensity of God. And yet, that very power is in *His Church*.

Thousands of lives are being changed. Families are being restored — children's hearts turned to their parents. Many are being healed. Some write of cancers disappearing; deafness being cured; demons being cast out.

But the greatest evidence of God's power in His Church today is that multiple millions are hearing the very same gospel Jesus preached.

Think of the veritable sea of humanity hearing every *World Tomorrow* program. Of the several millions reading the *Plain Truth*. Truly, greater works are being done. This really is the one true Church of the great, living God.

God says to each of you: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest [even though it would have frightened and awed you, had you seen it], and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words . . . but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem [the Church], and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant Whose voice then *shook the earth*: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which *cannot be shaken may remain*. Wherefore *we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved*, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: *for our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb. 12:18-28).

And that is power!

A BALANCED WAY OF LIFE

SURE, I'm a Christian, but I'm not working at it very hard," said the businessman in casual cocktail conversation.

"Pray for us, brother Armstrong. We're Christians, but we're backsliders, having a hard time of it," was the plaintive plea of a letter recently received.

Millions upon millions of people feel they are "Christians." That is, they are believers in the "Christian religion," as opposed to the beliefs of Islam, Buddha or Orthodox Judaism.

But once beyond the vague label of "Christian," all similarity stops. "Christians," it seems, come in every conceivable size, shape and ideal. One can claim the name of Christ while believing and practicing the very antithesis of the beliefs of another who claims the same name.

"Christianity," having undergone an evolution in meaning from the first century to the maze of confusing, conflicting beliefs and practices claiming the same title today, is an increasingly difficult word to define. Hundreds upon hundreds of organizations claim the title "Christian" — yet they may be so opposed to one another, not only in theology and theory, but in active internecine warfare, as to constitute the bitterest of enemies.

Today, as "belief in the Bible" seems to be gaining ground, dozens of the more bizarre among all so-called "Christian" groups have emerged. Some are ultramilitant, actively attempting to defy existing institutions or even other "Christian" organizations, while others are pacifistic, isolationist and prefer to live a secluded communal life.

In Search of Christians

But suppose you were to conduct an experiment. By using the *Bible definition* of "Christian" — meaning the plain, simple, impossible-to-be-misunderstood scriptures clearly defining just what is *meant* by the name — suppose you embarked on a *search* to find such people; to find, literally, the Church of which Jesus Christ is living Head.

How would you do it?

Where would you look?

Should such a search begin in the large, multimillion-member organizations whose steepled edifices dot the land? Among tiny, struggling missionary groups? Among the various newly organized youth groups claiming to be God's own children? Where?

How would you select the country of your research? Among which races, nationalities, political or religious persuasions would you search?

Would you begin looking in health food stores, at sports events, at communal settlements tucked away in secluded hills, among primitive tribes, or in busy offices on Wall Street?

To the Pharisees of Jesus' day, such a search for a true "Christian" (though the pharisaical religion never acknowledged Christ and was most certainly not "Christian") would be simple.

Any yardstick, ruler or other measuring device would do. Simply compare the breadth of the phylacteries. Take a look at all the religious deeds noted thereon. Check to find out whether the man indeed fasted "twice in the week," carefully tithed of mint, anise and cummin (Luke 18:12; Matt. 23:23), and most especially, looked with utter contempt and disdain upon people of lowly status in life whose righteousness was of an inferior brand.

During the Middle Ages, the search for a true Christian would have been equally simple. Look for the sign of the cross, the flashing blade of a blood-soaked sword catching the glint of the dying sun as it was dismembering the body of yet another "infidel." Look into the dungeons of medieval "Christianity," where hapless victims were put to death on the rack or burned at the stake. The true "Christians" of that day could be found ringing a town square of a tiny village hamlet, their eyes protruding in sadistic delight at the death cries of an alleged "witch," as the hooded executioner tossed his blazing torch into the pile of branches at her feet.

Yardstick Religion

All down through history it has been the same.

True believers? True "Christians"? Where to find them — how to search — where to begin?

Simple. You do it with calipers, measuring tape, a yardstick, a stopwatch, or with binoculars — or so it would appear, if you were to listen to some militant voices.

Find a "true Christian"? Simple. Check his diet. Notice the clothing. Pay special attention to the sideburns, hair length and facial hair.

Peep curiously into the creases around the eyelids to see if there is the faintest touch of makeup there.

Search pantries, closets and kitchen shelves.

See if you can find any "pagan abominations," like soda crackers, potato chips (which may have been fried in hydrogenated oil — ugh!) or a bottle of Alka-Seltzer.

Searching for a "true Christian"?

Simple.

Take time out for several dozen plane flights back and forth across the country. Notice carefully the passengers. Wait until you find one who, after takeoff and the "No Smoking" sign has gone out, whips out a well-marked Bible, adjusts his reading glasses and begins to read studiously, all the while making obvious red-and-blue marks with a flourish. Obviously, this fellow never has time to study his Bible at home, or in church services, or in private

Bible study in his motel room when he travels; and even more obviously, he would not be found dead with such pagan literature as up-to-the-moment news magazines, or even a novel, in his possession — and so, in order to be a proper “light” to the world, he tries desperately to create the impression that he is a religious fanatic.

Some “true believers” are identified by shaved heads and long robes, while others are identified by huge beards, flat-brimmed hats, square-toed shoes and a rejection of all twentieth-century life.

A Balanced Christian Life

Unfortunately, it seems one of the most truly difficult tasks confronting members of God’s true Church during this modern age is living a *balanced* Christian life.

But, difficult or not, that balanced *way of life* is, according to your Bible, one of the most powerful single *proofs* of God’s true Church!

Jesus plainly warned, “Ye shall know them *by their fruits*”! In condemning the pharisaical self-righteousness of a group of bigoted hypocrites who plotted His own murder, Jesus continually pointed to the *fruit* of the pharisaical *way of life*, as well as the false *doctrine* of the Pharisees.

They were the epitome of “outward righteousness” during Jesus’ day. While Jesus Himself was accused by the self-righteous Pharisees of being a “gluttonous man and a winebibber,” simply because he attended banquets and did enjoy a glass of wine now and then, Christ plainly showed the supercilious snobbery of the egomaniacal Pharisee was nothing but a hollow gong, a clanging cymbal, the braying of a jackass in the wind for all his hollow ceremony, pretentious dignity and ostentatious alms-doing. Jesus continually showed the Pharisees to be a pack of snivelling curs, a snarling mongrel group of hate-filled, murder-plotting hypocrites who loved to *appear* righteous in their daily postures, but who refused to *live* a righteous way of life!

But Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who promised to lead His people into all truth, also fully intended that a true Christian should be a wise, sound, fully balanced and

mature person emotionally, mentally, psychologically and spiritually!

The apostle Paul told Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7).

A Fine Line

Balance is a knife's edge. In a chaotic world of conflicting ideals, rapidly changing moral values, and chaotic disarray of standards, it becomes all the more difficult for a sincere person who is striving to live a truly Christian life to maintain that precarious equilibrium!

But God's true Church will be learning the lesson that you cannot "measure yourself" by careful comparison with the personal lives of others — that you do not enter into God's Kingdom by judiciously drinking apple juice, taking a shot of rose-hip tea now and then, avoiding white crackers at all costs, chewing twenty times before swallowing, and feeling driven, haunted and guilty if you do not "meditate" at least an hour a day!

God's true Church will know, and will *practice*, the soundly based biblical *truths* about correct diet, balance and soundness in right amounts of exercise and recreation, a wholesome and loving attitude toward people in the world who are "sinners," maintaining the balance that is loving a sinner without condoning his sin!

God's true Church will understand the right approach to marriage and the whole panorama of how to live a happy, full, abundant, yet spiritually dedicated life! Jesus said that He came that we might have life and have it *more abundantly!*

Many scriptures fully explain Jesus did not mean this to be interpreted in the amount of material goods or physical abundance — but the full, rounded, exciting and happy life (yes, a Christian is commanded even to rejoice in tribulation!) that the New Testament clearly teaches.

Christianity a Way of Life

Believe it or not, Christianity is a *full-time job!* It's a *profession*, not just a "belief." It's what you DO — all the

time, not what you do now and then, or when the mood strikes you, or when the social pressures build to the point of unbearable degree, thus sending you off "to church" once or twice a year, or to "confession" for a fresh shot of righteousness to replace the faded, dulled coating you're presently wearing.

Strange, that millions of professing "Christians" do not seem to know that "Christianity" is a way of life! It's a way of thinking, breathing, acting, talking, walking, dressing, working, playing, loving — a *way* of doing!

The true Church of God, the Church of which Jesus Christ is Head, *living* Head, will be living that way of life which Jesus brought!

The Shocking Sermon on the Mount

Christ's teachings concerning love of enemies, "turning the other cheek," and the precepts of the "Golden Rule" are so well known they seem a commonplace, almost casually repeated part of modern-day "Christianity."

Millions of professing Christians hear sermons preached from the famous "Beatitudes" of Matthew the fifth chapter. They are inspired, encouraged, perhaps a little chagrined now and then, as they listen to beautifully delivered, carefully phrased, sanctimoniously pronounced dissertations about the "poor in spirit," or "blessed are the merciful" or the "pure in heart."

But Jesus Christ *knew* His teachings would be watered down, spiritualized away and trampled underfoot in a maze of confusion. He *knew*, and forewarned, that men would *profess* His name — would *claim* to be "Christian," but would *adamantly refuse* to OBEY what He said!

"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not the things which I say?*" asked Jesus (Luke 6:46). He said: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me *with their mouth* ['amen, and amen,' 'hallelujah' a few times, and 'praise the Lord, man'], and honoureth me with their lips; but their **HEART** is far from me" (Matt. 15:7, 8).

Jesus knew people would "believe on Him," that they

would adore His person, and *pervert* or *ignore* His message! "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4, 5).

Continually, God's Word shows there is a huge, unbridgeable gap between those who *profess* the name "Christian" and those who are willing to *live* a Christian life!

Christ Spoke With Authority

When Jesus Christ first spoke the words recorded in Matthew's 5th, 6th and 7th chapters, people were *shocked* by what He said! It seemed the very antithesis of all previous religious teaching — yes, even the teachings of Moses, and most specifically the *added* plethora of rules and regulations which constituted the "Judaism" of Christ's day.

His message of mercy, love, forgiveness — of turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, and knowing, in your heart, that even *hating* another person constitutes *murder* in God's sight was *shockingly* different to that of the Pharisees and other sectarian leaders.

Christ's teachings were not intended as platitudes or mealy-mouthed pabulum for prettily spoken poetry and empty "sermons" of the inner-good qualities of human nature!

Rather: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were *astonished* at his doctrine: for he taught them as *one having authority*, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29).

A true Christian is a member of God's true Church! He *must* be a "member of the body" to be a true Christian! "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30).

There is only *one name* given under heaven whereby men must be saved (Acts 4:12). Your Bible plainly says: "Now if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is *none of his*" (Rom. 8:9).

"But ye are not in the flesh, but *in the Spirit* [and as such, you will truly be 'His' — a *member* of His own body],

IF so be that the Spirit of God *dwelt in you*" (Rom. 8:9).

Paul said: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Cor. 12:27).

Is Today's "Christianity" Really Christian?

The disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The word "Christian," as applied to these men, meant something *shockingly different* than it means to the millions today! If you could know how utterly, totally, completely and absolutely different they really were, it would boggle your mind!

They kept customs almost universally *abhorred* by so-called "Christians" today! Their entire "life-style" was different! They kept God's true Sabbath — the seventh day of the week — proved both by many scriptures in the book of Acts, and throughout Paul's writings, and attested to by profane history! They observed God's true HOLY days, the ANNUAL Sabbaths. They dedicated their lives to doing the WORK of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to the dying civilization of their time.

History proves there was a *total change* in what "Christian" meant at Antioch, and what it came to be called by the third century! It took bloodbaths to change some of it — to *force* people, as the years went by, to abandon the customs Christ had taught, and that the early apostles had kept and taught others to keep!

Study into the "Quartodeciman" controversy sometime. See how it finally required pressure from the state to *force* people to quit keeping the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, just as Jesus Christ had set for an example, and exactly as the apostle Paul had urged Gentile Christians!

Even before the close of the New Testament writings, Jude had to write: "... It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the *grace* of our God *into lasciviousness*, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3, 4).

Turning Grace into License

From the very days of Christ until now, the continual movement to turn grace (forgiveness, unmerited pardon, mercy upon repentance) into lasciviousness (license — permission to *do evil*) has continued.

Today, millions of professing "Christians" seem to *hate* God's laws! Thousands of their ministers continually cry out against obedience to Christ's commands!

They say there is nothing you must DO, therefore calling Christ a liar when He said: "... If thou wilt enter into life, keep *the commandments*" (Matt. 19:17).

God's Word makes it clear that to be a Christian you must repent of having broken God's law! *All* have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Christ paid that penalty by shedding His life's blood in *our place*. But acceptance of His shed blood for forgiveness of sins does not mean license, permission, to live in iniquity! "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*" (Acts 3:26).

Iniquity means *lawlessness*. Sin is the breaking of God's law (I John 3:4), and is the breaking of that law (in all of its points, as Christ *magnified* it and made it much more binding in the "sermon on the mount") for which we must repent! Peter said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

By receiving the Holy Spirit you *become* a true Christian. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13).

Becoming a member of that body makes you a member of God's true Church! (I Cor. 12:18, 27.)

A Christian Must Be an Overcomer

Once having repented of breaking God's law, the true Christian will be striving daily, with the help of God's

Holy Spirit, to become perfect in character. "Be [become, Greek] ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). "Him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also *overcame*, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). To LIVE the life of a true Christian, Jesus Christ said you must be OVERCOMING!

And while WORKS — works of *whatever* kind: physical, material, mental, spiritual (even keeping all the Ten Commandments perfectly) — cannot ever earn salvation, you must, nevertheless, overcome your own human nature — and that means bearing fruit in your private life; it means DOING, not just professing with the mouth!

James explains it: "So speak ye, and so DO, as they that shall be JUDGED by the LAW OF LIBERTY. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:12, 13).

"Showing mercy" is no hollow emotion — it is an *act* of life: whether giving of material goods to those that have need; helping accident victims, the aged, feeble, or sick; or granting instant forgiveness when wronged.

James goes on to say: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not WORKS? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not WORKS, is *dead*, being alone" (verses 14-17).

James seemed to *know* endless arguments would arise between those who would seemingly be "willingly ignorant" of these simple truths — that they would argue for either faith alone or works alone!

He said: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (verse 18).

"Faith without works is DEAD" (verse 20), says your Bible.

Will a true Christian be producing *works* in his own

private life? Either he will be doing so — zealously growing, overcoming, giving, sharing, studying, praying, helping others — or he is simply not a true Christian!

A Christian's Trademark

This living of a balanced, wholesome, zestful, happy, busy Christian life was intended to be a virtual *trademark* of God's true Church on this earth! John said: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him [which Jesus prophesied they would say: 'Oh, what a joy to know the Lord', ad infinitum], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him . . . He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk [live — a *way of life*], even as he [Christ] walked" (I John 2:3-6).

Peter, too, urges *good works!*

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation [conduct] honest among the Gentiles [nations]: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may *by your good works*, which they shall *behold*, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:11-12).

One of the great *proofs* of God's true Church is the fact that its members are *living their religion* — FULL TIME!

Walk Worthy of Your Calling

God calls it a profession! Like a chosen occupation of highly technical, skilled, intelligent expertise, Christ wants His true servants to be actively *living* by what He said!

Paul wrote: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye *walk worthy* of the vocation [profession, *job!*] wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is one body* [and ONLY one!], and one Spirit, even as ye are called in *one hope* of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ONE God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:1-6).

That way of life which Jesus came to live as an example, and to teach to His disciples, is required for a true Christian! Does it make any sense to believe a person may *argue* against his own Saviour, rebel and *resist* the Word of God, *fight* to have his "own way" as opposed to God's way, and still claim the name "Christian"?

Does it make sense to claim *worship* for Christ, and resist His plain and simple commands?

Does it sound intelligent, or even rational, to appropriate the name "Christian," yet trample underfoot the whole way of life which Christ Himself lived and taught, and urged His true disciples to keep?

A Different Life-Style

Continually, the persecutors, both from the ultra right (Pharisees) and from the ultra left (Sadducees and, later, followers of Simon Magus) of the religious spectrum of Christ's time, tried to convince their followers that the *way of life* the disciples taught was wrong!

It was the different "life-style" that caused such objections (Acts 19:9) and brought about such persecution! Are you careful to eat a balanced diet, without going into food faddism and vitamin fanaticism? Chances are you will be persecuted for it!

Want to live a *balanced* life in recreation, exercise, sleep and peace of mind — and, more importantly, *do you have a Bible reason for it?* Chances are you will be evil spoken of as a result!

If someone is taking advantage of you financially, cheating you, shortchanging you, or falsely suing you in the courts, and you choose to not only *allow* such mistreatment, but even offer him more, what do you suppose the comments will be?

If someone speaks horrible, incredible, distorted lies about you, and you choose to follow Christ's example and "answer them not a word" — choosing not to even dignify such slop with an answer — don't you realize the whole world will interpret your nonresponse as tacit admission of guilt?

If you search for Bible principles by which to conduct

your business, work on the job, handle your personal finances, rear your children, conduct your marriage — people will *persecute* you for it!

But so what?

Didn't Jesus Christ say, "Woe be unto you, when all men speak *well* of you?" And doesn't the Bible command us to "rejoice in tribulation," and say, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous"? (Ps. 34:19.)

Spiritual Growth and Development

God's true Church will be on a continual search for growth, development, maturity, improvement! God's Word says the ministry is for that very *purpose* in each local congregation. "... Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* [mature, margin] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ... speaking the truth in love, may *grow up* into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:13-15).

"But *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," said the apostle Peter (II Pet. 3:18).

Even as each individual member is commanded to *grow*, to develop, overcome, change, mature, *so must the entire Church* be growing, developing, overcoming, changing where proved wrong, and maturing!

This *WAY* of living, striving daily to *OVERCOME* — not only in the individual life of each member, but in the whole Church collectively, is a great proof of the true Church of God, of which Jesus Christ is *LIVING* Head!

Jesus Christ promised He would build His Church (Matt. 16:18), remain at the helm of it (Eph. 1:22; 2:20; Matt. 28:20), and gave it a great *reason for being*, a great *job* to do.

GOD'S TRUE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED!

I'M NOT leaving the Church," explained one in violent disagreement — "only leaving the 'organization'! I'll *always* remain solidly in God's Church, but I must repudiate the *organization!*"

But is organization — even of God's own Church — *evil?*

Can one withdraw from any active participation in the "organization" that is God's true Church — which is performing the *Work* of God by the power of His Spirit, fulfilling the *great commission* Jesus Christ gave His true disciples — and yet, somehow, "be in" the Church?

Let's see what the Bible clearly says, not using our own human reasoning, but searching the Scriptures to learn what the Great Almighty God, and His Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, say about it.

What Is the "Church?"

Millions reason they are somehow in God's true "Church" no matter what denomination, sect, cult, political organization, social club, or business affiliation they maintain. Millions like to believe that "most" all churches have "mostly good points," but, naturally, have "some points on which they might disagree." But "does this

really matter, after all?" some reason. "Surely, since they believe in *Christ*, and in His 'atoning work,' they will get to heaven anyway, won't they?"

Because of the false teaching, resulting from a completely misunderstood statement of Jesus Christ concerning the Kingdom of God, literally millions assume the "church" is a completely disjointed, loosely *disconnected*, ethereal, vague, nebulous, imaginary "something" that is "within" you!

Many assume that, collectively, the *true* Church (all those they assume are going to "heaven") might include "members" of literally dozens of "churches" of this world; denominations of all sorts. Whether liberal-minded Catholics actually *believe* any Protestants will "go to heaven" without ever becoming a Catholic is a moot point; but, it seems, many a professing Protestant Christian is willing to concede that millions of other Protestants (and perhaps even a few Catholics), though they disagree on many major points and belong to vastly different organizations, will eventually enter the "Beatific vision."

But is all this reasoning true?

And, even if millions might "think" it is — does that make it so? Is the true Church of God, the Church Jesus said He would build, just an "imaginary" body of "believers" who have no connection with each other, or any specifically *organized* group? May one "be in" the true Church of God, *bearing fruit*, fulfilling Christ's commands, carrying out His commission, *without* being a living, active member of an organization?

Let's see!

"I will build my church," Jesus said (Matt. 16:18). The Greek word for "church" in this passage is *ekklesia* — which can mean "called-out ones," or "specially chosen ones," or "body of believers"! It is a word which connotes "group," "body," "congregation" — a group of *people*! Through transmission of the Bible text into other languages, and especially resulting from the commonly misunderstood usage of the English word "church," the true meaning of what Jesus so plainly said has been lost from sight!

Today, a "church" is a "building," as often as it is a "group." The "Methodist Church" could be either a *building* on the corner, or the group of people who are called "Methodist" as an organization!

Jesus didn't imply He would build a building when He said, "I will build my *ekklesia*." He meant exactly what He said: He would construct, knit solidly together, consecrate, organize and commission *His group!*

Jesus — The Living Head

That passage of Matthew's 16th chapter is only understood by careful comparison with many other scriptures, which make it clear that the "Rock" (Greek, *Petra*) to which Jesus referred was Himself, and the "pebble" (Greek, *petros*) was Peter. Jesus is plainly called "that Rock" (I Cor. 10:4) which followed the Israelites in the wilderness, and the Rock of our salvation (Deut. 32; Psalm 18:2, 31, 46; Psalm 31:2, 3).

Paul says Christ, not any human being, is the living Head of His Church (Eph. 1:20-23; 4:15). "And he is *before* all things, and *by him* all things consist. And he is the *head of the body, the church*: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17, 18). *He*, not any man, is called the *Head of the body* (the Church) and the "chief corner stone" (Col. 2:10, 17; Eph. 2:20).

David said: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22). Peter referred to this scripture, saying: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a *chief corner stone*, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the *head of the corner*" (I Pet. 2:6-7).

Christ is called, at once, the "head," the "head of the corner," and the "chief corner stone," as well as the "cap-stone" (look up in concordance).

"... Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation..."

(Isa. 28:16). *Never* did God the Father or Jesus Christ intend turning leadership of the Church over to men! Jesus Christ said, "Lo, I am with you always" in commissioning His disciples!

He, Christ, is the living, active *Head* of His Church, just as He has *always* been!

An Organized Body

It is not an analogy of *men* to refer to Christ's group of "called out ones," or His *ekklesia* (Church), as a *body*! Jesus said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that *beareth fruit*, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth *more* fruit . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch *cannot* bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine [an integral part of the body!]; no more can ye, *except ye abide in me*" (John 15:1-4).

Jesus used the obvious analogy of a growing, producing *vine* with roots firmly emplanting in rich soil, the flow of life-giving sap through the main vine (Christ) to the major branches on to the smaller branches, and finally producing fruit! He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth *in me*, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much fruit*: for *without me* ye can do *nothing*. If a man abide *not* in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and *is withered* [he has been *cut off* from the main trunk, and therefore from the life-giving *flow* that can come only from remaining a part of a tightly knit, integral body, together, as one living organism]; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (verses 5-6).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth makes it crystal clear that He is the living Head of His Church, His group of human beings who are called by His name, in whom is the very Spirit of God and of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Each individual member is a *part* of a living, vital organism, having no life *separate* from, or *apart* from, that organism!

Though one might "reason around" in his own mind that by withdrawing from what he may contemptuously call "the organization" (God's Church!) he is, in fact, "remaining *in the church*," he is only *deceiving* himself —

playing with meaningless words — and directly contradicting these powerful words of Jesus Christ Himself!

Jesus Christ *organized* His true Church! He said: "Ye have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you*, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit..." (John 15:16). But unless one remains a part of that spiritual body, firmly attached to the main vine, he *cannot* "bear fruit."

Appearing to His own disciples after His resurrection, Jesus said: "*All power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am *with you always*, even unto the end of the world [the consummation of the age]" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Following the suicide of Judas (Matt. 27:5), Jesus inspired the apostles to select another man, Matthias (one of two men selected after lengthy discussion among the remaining eleven leaders, and the one finally chosen by lot), because He was determined to begin with the perfect *governmental number*, and a number representing *organized beginnings* — twelve! There were twelve tribes in Israel, and Jesus Himself described twelve future thrones (Matt. 19:28) upon which His own apostles will sit, judging the twelve tribes of Israel!

A Great Commission

Jesus showed His group, His body of believers, *His Church*, would be a human, physical group of men and women — flesh and blood human beings — with a great *Work* to do!

"... And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the *utmost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

Matthew's Gospel records Jesus' prophecy that His great commission to His true disciples would be fulfilled: "And this gospel of the kingdom *shall be preached* in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). Jesus, appearing again to His

disciples following His resurrection, said: "Peace be unto you: as my Father *hath sent me*, even so [in like fashion] *send I you*" (John 20:21).

Paul was inspired to write: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:13-15.)

Jesus said: "Even so *send I you*," and made it perfectly clear that unless those who are *sent* (ordained) remain *in the body*, and firmly attached to the Branch (see Isa. 11:1), they are utterly cut off, can bear no fruit, and are *not* the chosen servants of Jesus Christ, who remains the living, active Head of His Church!

Jesus said: "As my Father *hath sent me*" — showing Christ came to perform a *Work* on this earth! He said: "My meat [my daily activity; my livelihood, my 'occupation'] is to *do* the will of him that *sent* me, and to *finish his work* . . ." (John 4:34).

Christ said His preaching of the gospel (which He repeatedly called the "work" or "my work") was only possible because He, Christ, stayed firmly *joined* to the Father! "... My Father worketh hitherto, and *I work*" (John 5:17). And in verses 36, 37: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath *sent* me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me."

Gospel of the Kingdom

Continually, Jesus emphasized the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to all nations! He said: "And the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10).

Mark's account of Jesus' commission to His disciples reads: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [Greek, condemned]" (Mark 16:15, 16).

So, as Jesus was sent to preach the gospel, He also sent His disciples to do the same!

Christ did the *Work* of God: He called and trained His disciples, putting them through the maturing experiences they would need later. He rebuked and exhorted them, finally giving them of God's Holy Spirit, *ordaining* them into His own Church as His apostles, and sent them out into the world to fulfill the commission He gave them! That great commission is still being carried out today!

Organization Is Necessary

It would be impossible to perform God's Work, either then or now, without the organization Christ Himself ordained. "Organization" is not a "nasty" word! It stems from "organism," meaning a living, vital collection of cellular tissue; a plant, or living creature; a part of God's creation having life and purpose and *being*.

Jesus Christ established government in His Church — insisting He would at all times retain ultimate authority! He *never* intended making any *human* being the Head of the Church!

But He did place the apostles in charge *under* the living Christ!

Throughout the book of Acts, you see examples of the government of God in action. At the Jerusalem conference, for example, came the first major *test* of the type of *government* Christ had established within His own organization.

"Certain men," who are unidentified (men with *no* official status within the Church, who were *unordained*, and who were mainly affected by their past religious teachings — that of the Pharisees), "taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

Apparently, Paul and Barnabas could not change their opinions.

It became necessary to go to *higher authority* to resolve the difficulty. Even though Paul was an ordained apostle (as was Barnabas), these "men" who were *unauthorized* to teach anyone — who were *unordained* —

refused to believe him. Because of the effect it was having on the brethren, several of the leaders decided to "go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (verse 2).

Government Upheld

Read the whole chapter. *Think* about it. The advocates of circumcision would surely have seemed to have every possible scripture on their side, wouldn't they?

Remember, not one scrap of the New Testament had even been *written* yet! There were no "New Testament" books of the Bible to which the apostles, or the dissenters, could turn. And almost everything they could read from the Old Covenant might strongly indicate circumcision was required!

Perhaps, however, one of the apostles hit upon Jeremiah 4:4, which says: "Circumcise yourselves to the Eternal, and take away the foreskins of *your heart*, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem." But the major point which bore the most weight was *experience!* Notice how Paul and Barnabas reasoned that God had given the Gentiles His Spirit, that He had *obviously* not withheld salvation from them just because of their "uncircumcised" condition! Then Peter substantiated their words by showing that God had "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (verse 9).

James then rendered a final decision (verses 13 through 21). He said: "Wherefore my *sentence* is [decision, choice, policy], that we trouble *not* them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

A Verbal Decision

Later, it was said that the apostles "... went through the cities, [and] they delivered them *decrees* for to keep, that were *ordained* of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4).

This *decision* was rendered *orally!* It was not based on

any direct quotation of scripture you can find in the 15th chapter of Acts! Not once did any of those who spoke quote any "chapter and verse," but rather told of the experiences of practical day-to-day conduct of the *Work*, and of the *fact* that God had obviously given of His Spirit to uncircumcised Gentiles!

Now, of course, since Luke kept record of these facts, and sent them to his friend Theophilus (Acts 1:1), we can read the account of this verbal decision! But the verbal decision was not based on something previously written, but on the *facts* of what God had *done!*

Notice the organization here! First, the dissident "teachers" began upsetting the brethren. Paul and Barnabas tried to dissuade them and convince them of their error. They refused to believe. Paul and Barnabas and other ministers decided to take the matter to headquarters (at Jerusalem, then) to *higher* authority. They did so. A decision was finally rendered, after *all* sides had been heard!

But did this *stop* the false teaching that all must be circumcised in order to be saved? Did it end the controversy over circumcision? No — not at all — it only *began* it. From that time on, Paul's life in Christ's ministry among the Gentiles was to be plagued by continual persecutions from former or still active Pharisees who urgently insisted circumcision was required! They didn't *believe* in the official *authority* of God's headquarters apostles and ministry, as did most of the Church.

What Is Power?

"Power corrupts!" goes the saying. And, like many "sayings," it is in error. God possesses *all power* — and Jesus said, in commissioning His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Yet, our God is *incorruptible*, as is Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead, and the Head of His Church!

The *abuse* of power is certainly corrupt. The ageless lessons of power wrongly used by carnal men is the most noxious and repetitious lesson of all of mankind's history.

But what *is* "power"? It has many definitions in your

dictionary, from force, energy and the ability to do work in the physical sense to the political definition of the ability to hold sway over other men's minds.

Power and authority are, believe it or not, given into the hands of Christ's own ministers! And, though prayerfully it is a rarity, that power *can be abused*. One of the most basic cravings of human nature is the desire for power.

From the time we were children our own human nature of vanity, jealousy, lust, greed — the desire to enforce *our* will on others — manifested itself.

Human Desire for Power

The dangerous egocentricity of the craving for power is the hidden drive that motivates millions of human beings, in all our colors, races, religions and nationalities. Intangible, unrealized, unrecognized even by those so afflicted, power can, given carnality and base human nature, corrupt.

On one occasion the disciples were caught up in heated discussion about "rank" and "status" in the future. Jesus was heavy with sick dread about His imminent crucifixion. It was during the final Passover, the famous "last supper." Jesus had just finished sharing the bread and wine with His disciples, and had spoken out about the one who was to betray Him.

The disciples were not "saints" by any means — but carnal, albeit sincere and willing men, whose human natures had not yet been *changed* by the supernatural begetting of God's Holy Spirit. Their reasoning was still physical, carnal, and therefore selfishly oriented. Though Christ was exceedingly heavy of heart, they couldn't truly empathize with Him, reaching out with their hearts and emotions to let Him know they bore the same sorrow. Instead, "... There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

They wanted to know specifics!

At that time they wanted Christ to name names, and designate positions, ranks, titles, and official status! But Jesus Christ said *nothing* about who should ultimately

lead, even though Peter, John, James, all were present. Very likely, knowing the impetuosity of Peter, and noticing Christ's statement which immediately followed — "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (verse 31) — Peter himself was involved in the argument.

But Jesus was not about to be trapped into creating some "ecclesiastical hierarchy" of "ranks" which would ultimately ferment into a rigid, stifling, pompous, dictatorial "establishment"! Instead, He gave them a great principle of leadership.

Christ Defines True Greatness

"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called *benefactors*. But *ye shall not be so*: but he that is greatest among you, let him be *as the younger*; and he that is chief, *as he that doth serve*. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that *serveth*? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that *serveth*" (Luke 22:25-27).

To any stranger, entering the room at the mealtime, they would have thought Peter, James, John and the other apostles were the "greatest," since they were obviously sitting "at meat." But what about Jesus? Why, they would have immediately supposed He was a *servant* of the house, *waiting on tables*! They would have seen Him wash His own disciples' feet, a task among those of the lowliest. They would have seen Him break and distribute bread, and pour out individual servings of wine, and hand them to each one.

Yet, obviously to you and I, looking at the Scriptures and understanding the awesome greatness of Christ, it was *Jesus* who was *in authority*, who had the *power*, who was the "greatest"!

What a striking contrast to the usual ostentatious conduct of carnal men who desire personal recognition, acclaim and status!

Christ knew the only true "status" worthy of the word was where He stood with *God*, His Father!

So Christ provided the *basis* for God's government in His Church by pointing to the word "service"!

The very word "minister" means *servant!*

The Impact Upon Peter

Peter never forgot what Jesus said to Him following His denial, and his shamed, thrice-repeated, ever more intense statement of love for Jesus. He was to later write: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder [thus showing *no* consciousness of 'rank' between those who, though not 'evangelists' or even pastors of churches, were older men who were ordained], and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: *Feed the flock of God* which is among you, taking the oversight thereof [the 'overship,' or 'presbytery'], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. . . . Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be *subject one to another*, and be *clothed with humility*: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:1-5).

Peter never forgot Christ's three-fold command: "Feed my sheep!"

The Right Use of Power and Authority

The apostle Paul coined a new phrase, one which has been a guiding light to Christ's ministry in this modern age: "Not for that we have *dominion over your faith*, but are *helpers of your joy*: for by faith ye stand" (II Cor. 1:24).

"*Helpers of your joy*," a title hardly suitable for anyone *misusing* the power of the ministry!

Can we see clearly, and understand, that the *power* and *authority* Christ gives His ministry is not "over" the people in the sense of stifling control over their lives? He gave power — but power over the forces of evil which *destroy* men's lives, power over the diseases which afflict people, power over demons which might influence or possess!

Christ called His twelve disciples and "he *gave them power* against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1). In commanding them to go abroad and preach, He said: "And as ye go, *preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils [demons]: freely ye have received, freely *give*" (verses 7, 8).

The power was to *help* the people; to relieve terrible suffering, physical and mental; and to preach the *good news* of Christ's soon-coming *rulership* of this earth!

Later, when Christ *built* His Church on that first Pentecost after His resurrection by granting God's Holy Spirit to the original apostles (including Matthias, replacement for Judas Iscariot), He was fulfilling His promise: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). He again promised *power!*

Notice that even *after* the resurrection, and many infallible proofs that Christ was *alive*, the disciples *still* wondered about the establishment of an *earthly kingdom* then and there!

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own *power*. But ye shall *receive power*, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you . . ." (Acts 1:6-8).

Power for a Purpose

"Power?" But *why?* What *kind* of power? Was it "authority" in the sense of having power to "give orders" to people; to hold sway over people's private choices and opinions; to stiflingly *control* other human beings? No — it was for the same consistent reason He had given the same men power as fledgling disciples on their first "evangelistic" trip! "... And ye shall be *witnesses unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Those were the last words Jesus spoke before being bodily assumed into heaven!

The apostles *knew* there was a great *job* to do, that a *great commission* had been given! Peter certainly didn't mistake the *purpose* for God's Holy Spirit — the unlimited *power* that Christ promised to send. It is not revealed which one of the apostles spoke the words of Acts 1:24, 25 — only that “*they* prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may *take part of this ministry and apostleship*, from which Judas by transgression fell”

They knew they had been given a ministry (a service) to perform. Peter had referred to the broad principle in at least two of the Psalms concerning an “overseership” (“bishoprick,” KJV) to be transferred out of the hands of Judas and into the possession of a replacement.

Referring to Judas, he said: “For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this *ministry*” (verse 17). Peter went on to say: “. . . And his overseership [margin] let another take” (verse 20).

The apostles were keenly aware that their whole lives would now be organized into a unified body for the purpose of accomplishing *one great job!*

They had the fantastic truth to report that Christ was *alive*, that He had risen from the dead, that they were *eyewitnesses to that fact*, and that *He was going to come again!* And they knew that *job* was the *purpose* for receiving *power!* It was the power to accomplish the job they expected, and that power they used — not the raw abuse of “power” to interfere in people's private lives to the point of supersnooping, CIA-, FBI-type surveillance over every thought, deed and act.

“*Helpers* of their *joy*,” yes, but “policemen of their souls,” *never!*

Miracles began to occur. The first was Pentecost itself, and the powerful manifestation of God's Holy Spirit on that day: tongues of leaping, flickering flame, almost like divine crowns on their heads; powerful, intense, profound, moving words of Christ's resurrection; happiness, joy; a feeling of almost immediate expectancy of an imminent *utopia* that would come when Christ would

rend the heavens and step down once again to this earth! That spirit of *wonderment* and *excitement* filled them all! By the thousands, people were converted and baptized! They sold properties and stayed longer — wanting to *be* a part of all the miraculous things that were happening! Fantastic healings took place!

And then, suddenly, a shocking event occurred!

Ananias and Sapphira

A couple thought *pretense* — a pretended posture of “giving” while being covetous of money — could “put one over” on the Church and the apostles. They desired recognition as generous, giving, wonderful “Christian” people.

Their sordid story is told in the 5th chapter of Acts.

Ananias and Sapphira are names synonymous with “lying to the Holy Spirit.” Their deaths were such a *shock* to the Church that “*great fear* came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:11).

Unfortunately, the story of Ananias and Sapphira has been *misused* all down through history in order to wrest terribly private “confessions” out of thoroughly frightened ones who inexplicably find themselves before a stern-faced “minister” who now demands to know the “truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” about some juicy little incident in their private lives. A careful study of Hefele’s “Church Councils” proves enlightening, as does research into the origin of the Catholic confessional booth. Sometimes such private conversations apparently got out of hand.

But this was *unique* in all the Bible — and no doubt, there have been tens of thousands of cases all down through history where people have tried to deceive Christ’s ministry, or lied to a minister in private counsel, and lived through it.

God’s purpose in taking the lives of Ananias and Sapphira was *not* to provide His ministry with the ultimate fear weapon for inquiring into the private lives of individuals. Ananias and Sapphira *voluntarily* came to the apostles, *posturing* as generous contributors of their earthly goods. Peter plainly said that while it was in their

own hands it was *theirs*, to do with as they chose. Only after they *conspired*, and then *lied*, was the horrible penalty exacted — and that *not* by the apostles, but by a divine miracle from God, much like the case of Korah's rebellion.

The point is, it is a sin to lie, and the wages of sin is death — a fact which must be continually taught and emphasized by a loving ministry (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), in the hopes that sin will be repented of, forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 8:12).

God was proving, by direct intervention from heaven itself, that the *power* with which He was infusing His ministry was *supernatural*. There would be power to cast out demons, to heal the sick and to preach the gospel. The instant closeness of heaven was emphasized. The fact of God's *immediate* presence was plain! The fact that Christ *Himself* was ruling, judging and making the final decisions was clear!

Jesus Christ determined *He* would remain at the helm, as He had promised — never allowing mortal man to usurp that ultimate governmental function: final decision-making, *ruling* His Church!

But He had clearly demonstrated that awesome power could work in and through His chosen human servants!

The Church Begins To Wane

However, just as in the case of sensational healings, signs (earthquakes, being loosed from prison supernaturally, etc.) and other miracles gradually waned, even to the point the apostle Paul admitted at a much later date he had left "Trophimus at Miletum sick," so were the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira absolutely *unique* in those early moments of the New Testament Church of God.

Later, Jude was to write that there were those who had "crept in unawares" and who had deliberately *infiltrated* into the ranks of Christ's ministry, using hypocrisy and pretense! God *allowed* evil, plotting men to deceive and posture as true ministers, even though He had directly intervened, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, to show

His never-changing attitude *toward* would-be deceivers.

Almost from its very inception, the New Testament Church had to constantly *struggle* to keep itself intact against subversive acts from within and attacks from without.

But God's government *overcame* each of these obstacles. Though the Church may have been scarred, bruised, wounded, and, in fact, lay almost prostrate for long periods of time, true to Jesus Christ's promises *it never died!*

But some points of truth *did* "die out" over a period of many centuries, until virtually all that remained of the original truths known and understood by the apostle Paul and other early New Testament apostles was the knowledge of God's weekly Sabbath, the true name of the Church, and basic truths such as the nature of man and the mortality of the soul, the truth about a millennium on this earth, and the most basic of all truths concerning repentance, baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit in order to achieve salvation!

Many major points of truth had been lost, among them the knowledge of God's annual Holy Days and Church government itself.

Organization Desperately Needed

But as the need for a more organized preaching of the gospel grew, so did the need for an *organization* to preach that gospel!

Very soon after the Church began, it became evident that, if the apostles were to devote their time to the primary mission of *preaching the gospel*, they would need help in administering various forms of physical service to others. The example of waiting on tables, resulting in the very first ordinations of deacons, is a case in point (Acts 6).

It remained for the apostle Paul to delineate the various functions for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the world and for feeding the flock (all of which I'll explain shortly).

But today, God's Church is highly *organized!* As your body is highly organized — consisting of muscular, skele-

tal, nervous, digestive and circulatory systems — and as your own body must continually be nourished, fed, protected and receive exercise in order to continue to function in a healthy manner, so must the organized body which is the Church of God with Jesus Christ as living Head continually be nourished, and must *grow* as does the highly organized and tremendously complex systematic organization we call the “human body.”

No, there is nothing “evil” in the word “organization.” It comes from “organism,” meaning a living thing or creation which has been intricately and beautifully designed of God!

Government in God's Church is for the purpose of keeping unity in the faith (Eph. 4:1-13), for preaching the gospel, for overcoming every obstacle, as well as settling doctrinal disputes, reaching decisions concerning dis-fellowshipping and reinstating in the Church, ordaining of ministers and establishing of Bible studies and churches — especially for the means of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to all the world.

Without organization (and God is not the author of confusion, I Corinthians 14:33) there would be no smoothly functioning, healthy body, edifying and building up itself as it continually feeds upon the Word and the knowledge of God, or accomplishing a great Work, which, after all, is the overall purpose for the maintaining of a healthy body!

Yes, it is true that God's Church is organized!

It is true that it has government, and that that government *is from the top down!*

And that is *God's form* of government, and the only form which can ever function in God's true Church.

One of the major *proofs* of the true Church of God is the spiritual organization of that Church, exactly as defined in God's Word.

New Testament Church Administration

Many New Testament scriptures show a pattern of God-ordained Church administration and organization.

In the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God [not man] hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:27-28).

Notice how the organization emphasizes the primary purpose of the body *first*, and the secondary later. *First*, Paul spoke of apostles (meaning one who is "sent" commissioned with a message, "set apart"), and then prophets (which can also mean an inspired "preacher" as easily as it can imply a "foreteller of events").

Then he lists teaching (as in feeding the flock), and the *administrative* functions of the Church, as well as including various special gifts of God's Spirit for healing and other miracles.

Paul also wrote: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. . . ."

He then went on to describe *the order* of the "gifts" God had placed in His Church: ". . . Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teaches, on teaching" (Rom. 12:5-7).

Notice again in this organizational passage how "prophecy" (including inspired preaching and teaching of the Word of God as it especially concerns the future) and then the "ministry" are placed *first!*

This same pattern is repeated in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where he said: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. . ." (Eph. 4:11).

Paul's writings constitute a beautiful and vivid picture of the government of God in action!

His very letters, in themselves, show a concerned and fatherly apostle who continually wrestled with the manifold problems of each individual Church area; writing to them in deep anguish of spirit over their personal problems; exhorting them, rebuking them, setting and deciding

policies, sometimes disfellowshipping, and sometimes reinstating.

Paul's writings reveal how God's government was established for the purpose of preaching the gospel, for organizing churches and studies, for disfellowshipping in cases where this was required in order to keep God's Church free from contaminating influences, for reinstating where that could happily be done, and at all times preaching "sound doctrine" and protecting the Church from attacks both from within and from without.

Church Administration Letters

Paul's "Pastoral Epistles" are nothing short of "Church administration letters" from this apostle to the Gentiles to the young men under his charge. In them, you can read of the many details concerning Paul's instructions to young men such as Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Titus, Gaius, and others who were his helpers in various parts of the Eastern Mediterranean region. And again and again the *purpose* for such organization is revealed.

Timothy was charged again and again to remember how he would meet every opposition, including seducing spirits, doctrines of demons and lies (I Tim. 4:1-2). He would face pride, ignorance, questions and strivings about words, envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds desiring material gain (I Tim. 6:4-5). He was warned to beware of "oppositions of science falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:20), "profane and vain babblings" (II Tim. 2:16), lies that the resurrection had already occurred which would overthrow the faith of some (II Tim. 2:18), foolish and unlearned questions (II Tim. 2:23). He was warned that evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse (II Tim. 3:13); people, having itching ears, would heap to themselves teachers and turn unto fables (II Tim. 4:3-4). He was told some would love this present world and simply *quit* when the going got tough (II Tim. 4:10). He was reminded about Alexander the coppersmith, who had done a great deal of evil to the apostle Paul (II Tim. 4:14).

Titus was warned that he would encounter "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" (Titus 1:10), and that he should "speak, and exhort, and *rebuke with all authority*" (Titus 2:15).

He was charged to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic [factious, or of splits and schisms] after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3:9-11).

In these "Pastoral Epistles" you not only read of the organization of an apostle giving instructions to a young evangelist on how to conduct the churches in his area, ordaining elders, disfellowshipping or marking those who cause divisions, but also you read of the day-to-day conduct of the Work at that time, even including such instructions as helping others who were traveling through the area (Titus 3:13) and that Timothy should remember to bring both the coat and some books and parchments Paul had left behind (II Tim. 4:13).

Paul's Humanity and Humility

Through Paul's letters the constant *humanity* of the apostle comes clearly through. He calls himself a "wretched man," delineating the many areas of his own personal life in which he felt inadequate. He spoke of his physical infirmities and afflictions, sometimes cried out about the enormous burden of responsibility he carried and the lack of cooperation he would receive from this or that Church congregation.

Yet he continually preached, exhorted, and wrote powerful letters to strengthen the congregations to which he ministered, as well as the younger ministers in his charge.

Like the apostle Peter, Paul had a great measure of humility to temper any potential feeling of pomposity or vanity which he might have been tempted to assume simply because of the office in which Christ had placed him. Paul knew he was a "prisoner of the gospel," and that his

whole life was utterly dedicated to fulfilling the great Work to which he had been called.

The whole motive of all the apostles, as especially exemplified by Paul, was not to stifle the Church through their God-given power and authority, but — first of all — to give out Christ's powerful gospel message, and — secondarily — to protect the little ones in the flock from power-and-money-hungry deceivers (false apostles and ministers). This secondary function is a vital and integral part of feeding the flock.

Protecting the Flock

So not only is God's Church organized for the purpose of preaching the gospel as a witness to the world, and to edify and build the Church (Eph. 4:12), but also for the purpose of *protecting* the flock from attacks *from within*, and from without!

Paul warned: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers [bishops, or pastors], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of *your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore *watch*, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to *warn* every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

By looking at Paul's own life, the way he spent his time, you can easily see the *priorities* in God's Work and the primary function of an apostle.

First and foremost, Paul labored incessantly to *preach the gospel!* *Secondly*, he strove to establish churches, ordain ministers, feed the flock, and continually exhort that the Church be kept free from doctrinal error, as well as *free* from "grievous wolves" whether from within or from without.

The entire New Testament from the book of Acts onward bears testimony to the struggle which ensued as the government of God continually functioned to preach

the gospel freely and without hindrance; to feed the flock with the truth, free from error; and to *protect* the flock from attacks.

Initially, as in the case of healings, signs and miracles (such as at least two cases of resurrections from the dead, and earthquakes), and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, God was plainly showing His *great power* was there to *back up* and *support* the responsibilities He had placed on His ministry.

But those same powerful signs did not continue in the same intensity throughout the history of the writing of the New Testament, nor are they continuing today!

Christ Backs His Church Today

Nevertheless, Christ's promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," does remain in effect!

When (not "if") it becomes God's time to once again shake this earth with great signs and wonders, He will do it!

But in the meantime He is providing His Church, the body of Christ, with the spiritual power, as well as with the physical necessities, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in an organized fashion to the whole world as a last-moment witness and warning!

It could not be done in any other way!

In today's highly complex societies, with jet-age travel and space-age communication facilities, God's Work must use the electronic media, the printing press, personal evangelism — *all possible methods* to preach the gospel!

It must function as an highly organized Work: able to buy, sell, lease, pay salaries, purchase equipment, produce telecasts and radio programs, print magazines, papers, booklets and letters, administer churches and Bible studies — to *do the Work*, and to do it efficiently, and in an organized manner!

God, not man, is the author of order, or organization!

Thank God He has placed *government* in His Church — and thanks be to Him He continually supervises and guides it, seeing to it that His government really *works!*

GOD'S CHURCH HAS A COMMISSION

YOUR BODY does not exist only for itself. That is, the sole purpose of your life is *not* just the serving, caring for, feeding, clothing and protection of your own body!

No matter what your job, occupation, hobbies, or calling — there is a *purpose* for you. Your whole life consists of goals, short- and long-range ones, which you constantly strive to achieve. You don't eat *just* to "stay alive" — you are living for a *purpose!*

As we have seen so clearly, Jesus Christ Himself drew the analogy of a "body" when speaking of His own true Church, which He said He would build. He talked, too, of a "work" being accomplished on this earth — *by* that very body, the "body of Christ" which is His true Church.

Strangely, there are those who fail to grasp this vitally important truth — that Jesus Christ *commissioned* His disciples to carry out a *great Work* on this earth — that He promised to inspire, lead and guide them *in the conduct* of that Work. He promised He would be in their midst, overseeing directly, intervening when necessary!

Today, millions of hapless humans drift through life

aimlessly with no real goals or purposes beyond just experiencing each day as it comes. Like directionless human beings, some organizations seem to flounder aimlessly — having no great, exciting, stimulating, challenging *job* to accomplish, no inspiring *goal* to reach! Such groups usually fragment, grow weaker and weaker, and finally die — for they lack purpose and positive direction!

Not so with the true Church of the living God which Jesus said He would build! He explained it is given a *commission* to fulfill!

A Selfish Salvation

But to some few, the fulfilling of a commission is totally unimportant. They prefer to think only in smallish, inward, selfish terms — concentrating on *themselves* and *their* personal problems rather than on the hugely challenging problems of all mankind. Such an attitude was illustrated by a man who said, "Ain't no need to build no walkway — ain't goin' nowhere!" With this sarcastic retort, the farmer spat, hitched up his overalls and headed to his 1930s-model car, skirting the muddy puddles in the churchyard of the tiny building just outside Eugene, Oregon's city limits.

It was a Sabbath day in the early 1940s and the pastor, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, had just finished the sermon. In it he had mentioned the need for members to help build a walkway from the unpaved street to the front porch; perhaps by a combination of donated labor, and tithes and offerings for this simple project.

Many had complained of wet and muddy shoes while negotiating the rutted "yard" in Oregon's drizzly weather. The building had been constructed by several members, Mr. Armstrong included, who had donated labor and materials. Now, the old walkway had rotted, broken up, and decayed. A few dozen boards were needed.

But all this "progress" was too much for one conservative member. "Why build a walkway?" was his question. Quite likely, his farmyard didn't have any. He was completely comfortable with his mossy, rainslick boards and planks, and his mud puddles.

"Ain't goin' nowhere," he said. And he was right. He wasn't. But the Church **was**.

It was going to grow national in scope, then international, and then worldwide! Because it was the Work of GOD, and *not* of any man, it was destined to encircle the globe with the dynamic message about a LIVING Jesus Christ who is the soon-coming KING.

That little walkway only represented a "door" to the street, and easy access from a higher, drier roadway to a porch.

A Stifling Misconception

But the attitude of at least one local member represented a misconception that has influenced massive church bodies, decided various forms of church government, and stifled the true preaching of the gospel for centuries!

For that member life consisted of rejoicing in the truth he knew, going to services each Sabbath, and living quietly on his farm with his wife and children. Involvement in projects of growth, even so small as a board sidewalk, just seemed nonsensical to him.

It was hard enough, in those days of comparative poverty, warfare, and hand-to-mouth existence, to keep one's own family fed and clothed, without all that "foolishness" of trying to worry about someone's children sitting around the wood-burning stove drying their socks during services.

A quiet life on the farm?

Too bad we can't *all* enjoy that; I wish I could.

But if those who are called of God are called for a purpose, then that purpose transcends mere physical creature comforts. And as that great purpose is fulfilled — which is *primary* in the lives of members of God's Church — it can result in their own personal eternal salvation!

The by-product of that great transcendental purpose for which God's people are called is their own personal salvation. But that purpose is far *beyond* just individual salvation.

Think! If the only reason God has called His people is

to grant them personal salvation, then why do the calling now? Why call so many into God's Church *now* in this age? Obviously, there is a great *global purpose* in the collective calling of those who have really repented and become members of God's true Church. And that great purpose is directly related to the chaotic conditions extant on this earth today.

Global Conditions

Today's humanity faces the ever-increasing likelihood of massive worldwide famine. This possibility is fueled by the twin problems of the ever-burgeoning population explosion and the dwindling food supplies in poor, "under-developed" nations.

On the very day you read this — and repeated each day — some 350,000 babies cry their way into existence on planet earth! Most of these infants are destined, tragically, to live out their lives in the dirt-poor, "have-not" nations of the earth.

Even after subtracting deaths, every year there are some 75 million more mouths to feed on this already overtaxed earth. At present rates, demographers and population experts estimate that world population, already exceeding four billion, will double in approximately 35 years and *double again* 35 years later! By the year 2000 it is estimated that world population will reach the dizzying height of six to seven billion; thirty-five years later, twelve to fourteen billion! Obviously that can't occur. Something has to give.

In order to feed all these people anywhere near an adequate diet, world food production will have to double between 1960 and 1980, and virtually triple by the year 2000. Yet the present rate of increase renders this a highly unlikely possibility. In plain English — *when* population passes food production, then worldwide famine, starvation, disease epidemics and resultant *food wars* are inevitable!

Every single day — as totally unaware of it as we in the Western world seem to be — a "low" estimate of ten to twelve thousand people on this globe die of starvation!

Wars claim their toll too; the blood of humanity,

spilled in warfare, stains the soil of India, Vietnam, Korea, Biafra, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Middle East and even "Christian" Ireland.

Violence, political agitation, demonstrations, assassinations, hijackings, kidnappings, and mass slayings in airport terminals etch deep and lasting scars on the face of a tormented humanity.

But how does all this worldwide misery tie into the great *global* purpose of preaching and publishing the true gospel of Jesus Christ? Is God unconcerned about all this massive suffering? Or is He truly the God of all mankind?

Jesus Had a World View

Jesus Christ of Nazareth set us an example of concern, compassion and emotion-charged empathy for the plight of a heedless humanity. He showed that God — the Father — the God of all mercy — is the God of *all mankind*.

When Jesus saw the pitiful spiritual conditions and even the illnesses of the people of His day, He was "moved with compassion" (Matt. 9:36; Mark 1:41). He yearned to help, to save humankind from the heartrending results of its own folly. Christ's message — the good news of the Kingdom of God — was *to* the world and *for* the world. That gospel message was to be preached in "all nations" as a warning and a witness (Matt. 24:14).

Paul revealed the true God to the superstitious Athenians: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth . . . And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:24-26).

God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God the Father did not send His Son Jesus Christ with a message of selfish, personal, ingathering, self-righteous salvation — but with a worldwide message for *all mankind!* "And so *all Israel* shall be saved . . .," said the apostle Paul in Romans 11:26.

Jeremiah prophesied about *many* nations (Jer. 25:13-26). Isaiah prophesied concerning Assyria (chapter 10), Babylon (chapter 13), Moab (chapter 15), Syria (chapter 17), Egypt (chapter 19) and many other nations and family groups which have since spread to the four corners of the earth.

God is concerned with more than just a few "Bible-Belt" religious hobbyists in the southeastern United States (though He is deeply concerned about them, just as He is about any human being who draws breath). He has an *international message for all* peoples and nations! It concerns the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the whole human family.

Notice the deeply moving words of Psalm 67: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. *That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among ALL nations . . .* O let the *nations* be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and *govern the nations upon earth . . .* God shall bless us; and *all the ends of the earth shall fear him*" (verses 1-2, 4, 7).

This is the message of a globe-girdling gospel! It is a message of lasting peace, right rulership, radiant health and ultimate salvation for *all* races and nations around the world. It announces *the way* to world peace and harmony; the way to end all famines, wars and terrorism. It is a message of firm hope in an age of utter hopelessness.

Is Your Religion Selfish?

Yet, in spite of the biblically revealed international thrust of a giving gospel, religion is still a very private and very selfish commodity to many harboring a spiritual ingrown toenail.

They want that "old-time religion" — a religion that's part of one's neat, orderly, settled and comfortable life; a religion that's like a favorite pair of comfortable slippers, a spiritual tranquilizer, a good book and an easy chair by that old favorite lamp.

It is as familiar and comfortable as that rusting old automobile in the back farm lot that his father drove

before him; and it is as much a part of his encrusted environment as that old oak tree out back, or that creaking step on the front porch.

Church attendance is also oftentimes for purely selfish reasons. "Attend the church of your choice," advise the billboards. And that is exactly what most religious types do! They attend the church which most caters to their own *personal*, selfish needs, notions and desires.

Some attend church because they want a sense of "belonging"; others because of the convenience of the parking facilities; still others, because they enjoy the music — all for patently selfish reasons. The point is that a church *exists* to suit every type of personality and approach to religion. One can even find churches that openly worship Satan the devil if that happens to be a person's particular "bag."

Many denominations are in "cut-throat" *competition* with each other. Because of this peculiar "Christian" phenomenon, people who are next-door neighbors go to different churches — which are miles apart — driving past each other with scarcely a glance.

Those who prate about "my own salvation" have lost sight of the really big goal in human life — having forgotten that the true gospel has to do with *giving salvation* to as many *other* people as possible.

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a "pearl of great price" and to a "treasure hid in a field" (Matt. 13:44-46). The gospel message is an all-important, futuristic announcement of how that Kingdom is going to rule this earth and how those who hear the message may have a vital part in that ruling Kingdom! That message is a *saving*, giving message — *not* a selfish "get" gospel.

John's Disciples Misunderstood

John the Baptist's ministry was one of frugality and hardship. He apparently ate a stringent, limited diet — mainly subsisting on locusts and wild honey. He lived a very austere life-style, so much so that contemporaries observing his unconventional behavior mistakenly accused him of being demon possessed.

When John heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to try to substantiate who Jesus really was (Matt. 11:2). (John was in prison, but he was aware that somewhere, somehow, the Messiah had to appear at that time.) When the two disciples came to Jesus they asked: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Verse 3.)

Jesus answered: "Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see" (verse 4). He then (verse 5) pointed to the miracles which were a vital part of His messiahship. Jesus pointed to *the fruits* — to the *work being done*.

Then Jesus added: "... And the poor have the gospel preached to them" (verse 5). He pointed out that He was in the business of *giving* that gospel message — and this was one of His most important works. Then Jesus said a seemingly strange thing: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (verse 6).

What did Jesus mean by this enigmatic saying? Does this veiled warning and blessing really fit in this context?

Yes, it does! Let's understand.

After a brief description about John's commission and character (verses 7-15), Jesus began to explain the meaning by comparing the two ministries. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil [demon]. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children" (verses 18-19).

In other words, *the incongruity* of the two situations showed that no matter what we in God's Work do, we will be criticized for doing it "all wrong"!

Jesus was roundly accused and criticized because of His "hobnobbing" with the leaders of the Sanhedrin, sitting with the Pharisees at a huge banquet table, and going to the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee.

Yet Jesus preached to large *crowds* of people — thousands at a time (Matt. 8:1; 13:2; 23:1). He preached the true gospel to them — the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14).

The fact that Jesus said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," strongly indicates that the disciples of John didn't observe what they had *expected* to see in Christ. They probably expected to find someone whose life-style was similar to John's — one of frugality and self-denial. Even John himself may have misunderstood! That's probably why they asked, perhaps preprogrammed by John to do so in a dubious, quizzical tone: "Well, are *you* he that should come, or should we look for another?" They expected the Messiah to be living quite differently.

It is obvious that they were thinking: "You couldn't be the one — or you wouldn't be here in the midst of all this . . ."

Christ's Commission to the Disciples

Jesus *commissioned* His disciples in much the same way a person was commissioned at one time in the military service. A "commissioned officer" originally could have been an ordinary private citizen, or even a wealthy or titled person, who was given a directive to carry out a certain mission. The word "commission" means "with a mission"; that is, with a *purpose* or an objective.

Jesus *sent* out the twelve with a specific charge or purpose: "These twelve Jesus *sent forth*, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, *preach*, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 10:5-7).

The disciples were *not* sent to the Church — they were sent to preach to the world: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have *I also sent them into the world*" (John 17:18).

The main commission was *to the world*. In turn, the body of believers that resulted from their preaching of the gospel to the world became the "Church." But the Church was the *by-product* of the preaching of the gospel!

IF THE GOSPEL WERE NOT FIRST PREACHED TO THE
WORLD, THERE WOULD BE NO CHURCH!

After the gospel is preached and the Church is formed *as a result*, those who are the called members of God's Church make it possible — by their prayers as well as by their *continual* physical and financial support — for *more* people to hear the message of the gospel. And that body of Church members also provides more ministers by which the gospel is preached to more and more people.

The body of Christ — the Church — is therefore constituted to do the work of preaching the gospel.

Jesus Set a Precedent

Jesus of Nazareth came to this earth to deliver the gospel of the Kingdom to that local area (Galilee, Judaea, and their environs) at that time — *to set a precedent* for succeeding generations of the Church. He came to teach and train His own disciples through those experiences.

He then sent them out and told them *to do as He had done* — in fact, they were told they *would do even greater works* than Jesus!

The commission to preach the gospel is a collective charge to all Christians at all times!

New Testament history is a chronicle of the fact that the early disciples fulfilled their commission. They preached the gospel with great zeal throughout the known world.

The apostle Paul, called *later* than the original apostles — as “one out of due season” — also carried on the commission of preaching the gospel. He was so filled with the sense of a great mission that he said — undoubtedly *with deep feeling*: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for *necessity* is laid upon me; yea *woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!*” (I Cor. 9:16.)

At the conclusion of the book of Acts, Paul is busy *on the job* in Rome in his own hired house, preaching *that same gospel* to all who would hear. “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31).

Paul realized that his whole reason for being called was to preach the gospel: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated unto the gospel of God*" (Rom. 1:1).

Jesus Christ suffered more than anyone for the sake of the gospel; and His disciples ultimately followed in His footsteps. Suffering went hand in glove with the preaching of the gospel in the first century.

And their suffering is also an example of what today's true Christian can expect for putting the work of the gospel *first*. "For even *hereunto were ye called*: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Most of the early apostles were martyred for the sake of the gospel. Paul actually left a record of some of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11. He said he had been imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, near death on a number of occasions, stoned, nearly drowned, threatened, and in every conceivable kind of danger. But *nothing* would make him stop preaching the gospel!

Not a Christian Retirement Plan

Jesus did *not* come to set up some kind of a self-perpetuating Christian retirement plan. He did not come to bring about a peaceful, blissful, utopian, comfortable, "dropped-out," esoteric society.

He came to preach the gospel — a gospel that would bring about intense personal suffering for those who would dare to proclaim it. It is a gospel that, by the very essence of its message, *invites persecution*. He commissioned His Church to preach that message fearlessly and boldly. His disciples were ordained and commissioned to preach that same gospel. They did so at great personal sacrifice — and ultimately even martyrdom.

Paul's own desire was so *outside of himself* that he said he could wish himself accursed for his kinsmen (Rom. 9:3). He would have accepted the loss of his personal salvation if that's what it would have taken to get all his fellow brethren into the Kingdom of God. His main desire was for *others* to get into the Kingdom of God.

There would *be* no salvation apart from the preaching of the gospel!

The reason a local congregation gathers at the feet of the minister — to be taught and fed spiritually — is so that it can go out and *do the Work*; so that it can be a more effective part of that commission to preach and proclaim the gospel to all the world *before* the end of this age!

Anyone who is really a part of the body of Christ can see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth organized the Church for the purpose of fulfilling and supporting the attainment of that *number-one purpose*. Those who are *not* doing that job are *not* truly a part of the Church, *not* part of the vine; and they will simply wither up — and die!

The Signs of God's Church

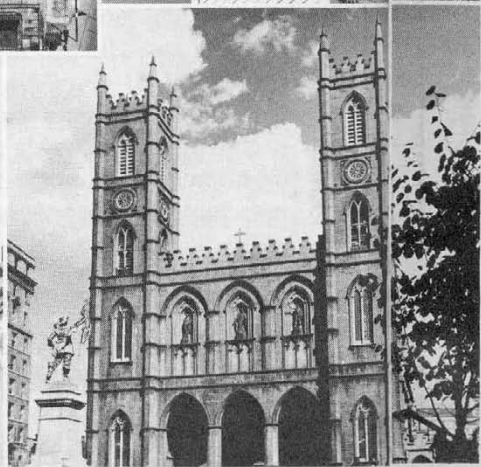
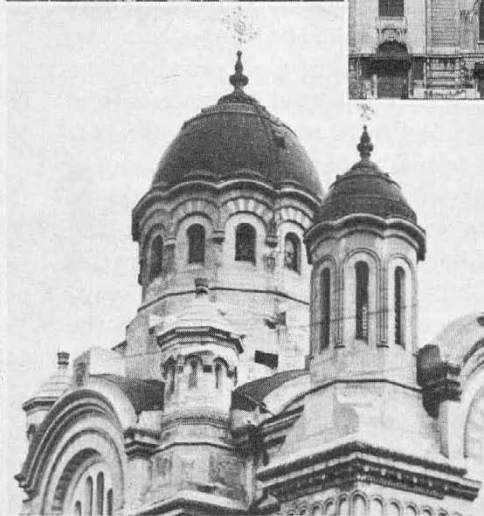
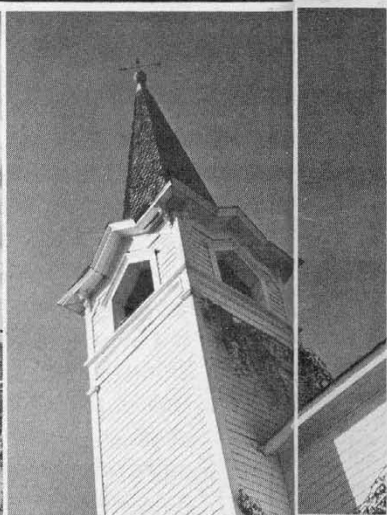
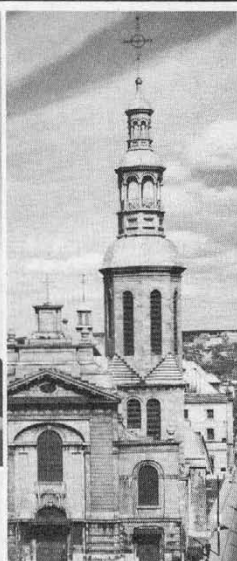
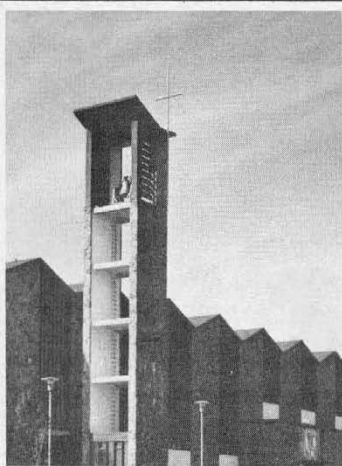
"You shall know them by their fruit," said Jesus!

What is the "fruit" borne by self-serving? What great *harvest* is gathered for Christ? You need to *prove* to yourself where the Church of which Jesus Christ Himself is living, vital, active *Head* is working today!

In this booklet, we have seen that God's true Church is given only one "official" name. That name is repeated *far* more often than any other "descriptive" term which may have included the city in which a local congregation was located. We have seen the great "sign" God gave between Himself and His people, that of the weekly *Sabbath*, and God's annual Holy Days! We have seen how God's true Church would have the overview of world events; would understand the truth about pagan doctrines; would be *organized* as Christ Himself originally established; and very importantly, would be doing the *work of God* on this earth of *fulfilling that great commission!*

Jesus said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). To do just that, God's Church is striving with all that is in it, humanly, calling on God's own divine power to make up for that human lack. Those privileged to have a *part* in that great humanitarian effort never cease to thank God for the opportunity!

Where is God's true



church today?

Does it matter which church you attend — or whether you attend at all?

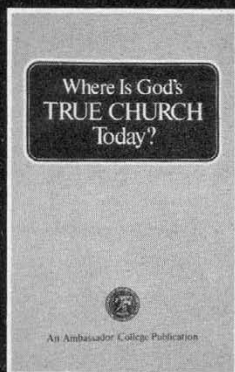
Religion is once again on the upswing. Bizarre sects are proliferating, and the traditional organizations are experiencing renewed interest. But are any of these religions making any difference in today's world?

Does religion really matter? It only matters if there is an all-powerful God who has something to say about it.

Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church," and again, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Christ gave certain signs by which His church could be identified. He said he would do a great work through His church — in *our* age, today! Where is that church now?

Write for the free booklet, *Where Is God's True Church Today?* We think you'll find it most enlightening.

To request your copy, write to: *Plain Truth, Pasadena, California 91123.* Or, if you live outside the U.S., see inside back cover for nearest address.



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