

The Good News

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THE CHURCH OF GOD

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How *Far* Does CHURCH GOVERNMENT Extend into YOUR Life?

Through whom does God make final decisions in matters of Church policy? What is your responsibility under the government of God?

by Herman L. Hoeh

HOW MUCH do you, as an individual, have to say about the policy, the conduct, the practice of God's Church? What are the *Church's* prerogatives and what are each *individual's* prerogatives?

It is time we learned what questions are matters of personal decision and what are matters of Church responsibility regulating us all!

The Church Is a COLLECTIVE Body

The Church of God is a collective body. The Greek word for church means a *group* of individuals who have been called out for a purpose.

When there is a church, a *collective* body, who is going to determine what the church does *collectively*? Who is responsible for determining what each member does as part of that body?

Is each individual free to decide for himself how God's law applies to him? And what about "free moral agency?"

Every one of us is a "free moral agent." Each one of us must decide for himself whether he will obey God. God is the One who decides what we shall obey. Notice how this is explained in Deuteronomy 30:19. Moses said: "I call

heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have SET before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore," says Moses, "CHOOSE life, that both you and your seed may live."

Notice Moses did not invent the difference between life and death. He did not originate it. He merely *set* it before the people. The people are to choose. God commands *you* to choose. That is your responsibility as a "free moral agent."

But God commands you to do something more, not merely to *choose*. He commands you to "choose LIFE." That is an order! And any man who refuses to choose LIFE is in defiance of God. In other words, even though you are a free moral agent, you have been *ordered* to choose life. But *you* must make that choice voluntarily! Free moral agency involves merely the question of *whether* you choose to do what God has commanded you to do, or whether you choose to go contrary to His express order by choosing death instead.

GOD the Author of Right and Wrong

Moses merely set before the people the way of life—blessing, peace, happi-

ness—*God* is the AUTHOR of life! God's ministers are not free to decide for themselves what is right or wrong. That is a prerogative of God!

Is the question of right and wrong really a matter for any individual to determine for himself? Is it *your* decision which determines whether a thing is right or wrong? Or is there a HIGHER AUTHORITY than man who determines the difference between right and wrong?

Indeed there *is* a Supreme Authority which regulates human life and human conduct! Scripture reveals that Authority is God and His government!

It is time we *learn* how God rules and how His government functions.

God is the source of our way of life, of our religion. He has perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom. He *knows* right from wrong. He has not left up to people or to society or the whims of any individual to determine what is sin and what is not sin. *He* is the Lawgiver.

Seventh-day Adventists tell us that the Ten Commandments are a "moral law." The Ten Commandments are no such thing—they are a "*spiritual*" law (Rom. 7:14). A spiritual law is a law that must be set in motion by Spirit,

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by God, *not* by the morals of human society. Catholics call the Ten Commandments a "natural law." This idea has come down through the Catholic Church from paganism. The concept of a "natural law" assumes that God's law can *naturally be understood* by man. To a Catholic only those portions of the Ten Commandments are valid today which can be *naturally* understood.

The question is, Is the law of God, the way of God, *naturally understood* by man? The answer is very plainly NO!

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2 that the spiritual things of God—God's law, His way—are not discerned by the *natural* mind. That means that as individuals we cannot *naturally* understand or discern truth, or right from wrong. The Bible is God's revelation of spiritual knowledge and of those physical laws which man could not with absolute assurance understand by himself. The Bible then is primarily a closed book to the natural mind. That is why most learned and intelligent people regard it as a book of straw, a book of superstition or fable.

Now notice how conversion and the government of God lead to understanding the Bible.

Conversion Takes TIME

Conversion involves a genuine change of this mind. We thereby *begin* to grasp the meaning of Scripture and the Bible—we *begin* to understand the deep differences between right and wrong and recognize what sin really is.

But does this mean that everyone in

God's Church is fully able—merely because he has received the earnest of God's Holy Spirit—to understand *all* the Bible, completely and perfectly? The answer is NO! Notice the Scripture proof!

Peter tells us there are some scriptures, especially those which Paul wrote, which are hard to be understood, which the unstable wrest or twist to their own destruction! Peter declares prophecy to be a light which shines more and more until the day that God finally intervenes in world affairs. Prophecy is not something that was as clear one hundred years ago as it is today.

The ability to understand the Bible is a matter of growth and development. *We are told to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But we do not all grow at the same rate.* Some individuals have been converted much longer than others. Some develop spiritually faster than others. That development depends upon the amount of earnest prayer and study and obedience. As individuals we are not all of the same competence to determine what Scripture says.

How, then, does God regulate those things which we must do together *in unity* if we do not all grow spiritually at the same rate? How are we going to have unity in the Church if as individuals we cannot all understand all things alike without assistance? The answer is that we must be led, governed, ruled by the government of God—guided by Him into truth!

World Rejects God's Rule

The whole world is confused, divided. Even the professing Christian world is divided. Why? The cause of the division among Catholic and Protestant denominations is the REJECTION of *God's authority* and the kind of church rule He set in motion.

Let us notice how God first established rule and authority in the Church. In order to keep the children of Israel in the knowledge of the truth so they would not stray and misinterpret and misunderstand the law, God established His government in His Church, the congregation of Israel. First, He commanded the people, in Deuteronomy 12:8, to perform what *He* said. He forbade them to do what was right in their own eyes, as they had been doing.

But how were they to know what was right in God's eyes? The answer is that God set rule and authority in His Church to determine the difficult matters for the people. We read of this rule and authority specifically in Acts 7:35.

Notice how the people in the Old Testament Church first regarded God's government, His rule and authority.

"This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." I want you to notice. The people did not accept God's government through Moses. They were carnal.

The degree to which individuals accept God's government is illustrative of the degree to which they are converted and changed from their natural carnal mindedness to the mind of God and the Spirit of God. When people say, "Well, I think I ought to decide this for myself," when it is not their decision, they are merely illustrating carnal mindedness. And to be carnal minded is death.

Scripture makes it very plain that throughout time Church members need guidance and direction. The Ethiopian eunuch did not understand what he was reading in the book of Isaiah. God sent Philip to explain that passage which he was reading. To understand, we, too, must have God-called and God-sent teachers who do know and understand the truth.

How God's Rule Works

When it comes to collective matters the Church of God as a whole must perform, there is the need—in order that there should be unity in the Church—of a *central authority* inspired and led by Jesus Christ who is the living Head of the Church. It is the government of God, but God works through human agents. Christ worked through Moses. Christ worked, at a later time, through Joshua, then through Samuel and through David.

In Christ's own day, we find that God worked through Christ, who in turn gave authority to His ministry in His Church. Consider Matthew 18:18. When questions come up, when decisions have to be made, the ministry—this central authority to which all must appeal—has the power to *bind on earth* those matters which the Father and Christ "shall have bound in heaven." Jesus did not institute anything new when He gave His ministry in the New Testament Church the power to bind or to loose on earth. He was merely following the practice that He had already given to the physical ministry in the Old Testament Church—to the priesthood and the judges!

Notice it! Jesus said in Matthew 23:3 that, when the Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: "All things whatsoever they command you, that do."

So there *was* authority in the Old Testament Church.

Most people have misunderstood
(Please continue on page 8)

WHY Some Fall Away

Several have cast aside their eternal life just recently. They are headed straight toward the lake of fire! Read this article and avoid the frightening mistakes they have made.

by L. Leroy Neff

HERE is a stern warning for God's Church today. In the last few months some few—just as Jesus prophesied—have fallen away. That ought to put fear and trembling in each one of us—lest we also let slip this *one* opportunity of eternal life.

It is no strange thing when people who have been a part of God's Church for years fall away. It happened in post-apostolic days (II Thessalonians 2:3).

These individuals who departed would not have believed a year or two ago that they would make such a horrible mistake and cut themselves off from God—but they did!

There were warning signs during the past months and years that they *could* have seen. They could have prevented this. But they purposely disregarded these signs until it may now be too late.

Many are letting the cares of this world, the problems of physical life, and the lusts of the flesh separate them from the goal of eternal life.

What About You?

Are you still striving with your whole might to enter that Kingdom? Or have you, like some of these, grown "weary in well doing?"

Some of you are *disqualifying yourselves* RIGHT NOW from ever receiving that wonderful reward!

Some of you who have been attending services in God's Church are really *not* a part of the true "body of Christ" any longer. You are *not* really a part of this Church, the Church of God. Others of you have never been made a real part of the true "body of Christ."

Just because you are with God's Church physically, does not mean you are a part of that spiritual organism the *True Church* which is carrying on the work of God.

Some—who have been a part of the Church in the past—already have put themselves out because of *disobedience*. Others of you are on very shaky ground and may be rejected by Christ *even now!*

This does not apply only to those who have been attending our local services. Others of you have come to God's festivals, or you may never have come to God's festivals, and yet you believe you are a part of this Church, when you may not be!

You Can't "Join" God's Church

We do not "join" the body of Christ. God makes us a part of it through His Holy Spirit after *complete repentance, baptism, and a total change of attitude*. We remain in the church *only* by *continuing* in this right attitude and by *overcoming* through prayer and faith and obedience.

We do not become a part of the body of Christ by telling our friends or neighbors that I "belong to the Radio Church of God." Nor do we become a part of that true body of believers by just signing a statement. We do not become a part of that *true body by baptism alone*. It requires complete repentance and submission to God—and faith toward Jesus Christ—before we are put into the true Church of God. Let us not deceive ourselves. We may fool some people, but we cannot fool God. *He is our Judge*.

Don't deceive yourself. It is time to examine yourself to determine whether or not you are in the faith. Whether or not you are truly a part of God's Church in this climactic end-time.

The time is fast approaching when it will be too late for change and correction, too late to go to the place of safety that God is preparing for His people.

Some of you are sinning and know it. You have procrastinated and delayed obeying God. God is merciful, kind, loving, patient. But there always comes a time when God's patience ends. Then will be the time of action. He may permit you to continue in sin for a season, but if you do not repent and change, He will soon cut you off *in our sins*.

Others of you are sinning and cannot see your sin.

Why? Because you are not continually looking into God's Word for correction. Sin is the transgression of the law. It defines what sin is. The Word of God is a spiritual mirror. Look into that spiritual mirror to see your sin.

Are You Unknowingly Guilty of These Sins?

The Bible tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law. But some of you have *hard feelings and bitterness* against others in God's Church. You will never get into God's Kingdom with such animosity!

Now is the time to go to your brother, to ask his forgiveness, and settle the matter. Remember that Jesus Christ willingly and lovingly died for both of you. Remember that you both have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and it is only through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ that either one of you have ever been forgiven of your past sins.

Others of you have been talebearers, telling falsehoods and untruths, or half-truths. Or you may have repeated gossip *which may be true* that you should never have repeated to others. One of the six things that *God hates* is the spreading of discord among brethren (Pro. 6:19).

Some *claiming* to be a part of the Church are actually HYPOCRITES. They come among us, and yet when they go home, or to their job, they do not live what they profess to live while among God's people. *What a wretched state!* Living a LIE. God is going to cast all such people into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, unless they repent and change *in time*. If you are one of those in this category, NOW is your time to change and to repent.

There have been many articles in The PLAIN TRUTH and in The GOOD NEWS concerning the first and second tithe. But some are still refusing to obey God in this *plain and clear command of God Almighty*. Some of you did not attend this recent Feast of Tabernacles because you had not faithfully saved your second tithe as God commands. Some day you must give account of your deeds—IN THE JUDGMENT. What excuse are you going to give then?

Or you may have had many other kinds of excuses. If you are guilty of these sins—and many of you are, now is the time to repent, to change your ways and to *prepare now* for God's festival next year.

What Are Lusts of the Flesh?

There have been articles, broadcasts, and sermons on the subject of SMOKING. And yet some of you still persist in continuing in this filthy, rotten and enslaving habit. We know that it is not easy to quit this habit, once a person has become enslaved to it, but *it can be done*. With God's help, many have

conquered the desire to smoke.

If you are still enslaved by this habit, you are not serving the true God in spirit and in truth. You are serving and idolizing tobacco instead.

Others of you are married and now are living apart from your true mate. You may have had to separate because of God's commands concerning adultery, or you may have already been separated before you learned of God's laws. If so, are you, as some, sometimes letting your lusts of the flesh come before your overall spiritual goal of the Kingdom of God? Some have permitted themselves to break the *spirit* and intent of this law by spiritually committing fornication or adultery (Matt. 5:28).

If you have "hidden sins" that no one else knows about, remember this—all sins are open to God. He sees all. It is He who will judge you. *You cannot fool God.*

Now is the time to put such sins out. If we are not overcoming these things now, how can we ever expect to overcome them in the future?

Some of you married couples who have been having marital problems have not been overcoming them. If both parties show the real true Christian love of Jesus Christ, and the kindness that He has, you would *not* have these problems. Is Jesus Christ living within you? If so, then that love and kindness would be growing and increasing in your life. You would be having more patience, kindness and consideration for others.

Don't Be "Cut Down"

You may have continued in your sin and God has not yet finally cut you off. Such a situation is described by Jesus in Luke 13:6-9. "He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none."

God has been coming to some of you for a long time seeking fruit. He has looked for the fruits of the Spirit, given in Galatians 5. He has come to see whether or not you are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has come to see whether or not your real goal is still the Kingdom of heaven. He has come to see if you are really doing your part in getting this gospel of the Kingdom to the world. He has been patient and merciful.

But God has found no fruit for many of you!

Notice Christ's further words. "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

That may be what God the Father is

about to say of you now. Maybe He has already said this at some time in the past.

But Jesus Christ has intervened. "And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it."

God has sent His ministers and His servants to work with you. They have worked with you in articles, in the Correspondence Course, the booklets and other literature. He has also sent His servants to work with you through The WORLD TOMORROW broadcast and through our local ministers so that fruit might be produced in you. Some of you have produced fruit and *some have not.*

"And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt *cut it down.*"

Some have already been "cut down." There comes a time when God ceases to have patience or leniency. Others of you are just about ready to be "cut down."

What about you? If you have not had fruit, it is because *you are not applying yourself.*

It is because some are not *really* putting the Kingdom of God FIRST in their lives (Matt. 6:33).

You have lost sight of that overall goal, the Kingdom of God. Now is the time to once again put your eye *single toward that goal*, not on your physical surroundings.

First Love Lost

Some of you have gone backward and not forward since God first called you. You have lost that "first love." You need that "first love" to enter into God's Kingdom.

To you it might personally be said: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

Do you have the same zeal and love for the work and truth of God now that you had when you were first converted? If not, you had better change now. Here is Christ's instruction for you: "Remember therefore from whence thou art FALLEN, and *repent, and do the first works . . .*" (Rev. 2:5).

Another reason why many of you are having these problems is that you are neglecting the Christian *necessity* of prayer and Bible study. How can you grow spiritually except you pray "without ceasing" (with regularity). We must devote a regular period each day to prayer and Bible study. How can we know what our sins are unless we look into God's Word regularly to see those sins?

Many of you are neglecting The PLAIN TRUTH, The GOOD NEWS, the Correspondence Course and the various booklets and articles. Unless you have

God's ministers explain necessary things to you by these publications, you will not be able to grow spiritually as you ought.

Don't Neglect the Broadcast

Some of you have become lax in listening to the broadcast. In most areas of the United States you can hear the broadcast more than one time each day. In some areas it is available *seven times* a day. And yet, some have neglected this very important part of their spiritual life. If you believe that it is not necessary for you to do these things, then you have become "spiritually rich," just as the Laodicean church (Rev. 3). *That church is not going to a place of safety.*

God says to some of you: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: *because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee*, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast *forgotten the law* of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

That is why some of you are disqualifying yourself to enter God's Kingdom! You are rejecting the knowledge that God has given you, and not acting on that knowledge. You have forgotten the law of God, and in place of it you are seeking worldly and temporal pursuits.

Now is the time to act on the knowledge God has given.

Who Will Be Saved?

Since there is such a lack in many who assemble with God's Church, it can sometimes be discouraging. Sometimes one almost wonders, "Will anyone attain to the Kingdom of God?"

There were people in Jesus' time who also had such questions. "Then said one unto him, Lord, *are there few that be saved?*" (Luke 13:23).

This is a natural question to ask.

Notice the very next words of Christ. "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate:* For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

That is the answer from Christ. Are you *striving* to enter into the Kingdom of God? Or, have you let the cares of this life turn you away from that goal?

Some of you who think you are in God's Church now will try to enter into God's Kingdom, and will not be able! You will not have time to prepare for God's Kingdom next year or the following year, or ten years from now. The time to prepare is *now*. If you put off until tomorrow what you should do today, you may find that you are too late.

God's ministers diligently show the
(Please continue on page 12)

Is JUDAISM the *Religion of Moses*?

How much do you know about the Jewish sects mentioned in your New Testament—the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and the Herodians and Zealots? Were they all really God's Old Testament Church?

by Ernest Martin

Part 2

HUNDREDS of denominations and splinter sects are represented in so called Christianity today. It is possible to find any variety that might suit the fancy.

A Sect for Every Whim!

There are "pentecostal" sects that cater to those of certain emotional tendencies. Others appeal to the educated and the intellectual. There are puritan and fundamentalist denominations and at the other extreme, cold, formal and modernistic ones. On the other hand, we find certain denominations having a strong central government and in others the congregations rule. There are those with pomp and ritual, and those having no religious adornment. And yet, the irony of the whole thing is the fact that all these opposing and irreconcilable denominations claim to be the Church that Christ founded while they preach conflicting and contradictory "gospels." It certainly is obvious that they are not preaching the *one* Gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Our people—claiming to be Christians—have gotten themselves into a chaotic state of confusion in regard to religion. They have abandoned the Gospel of Christ—which is clearly and plainly revealed in the Word of God—and substituted for it their various opinions and beliefs resulting in our modern denominationalism.

It should therefore not be surprising to us today, who are so used to the splits and schisms based on the opinions of men, to find that the Jews in the New Testament times were *also split up into many differing and opposing sects.*

The Denominations of Judaism

It is a common law of human nature that when mankind uses human reasoning to arrive at the truth of a religious subject, there are going to be many differences of opinion. The Jews in the New Testament period were not one unified denomination preaching one message. They were far from common agreement with one another in many basic points of religion.

Judaism had its sectarian divisions as we have ours. How did they originate

—and why? Let the Jews themselves answer.

Here are the candid admissions of Heretford:

"If it were possible to analyze the Judaism of the New Testament Period into all its component elements, the result of the process would be to show *how complex a variety* is summed up under that name, and *how far from the truth* it is to speak of 'the Jews' collectively as if they were all alike, in respect to their Judaism" (Herford, *Judaism in the New Testament Period*, pp. 41, 42).

"When looked at from a distance, as is usually the case with non-Jewish students, Judaism appears to be a well-defined and fairly simple system, with a few strongly marked lines of thought and practice capable of easy description, and supposed to be not less easily understood. But, when studied from near at hand, and still more when studied from within, Judaism is seen to be by no means simple. *There were many more types than usually appear, many more shades of belief and practice than those which are commonly described.* In this sense it is true to say, in the words of Montifiore, that *there were 'many Judaisms' . . .*" (*ibid.*, p. 14).

The fact that there were all types of conflicting and opposing sects in Judaism is important to recognize if an adequate understanding of the New Testament Period, and especially Paul's writings, is to be gained. These various sects, *to which only a very small part of the population belonged*, disagreed among themselves on many religious doctrines. Even within the sects, many individuals or groupings were at variance with one another.

This condition of religious discord among the various sects, with the independent and differing views of many even within the sects, undoubtedly was a prime factor in causing the Common People of the land to dissuade themselves from joining the sects of Judaism. When there is not unanimity of belief in religious teaching, there is a natural repulsion on the part of most people to religion itself—or at least in taking a serious interest in it. This is the condition existing in our contemporary world, and it was the very condition that existed among the Jews of Palestine

during the days of Christ. The overwhelming majority of the Jews did not directly belong to the religious sects, and the sects, themselves, were in a state of confusion as to religious belief.

Let us look at some of these divided sects of Judaism in order to help us better understand the New Testament period.

The Pharisees

The major sect among the divisions of Judaism was that of the Pharisees. This was the most influential group at the time and can be called the leading division.

Even though their membership was only 6,000 out of a population near 3,000,000, they had greater religious influence over the people than any other group. The main reason for this is because the individuals in charge of the majority of synagogues were Pharisees. Being in charge of the synagogues gave them a certain amount of sway over the Common People who attended the synagogue services. We must remember, however, that the evidence shows that only a minority of the Common People attended the synagogues with regularity. The Pharisees had no direct control over the bulk of the people at all.

Who Were the Pharisees?

The Pharisees were not exactly like a church as we know it. They were, instead, a group of men, and even some women, representing many different walks of life—teachers, ministers, businessmen, politicians, etc. These men had voluntarily bound themselves together in a covenant to live a particular manner of life. Instead of calling them a church, they can best be described as a *religious fraternity or association* (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i, p. 311). These were Jews who bound themselves together into an exclusive fraternity to perform certain religious customs and traditions that the Common People did not wish to keep, or did not wish to keep with the strictness of the Pharisees.

Edersheim continues:

"The object of the association was twofold: to observe in the strictest manner, and according to traditional law, all the ordinances concerning Levitical purity, and to be extremely punctilious

in all connected with religious dues (tithes and all other dues)" (*ibid.*, vol. i, p. 311).

It is important to note that the Pharisees were merely an association of men who had bound themselves to keep the Levitical laws of purity and also to conform very strictly to the laws of tithing. *They had not bound themselves to accept any creed or set of doctrines.*

"The Pharisees were never a homogeneous body possessed of a definite policy or body of doctrine" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. xxi, p. 347).

At no time was it required of all Pharisees to believe alike. This fact is very important! By understanding this, we can come to a clear comprehension of the true activity of the Pharisees during the time of Christ.

It can be plainly shown that the Pharisees exercised little central authority among themselves at all. In fact, other than their uniformity in their desire to keep the laws of purity and the other religious dues, the Pharisees represented a group of men *with unlimited differences of opinion.* They were not one unified group in the matter of religious doctrines. One Pharisee would teach his opinion on a religious question and another would teach another opinion, in many instances, often totally different or diametrically opposite. Each Pharisee could teach whatever he pleased concerning the Scripture and *still be a Pharisee* so long as he kept bound to the Pharisaical rule of life.

You can imagine what confusion this would bring among the Pharisees!

The Pharisaical Schools

Just a few years before the birth of Christ, and also during His lifetime, we have record of many divisions within the Pharisaical group. These divisions resulted from differences of opinion among the Pharisees. Some Pharisees, who might believe one particular set of doctrines, would tend to associate themselves together into their own societies. Some of the prominent of these societies would also form themselves into schools where any differences of opinion on religious questions among themselves could be discussed and then accepted or rejected by the whole of the school.

Two of the most distinguished schools at this time, representing the two major divisions of the Pharisees, were the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. These two schools were the rivals of one another. The points over which they disagreed were practically innumerable (*Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, by McClintock and Strong, vol. ix, p. 472). There was hardly a point of

religious doctrine that these two schools completely agreed on. Edersheim says that at one time there was such violent disagreement between these two schools that blood was shed between them (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii, p. 13).

These two schools were *not the only divisions* of the Pharisees, however. There were many more! Dr. George H. Box, of the University of London, informs us: "The Pharisees at this time were *sharply divided into various sections* which were *NOT* exhausted by the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai" (Abbington Bible Commentary, p. 841). There were many other splinter groups existing even among the Pharisees, almost all teaching different doctrines.

The Pharisee Synagogues

It is readily understandable why the rulers of the synagogues were adherents to the code of the Pharisees. It was a mark of religious piety to keep the Levitical laws of purity and to be scrupulous in keeping the laws of tithing, etc. So, the majority of the rulers of the synagogues (ministers) were Pharisees.

This does not mean that these synagogue rulers taught a unified creed. The ruler of the synagogue, in most cases, would teach what he, himself, thought was proper. Some of these Pharisees would conform as near as possible to the Hillel School of interpretation. Others would lean towards the Shammai School. Many would teach a combination of the two schools' doctrines infused with their own peculiar beliefs. No creed existed in the synagogues ruled by the Pharisees. This is the reason why almost every opinion was tolerated in the synagogues. *The scribes and Pharisees never taught with authority* as did Jesus! (Herford, *Judaism in the New Testament Period*, p. 170).

Now we can understand why it was not difficult for Christ and the Apostles to speak in most of the synagogues without molestation. Each ruler of the synagogue could teach what he pleased and he allowed those of the congregation to express their opinion if they wished. There was little government of God—and there was little truth.

The Apostle Paul spoke many times in the Jews' synagogues about the *truth* of Christianity (Acts 13:15; 14:1; 17:1-2). Sometimes Paul met with approval and other times with opposition. Jesus also preached the true gospel in many of the synagogues throughout Judea and Galilee without being prohibited (John 18:20).

Because the majority of the synagogues were under the control of individuals who were Pharisees, it is safe

to conclude that the Common People who attended endeavored to keep some form of the Pharisaical teaching. In this sense, it would be proper to say that those who attended the synagogues were following a type of *nominal* Pharisaism—even though they were not Pharisees themselves.

"The popular religion therefore, so far as it was entitled to be called *Judaism*, might be described as more or less *diluted Pharisaism*" (*ibid.*, p. 136).

And because the Pharisees did control the synagogues, and had greater influence over the Common People who attended, they assumed the position of being the major sect of Judaism. They by no means represent the only religious group, however. There were many more!

The Scribes

Along with the Pharisees it is necessary to mention the Scribes. They adhered to the Pharisaical rules of piety and, in fact, represented a particular group within the Pharisees. They were the *scholarly Pharisees*—sometimes called "doctors of the law" (Luke 5:17).

In other words, they were the ones most learned in the Law. Both Hillel and Shammai, who founded the two prominent Pharisaic Schools, were Scribes, or Doctors of the Law. Not all Pharisees were Scribes, but *all Scribes were Pharisees* (*ibid.*, p. 158). To them was committed the copying of the Hebrew Bible.

The Sadducees

Another major group within Judaism at this time were the Sadducees. Even though the members in this sect were fewer than the Pharisees, they could command attention because they were in influential political positions in Jerusalem. Actually, *many of the Sadducees were priests* who ministered in the Temple in Jerusalem. Performing these functions was about the *only* religious service that the priests were doing at this time.

In the distant past, it had been the job of the priests, along with the Levites, to be the religious leaders in Israel. But, by the time of Christ, the Pharisees, who were not priests, had been allowed by Queen Alexandra (79 B.C.) to take this leadership to themselves, while the priests were relegated to the place of performing only the rituals at the Temple. Jesus recognized the Pharisees' authority, however (Mat. 23:2-3).

Because the Pharisees had deprived the priests of their rightful position as teachers of the people, we can see one reason why the priests did not favor the Pharisees nor what they taught. This is why the majority of priests were Sadducees! They had a spite for the

Pharisees, so they joined themselves to the sect which disapproved of the Pharisees the most.

The Sadducees had no set religious creed *except* that they *all disbelieved* in the resurrection from the dead, in angels, and spirits (Acts 23:8). They claimed to believe explicitly in the Scriptures, but even in their fundamental doctrines just quoted, it is clearly obvious that they rejected much of the Scripture, for the Word of God plainly teaches the resurrection, the existence of angels and spirits (Job 14:14; Eze. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:1-3; Ex. 14:19; Dan. 6:22; I Sam. 18:10). Probably they rejected such essential and basic doctrines because the Pharisees held all of these as indispensable doctrines of the Scriptures. Perhaps it was out of spite that the Sadducees rejected them. They certainly had no Scripture proof for doing so. It is known that the Sadducees detested the Pharisees so much that they would counter almost every belief the Pharisees would teach.

These doctrines of the Sadducees were not popular with the people. Very few of the Common People ever joined with them. And, the Sadducees made no attempt to proselyte. They also had no synagogues in which to worship (Herford, *Judaism in the New Testament Period*, p. 122). Nor did they have any real centralized authority among themselves. The individual members of this group could believe whatever he pleased, and there was "a considerable variety of type among the Sadducees," declares Herford.

Their real prominence was mainly *political*. During the time of Christ, the Sadducees were in control of the civil Supreme Court of the Jews (the Sanhedrin). Because of their being majority leaders in this powerful judicial organization, they had recognizable respect from the people. The Sanhedrin was the high civil court, allowed under the Romans to try legal disputes which would arise between Jews. It even had power, in some instances, to give capital punishment. And, by the Sadducees having the majority vote in this court (called "the council" in the New Testament—Luke 22:66), they could command certain political esteem from the people—even at times from the Pharisees. Religiously speaking, however, very few of the Jews were Sadducees. Their materialistic concept of Scripture and the fact that they were mainly priests plus some rich and influential men, caused this sect not to be in any way popular. "The priestly and aristocratic Sadducees were rigidly exclusive, and insignificant in numbers" (*The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, p. 134).

The Essenes

The last *major* group of Judaizers to be considered as representing Judaism, and having about 4,000 members, were the Essenes. This sect is not mentioned in the New Testament, although they were in existence at the time.

Because Jesus never directly by name condemned this group, as He did the Pharisees and Sadducees, some modern scholars have been led to assume that perhaps Jesus was a member of this sect! Nothing could be further from the truth!

Members of this group were ascetics who lived in the desert near the Dead Sea. They were anti-social in the extreme, withdrawing from society altogether, having no social intercourse with any except members of their own sect. They practised celibacy (repudiating marriage entirely), drank no wine, did not attend Temple services, nor did they sacrifice (*Cyclo. Bib., Thes. & Ecc. Lit.*, vol. iii, p. 302). Their order was similar to the practices in monasteries and nunneries of the Catholic Church with which we are familiar (Herford, *Judaism in the New Testament Period*, p. 63). They even had their own synagogues in which to practice their ascetic customs.

Christ practiced none of their basic tenets! Simple reference to the New Testament shows us that He was certainly not an ascetic. *He came eating and drinking wine* (Matt. 11:19). He went out into the highways (Matt. 22:9) and even ate with the Common People of the land, called *sinners* by the Pharisees (Matt. 9:11). He attended the annual Holy Days ordained of God (John 2:23; 5:1; 7:14). *All these things the Essenes would not do!*

The Apostle Paul *condemns* asceticism as a way of life (Col. 2:21-23), while the Essenes believed in it as a fundamental doctrine. Neither Paul nor Christ was in any way connected with this sect of the Jews nor did they propound any of this sect's peculiar doctrines. Even the most skeptical of scholars must admit this fact (*Abington Bib. Com.*, p. 842). Most of the doctrines adhered to by the Essenes actually came from heathen influences, not from the Bible.

The Qumran

Another sect—or perhaps sects—connected directly with the Essenes, were the Qumran group. Before 1947, no one knew that this sect existed in Palestine. In that year, however, some scrolls were found by an Arab in a cave near the Dead Sea. It was found that these scrolls were hidden by this sect now known as the Qumran.

Subsequent archeological discoveries

revealed that this group were like the Essenes in many ways. They preferred a life of asceticism and lived in monastery-like institutions (Thompson, *Archaeology and the Pre-Christian Centuries*, p. 107). However, a study of their writings indicated that they may have been a splinter group of the Essenes. Their own writings tell us that there were differences of opinions among themselves and that there were different sections within the group (*ibid.*, p. 115).

That Jesus had nothing to do with them is apparent! Professor Thompson says that the teaching of these Qumran sects differed from that of Christ in a thousand ways (*ibid.*, p. 118).

The Zealots

The Zealots were a religious group (Herford, *Judaism in the New Testament Period*, p. 66), who had as their basic philosophy—the defense of the Law of Moses. At least, this was their supposition. In their religious beliefs they sided with the Sadducees *in one respect*: they rejected the authority of the Pharisaic teachings (*ibid.*, p. 68). But they were not Sadducees! They held that the Law of Moses was sufficient to guide the religious life, and that it did not need the extra teachings of the Pharisees or any other group to make it clear. It is not known just how fervent they really were in adhering to this religious conception.

Their main point of doctrine, and the one which gave them their name, was their *zealousness* for the Law. They were supposedly willing to fight or even to die for the Law if necessary. However, we find that this seemingly good quality was actually a tool by which they could get the Common People to come to their aid in order to accomplish their own nationalistic desires of driving all foreigners from the land of Palestine. It was the overthrow of the Roman yoke more than anything else that gave them impetus for zealously.

We often meet with this sect in the New Testament only because one of the Apostles was *once* a member of it before becoming a Christian (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

Their importance was not overly great during the time of Christ, but their influence grew, after the crucifixion, to the extent that much of the blame for the rebellion against Rome, that caused the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D., is to be accorded directly to them. Their fundamental doctrine of rebellion against all foreign domination (using the pretext of fighting for the Law of God) brought much of the misery the Jews suffered during the destruction of Jerusalem

nearly 40 years after the crucifixion. This sect was extinguished from Judaism after that destruction.

The Herodians

During the time of Christ there was another minor group represented in Judaism called the Herodians. They are mentioned twice in the New Testament (Matt. 22:16; Mark 12:13), and are in both cases aligned with the Pharisees against Christ. Little is known of them except that they had independent doctrines of their own. It has been *conjectured* by some that they were endeavoring to proclaim Herod the Great as the King and Messiah. The Jews were well aware that the Messiah was to come at about this time because of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. It is possible—say some scholars—that the Herodians were proclaiming Herod as their coming King. However, this is entirely conjecture.

It is not known how many members were in this *minor* group, nor is it really known what they taught.

Other Sects in Judaism

Other than the sects and divisions already mentioned, *there were many other minor religious groups in Judaism*. That these sects existed is readily recognized because they wrote many erroneous and fantastic apocryphal books which show that they were people who believed doctrines totally different from the common sects. These books express different opinions among themselves as well, and in every case endeavor to teach what the Bible clearly does not teach.

The name that has been applied to many of these small and independent groups, or perhaps they represent nothing more than a few individuals, is Apocalyptists. The word means "the revealing-ones" or those who purport to give *secret* doctrines or prophecies never heard before.

Many of the writers of these books claimed the names of famous Old Testament personalities, such as Enoch and Moses, as the supposed authors of their books. However, it is well known that these books were written about one to two hundred years before Christ. See R. H. Charles', *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, Oxford University Press, page 123, for the evidence of this.

Instead of revealing many hidden truths, these books reveal only the errors that some of the Jews had foolishly come to believe. The important point to realize is the fact that these false books are at variance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. *They do not belong in the Bible!* They were

all rejected by the Jews of Palestine. In a future chapter we will see just what books really belong in the Old Testament and who had the authority to decide it. It is important to know!

Points to Remember

Let us summarize the religious condition of the Jews during the time of Christ.

Out of a total population of about 3,000,000 Jews in Palestine, there were only about 6,000 Pharisees, about 3,000 Sadducees, 4,000 Essenes, and a few thousand representing the other sects of Judaism. Those belonging to the religious sects represented only a mere fragment of the population—less than 5% of the total population.

The evidence shows that, relatively speaking, very few of the Jews attended the synagogues each Sabbath. The synagogues were just too small or there were not enough of them to allow all to attend.

Of the sects themselves, the Pharisees, the major group, *were divided* into many opposing divisions. Nor were the Sadducees a unified group, for there *were many varieties of beliefs among them*. The Essenes and Qumran, by their own writings, were not a uniform group, *but were divided into various elements of belief*. The rest of the sects were minor in importance. Even the writings of the Apocalypticists show a variety of opinions. They certainly did not agree with one another—and especially they did not agree with the Bible.

Among all these differing sects we find some keeping the traditions of the elders. Some believed in asceticism; others repudiated it. There was disagreement over the rituals, marriage, the Sacred Calendar, the correct observance of the Holy Days, etc. In fact, the points of disagreement were virtually *innumerable*.

About the only things held in common by them all were some kind of observance of the Sabbath, the rite of circumcision, the calling of Israel "a chosen people" and the expectancy of the Messiah. However, even in these fundamental doctrines there were countless shades of interpretations.

The condition of the Jews in New Testament times can best be described by the statement in the Bible: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

There is no question but that the religion of the Jews, as taught by the differing sects, was not the religion that God gave Moses. In truth, the message that Christ brought re-emphasized the religion of Moses *in its true spiritual intent*, and to give it to a people who had forgotten the true spiritual applica-

tion of the Law!

In the next chapter we shall see how the Jews originally departed from the Mosaic faith; how they instituted the commandments of men which Christ condemned (Mark 7:7); how the religious sects first arose; and why the Jews came to such a state of religious confusion during Christ's time.

(To be continued next issue)

Government

(Continued from page 2)

this scripture. They have assumed that everything the scribes and Pharisees *taught* was taught from the seat of Moses. That is not true. Whatever proceeded from the "seat of Moses" had authority—but the scribes and Pharisees did *not* teach with authority—they did not teach from Moses' seat. Mr. Ernest Martin has prepared a thesis, running serially in *The Good News*, entitled, "Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?" At the close of this thesis he will bring out that the "seat of Moses" *was that AUTHORITY*, vested, in Christ's day, in the scribes and Pharisees and which they *exercised on behalf of the whole community to keep unity and order in the congregation*. It had to do with those decisions which came before the Church *as a whole* which had to be determined by a central authority for all the Church. Such decisions were *very rarely made*. Jesus recognized that the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat had authority over the synagogues and whatever God allowed them to determine. *that* the people were to obey! Then Jesus added: "But do not do after their works."

What If Jews Sinned While in Office?

Notice what that means! *Even if the scribes and Pharisees had individually cut themselves off from God*, yet when it came to the major decisions, God still allowed them to determine what the Old Testament Church *collectively* should do, and the people under the authority of the scribes and Pharisees were *required* to submit to that authority.

God still governed the Old Testament Church through the "seat of Moses." The decisions rendered by scribes and Pharisees *were allowed of God* and were to be obeyed. If those in authority did not obey their own injunctions the people were not to follow their bad examples; but they still must follow God's orders as expressed by those in authority. Pharisaic disobedience did not excuse the people from obedience to God's government!

Some people today have to learn the

meaning of this example. Even if a minister today were to make a mistake, as long as God leaves him in office he is to be respected. *God* is responsible for correcting him. In the meantime we are to *submit to God's government* functioning through him.

New Testament Church Government Today

Jesus Christ reveals His New Testament Church government through the writings of Paul in I Corinthians 12. In verse 18 we find God set certain offices in the Church. It is the Government of God, not the election of people. In Ephesians 4, verse 11 to 14, we are told of the same government—of apostles, of prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. The function of this government is to teach us and to bring us to that final goal—"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The goal, then, is that we all may be brought to the unity of the faith, to the stature of spiritual understanding like Jesus Christ. The very fact that this is a goal and an aim and that we don't all progress to that goal with the same degree of speed, nor do we all sense the direction that we should go, PROVES the need of the ministry! Ministers are pictured as shepherds; and the people, in general, are called sheep because they do not always know the way to go.

Jesus Christ is the CHIEF SHEPHERD. He has set those in the ministry who are *spiritually more mature*, and who can be called "elders," and who are responsible under Christ to assist in shepherding the flock. *He holds them responsible for ruling the Church well.* We read of some of the functions of the ministry in I Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that RISE WELL be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Notice it again! One of the functions of the elders is to RULE WELL. This rule involves the authoritative expounding of the meaning of the Scripture. If God's rule in the Church involved *only* teaching, but no authority to enforce that teaching, the Church would quickly be divided like Protestant sects are!

If you for example tell your child do this or do that, and he doesn't do it—and you haven't been given the authority to act, but only the authority to talk, are you going to have any unity in the family? No! Now if God says that every elder must *first* learn how to rule his own house well, that means he is also to have Church authority vested in him. He is to teach God's truth, and if the teaching isn't followed, then he is responsible for exercising authority to see that God's teaching is obeyed. The duty

to rule well in the home is a necessary prerequisite to the ministry.

You Must Decide Whether This Is God's Church

Notice Romans 10:13 through 17: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him on whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him on whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear *without a preacher?* and how shall they preach *except they be sent?*"

We must first of all come to a knowledge of *where* God's teaching is. We must find those whom *God* has sent. Unless we have found those whom God has sent, how are we going to know that what is preached is true?

The first thing that all of us must do is to decide whether or not *this is God's Church.* We must come to know where God's Church is. The Church of God has been given a commission. Jesus said He will be with us always, even to the end, or consumation, of this age. We know that the Church that God uses is one in which *Christ is.* It is the Church which fulfills the commission of Christ, not some other mission. It preaches the Kingdom of God, not a social gospel, not the "Israel message," and certainly not the visions of Ellen G. White. It is the Church which yields itself to all the Scripture. A Church which obeys God and which has Jesus Christ as its Head and living in its members.

When Jesus made a statement that many of His disciples didn't agree with, many of them left. Jesus asked Peter, "Are you going to leave also?" Peter said, "To whom shall we go? *You* have the words of eternal life." Now if this is not God's Church, where else will you find the truth? If this is God's Church, then you must recognize that God has set in this Church His government through which Christ rules.

Once you have proved this is God's Church, how far are you going to let God rule you? How far will His government extend in your home and into your life? What decisions are you, as an individual, to make? And how much is vested in the Church as a body? The Church, of course, authoritatively speaks *by the ministry* when it comes to making decisions which regulate the whole Church. (Observe Acts 15, for example.)

Example of the Sabbath

Let us take the example of the Sabbath. Who determines what day the Sabbath is? *God* does! The source of our religion is *God.* What does God say? He says the *seventh day* is the

Sabbath of the Lord our God.

Who then has been responsible for determining whether or not the seventh day, which is now called Saturday, is actually the seventh day of God's week?

The Jews!

But when every seventh day comes around, *who determines the exact time when the Sabbath begins for you?* I have asked several this question and very few have been immediately able to answer! Where *you* live, who determines the moment when the Sabbath Day begins *for you?*

The Bible—the source of our religion—shows us that it *begins at sundown.* That is the beginning of every day. But who determines for you when sundown occurs? *You do!*

That is *your* individual responsibility. If you live west of me, the Sabbath begins for me before it begins for you. God holds *me* individually responsible for deciding when the Sabbath begins *for me*—either by observation or by consulting the local paper. But I must always decide it IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S LAW—which makes sunset the beginning of the day. It is *your individual responsibility* to determine at what moment the Sabbath begins *for you.* But, if you are responsible for determining when sundown commences for you, who is responsible for the *time* at which we all meet at the local church on the Sabbath Day? This is a *collective matter.* When it comes to the time we all meet together, *that* must be a decision of the local ministry in each congregation. When it comes to the matter of *the place* where we all must meet, that again is a collective matter. That is for those in authority in the Church to decide. Whoever decides must be one whom God has chosen to decide—one in His ministry. It is not your responsibility.

But some individual will say: "Well, I believe we shouldn't meet here—I think it should be there, or somewhere else." Or: "I believe it is wrong for us to meet at a certain time of day, I think it ought to be at a different time." If you think that *is* your responsibility, you are saying then that God is using you and not someone else to make this decision for the Church. And anyone who decides that he himself should make such a decision is doing what all worldly ministers have done—he is *putting himself* in the function of the ministry—an act only God can do!

Let's again illustrate the responsibility God places on the ministry for the Church. We have the matter of Pentecost. Pentecost is the fiftieth day after the day that the wave sheaf is offered. The question comes, how does the Church determine what that fiftieth day

is? The answer is, the Church, led by the Holy Spirit of God, *counts* it properly. *Individuals* often cannot count this properly. And, since observing this day is a *matter* for the whole Church, it becomes the responsibility of those *whom God has set in authority in the Church* to determine how the day is counted—whether or not you can see it! Once you recognize this is God's Church and that we *are* under God's authority in the ministry—then Jesus' statement applies to you as much as it applied to the Jews in that time, "All things whatsoever they command you, that observe and do." And when God decides through His ministers which day Pentecost is, you are required to obey.

God gives His ministers the wisdom to understand His will—or He could not continue to use them in His ministry.

What About Controversial Passages in the Bible?

When it comes to the *text* of the Hebrew Old Testament, do *you*, as an individual, have authority to decide for the whole Church what is the true reading of the Old Testament Hebrew in any controversial passage? Of course not!

But, some argue, were not the scribes and Pharisees responsible for the death of Christ.

Of course! But consider! When He was rejected of them, they collectively cut themselves off from any *new* service in God's government. From that time forward Jesus had to commission others in the New Testament ministry to bear His spiritual Message worldwide.

This does not mean that the Jews, because of disobedience to God, are not to be relied upon in the preservation of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Calendar! Their disobedience does *not* mean we can spurn God's government functioning through them when it comes to those things which God committed to the Jews to preserve for us—the Hebrew Old Testament and the Sacred Calendar.

The Jews, despite their sins, *still have* authority in these matters!

It is *their* responsibility to determine for us what constitutes the Old Testament and to preserve the rules of God's Calendar!

We find in Romans 3:1-4 the proof! "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that *unto them* were committed the oracles of God." But we may ask, "What if some [of the Jews] did not believe? shall their unbelief"—their rejection of the truth of God—"make the faith of God"—which was committed to us in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and in the Sacred Calendar—"without effect?"

In other words, even though the Jews have disbelieved the Scriptures, twisted the meaning of the Bible, substituted their own traditions for the truth in their oral teaching, we still must acknowledge their authority. *Their sins do not make the Hebrew Old Testament null and void!* Verse 4 further explains it: "God forbid: yea let God be true, but every man a liar." If *all* the Jews should have departed from the faith, *we would still be required to recognize God's government working through them to preserve authoritatively the Old Testament Scriptures.* The Scriptures were given to the Jews to preserve—and *God holds us responsible for recognizing that fact!* What were once committed to the Jews to preserve is even now their responsibility—it is not *ours!*

We acknowledge the authority of the Jews for the Hebrew text of the Bible.

The Jews authoritatively preserved it in the "Masoretic Text"—the official Hebrew Old Testament, accurately copied by the Masoretes—a guild of specially trained Jewish scribes.

When we seek the proper order in which the books of the Old Testament have been kept, *we go to the Jews*, who have preserved it.

When the ministers want to know authoritatively how the various Hebrew words of the Old Testament are to be read (the Hebrew, you know, did not have vowels), we do not decide for ourselves. We must rely on the traditional oral reading that the Jews *always enforced*, as a part of the government of God, in their synagogues. Here is why: The Jews used to assign readers to read the Bible aloud in the synagogue. If the readers did not read properly the true text, they were not allowed to continue oral reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue.

Jesus, according to Luke 4:16, was a reader in the synagogue. He thereby gives His approval of the text of the Bible as then orally read. That same oral reading is still preserved in the various added vowel points of the Hebrew Old Testament so that we may know how the Hebrew Scriptures *actually are to be read*, word for word.

This is how God's Government operates. It is not left to the individual to decide! But what about all those footnotes in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament?

How God's Government Rules the New Testament

Who decides in your home about the RSV footnotes in the New Testament? How can one know *authoritatively* what the text of the New Testament is?

When the oracles of God were revealed

in New Testament times, He sent a special apostle—Paul—to commit the New Testament Message to the Greek people! The New Testament Scriptures were written in Greek, and it is to the Greek people that we must look. They—not the modern critics—are responsible under God for the preservation, the copying, and the reproduction of the New Testament! The Greeks have not been left to decide for themselves whether or not they want to preserve it. God has *made them* responsible. The footnotes in the Revised Standard Version have no authority.

I have before me, as I write, the Greek New Testament in the first printed edition published in Constantinople in 1912. It is the Greek's *official* authorized printed text of the Greek New Testament. When the Greeks published this edition they checked *their* authoritative manuscripts. The Greek religious authorities are held responsible by God for it. You and I do not have the facilities to decide on our own whether this, that or another reading should be in the New Testament. We don't even have access to those manuscripts!

How, then, can you in your home know the true New Testament wording? God makes *us*—His ministers today—responsible to teach you what it is. And we, recognizing God's government, are to go to the Greek authorities in the Greek world, not to "higher critics." In most every instance the *King James Version* agrees with the true Greek text.

Jesus committed His Word to the people who always read the Greek Scriptures *in their churches and who have heard the traditional readings since apostolic days.*

Here is an example of how the New Testament is being preserved under the rule of God's government. In the reproduction of this first edition (in Constantinople) before me, *a typographical error occurred.* Mark 7:16 was, by accident, left out of the printed text! So, in later production, when the printing of the new edition came out, in all faithfulness to the original printed edition the Greeks did not insert this accidentally missing verse (Mark 7:16) in the text, but made a note in the text and put the verse at the foot of the page for all to read. In other words, once an OFFICIALLY APPROVED printed edition was made, there are to be no additions or deletions in the printed edition. And if an error, due to human oversight, later is found, it was required to be printed below. Every Greek must thereafter, when reading, insert the accidentally missing verse placed at the bottom of the page!

This is fundamentally the same way

the Jews preserved the Old Testament! When the Jews had OFFICIALLY APPROVED a manuscript for synagogue use, if, at a later time, they found a scribal error which they had not noticed, they left the text *just as it was*—with the scribal error; *but*, in the margin of this officially approved text, they inserted the correct reading and every man who read in the synagogue had to read what the margin had! When they recopied that manuscript, they *recopied the error in the text and the true reading in the margin!* That is how they have *always preserved* the Bible absolutely accurately! God has not left it to the individual to decide these matters. He has made certain authorities responsible!

What peace of mind to know that God set authority in the Church.

Who Decides the Calendar?

Who decides the point on this round earth at which the new moon is to be observed? The surprising answer is, *God does not allow us to decide!* He has NOT made it *our responsibility* to observe the new moon.

God revealed His Sacred Calendar to the Jews. *They* determine where the new moon is to be calculated from. *They* determine mathematically when, in a nineteen-year cycle, the thirteenth month is to be added. *They* determine when a nineteen-year cycle begins.

They determine mathematically that no holy day in the Sacred Calendar may fall on Sunday in the autumn. That is why the Feast of Trumpets, for example always falls on either a Monday, or Tuesday, or Thursday, or Sabbath (beginning in each instance, the evening before). But it never falls on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday. It is one of the irrevocable mathematical rules of the Sacred Calendar God committed to the Jews. We have nothing to say about it. We are under authority. Determining the year is not left up to any individual in God's Church today. It is determined by those who are responsible in the Jewish community. The function of God's ministry today is to understand God's Calendar and to *enforce* this calendar today.

The Jews have been required *through all these centuries* to preserve God's Calendar. One can find the Sacred Calendar for this century preserved by the Jews in "The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar," which gives in advance all the months from now till 2000 A.D.

The ministry today is responsible for publishing God's Calendar for the Church each year, but we do not decide for ourselves when a month begins. We do not decide what year is to have 13 months and what year is to have 12 months. These things are not left to us,

1961 HOLY DAY CALENDAR

Passover, observed after sunset Thurs., March 30.

Days of Unleavened Bread begin sunset Fri., March 31; end sunset Fri., April 7. Annual Sabbaths are April 1, a weekly Sabbath, and Fri., April 7.

Pentecost, Monday, May 22.

Feast of Trumpets, Monday, Sept. 11.

Day of Atonement, Wednesday, September 20.

Feast of Tabernacles begins sunset Sun., Sept. 24; ends sunset Mon., Oct. 2. Annual Sabbaths are Mondays, Sept. 25 and Oct. 2.

nor to any of you. But we do have authority to bind God's Calendar on the Church.

As to *which day* a Festival falls, that is not left to your decision. *God* tells us *which day* in the calendar any Festival falls. He tells us the Passover is to be observed on the 14th day of the first month. But He does not allow us to decide for ourselves when the first month is. That has been committed by revelation to the Jews, just as much as have the Scriptures of the Old Testament!

The responsibility of the ministry is to bind these dates on the Church in any matters of controversy. But we do not originate them. *God* does! When we see these things, brethren, it becomes quite clear that there has to be AUTHORITY over our lives when it comes to group functions of the Church.

The Decision on "Make-up"

God's government even determines the question of wearing make-up *in your home!* The problem of "make-up" was not clear to many people. The Church could have been split on this matter! The Church had to speak authoritatively on this matter, and it did. Now, whether or not you agree, whether or not you can understand, it is no longer a question. There has been a "thus saith the Lord" and all are to obey.

God expects you to submit to His truth and to respect His government in the Church, to submit to that government for the sake of the unity of the Church and to obey that regulation *whether or not you "see" God's* decision. God holds us responsible for making the decision. You should study to recognize why God's decision is true; but, in the meantime, it is your responsibility to *submit to God's decision revealed through His ministers.*

Whether it concerns the time we meet on the Sabbath, the place we meet, how to count Pentecost, whether or not make-up is to be worn—all those public

matters—we publicly expound and make plain, and you are required to submit!

As an illustration, every Library has its rules. No student in Ambassador College will stay in college who cannot submit to the rules. If he decides, "I don't have to submit, I'm going to do as I please," that student must be reprimanded and may have to be expelled. There have to be rules and we have to submit to the rules whether or not we "see" them.

What About Personal Decisions?

There are private, personal decisions, for instance on baptism or cases of divorce. Most cannot determine whether they should be baptized, whether a prior baptism was valid. How are you to know? The answer is you come before two or more of the ministers. If they cannot decide, they bring it up before others at Headquarters so that we *can* know. Your God-given responsibility is to provide us with the facts. If the facts you provide are true, *the decision is our responsibility.* All we can do is apply God's law to the circumstances you give.

If you have been baptized by another Church and we find it was not valid, in order to conform to Christ's teachings you must, upon repentance and faith in Christ, be baptized again. It isn't left to you to decide whether your former baptism is valid. It is our responsibility to decide.

Former marriages often come up. If you have been married before, the question is, Are you really married to that person or are you not? Some mistakenly attempt to decide for themselves. Since, in God's Church, authority is vested in the ministry to perform a marriage ceremony, we cannot perform a ceremony unless we know you are *free* to be bound to another partner whom you wish to marry. We have to determine whether that former marriage was binding or not. If a decision has been rendered by the ministry, you are bound by that decision. And if you want to marry unlawfully somebody else, God allows you to sin—to go ahead and do it. But He puts you out of the Church—out of His fellowship for do doing.

Some, at times, want their cases reopened. But if the ministry, upon hearing the petitions, finds no new, different facts, we will not reopen a case. You must abide by the original decision.

Situations in the Local Church

Take the example of our local Spokesman Clubs in some of our churches. It is the responsibility of the coordinators and leaders in each club to make final decisions. If you think that the club is mistaken because it does not usually

recommend that men give "sermonettes," take it up with those in authority. If you still cannot "see" it, we are not going to force you to continue in the club. That is a voluntary matter. You are accepted on a voluntary basis. As a member, you do have to submit to the authority vested in the leaders of these speaking clubs, whether or not you agree. Once you learn to submit it is remarkable how soon you find that *your mind is open* so that you can see God's way is right. It is those who do *not* want to submit to the government of God who find they soon cannot agree with God or His Church!

The "race question" also may present itself in our local congregations.

We all have "inferiority complexes." The one reason some feel superior is they want to rise over their feelings of inferiority. Let's face it. None of you is any better than Job, none of you as righteous as he was. He confessed that he was nothing but "dust and ashes" and you are no different. It does not matter how tall or how short, male or female, or what color your skin is or what nationality you are—we are all composed of the same old dirt!

God organized the human family in races and nationalities. We must find out what is God's decision in these matters. Then we must determine God's policy as it applies not only in the Church as a whole, but in the various congregations, in our colleges, in our secondary schools. God's teaching is made plain in the Scripture. God has already decided what it is. We in the ministry are responsible for teaching what God has already decided. We all meet in the local congregation, no matter what our nationality or race. When it comes to the annual Festivals, *we all meet together*. Some who are not Israelite by flesh birth have mistakenly concluded that—since there are certain social occasions when the Church has decided that there must be social segregation—they will not fellowship with the rest of the brethren on the annual Holy Days when we are all to have spiritual fellowship *together*. This is hereby **EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN!** That is only a feeling of *selfishness*, that if you can't have your way you won't have it any way. We all better have it God's way or we won't be in God's Kingdom at all. *God determines these things*. Let's see that our hearts are right. In all of these matters where we have group functions, *the Church must speak* in order that we can have unity and all do these things decently together.

What About Your Home?

Does the Church also have power to intervene in your private life, in your

home, if you are going contrary to the general practice and teaching of this Church?

Suppose you are lazy! Suppose you become a drunkard! Suppose you live in utter filth! Do we have the right to intervene in your life and put you out of our fellowship? The answer is certainly given in II Thessalonians. Here is just such authority. II Thessalonians 3:10: "For even when we were with you," says Paul, "this we commanded you, that *if any would not work, NEITHER SHOULD HE EAT.*" If there are "brethren" who refuse to work, who are indolent and lazy, you brethren are expressly *forbidden to give them money or food or any kind of assistance which they should and could earn for themselves through work*. That's a command! "This we commanded you," declares Paul. "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 [keep their mouths shut], and eat their own bread" [that is, earn their own living]. If this is not obeyed, we read in verse 6, "Now **WE COMMAND YOU**, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *withdraw yourselves from EVERY brother that walks disorderly*, and not after the tradition [that is, the oral sermons] which he received of us."

Now do not go to the extreme as some have done. Some people decide a brother or sister is not doing *exactly* what Mr. Armstrong said. They then refuse to have any fellowship with him. I want you to notice that the Bible says "we command you . . . to withdraw." If you think someone is walking disorderly, you might admonish the brother. Then bring it up to the ministry if he does not heed. It is not your responsibility, if you are in a local congregation, to decide on your own whether or not you want to have fellowship with, or to disfellowship, someone else. That is a Church matter. Otherwise we should all be disfellowshipping each other because of petty faults! Help those weak and overtaken in a fault, not hinder them. When you have no way of knowing what to do, contact a minister or elder. We will talk or write to this person, and determine what can be done to help him spiritually.

God has given us a responsibility for your sake to intervene on special occasions in your personal life—in matters of adultery, drunkenness, utter laziness, etc. It isn't a question of our wills, it is for your sakes.

The great requirement is that you learn to submit to the government of God. After you have recognized that this is

God's Church, that we are fulfilling that commission which God has commanded, you are to submit to God's government in the Church.

WHY Some Fall Away

(Continued from page 4)

people of God their sins. God's people are told through His Word, the broadcast, the literature, and in church services. But the ministry can only sow the seed, cultivate, water or fertilize. The ministry by itself cannot bring the increase.

The ministry cannot act for the people. The people must *act*.

We can only "blow the trumpet" (Ezekiel 33). It is up to the people to heed the warning. Some of you have heard these warnings and have not acted.

Have you looked to the ministers as those who are doing a good job, and yet you have not applied it to yourself? It is the responsibility of the ministry to warn the people, but it is also the responsibility of the people to act on that warning.

Some of you really enjoy hearing Mr. Armstrong on the radio, and you enjoy hearing the ministers in service. But do you apply these things to yourself?

It is just like God told Ezekiel, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: For with their mouth they show much love but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: For they hear thy words, but they do not do them" (Ezekiel 33:31-32).

If you are one who has this attitude, now is the time to repent.

God is Calling You

If you are guilty of any of these sins, what should you do about it?

"Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:15).

Now is the time for action! Now is *your* day of salvation.

Judgment is now upon the Church of God (I Pet. 4:17-19).

Don't become weary of well doing, but press forward to the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Fight the good fight of faith now.

Repent of your sins. Turn from them. **OVERCOME**. If you do this, you will be among those of the faithful who will hear the voice of Christ saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."