

**SYNAGOGUE
&
CHURCH:
COMPARATIVE
STRUCTURES**

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**History teaches us that he who beats his swords
into plowshares usually ends up plowing for
those who kept their swords.**

Anon

Moral of the story?: this is not the Millennium yet. Sometimes we must face challenges head-on and fight for the Truth as if our lives depended upon it. We must be warriors for Christ!

**Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.**

In Flanders Fields by John McGrae (last stanza)

There has been a ‘silent coup’ – the takeover of God’s Church(es) – it is up to us to continue to hold the torch high. Unworthy, ‘Johnnies-come-lately’ who do not believe in God’s Truths, have pushed aside the faithful for their own vain ambitions.

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"In a world of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act." -- George Orwell

NB: this paper is far from complete. Most of my research papers and resources are in a box which I am finding difficulty locating. In due course I shall fill in the details of this paper when I locate that box. In the meantime, I thought it would be beneficial to release this information.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

"He who knows only his own generation [i.e., one without a knowledge of history] remains forever a child." -- Marcus Tullius Cicero

Is this just another paper on the controversial subject of Church governance? Or does it provide further information on a valuable and important Bible subject?

In this paper I attempt to answer questions such as *Are checks 'n balances and accountabilities necessary within the Church?*; *Is the basic structure utilised within the old Worldwide Church of God similar to that of the first century synagogue?*; *Are Christians meant to be passive or active?*

By way of background: in the 1970s, as a school student, I was fascinated by the Sabbatarian movement and was able to collect literature and information from many Church of God, Adventist, Messianic and other groups.

The various Biblical statutes I found very interesting – after all, the Ten Commandments are, in a way, the table of contents for the various commandments, statutes and judgments found within the Torah. Familiarity with the table of contents is just not enough – the rest of the contents of a book should be read and understood – so it is with the Torah.

The structure of Church governance in particular I found was very important. I wondered if the various Churches aligned themselves closely to the scriptural model, if indeed, there was one. It soon dawned on me, from the scanty information I possessed, that the Church emanated out from the synagogue and more-or-less based its structure on the latter and I began to study what the scriptures revealed on the subject of governance for the Church community. What were the similarities and differences between presbyters, bishops, pastors etc I wondered? And how did they relate in the hierarchy of the early Church.

I wrote some notes and tried to undertake studies as time went by. Years later, in the early 1990s, I began to assemble my notes and in 1995/96 I began to type up a paper on the subject. But due to so many other competing priorities, I never completed the paper.

At that time I undertook some further research by scouring through university libraries. It was about 1994 or 1995 that I made an important discovery in the Sydney University library: I came across a book titled *From Synagogue to Church* which contained many answers to questions and further proofs. Below is a quote from the book – I regard this quote as the essence of what this paper is all about:

"From their beginnings the communities of Christian believers had gathered into the shape already familiar from the Jewish synagogues ... the evidence is more respectfully treated if we conclude that the synagogue was the point of reference for the church ... There are also clear similarities in the structures of community offices. The presiding officer, the college of elders and the assistant appear to carry over from synagogue to church ...

"Jesus instigated no characteristic new organization or anarchy among those who shared faith in him ...

"as the offensive and destructive abuses of office [in Catholicism and

Protestantism] are believed now to be neither necessary nor inevitable (perhaps because, if not accorded absolute clout, the officers are not so likely to be corrupted absolutely) the inveterate ability of those officers to serve the needs of a unified church is once more credible."¹

This paper is based on that premise. Below I provide an outline/summary of the paper to assist the reader in grasping its concepts:

1.0 Why Church Governance

The reasons for Church Government and why it is organised in a certain way. Ecclesiastical and liturgical purposes defined.

1.1 Form, Shape, or Nature

This section argues that the form or shape of a religious organisation does not predicate its nature, either good or bad. Leadership may be good or bad in any form of administration. This paper concentrates on form, but touches on the Biblical nature of Church Administration. Are ministers 'as Christ before us'? Should they dig into the bottom of our very being and take control of us? Are they priests over us? Are they meant to nurture Christians, assist them to identify their spiritual gifts and to grow by giving all an equal chance at participating in their Church. Cronyism and nepotism are not Christian attributes. How many times has one seen inept folk or folk that even if they are often in error (either publicly or privately) are still given leading roles due to their relationships or wealth?

1.2 Four Basic Forms of Church Governance

Discussion of the four basic types of structure, each with scores of variations:

- hierarchical or episcopacy,
- vertical ordered family style,
- presbyterianism,
- 'biblical' eldership/local self government (independent or congregationalist).

Mr Armstrong's 1939 article revisited: it has been badly misused and misapplied. It simply indicates a period of time when the fledgling Philadelphia Era was emerging out from its mother Church. This daughter Church had a lot of unlearning to do. HWA had not learnt about a more organised form of Church Government until the early 1950s.

1.3 Unity and Nurturing

The primary reasons for Government. These two characteristics (unity and nurturing) are prime aspects of God's nature (a fascinating study in itself) and underlie much of what the Church is all about.

1.4 Outgoing Concern: To Maximise Outreach

A further primary reason for the very existence of the Church is its evangelistic efforts to witness to and to warn the world. It is not merely to just exist, but to serve others and to

¹ Burtchaell 1992: 335, 339, 352, 356

provide spiritual respite for all those wishing to have a drink from her delicious fountains. For from the daughter of Zion gushes wonderful cool, refreshing streams of water, restoring the 'soul' in this spiritual desert/Babylon.

2.0 History of Governance throughout the Bible

2.1 Consistency of God's Mind and Characteristics

Some suggest that God governs in a certain way throughout history, with the exception of the New Testament Age? Why is it that certain basic laws and principles have been in existence since the beginning of time, but are supposedly eschewed in this time period? Is this thought connected intrinsically with the notion that so much of the Older Testament has been fulfilled and that Christ has, in effect, done away with the Laws and that He has fulfilled them for Christians? So they, as members of the Kingdom of God, are not subject to them or any semblance of the Older Testaments ecclesiastical structure and liturgy. But what does the latest research have to say?

2.2 Governance in the Heavens

A short discussion of God the Father, Jesus Christ, Council of 24 Elders, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim and so forth. An organised system not unlike the various systems of government God inspired upon the earth.

2.3 Governance Prior to Moses

Clues in the Bible of how Godly people functioned administratively in the times prior to Moses.

2.4 From Moses to the Fall of Israel & Judah

The Priests had the Holy Spirit with them, whilst the people were carnal. Their function included shepherding the (unconverted) flock. The holy men, patriarchs and prophets of old were proto-Christians, longing to see the Christ. They had the Holy Spirit and lived a lifestyle commensurate with the need to develop Godly nature and mind. That means that they were not radically different to the Newer Testament's Christians. Indeed, they fulfilled all of the Laws, fulfilled the beatitudes and fruits of the Spirit, prayed, fasted, meditated etc. One of the differences were that they were among the few converted in the congregation and were circumcised. But under the Melchizedek priesthood, baptism replaces circumcision and the baptised members of the congregation have the Holy Spirit as well as direct contact with God. Did David have a Council of Elders? Did God's basic system continue long after Moses? What part did the prophets play?

2.5 The Restoration under Ezra & Nehemiah

When Ezra and Nehemiah restored God's religion, they also restored a system of government based on Biblical principles. And once again, God raised up a Torah-based Work under the helm of a strong leader who put things 'back on the track'. This necessitated centralised administration and a purifying of the doctrine. For what is the use of walking a good life if one's ideology is wrong? One may as well be a good living Buddhist.

3.0 From Synagogue to Church : Continuum of God's Operational Norm

3.1 Historical background

The gradual decline of the influence of the priests after Ezra, permitted by God. Why? To allow for the gradual means to permit the rise of the Melchizedek Priesthood with as little conflict as possible with the Levitical priesthood. The Melchizedek priesthood comprises all true Christians - but they still need, from among their numbers, shepherds. Thus ministers are not priests over carnal humans, but shepherds guiding fellow priests/priestesses. Nor are they fathers over little children. But adults guiding adults.

3.2 Organisational form

These shepherds are organised into a system of ranks or taxonomical arrangement patterned in some ways after the priestly system.

4.0 What does the New Testament actually say?

4.1 Does the New Testament radically alter the Older Testament ?

A brief discussion of how the New Testament does not alter God's ways and system of laws from the Older Testament. God's laws etc were all spiritual prior to Christ. He continued them and enriched them by living them in perfection. There is no hint of spiritualising them away. How do the Dead Sea Scrolls help in developing a background to the New Testament's theology?

4.2 The words of Christ

Various quotes from Christ regarding not lording it over the flock etc which should be incorporated into any doctrine of Church governance as well as into the very nature of Church governance as practiced by the ministry.

4.3 The book of Acts, the Epistles and afterward

Other clues about church governance found in Acts and epistles. In addition, what can our knowledge of the Qumran sect and the Nazarenes tell us about the Early True Church of God? How the Church of God scattered and 'branched out' - yet shepherds were still provided.

Conclusion: Flexibility within historical structure

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Herbert W Armstrong's 1939 article – is it relevant today?

Appendix 2: Bible Study and Worship

Bibliography

1.0 WHY CHURCH GOVERNANCE

"In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence, the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible." - Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th US President

1.1 FORM, SHAPE, OR NATURE

We might argue until we are blue in the face about problems extant in Church administration and government. We might examine various theories and structures. But one thing remains certain, there are problems with them all, as we shall see. What really is the issue then? Certainly it cannot be the shape, form or structure, but rather the nature of humans administering the Church's Government.

It is humans that are the problem; not God's structural form; not God's Laws (Heb 8:8; Deut 5:29; Rom 8:3-4,7); not a thing we might care to list: but infallible humans doing their best with what they understand; or wolves bashing the sheep. It is essential that we understand that. Let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Let us work at purifying and fine-tuning that what we have been given.

1.2 FOUR BASICE FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNANCE

To be completed.

1.3 UNITY AND NURTURING

To be completed.

1.4 OUTGOING CONCERN: TO MAXIMISE OUTREACH

To be completed.

2.0 HISTORY OF GOVERNANCE THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

“Books are the open avenues down which, like kings coming to be crowned, great ideas and inspirations move to the abbey of man’s soul. There are some people still left who understand perfectly what Fenelon meant when he said, "If the crowns of all the kingdoms of the empire were laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my love of reading, I would spurn them all." ”
- Ernest Dressel North

2.1 CONSISTENCY OF GOD'S MIND AND CHARACTERISTICS

To be completed.

2.2 GOVERNANCE IN THE HEAVENLIES

To be completed.

2.3 GOVERNANCE PRIOR TO MOSES

To be completed.

2.4 FROM MOSES TO THE FALL OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

To be completed.

2.5 THE RESTORATION UNDER EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

To be completed.

3.0 FROM SYNAGOGUE TO CHURCH: CONTINUUM OF GOD'S OPERATIONAL NORM

“The great composer...does not set to work because he is inspired, but becomes inspired because he is working. Beethoven, Wagner, Bach, and Mozart settled down day after day to the job in hand with as much regularity as an accountant settles down each day to his figures. They didn't waste time waiting for inspiration.”
- Ernest Newman

We have seen over the previous pages the means of God's operations over the eras and centuries of human existence. His *modus operandi* has been consistent has it not? Have not the principles been the same? Is God given over to changing fundamentally (Prov 24:21; Eph 4:14)? Does not Almighty God roar that “For I am the Lord, I change not ...” (Mal 3:6)? Why then are some of the belief that God radically alters His Governmental, Administrative and even covenant structures every so often?

My God is not schizophrenic! He does things in order and with a consistent theology. Perhaps Baal is different. Perhaps he and his cohorts are not consistent.

Let us now take a peak as to the structural form of God's system between the Testaments and see indeed if God chops and changes constantly. For this is a important, nay key, part of the debate on the very structure and administrative basis of the Church. The debate continues and the search and research must go on. All of this helps us to sharpen up our philosophy and to be sure of our beliefs. For faith without works is indeed dead. We must prove our beliefs to ourselves, and even to others as the need arises.

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the intertestamental period, it would appear that gradually, subtly, and not so subtly, God was preparing for a transition from the Levitical Priesthood to the Melchizedek Priesthood. God had used the Levitical Priesthood in a marvellous way. There we had Priests and Levites being led by God's Spirit (although not necessarily inwardly filled by the Spirit). They in turn were the ecclesiastical shepherds and judges of the people - the nation Israel which was basically carnal.

As we shall see, in the Melchizedek Priesthood, men are appointed to offices via a certain method to shepherd fellow Priests. No shepherd was permitted to come between the Priest and God. No shepherd was permitted to act as a Priest toward other Priests: all were sanctified and had direct access to God. Mutual respect toward one another and gratitude for God working in each others lives was and is the order of the day. Priests that were not shepherds (ie did not have offices of rank) could be used in the Work of the Church in various service roles.

The Priests had ‘gifts’ (see ICor 12) which could be used as services toward others in the Christian community or the world at large. One would expect that these ‘gifts’ or talents are not always able to be used by the Church in the main thrust of the Work. Today we could say that it is not possible for everyone to be used in tele-evangelising, writing articles for magazines, giving sermonettes and so forth. These and other roles are properly held by the full-time, professional Priests (the shepherds) with the result that there is a clear division of labour and opportunities.

No one should be jealous of another's gift or feel threatened by them for they come from God ultimately. One would also expect that many of these talents are those of natural ability and which the

Holy Spirit is used by God to sharpen up and use in some way.²

Note what God's Word declares:

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, **in honor giving preference to one another**” (Rom 12:10)

Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, **honor to whom honor**.

Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:7, 10)

So quit the jealousy and the spirit of competition please – for your own salvation's sakes. If God is using members according to their natural abilities, talents and spiritual gifts, then back off attacking them lest YOU be subject to His wrath!

Now, the picture that is painted in the letter to the Hebrews is that the Melchizedek Priesthood now has prominence.³ They operate under the conditions of the New Covenant even though it will not be ratified until the Messiah returns when He shall make the Covenant with Israel. The Covenants are simply agreements to obey already extant Laws of Love. They are not Laws in themselves. When Christ ratifies this New Covenant with Israel, converted Gentiles will have to be grafted into Israel spiritually and agree to obey these Laws. The physical Levitical Priesthood will again be elevated and made operative and the spiritual Melchizedek Priesthood will be in God's Kingdom as Kings and Priests.

There is no doubt that God was preparing the way for the Melchizedek Priesthood over the decades and centuries in the period known as the Inter-Testamental period. As per the norm, He worked in circuitous and mysterious ways.

Turning now to the historical origin of the synagogue: no historical record exists as to the origin of the synagogue, but the Jerusalem *Talmud* assumes that it dates clear back to the time of Moses (see Exodus 18:20).⁴ The Hebrew word is *qahal*. The word originates with the Greek parallel word *sunagoge*.

The Godly community of the Older Testament was termed the *assembly* (Heb *qahal*) or congregation (*edah*) of Israel. The Greek equivalent is *ekklesia* and reflects these Hebrew words and the Aramaic equivalent *kenista*. Thus it “expresses the community's conviction that it was the true remnant of the people of God”⁵ which must have been well understood by the antagonists of that day.

All we do know for certain is that the synagogue probably originated during the Babylonian captivity to enable the preservation of the Hebraic religion. There is no doubt that they gathered together in houses to study and proclaim God's Word. It was considered an extension of the Temple as local places of worship sometimes being referred to as “little sanctuaries.”⁶

The Apostle James himself declared that:

² Sermons and sermonettes are supposed to be interesting and positive. Not dumping one's frustrations on the congregation. Constantly being down on people while elevating the self leads to discouragement. For “We live by encouragement and die without it - slowly, sadly, angrily.” (Celeste Holm)

³ A future paper will attempt to demonstrate that many ethnic Levites serving as shepherds in it.

⁴ Philo in *De Vita Mosis*, III, 27 and Josephus in *Against Apion* II, 17 also subscribe to this tradition.

⁵ Bruce 1972:206

⁶ See Ps 74:8; Ezek 11:16

"For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him in the synagogues, where he is read every sabbath" (Acts 15:21)

This indicates that the synagogue has an ancient origin, long prior to Christ. And at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans in 69-70AD, there were about 394 synagogues in Jerusalem alone according to the *Babylonian Talmud*.⁷

It also had authority to teach God's Laws and Commandments and permit or prohibit within their bounds. Notice Matthew 23:1-5:

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments." (compare Matt 1:30; IJohn 5:3; Hab 1:2-3; Deut 11:18; Prov 3:1-3; 6:20-21; 7:15 to throw further light on this important scripture)

The major function of the synagogue was not worldly chatter and piffle: it was education and strong meat.⁸ From all accounts, it was thanks to Ezra, that the synagogue arose. After cleansing the Priests, Levites and people of error and paganism, he set up institutions to educate people to become scribes and rabbis which led to the basic synagogue structure.⁹ Whether he set up the hierarchical offices based broadly upon the priesthood structure, it would be fascinating to know. In any event, parallel to this was the decline in the influence of the priests and prophets. It seems like God was readying His people for the introduction of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

And once again, God raised up a Torah-based Work under the helm of a strong leader who put things 'back on the track'. This necessitated centralised administration and a purifying of the doctrine thereby. Today we would term this a 'corporate structure.' Localism and congregationalism do not form part of this model. The only time that localism is of some use is when the Church is scattered due to persecution and must survive locally. Normally the ambitious want 'independence' for their local congregation or region. And normally these are inept or incompetent, keeping down the true believers as they set up positions for themselves and their buddies.

3.2 ORGANISATIONAL FORM

What was the form of community organisation of the Jewish community between the Testaments? Did it impact at all upon the public service roles of the religious leaders and the framework of the structure of the early Church? Studies have been undertaken of the services and the offices of the leaders of the synagogue during that period.

⁷ *Babylonian Talmud* Kethuth, 105a. How similar to the Ambassador Auditorium functioning as the HQ place of worship with the local congregations functioning as extensions.

⁸ Indeed, "The earliest Christians were all Jews. Moreover, they did not regard themselves as having abandoned Judaism. Indeed, one of the earliest questions that the new religion addressed was whether gentiles--non-Jews--could become Christians or whether it was necessary to be a Jew in order to become a Christian (see Acts 15)." (Pizner 1990:23-24)

⁹ "As only a small portion of the people could become proficient in the study of the law under the scribes, ... it was desirable that all should have at least an elementary knowledge, thus the synagogues main object was the religious education of the people, Philo called them 'houses of instruction.'" (Unger 1980: 1053)

Several research works are available on the subject, but one which stands out with some unique thought and research is *From Synagogue to Church* by James Burtchaell. It was obvious to Burtchaell that we should

“... assume that the pattern of community organisation in those earliest churches may also have been an heirloom from the Jewish past ... they would instinctively create communities in the way familiar to them: following the patterns of the Hellenistic Jewish synagogue ...”¹⁰

In fact, the Church of God in those formative years was even known as "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) – a term reminiscent of "sect of the Sadducees" (Acts 5:17) and "the sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5) used for other sects or groupings within first century Judaism. In other words, the early Church of God was a distinct sect within the Hebraic teachings of its day. It was not revolutionarily opposed to the Torah or Law in the slightest.

Notice what one scholar wrote: "The first Churches were synagogues".¹¹ How true, for early, primitive Christianity was considered a sect of Judaism. Its major difference to Judaism was cleansing out of the corruption, false teachings in their midst and accepting the Divinity of Christ.

And one might add that this was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The various offices such as elder, community chief, assistant/deacon and so forth were typical in the Second Temple Jewish synagogues and subsequently in the early Christian synagogues, assemblies or churches. Their impact upon the early Christians was enormous and the basic structure, hierarchy and offices were essentially borrowed by the Christians. The result?: the organisation and other principles of early Christendom was essentially Jewish or Judaic. I do not mean that it was a clone, for the synagogue was not a perfect replica of God's system. Nor do we have all the facts with regard to the means of selection of offices and so forth. But my purpose is primarily to gesture that the basic structure or form of hierarchical offices were repeated in the Newer Testament as a type of template or guideline. This is the point of this section, not to concentrate on other areas which may have been later traditions or which we have little evidence.

Some may argue that the synagogue organisation was Greco-Roman. But an examination of the minutiae and each nuance disproves that theory very quickly. It was a thoroughly Judaic-Hebraic structure with principles based on the Older Testament.

Let us now explore the various offices and terms in common usage during the Inter-Testamental period and first century to give us a background to the structure and outline of the Early True Church

¹⁰ Burtchaell 1992: xii-xiii. The contents for this essential book are: Preface; 1. The Reformation: challenge to an old consensus; 2. The nineteenth century: a new consensus is formulated; 3. The early twentieth century: the consensus is disputed; 4. The last fifty years: the consensus restated, rechallenged, reused; 5. A search for a new hypothesis; 6. Jewish community organization in the later Second Temple period; 7. The officers of the synagogue; 8. Community organization in the early Christian settlement; 9. A conclusion; Index auctorum; Index locorum. This work is a 'must read' for all serious researchers into early Church of God structure.

¹¹ Pizner 1990: 23. And "The synagogue became the cradle of the Church, without it ... the conversion of the gentiles (would) have required a succession of millennial miracles.(em. mine)" (Edersheim, 1993: 299)

of God.¹²

- Liturgy or Synagogue Sabbath Service Format:

Services commence with the *Shema* – opening blessings for morning and evening (comprised of Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41).

This is followed by **prayer** which is composed of eighteen benedictions and petitions.

Next is **the reading of the Torah** or Law which is done from behind a podium (a pulpit made of wood). Next comes the **reading from the Prophets**. Finally the **Scriptural lesson** is given. Any one of the Jewish brethren might be called upon to present the "word of exhortation" (Acts 13:15).

Services close with a *Shema* – closing blessing for morning and evening.

Of course, we don't have to follow the Synagogue service exactly, but the basic outline is of interest.¹³

- The Assembly:

To the Jews, together they constituted an assembly. The Hebrew is *edah* which *synagogue* was a common synonym. The Greek equivalent is *ekklesia* which may be found on twelve occasions on the New Testament.¹⁴ In both cases the root meaning was *to call* or *to convene* elders at the town gates to discuss issues.¹⁵ The synagogue was the central venue for all major events in the community and was the centre of their religious and social lives. A certain degree of exclusivism pervaded. They believed that they were the true religion, but they consisted of several groupings. Yet they acknowledged each other despite differences. This might be likened to the old Worldwide Church of God and the Church of God (seventh day) and daughter churches.

In the New Testament the Sanhedrin is called the senate = *gerousia*, body of the leaders = *presbyterion*, council = *synedrion* or *boule*. Note: "the chief priests and Pharisees" (Matt 21:45; John

¹² Whately 1847: 86: "He complied with the usages of public worship, and exercised the privilege, which seems to have been common to all worshippers, of expounding the scriptures to the people. This respectful compliance with existing institutions he continued to the last; and his example was followed by his disciples. When they went abroad to preach, they availed themselves of the facilities afford by existing institutions and arrangements. They always, if they could, preached in the synagogues. The first preaching, even to the heathen, was in synagogues. it was only where they found no synagogues, or when they were shut out from them, that they began to form separate societies. 4. When a separate organization did take place, it was on the ancient model. The first Christian church, as we have seen, was at Jerusalem. Now the organization. of this "church that was in Jerusalem" is entitled to particular attention upon two accounts, first, because it was the mother church, from which the other churches were derived by propagation; then, because all the twelve apostles were, for a short time, members of it. So far then as apostolical practice and example can be binding upon us, the history of this church must be highly instructive, in relation to the local constitution of the early Christian churches."

¹³ It is my understanding that hymns were also sung, but I am not clear as to exactly when during the services. Note: "from a very early date, perhaps from the beginning, Christians employed in their services the psalms found in the Jewish Scriptures, the Christian Old Testament ... We hear of at least one form of service in which, after the reading from the Old Testament, the "hymns of David" were sung ... Until the end of the fourth century, in the services of the Catholic Church only the Old Testament Psalms and the hymns or canticles from the New Testament were sung ... Gradually there were prepared versical paraphrases." (Latourette 1975: 206-07). Synagogues had cantors (*Hazzan*) who blew the trumpet to announce Holy Days and Sabbaths; conveyed the scrolls of the Torah, led the prayers (many of the prayers were offered as song)

¹⁴ In the Old Testament the parallel word is *qahal* which means the *assembly* or *church* in modern English. It is also used on twelve occasions (Num 16:3; 20:4; Deut 23:1-8; IChron 28:8; Mich 2:4; Lam 1:10; Neh 13:1).

¹⁵ Today the Church is called to assemble from out of society– like Israel and as we are told to do so in Rev. 18:4.

7:32); “the chief priests and elders and scribes” (Mark 14:53); “the chief priests and scribes” (Luke 22:2); “the rulers and elders and scribes” (Acts 4:5); “the chief priests and elders” (Acts 4:23); and the “chief priests and all the council” (Acts 22:30).

The early Church inherited this function. See Acts 15 which appears to be a type of Christian Sanhedrin whose members were Elders, led by the Apostles.¹⁶

- The Senior or Chief Elder:

This person was the first officer, leading elder and the president of the council of elders. He was the one, in effect, who made the final decisions and was looked up to with special respect. Particularly during periods of internal dissent or major upsets, he would be regarded as the man to quell the problems and to return harmony to the community.

He was also known as ruler of the synagogue:

“The "ruler of the synagogue", (Mark 5:22, 35, 36,, 38; Luke 8:49; 13:14; Acts 13:15; 18:8, 17), *rôsh hákkeneséth* (Sota, VII, 7) presided over the synagogue and its services. This presidency did not prevent the "sons of the synagogue" from freely officiating [probably best to state “participating” rather than “officiating”]. Witness the freedom with which Our Lord and St. Paul stood up to explain the Scriptures in the various synagogues of Palestine and the Diaspora. The *hazzan*, "servant", handed the scrolls to the readers and taught the children.”¹⁷

Means of selection: not certain.

- The Community Chief:

The major sources of information on the subject comes from inscriptions rather than written text alone. This rank was known in the Greek as *archisynagogos* or synagogue/community chief = angel of the Church of overseer.¹⁸ His primary role was that of the leader or presiding officer of the notables' and synagogue's meetings rather than chief of the congregation. He was not elected but enjoyed an inherited office based on a particular family line.

He presided not just at worship, but at all community functions. He was at the forefront of the people, working in a professional manner as executive of all programmes and activities.

In Acts 13:15 (cp Heb 13:22) he is shown as sending an attendant to Paul and Barnabas (the visitors)

Means of selection: This position was until. He may have been selected by the elders, but evidence is scant.

- Elders:

The elders formed a council (*presbyterion* in the Greek) or college (in effect it was a local council of elders). They functioned as statesmen and jurists: representatives of the people's interests to outsiders, while maintaining unity within the community.

¹⁶ It is believed that the Sanhedrin was based on the concept of 70 introduced in Exodus 18.

¹⁷ *Catholic Encyclopedia* 1912: vol 14, art. “Synagogue”

¹⁸ See Lightfoot, Vol. 11, 89-99

Means of selection: They were men of station and family who were groomed over many years in the art of eldership. Thus, when they were selected, generally for life, there were no surprises. There were no surprises or forcing on the congregation men unfit for duty (ie inept in the Scriptures, jealous, sickly, severe, competitive).

Quotes from the following sources may throw further light on the subject of elder. For example, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* states:

“**Elder** - a name frequently used in the Old Testament as denoting a person clothed with authority, and entitled to respect and reverence (Gen. 50:7). It also denoted a political office (Num. 22:7). The "elders of Israel" held a rank among the people indicative of authority. Moses opened his commission to them (Ex. 3:16). They attended Moses on all important occasions. Seventy of them attended on him at the giving of the law (Ex. 24:1). Seventy also were selected from the whole number to bear with Moses the burden of the people (Num. 11:16, 17). The "elder" is the keystone of the social and political fabric wherever the patriarchal system exists. At the present day this is the case among the Arabs, where the sheik (i.e., "the old man") is the highest authority in the tribe. The body of the "elders" of Israel were the representatives of the people from the very first, and were recognized as such by Moses. All down through the history of the Jews we find mention made of the elders as exercising authority among the people. They appear as governors (Deut. 31:28), as local magistrates (16:18), administering justice (19:12). They were men of extensive influence (1 Sam. 30:26-31). In New Testament times they also appear taking an active part in public affairs (Matt. 16:21; 21:23; 26:59).

The Jewish eldership was transferred from the old dispensation to the new. "The creation of the office of elder is nowhere recorded in the New Testament, as in the case of deacons and apostles, because the latter offices were created to meet new and special emergencies, while the former was transmitted from the earliest times. In other words, the office of elder was the only permanent essential office of the church under either dispensation."

The "elders" of the New Testament church were the "pastors" (Eph. 4:11), "bishops or overseers" (Acts 20:28), "leaders" and "rulers" (Heb. 13:7; 1 Thess. 5:12) of the flock. Everywhere in the New Testament bishop and presbyter are titles given to one and the same officer of the Christian church. He who is called presbyter or elder on account of his age or gravity is also called bishop or overseer with reference to the duty that lay upon him (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17-28; Phil. 1:1)."¹⁹ [emphasis mine]

And *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*:

“4245 presbuteros (pres-boo'-ter-os) comparative of presbus (elderly); TDNT - 6:651,931; AV - elder 64, old man 1, eldest 1, elder woman 1; 67
adj

- 1) elder, of age,
- 1a) the elder of two people
- 1b) advanced in life, an elder, a senior
- 1b1) forefathers
- 2) a term of rank or office
- 2a) among the Jews

¹⁹ Easton 1897: art. "Elder"

- 2a1) members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from elderly men)
- 2a2) of those who in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice
- 2b) among the Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches)
The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably
- 2c) the twenty four members of the heavenly Sanhedrin or court seated on thrones around the throne of God”

Thayer clearly demonstrates that a parallel term that is used in the New Testament for elder is *presbyter* = *presbuterion* (see also *Strong's Concordance* #4244. See also #4850). The term is used interchangeably with elder in Acts 22:5; ITim 4:14.

Among their many duties was to anoint the sick (James 5:14) and be ordained in new congregations (Titus 1:5). They were also to be of a good reputation (Acts 6:3.) – which infers that if they are of a bad reputation due to their lifestyles, abuse, unfairness, nepotism and so on, they should not be elders.

- The Teacher:

Little is known of them, except that they were known as “disciples of the law.”²⁰

- The Assistant or Deacon:

These were known as the *hyperatai* = *diakono*i or servants. It meant assistant, attendant or deacon in today's language. The original Assistants were Levites who helped the Priests, the elite of their tribe. They were known in later rabbinical literature as the *hazan*. Often they would serve under the overall supervision of the Community Chiefs as masters of ceremonies at scripture readings. They served also as offices of the court: they would scourge the guilty or summons those accused of crimes. Other duties included serving as clerks of the treasury, teachers of children and so forth. They could assist the Community Chief in any aspect of the community's program that he asked them to perform. For example, the Community chief would send the Assistants to look after visitors to the synagogue²¹, care for the needy and poor. In addition they had to be Bible scholars.

Means of selection: chosen by the Community Chief.

Other offices which were not carried over into the structure of the New Testament Church:

- The Notables:

The Notables were a rank of elder that was few in number, but very powerful. The literature of Judaism oft makes references to them utilising generic, interchangeable terms such as *archon*, *archontes*, *protoi* and *proteuontes*. They were also elders, but functioned as an inner circle of leadership - an executive or board if you will.

²⁰ According to Unger 1980: 1053: "The peculiarity here is that just for the acts proper to public worship - the reading of the Scriptures, preaching and prayer - no special officials were appointed. These acts were, on the contrary, in the time of Christ still freely performed by members of the congregation." So teachers could be visiting rabbis, visitors, lay members. No nepotism, cronyism, politics, jealousy please! No trying to keep the loyal down while promoting ineffectual, boring and uninspired friends, relatives and 'crawlers' desperate for positions.

²¹ Bruce 1972:275

It must be emphasised at this point that they are not merely influential persons in the Jewish community, with notable implying a generic title. Rather, they were a religious rank within the synagogue. Community notables are also referred to in the literature, but as a separate group to these.

Means of selection: It is difficult to ascertain, but they might have been selected or elected for a certain time-span.

- The Scribe:

The clerk or scribe (= *sopherim* or *grammateus*) was invaluable to the synagogue.

“Their skills in reading, writing and translating gave them monopolistic access to the entire civil service, a career they made sure to pass on to their own sons by enrolling them in the royal schools for scribes.”²²

It were these that edited, copied, studied and interpreted the scriptures. They could have been multi-talented or serving in a capacity of, say, a copyist, or one who reads the Egyptian papyrus; or a legal interpreter; or a great sage such as Ezra or Simon the Just. Some would draw up minutes of meetings, draft correspondence, serve in the archives, as clerk of the court and as counsel to members on certain legal matters.

Like the office of the Community Chief, this office was held by generations of family lines and was not elected. They were not ministers/pastors/elders per se.

Means of selection: by the Notables and Elders.

- The Priest:

Both Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 4:190-192) and Josephus (*Ap.* 2:185-188; *Ant.* 11:111; 14:41,404) believe that Priests were granted special gifts. Josephus was indeed one himself. But their ‘political’ power was gradually diminishing over the centuries since the great Ezra, the second Moses, passed from the scene. By the time of the first century their position was seriously weakened, although they still had various functions. They were somewhat still respected and fairly powerful in Jerusalem, but in the local communities were not counted for very much.

“It is striking how decisively the priesthood vanished from the scene of power after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 [AD].”²³

Could it be that God was intervening (Dan 2:20-21; 2Chron 25:8) in the workings of the community as a means to gradually de-emphasise the Levitical Priesthood and then to emphasise the Melchizedek Priesthood during the time of the early Apostles in the first century? This could be the basis of an informative future paper.

Means of selection: to the Temple born.

- The Commissioner:

The size of the scattered Jewish synagogues appeared to perhaps determine whether certain offices

²² Burtchaell 1992:251

²³ Burtchaell 1992:253

were necessary. Resources may be large or tiny; programmes may come and go. Sometimes people would be called upon to perform certain duties which in other places or times may have been performed by an office holder. One such position appears to be that of *phrontistes* or commissioner/administrator/ manager/ trustee. They had basic responsibility for physical plant, maintenance and even the management of finances. Sometimes the Community Chief would assume the title of Commissioner. They were not ministers/pastors/elders per se.

Means of selection: by the elders and notables.

- The Reader:

All evidence points to the fact that sometimes the priest or elder undertook the reading and exposition of scripture. But this may well have grown into a particular office at a later date where no elder or priest was present. But we have no real evidence one way or another at this stage.

Means of selection: by the Commissioner, perhaps with the counsel of the elders and notables.

- Female offices?:

Some may feel that this paper is gender-exclusive or sexist. But what I present is mere historical fact. Yet they argue about women dignitaries or supposedly female community chiefs. Nothing could be further from the truth. There were, indeed, noted females who were prominent and looked upon as 'mothers' by others. But their role was feminine and not a rank of authority.

“... the record is silent about any public leadership exercised by women ... Females had a presence in many of the synagogue activities, but we can find no support for the supposition that they acted as officers. What these feminine titles seem to denote is that the women are married to men in those positions, and theirs is a consortial form of dignity.”²⁴

There were also 'fathers' of the community. Neither the Father nor Mother of the synagogue were offices of authority. Rather, they were titles of honour which were conferred upon certain prominent ones. They were, in a sense, patrons, honoured for their wisdom, hospitality and service.

- Apostles and Prophets:

The person at the bottom of the rung was the apostle. According to the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*:

"The rabbin term for such agents was *shaliah*. Such persons might represent individuals or corporate bodies such as courts and synagogues, their duties depending upon the terms of their commission -- to serve legal documents, collect moneys, convey instructions, particularly with regard to the calendar or festivals. In the synagogues the *shaliah* might be the leader of the congregation in prayer. The rabbinical principle that 'a man's *shaliah* is like to himself' (M. Ber. 5.5) states the obvious truth that the person who follows his instructions points the responsibilities for his actions to his authorizing agent. It does not define the status of the *shaliah* so much as his function."²⁵

²⁴ Burtchaell 1992:245

²⁵ *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Apostle"

They also functioned as the messengers sent between synagogues to keep the lines of communication open and to relay whatever news was necessary.

Prophets were still extant during the intertestamental period and into the first century

- Concluding Remarks

Much evidence is available for the existence of the offices of assistant, synagogue chief and elder. There is less evidence for the senior elder, scribe and commissioner. These may have developed later or which may have been extant in only certain synagogues.

The Jewish means of selecting officers was not done by limited democracy as with certain Greek traditions or per certain Roman traditions, but they were selected according to merit and test of experience.

Many of these offices were rank and others were functions on an equal 'official' level with others, yet gaining a certain social status. We shall soon see how similar they were to the offices and functionaries in the structure of the Early Church.

One more word: there is no evidence that the Jewish structure was borrowed from that of the Persians, Greeks or Romans. Although, of course, there were some similarities with Councils assisting sovereigns, which we find in most cultures. Writes Burtchaell:

“There probably was very little direct influence [from other cultures] ... There were differences ... The elders themselves, who in many societies were elected for terms, were stable personages in the synagogues ... neither the assembly nor the elders nor the president nor the king was ultimately authoritative: their God was Lord over them all.”²⁶

Similar traits (typical but not necessarily uniform) may be found among the Essene settlement at Qumran where they regarded themselves as the holy community, congregation of Israel, council, assembly of saints. They had a general assembly and elite assembly. The latter was presided over by those whose functions it was to teach the general assembly God's ways, control recruitment, finances, hear grievances and so forth. Is there similarity with the New Testament Church in all of this? What of certain of the ranks aforementioned? Are they found in the New Testament as well?

A further attribute of the synagogue and the Jewish family was study. Dr John Garr throws some light on the educational function of the synagogue:

“When Christians think of worship, images of the Sunday morning worship service come to view, with singing, praying, giving, preaching, and sharing the sacrament. Study is perhaps something that is done in preparation for worship, but could Christians ever conceive of study, itself, as an act of worship, even the highest form of worship? When we analyze this concept, however, we begin to understand that intensive study of the Word of God is the most reliable way in which God can speak to us and cause us to understand his will and his ways. Even the most intense and profound subjective experiences must be judged by the written Word of God (II Peter 1:16-19). Study of the Word of God, then, with a view toward doing the Word, is an act of submission to the divine will, the essence of true worship. When we pray, we speak with God; when we study, God speaks to us.

²⁶ Burtchaell 1992:265-6

For many centuries study has been at the very heart of the Jewish experience, so much so that much of Judaism has considered study as the highest form of worship. Humbly submitting oneself to the wisdom of God revealed in the *Tenach* (Hebrew Scriptures) was viewed as worship, which literally meant to "prostrate oneself" before the Eternal. The Hebrew word for worship, *dg's]* (*segad*), means to "bow down or do obeisance to," and it has the connotation of total submission to a superior (as the king). The Greek translation of this word, *proskunevw* (*proskuni*), is even more graphic, meaning to "kiss as a dog licking its master's hand." ...

"The continuing recognition of the synagogue as a house of study is seen in the fact that many Jews today prefer the Yiddish term *shul* over the term synagogue to identify their place of meeting. *Shul* literally means school and probably is related to the Latin *schola*, from which we get the words scholar and scholastic."

For the Biblical principle is simply this:

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" (Prov 1:22)

"The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge." (Prov 14:18)

Notice what the Newer Testament reveals about this approach:

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so.

Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few." (Acts 17:10-12)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**" (II Tim 2:14)

"But grow in grace, and *in* the **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen." (II Pet 3:18)

And so studying the Word was a crucial aspect of synagogue and Jewish home life – as it was in the early Church.

In the following section, we shall explore the Church structure as outlined in the Newer Testament within the cultural context of the times, as well as the background of the synagogue's administrative set-up.

4.0 WHAT DOES THE NEWER TESTAMENT ACTUALLY SAY?

They who lack talent expect things to happen without effort. They ascribe failure to a lack of inspiration or ability, or to misfortune, rather than to insufficient application. At the core of every true talent there is an awareness of the difficulties inherent in any achievement, and the confidence that by persistence and patience something worthwhile will be realized. Thus talent is a species of vigor.

- Eric Hoffer

So much has been written about Church Government in the Newer Testament. The emphasis here is on structure and shape, rather than nature. Although the latter will also be touched upon. I suppose one may spend a life-time on this issue, but rather that I tackle mainly just one aspect. We also need to ascertain

“whether the Christian communities telescoped out of that predecessor tradition, or went their way with innovative structures (or freedom from structure) of their own ... **From their beginnings the communities of Christian believers had gathered into the shape already familiar from the Jewish synagogues.**”²⁷ [emphasis mine]

In the book of James we find reference to the Church as a synagogue (James 2:2). The Greek *sunagoge* is the word used elsewhere as meaning the Jewish synagogue or meeting place. It may also be translated *assembly* as we have seen. But there should be no doubt as to what image the use such a word would conjure up in the minds of first century believers. In the first century it was known that assemblies of this sort were held every seventh-day sabbath and feast day.²⁸ This word

“was specialized in Greek as a designation for a Jewish meeting-place in the *synagogue* in distinction from the church.”²⁹

We need now to answer the following question: Did the Melchizedek Priesthood really alter the roles of the Levitical Priesthood in its shepherding function? This is a key to understanding the role of the ministry today and also whether its organisation includes ranks somewhat like the Priesthood.

What we know is scant, but we must, nevertheless, lean on the documentation that we have: the knowledge of the synagogue, the records of the first and second century and the Newer Testament itself. We also have the record of God’s nature; He is consistent and does not change like the wind.

Studying the synagogue and Jewish history prior to the coming of the Christians it is relatively much easier to determine their beliefs, community structure and the such like. But when we attempt to ascertain early Christian history, we hit the proverbial ‘wall’. Note what Burtchaell has to say about this ‘hidden century’ of the early Christian Church:

“There are virtually no inscriptions referring to identifiable Christians before the third century. No papyrus collections have survived. The Christians of the first, say four generations had no Philo or Josephus to lay down a corpus of literature ... Not until well through the second century were dissident sects emerging that would leave us a polemical literature, not can we gain access to very early alternative Christian communities ... The new religion elicited only a few brief notices from gentile writers ... Remarkably little comment is found in the documents of contemporary Jews.”³⁰

²⁷ Burtchaell 1992:271, 335

²⁸ Thayer 1889:600

²⁹ Bruce 1972:206

³⁰ Burtchaell 1992:272

So much for those who deny that there was a 'lost century' in Christian history.

Indeed, dark and foreboding was the 'hidden century' before the curtain is lifted on Christian history. What happened in the meantime? Was a conspiracy responsible for the divergence of what theologians and historians term the Roman Pauline tradition which in effect negated God's Law and that of the Jerusalem Church of James the Just (the Nazarenes)? Was infiltration the reason for the faithful few being forced to leave?

I often wonder if the records of this period have been destroyed or will they be uncovered some day.

4.1 DOES THE NEWER TESTAMENT RADICALLY ALTER THE OLDER TESTAMENT?

We might search the Bible from one end to the other and we will find an amazing consistency in doctrine, practice and the true Way to live. In short, God's theology remains the same.

In the Newer Testament, God's children are still regarded as holy ones. Note some of the names He gives His little ones:

- His body (Eph 1:22-23)
- Holy Temple (Eph 2:21)
- Habitation of God (Ex 25:8; Ps 22:3; Eph 2:22)
- God's building (1Cor 3:9)
- The House of God (Heb 3:6; IPet 2:6)
- Holy Nation (IPet 2:9)
- People of God (IPet 2:10)
- Israel of God (Gal 6:14-16)
- Mt of Zion (Heb 12:22)
- Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22)
- General Assembly (Heb 12:23)
- Church of the Firstborn (Heb 12:23)

Of course God's people are called by various other names, but we should recognise that the Bible continues to call or name His people utilising the same terminology for them in both Testaments.

4.2 THE WORDS OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ instructed the disciples to teach the people "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Just evangelising is not good enough. The true doctrines must also be taught. The reason being that He wants His Church to be without wrinkle or blemish, but a beautiful bride. Just as the local synagogue was a place of leaning and instruction for the Jew, so the local congregation is to be a place of instruction in the Word of God by appropriate men of God.

4.3 THE BOOK OF ACTS AND EPISTLES

In the book of Acts, the term *ekklesia* or *ecclesia* is used in the following ways:

- built by Jesus Christ Himself (2:57)

- a group disciplined by Christ Himself (5:5; compare Rev 2&3)
- believers in an assembly (5:14)
- a part of Christ Himself (5:14)
- it is a place that God joins people to, not man (5:13)
- it has a manifold ministry (13:1; 15:4)
- it is a fellowship with other congregations which together form a unified body (15:3-4)
- it is a place established in faith (16:5)
- it is a place from where the ministry are sent out to evangelise
- a place of teaching, nurturing and, if need be, disciple (11:26)
- a congregation or assembly of ‘called together ones’ from out of the world in a given locality which meets each week (8:1)
- a complete unity with corporate authority (15:22) and as such has a structure of ordained men in positions to exercise shepherding leadership and oversight (14:23; 20:17-28)

It is clear that no one may just ‘join a church’. Rather, it is where God draws them to attend (cp John 6:44). No one should just choose a convenient haven to attend; nor should Christians be without a spiritual home.

4.4 SYNAGOGUE AND CHURCH

Burtchaell’s scholastic dignity may be seen in his honest attempt to hypothesise the likelihood that the first Christians, being Jews, and being familiar with the structure of the synagogue, used it as a basic model for the early Church. Instead of looking at the structures of the second or even third century, and then projecting back to the first and thereby imposing certain structures on the Church, Burtchaell, is attempting to be as honest as possible. Note his following comment:

“ ... there is an antecedent likelihood that the first Christians, being Jews, organised themselves in the familiar and conventional ways of the synagogue.”³¹

Indeed they were organised that way by the Apostles as we have seen and they knew themselves that that is the correct way to be: organised in the most effective and efficient way possible to undertake a Work to proclaim the True Gospel and to feed and nourish the flock. And following in the footsteps of the ‘Second Moses’, Ezra himself.

We should also realise that there were many similarities between the social program and undertaking of the Christian assembly and the Synagogue: to read and expound the scriptures, enforce discipline, share in meals, administer a welfare fund for the widows and orphans, enounce community policy, provide shelter and hospitality for members of other communities on their journeys, inaugurate officers and arrange for burial of the dead.

Note also the following quote from Eric Myers’ and James Strange’s work *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity*:

“Our discussion of Jewish tombs, burial practices [they did not practice cremation - ed], and views of afterlife has reinforced our methodological assumption that a study of the earliest Christian remains in Palestine means studying Jewish remains. Given this fact that Christianity did not develop its own symbolic vocabulary of signs and symbols until the fourth century, we must, so it seems, depend on Jewish remains in

³¹ Burtchaell 1992:274

order to understand the context of early Christianity.”³²

Indeed, the earliest Christians were known to outsiders as Nazareans as almost all historians now accept.³³ To themselves they were known as the holy ones or the assembly of God (Gr *ekklesia*) – a holy community of believers. Today, in our modern language, we would say ‘Church of God’. In the first century, the term *ekklesia* was in common usage among the Jews as a synonym for synagogue. We can look at Acts 20:28 and find that Paul replaced *synagoge* with *ekklesia* so as to make the scripture apply to the Christian community. Christians began to use this title to differentiate themselves from the Jews later.

For when they left the synagogues, they had nowhere to meet at first, save in members homes, and later in rented halls.³⁴

And so the connection to the synagogue was close, for it was here that the Christians first met. They were tolerated at first due to the Jewish tradition to tolerate a wide range of doctrinal opinion. For, amongst themselves, they had the Sadducees, Zealots, Therapeuta, Essenes, Pharisees and others. The Pharisees themselves were divided into several schools of thought.

Later, it becomes apparent that the Christian claim that Christ was the Messiah and that he had been raised from the dead, did not forebode well for them. But to the Jews the Messiah would be an all conquering king, one that could not have been guilty of crimes which Jesus Christ was accused of. How could Christians be tolerated in the synagogues, keeping the sabbath and holy days among fellows. To be put out of the synagogue or to quit was a terrible thing to happen to any Jew. One lost all public standing, welfare benefits, judiciary protection, access to marital arrangements, hospitality and so forth. It was an enormous blow to their physical, emotional, cultural and social well-being. The costs in political and social terms was simply enormous.

“Clearly they would have begun to duplicate the traditional synagogue program as best they could ... evidence shows that the Christian development of titles follows the Jewish customs rather faithfully. The title community chiefs may serve as an illustration ...”³⁵

What ranks may be found in the early true Church? There is enough evidence that the rank of community chief was known as *archisynagogoi*, that is, the superintendent or shepherd, the assistant as *diaconus* and the elders and *presbyteros*. These terms are used throughout the Newer Testament.

Burtchaell explains the similarity between the offices apparent from history and the Bible with those of the synagogue:

- Apostle:

This was one group of leaders which the synagogues did not have at the helm, but served at the bottom of the hierarchy.

“They were not merely community appointees. They were charismatics who, whether through a personal call or some prophetic summons, went forth as appointed by God. Hence a much higher sponsorship that their home churches might accept and accredit

³² Meyers & Strange 1981:169

³³ See Ray Pritz 1988

³⁴ See Burtchaell 1992:287. See ICor 16:9; Col 4:15; Philemon 1:2; Acts 20:20;

³⁵ Burtchaell 1992:283

but not initiate.”³⁶

They were acknowledged by their fruits as having being sent by Christ Himself, with a prophetic and leadership role. All the churches answered to the Apostles who spoke with *kyriotes* = *ruling power*. Note the statement “It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves” (Acts 15:28) as evidence for this.

In this way they were different from the *apostoli* which were sent as messengers between the synagogues. In the literature we find that they were sent as travelling fund collectors. In effect, their role was converted from a messenger-boy to the highest office of service in the Church. Dr Hoeh alluded to this in a sermon he gave sometime in the early 1980s and which has stuck in my mind ever since. I am unaware that he expanded on this important concept.

Why else would Paul state:

“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.

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?”
(1Cor 12:28-29)

Paul mentioned “first Apostles” here to emphasise a change in the Church’s adoption of the synagogue model.

“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)

Again, he lists Apostles as first.

After all, why is there such a great deal of emphasis on the role of Apostles in the New Testament? Why did Paul have to mention his credentials if the rank of Apostle was already the highest? Perhaps some, familiar with the synagogue structure, needed convincing.

It seems that Herbert W Armstrong knew little about the synagogue, yet the basic structure of the Worldwide Church of God was based upon it. It seems that there was Divine inspiration for this to happen. For God works in mysterious ways.

- The Prophet:

It is apparent that an office in the New Testament was that of Prophet (inspired preacher) or a senior minister with special insights. That is, someone who could discern the spirits of men (unlike so many today who have made terribly wrong decisions towards people) and who could also discern what God had in mind in human affairs and world events in the light of Bible prophecy.

In the Newer Testament, in similitude to the Older Testament, we find prophets outside of the ecclesiastical structures. However, it seems plausible, that some of the roles of the prophet were incorporated into the Church.

³⁶ Burtchaell 1992:307

Some such as Agabus appear to have been outside of the organised Church (Acts 11:27; 21:10); another band of prophets apparently outside of the Church, but used of God were those mentioned in Acts 13:1-3.

Others prayed over Timothy when he was appointed (ITim 1:18; 4:14).

- The Community Chief:

The early Christian assemblies did not normally use the title *archisynagogos* even though, like the word *synagoge*, it was part of the synagogue terminology. This was partly due to the Church separating out from the synagogue even though “the institutional protocols might be remarkably continuous with the realities of the past.”³⁷

James would have fulfilled such a function given that he was presiding over the Jerusalem community (Acts 15:22). His position as chairing the meeting (no doubt under Peter) together with his statement

“I rule, then ... and not forgetting Simeon’s key role, suggests that he was a chief in the Jerusalem Church and that they practised similar family continuities in similitude to that found among the synagogue chiefs. From Acts 15 it is obvious that Peter and Paul who were Apostles and gifted with the spiritual understanding, set forth the policy and rationale that carried the day. James, the community chief surrounded by the elders, presided and pronounced the verdict.”³⁸

It is very likely that the early Church each had a community or assembly which had a community chief who, as shepherd, presided over two councils/boards/colleges: the elders and deacons.³⁹

In the Book of Revelation letters are sent to the angel of the church ... which seems awefully like a single person responsible for presiding over an assembly like a community chief.

- The Elders:

“The evidence before us says that during the organization of a new community the elders were appointed by the apostle or founder ... The pastoral epistles seem to imply that the selection of elders was a prerogative of Paul’s major deputies after the time of founding. There is a hint that prophets may have played a part in validating candidates for community office ...”⁴⁰

However, later, in the embryonic Great False Church, the local churches chose their own elders as the selection became a matter for local choice.⁴¹

Another synonym is *poimen* which means shepherd (Acts 20:28-30) practising pastoral gentleness (IPet 5:2-4). And in similitude to the synagogue, they are sometimes called *archontes* or notables.⁴²

³⁷ Burtchaell 1992:306

³⁸ Burtchaell 1992:314

³⁹ We find in one of the branches of the Ebionites that they had *presbyteroi* (elders) and *archisynagogoi* (community chiefs) and they called their assembly a *synagoge*.

⁴⁰ Burtchaell 1992:293-4

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² Burtchaell 1992:299

Burtchaell lists some of the duties of the elders which they have ultimate responsibility and authority for in the congregations or assemblies:

- preaching and teaching
- community finances
- admonition and rebuke when unity was at risk
- appointment of officers and, in the opinion of Burtchaell, some way of endorsing the Apostles
- caring for the sick and the community's dependent's
- their rank deserved honour

They are often described as an organised group which gives the clear impression that there are at least three in each congregation of a reasonable size.

“They are a *presbyterion*, like a *synedrion* or an entourage. They are visualized as a council in session with the community chief, and thus a ruling council for the full assembly.”⁴³

The traditional synagogue title for elders was *presbyteros* or alternatively *episkopos* which means overseer; this latter word still has overtones of the synagogue. They formed a board or council. In other words, each local congregation had a group of elders to assist the senior elder (pastor). This was not a ‘democratic’ system, but one of brotherhood and joint assistance to nurture their brothers and sisters in the Church.

Burtchaell argues that there was one difference from the synagogue: the elders did not have a senior elder (pastor) among their numbers. But this must be an oversight by him, and defies logic and natural order. There is always a need for a chairman of the board in any society, organization or structure. Why should there be any difference on this occasion?

It would also appear that the college of elders united with similar colleges of other assemblies to form a synodal unit which was not answerable to a single assembly but to the corporate authority.⁴⁴

- Teachers:

Teachers, like the apostles and prophets, were not selected by the membership⁴⁵ as their gift came from God. It was thus necessary to fit them into an office within a Godly ranking system.

Their duty was to explain the scriptures, an influential gift and which deserved high honour.”⁴⁶

There is some slight evidence from early Christian history that a minor teaching office was operative but details are unknown. It is probably in the area of sermonettes and teaching children in Sabbath classes or similar.

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?...
For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD” (Prov

⁴³ Burtchaell 1992:298

⁴⁴ Burtchaell 1992:332

⁴⁵ Burtchaell 1992:303

⁴⁶ *ibid*

1:22, 29)

- The Servant or Deacon:

They are titled the *hazan* = *assistant* of temple and synagogue but appears under the Greek equivalent word *diakonos* = servant.⁴⁷

This was, of course, an actual rank. Yet all true believers are servant or assistants in some way also:

- Moses (Rev 15:3)
- Hebrew prophets (IPet 1:12)
- Jesus Christ (Rom 15:8; Phil 2:7)
- Paul (Acts 26:16; Rom 1:1; 11:13; ICor 3:5; 9:19; IICor 4:1,5; 6:3-4; IICor 4:1; 8:19; 11:23; Col 1:7, 23-25; Eph 3:7; 4:11; ITim 1:12)
- Preachers in general (ICor 3:5; IICor 8:19; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7, 12, 17; Titus 4:5; IThess 3:2; IITim 2:24; 4:5; IPet 4:10-11)
- Priests in the True Church?

We find no record of a priestly rank in the Early Church. Why is this so? For the New Testament Church, although continuing the Laws and so forth of the Older Testament Church, was governed by the Melchizedek Priesthood in lieu of the Levitical Priesthood (Heb 8). In this Priesthood all baptised persons had the Holy Spirit dwelling within them leading them into righteousness. They have direct access to God and perform good works on His behalf, evangelising as needed.

This does not mean that there were no priestly shepherding functions by fellow Melchizedek priests. To the contrary: the Newer Testament contains examples of elders and deacons being appointed by the Apostles as we have seen. Eph 4 and ICor 12 also reveal a clear rank system of Melchizedek shepherds. It is quite plausible of course, that the Melchizedek Priesthood had Levites functioning as shepherds given that quite a number, it would seem, were joined to the Church of God (Acts 6:7), perhaps even to this day.

But who are the spiritual Levites and Priest today? All true Christians are - and we find many analogies to this effect. See also the appendix *Priests and Levites* in *The Study of the Types* by Ada Habershon (one of the best book I have read on Biblical typology.)

Not surprisingly one cannot find the title *hierous* = levitical priest anywhere applied to offices in the

⁴⁷ Torrance 1984: "When the Church in Jerusalem became too large for the Twelve Disciples themselves to look after as pastors of the flock, they decided to appoint others to carry out the duties of local ministry, and to devote themselves as Apostles to the Word, for which they had been specially trained and commissioned by the Lord. They felt themselves uniquely called to provide the Church with the authoritative understanding of Christ and his Gospel which the Lord meant the Church to have and which he mediated to it through the Apostles -- that is what we now have in the Scriptures of the New Testament in which we receive from the Apostolic Foundation of the Church and through the Apostolic Tradition the 'deposit' of the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

John Lightfoot, the learned Westminster Divine, once drew attention to a very significant reference in Acts 1.15, where we are told that the company of persons in the first assembly of disciples numbered about a hundred and twenty.[23] It would appear that the Primitive Church took care to act within the provisions of Jewish law later recorded in the Mishnah tractate Sanhedrin,[24] a Rabbinic codification of earlier material (mishnayot) not infrequently reflected in the New Testament. There we find it laid down that if a community is one hundred and twenty strong it is entitled to have its own little 'sanhedrin' of 'seven', appointed through 'the laying on of the elders' hands', to exercise oversight over its affairs.[25] That was the legal ruling which the Apostles seem to have followed when they laid their hands on seven chosen men, giving them authority to have charge of the local congregation of converted Hellenistic Jews (traditionally separated from Palestinian Jews even in their synagogues)."

Early Church.

“Nowhere, however, despite the range of freedom early Christians felt to draw on the traditions of the temple, priesthood and sacrifice by way of illustration, precedent and analogy, is there a willingness to accord Jewish priests any community prerogative ... It is not that there are no longer any priests: there are no longer any who are not priests. Priesthood is no longer the identity of a clan or a tribe, but the name of an entire people.”⁴⁸

It is obvious: what priests there were in the New Testament Church functioned as elders and shepherds/pastors. Their priestly rank was gone, although their Levitical racial/blood line obviously continued. As such many from this line may be found both in the Churches of God as well as in the Apostate Churches.

- Women elders?:

Paul is clear as Burtchaell demonstrates:

“church offices were not open to women ... As for female elders or overseers: there are none, not even any female titularies that are officers.”⁴⁹

A possible exception was that of Deacon. Note that Phoebe is called a *diakonos* and possibly the courier of a document which is what one would expect a deacon to do. She would no doubt then have been a protector and helper of the saints. But a deaconesses role did not include public preaching to men or other women (ICor 11:2-16; ITitus 2:11). Given this principle, this would also preclude them presenting at seminars on the Sabbath, giving opening or closing prayers, Bible readings on the Sabbath or song-leading. For them to be involved in such is ‘the thin edge of the wedge.’

However, notice how important women were to the Jewish community:

"The basis of Jewish social life is the family, and the Talmud is ever watchful to conserve its purity and stability. Recognizing the all-important place which a woman occupies in the life of the family, **it accords her a most dignified position ... In no way is she looked upon as a being inferior to man.** Here sphere of activity is different from man's, but of no less significance to the welfare of the community.”⁵⁰ [emphasis mine]

Inferior? No! Having different roles and responsibilities? Yes!

Notice further proofs of the absolute importance of the mother:

"The mother sets the spiritual tone in family life; she is most responsible for the character development of her children; and she holds the family together in the face of adversity ... she assumes full responsibility for the atmosphere of piety and reverence in the home and for the inculcation of Jewish ideals. She gathers her children around her on the eve of the Sabbath to hear her pronounce the blessing over the lights. She prepares the home for each festival and creates a mood of joyous expectancy in the household ... But more important was her traditional role of counselor to the entire family. The *Talmud* says: ‘No matter how short your wife

⁴⁸ Burtchaell 1992:322-23

⁴⁹ Burtchaell 1992:328-29

⁵⁰ Cohen 1975 : 159

is, lean down and take her advice.’”⁵¹

So much for the non-importance of women in Hebrew society and the synagogue. They are HIGHLY regarded and their talents utilized in a feminine way. Their participation and service within the community of God should be treasured.

After all, participation by those with ‘connections’ and the expense of the rest of the assembly is unfair, divisive and unCristian.

Concluding Remarks

From the above it can be seen that the structure of the old WCG under HWA broadly approximated that of the synagogue about 2,000 years ago!

Clearly there are ranks in the ministry – these are hierarchical offices, but in a collegial or community spirit.

The offices of Apostle, evangelist, pastor etc do not portray lay members’ functions at all. These are dogmatically ministerial ranks. However, members do have vital roles (if nepotism can be eschewed). But members can ‘apostle’ in the sense of going out and doing things; they can evangelise by using their talents and gifts God has given them to further the Work; they can ‘pastor’ or shepherd one another; and the can ‘deacon’ or serve others. But they don’t occupy offices of rank.

The following chart should throw further light on this.

⁵¹ Kertzner 1996: 74

A CHART COMPARING OFFICES IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

Offices in the Synagogue	Historical evidence for offices in the NT Church	Ephesians 4:11-12	ICor 12:28-29	Old WCG Structure
	Apostle (<i>apostolos</i>) ⁵²	Apostle (<i>apostolos</i>)	Apostle (<i>apostolos</i>)	Apostle
	Prophet (<i>prophetes</i>)	Prophet (<i>prophetes</i>)	Prophet (<i>prophetes</i>)	N/A, unless some senior men who brought truths to HWA may have functioned in this capacity in some way at various times
Senior or Chief Elder (<i>nasi = president</i>) ⁵³		Evangelist (<i>euaggelistes</i>)		Evangelist (many were Regional Directors)
Community Chief/Pastor & Elders in Council (including Notables) (<i>chazen or zaken</i>)	Community Chief (<i>archisynagogi</i>) & Elders in Council (<i>poimen</i>)	Pastor & Elders in Council		Pastor sometimes Assistant Pastors Local Elders Local Local Elders (pastor presided over regular meetings with Elders and Deacons (DELS))
Teacher (<i>rab</i>)	Teacher (<i>didaskalos</i>)	Teacher	Teacher	Sermonette presenters. Youth class leaders
Assistants (Deacons) (<i>almoners or parnasin</i>)	Deacons (in Councils)	(Deacons are mentioned elsewhere in the NT)	(Deacons are mentioned elsewhere in the NT)	Deacons & Deaconesses

⁵² This is probably also known as the *Angeloi tas Ekklesias* (cp Rev 2:1,8,12,18, 3:1,7,14)

⁵³ This aspect is still not clear to me. It may have been a parallel role to the *magid* who traveled around and raised up local churches and proclaimed the Gospel to the community. See IITim 4:5; Titus 1:5.

Apostoli (<i>shaliach</i> or <i>announcer</i>)				
Prophets (outside the jurisdiction of the synagogue) (<i>esha'elohim, nabyi'</i>)				
various gifts were noted and utilised, but were not ministerial rank: scribe, commissioner, priest, reader, apostle, prophet. One such was the <i>preceptor</i> or song-leader. Another was the <i>meturganim</i> who translated into the local language the teaching of the Law in Hebrew. He stood next to the teacher as he undertook the translation. ⁵⁴			(various gifts such as miracles, healings, helps, governments, languages) See ICor 13:1, 8; 14:1-28	Members in general

NB: further detail on the structure of the synagogue could be added here, however the above suffices. The striking feature is the similarity between the synagogue and that postulated by Paul. Also the non-rank role of apostle and prophet. These were evidently raised by Paul to highest office in the early Church of God.

⁵⁴ See the *Talmud: Meg. 4; Maimon. Tephillah, 12; Mas-secheth Soph. 103*

APPENDIX 1:
HERBERT W ARMSTRONG'S 1939 ARTICLE –
IS IT RELEVANT TODAY?

Much has been made of this 1930 article by HWA with this or that claim concerning it. Most notably, various ones see in this article an excuse to revert to local congregationalism. Yet the thrust of the article did not dwell on that aspect but on excessive control. In fact, with the omission of a few lines here and there, the article would be current today.

The article was written in reaction to the structures being set up in other Churches and he noted the errors he perceived within those structures – the backdrop to the article should be considered prior to one wishing to revert to localism or changing modern structure.

Now there can be no doubt that HWA made some basic changes to Church governance – due to the Church adopting a corporate structure some years after this article was written, it managed to perform a great Work. Local congregationalist structures do not produce major fruits nor a united, combined, efficient means to reach a huge audience.

As I pointed out earlier in this paper, when God raises up a Torah-based Work (eg Moses, Hezekiah, Ezra) under the helm of a strong leader who put the assembly and its teachings ‘back on the track’, a centralised administration naturally arises with this effort. The purifying of the doctrine is an outcome. Today we would term this a ‘corporate structure.’ Localism and congregationalism do not form part of the model. The only time that localism is of some use is when the Church is scattered due to persecution and must survive locally.

Therefore those that wish to return to a 1930s structure must consider that such a structure would not have led to a great Work. In addition, HWA was still learning in those days. For instance in the 1930s he believed in 6 Sivan for Pentecost; did not know the identity of Germany; believed that one is born again now, not in the resurrection; did not understand the truth about the 'spirit in man'; or major aspects of God's Plan and such like. Should we revert to old 1930s teachings or reject newer understandings simply because he held to other positions in the 1930s? That just does not make sense.

So it depends what one wants: localism so that one can get a position; or a corporate structure to undertake a great Work. One can and should be involved within a corporate structure – only cronyism and nepotism will prevent that.

DID CHRIST REORGANIZE THE CHURCH?

By **Herbert W Armstrong**
The Good News, February 1939

WHICH is the one true church? Here is amazing new light from the Bible, establishing the TRUTH of this important question of Church organization and government. Let us open our minds, and without prejudice, search the Scriptures, whether these things are so!

Just what is "The Church"? What is its object and purpose -- its real mission?

Is it AN ORGANIZATION, or a spiritual ORGANISM, composed of those saints whose names are

written in heaven, and who have, and are led by, the Holy Spirit?

And, granting it is not just some one organization, yet should not the true Church be organized -- and if so, HOW?

Just what is the true BIBLE form of organization and Church government?

A startling new truth now comes to light; thru God's precious Word!

Most of us have ASSUMED one or two central points in this important question -- taken them for granted without investigation. And this careless assumption has led most of us into error. It has left us open to be deceived!

The Bible cautions us to prove ALL THINGS! It is profitable for correction as well as for instruction in righteousness. (The true Christian must be willing at all times to be corrected and chastened -- and must continually seek to GROW in knowledge as well as in grace!)

It is the true remnant people of God who keep the COMMANDMENTS that the Devil is wroth with today. It is us Satan is seeking to deceive. He will deceive even the very elect if POSSIBLE. And it is possible if we are careless, and assume things without careful study of all sides, and ample PROOF from the Scripture. We must be continually ON OUR GUARD, never trusting any man, or even a board or group of men, but God alone, thru His Holy Word!

So let us SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES! Let us begin at the beginning.

The CHURCH, as we know, actually BEGAN at Mount Sinai, in the days of Moses, Acts 7:38.

True, this was the Church under the OLD Covenant, not the New. True, there is a vast difference between the Old and the New -- and part of just what constituted that difference is one of the important things we want now to investigate. We want ALL the facts on the subject.

The Church was Married To The Lord!

At Mt. Sinai, God set up AN ORGANIZATION. Make no mistake about that!

In our quest to learn WHETHER God's people should join themselves together in an ORGANIZATION, having CHURCH GOVERNMENT, let us begin by recognizing that in the beginning, at Sinai, God Himself formed His people into an ORGANIZATION, having GOVERNMENT.

At that time God's people -- the only people on earth who were the people of God -- were formed into a NATION. As such, they had LAWS, and GOVERNMENT. They were A KINGDOM. First of all, they formed a civil government. But in this government, God also placed certain church governments, giving them the rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the Law of Moses. Church and state were inseparable.

In any government, men are placed in authority, with power to GOVERN and to rule. There never was a government without MEN in authority, ruling over others. And, perhaps without exception, there always is, and always was, some ONE MAN who was in actual fact, tho not always in name or title, the real head, or ruler.

As God first organized His people, HE was their HEAD -- their King. But soon the Israelites wanted a MAN to be their king, like the Gentile nations around them. It is IMPOSSIBLE to have ORGANIZATION, or GOVERNMENT, without having a MAN as the actual and real head, even tho we SAY Christ in heaven is the Head, and continue to try to believe it that way.

A fact that many of us have never noticed is that THE OLD COVENANT WAS A MARRIAGE COMPACT!

When God first set up AN ORGANIZATION on earth, the people who formed this organization were MARRIED to the Lord. It was this MARRIAGE that bound Him and His people together!

In Jeremiah 3:14, the Lord says: "Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I AM MARRIED UNTO YOU."

The Lord Divorced His Wife!

The making of the Old Covenant, as recorded in the 24th chapter of Exodus, was the MARRIAGE CEREMONY. If anyone may doubt this, let us merely ask, WHEN, if not here, did the Lord ever enter into a marriage ceremony, joining :Himself and His people together as husband and wife? Where else, in all the Bible, can you find any account of a marriage ceremony?

The MARRIAGE ceremony was the OLD COVENANT CEREMONY! They are one and the same. It was this marriage, then, that established ORGANIZATION and GOVERNMENT among God's people!

We want to repeat that! We want you to understand it -- for it is of great importance -- it is the **KEY FACT** upon which the real truth, so long hidden, really hinges! **IT WAS THE MARRIAGE THAT FORMED GOD'S PEOPLE INTO AN ORGANIZATION HAVING CHURCH GOVERNMENT!**

That being so -- and it **IS** so, and none can deny it -- then it naturally follows that **THE ORGANIZATION** and the **GOVERNMENT** of God's people, at least as ordained and sanctioned by the Lord, **EXISTED ONLY AS LONG AS THE MARRIAGE UNION WHICH ESTABLISHED IT!**

If the marriage was done away, the **ORGANIZATION** and the **CHURCH GOVERNMENT** was at the same time done away! For it was only this marriage relationship which established the organization -- the kingdom -- the government, both civil and ecclesiastical!

When God first proposed the Old Covenant marriage, Exodus 19:5-6, He promised His people that **IF** -- they would be obedient, as a wife should to her husband, they would become "a kingdom of **PRIESTS**, and an holy **NATION**." In other words, a **GOVERNMENT** of religious character -- a **CHURCH GOVERNMENT!**

This is repeated in Leviticus 26. There the blessings to accrue for obedience are enumerated, together with the **PUNISHMENT** for **DISOBEDIENCE!** And what was that punishment to be?

Notice it! -- "they that hate you shall **REIGN OVER YOU . . . SEVEN TIMES**" -- or 2520 years! (verses 14-28).

Look at it, in your own Bible! If Israel, the **WIFE**, married unto the Lord, proves disobedient, Israel is to **LOSE** her government! No longer to be **AN ORGANIZATION!** Enemy nations shall **REIGN OVER** -- rule over -- the Israelites. Their own government no longer will rule them. No longer will they be an organization of their own.

Thus God threatened to turn the **GOVERNMENT** -- the **ORGANIZATION**, if you please, over to the **GENTILES** for 2520 long years, **TAKING ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT AWAY FROM HIS PEOPLE!**

Now let us see whether He did that!

Israel, of course, disobeyed.

"And I saw, when for all the causes where by backsliding Israel committed adultery I **HAD PUT HER AWAY, AND GIVEN HER A BILL OF DIVORCE,**" Jeremiah 3:8.

Surely that ought to settle the matter! Israel was **DIVORCED!** This cut off the **GOVERNMENT**, the **ORGANIZATION**, from among God's people, and **TURNED IT OVER TO THE GENTILES FOR 2520 LONG YEARS** -- until the very present generation! Still other Scriptures **PROVE** it!

Government And Organization Turned Over To Gentiles

Let us follow the story thru the Scriptures. Let us see if the other Scriptures confirm this astounding truth!

Israel sinner first, and was taken captive to Assyria about 721 B.C. But the House of Judah remained, and as long as they did God's true **BIBLE FORM OF ORGANIZATION** and **CHURCH GOVERNMENT** continued with them.

But soon Judah was sinning even worse than Israel, and they, too, were taken captive. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured the Jews, destroyed Jerusalem, moved the Jews to the land of the Chaldeans. Among them was Daniel, the prophet.

Soon after this captivity, Nebuchadnezzar had the dream in which he saw the great metallic image. Of course you are already familiar with this.

Only Daniel could tell the king his dream, and its meaning, as **GOD** had revealed it to him. But notice a point in its interpretation:

"This is the dream," Daniel said after describing the image, "and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, are a king of king -- in other words, a **WORLD RULER** -- "for **THE GOD OF HEAVEN HATH GIVEN THEE A KINGDOM,**" verses 36-37.

Note it! **GOD** gave the kingdom over to him! Now God never makes covenants with **GENTILES**. God never did, and never will, marry a Gentile people as such, or will, marry a Gentile people as such, or establish them as **HIS** kingdom, **HIS** government, **HIS** organization, **HIS** Church!

Yet it plainly says, here, that **GOD GAVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR A KINGDOM!** How? And **WHY?** Since God could not have established or set up a kingdom in Babylon, among the Gentile Chaldeans, the only way God could have **GIVEN** Nebuchadnezzar a **KINGDOM** was to have given **OVER** to him the Kingdom He already had set up -- the one set up **AT SINAI!**

Babylon never was the Kingdom, the Government, or the Church of GOD! But Nebuchadnezzar, under God's divine direction TOOK CAPTIVE the people of God's kingdom and church. And so God GAVE OVER TO HIM the KINGDOM -- that is, the GOVERNMENT -- the AUTHORITY to RULE -- which had been set up at Sinai!

Understand it! The AUTHORITY to RULE and to GOVERN was now taken away from the people of God, because of disobedience, and this AUTHORITY was transferred over to NEBUCHADNEZZAR and HIS SUCCESSORS for 2520 years!

When The Kingdom is Restored

Now notice the truth revealed in this Gentile Image a little further.

The AUTHORITY TO RULE was not only turned over to Nebuchadnezzar -- not just temporarily -- but it was to continue in the power of his successors 2520 years!

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom . . . and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule OVER ALL THE EARTH," verse 39. Note it! The RULE God had transferred over to Nebuchadnezzar was to continue in the Persian Empire, and the Grecian Empire -- they were to bear RULE over ALL THE EARTH! Yes, and by God's ordination!

Then followed the fourth kingdom of iron -- the ROMAN Empire. In the latter days -- at the end of the 2520 years -- NOW -- in OUR generation today -- this Roman Empire is once more to be restored by a union of ten European Dictators, as foretold in Revelation 17.

And then what shall happen, at the END of this 2520-year Gentile reign?

"A STONE (Christ) . . . smote the image," -- smashing this Gentile reign into pieces! Yes, CHRIST, at HIS SECOND COMING, is to SMITE it, and end it. What will happen then?

"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: . . . but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and IT shall stand forever," verses 34, 44.

Jesus' disciples understood that the KINGDOM, with all authority to GOVERN, whether civil or church government, had been taken away from His people, and turned over to Gentiles. You'll remember how they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). But He did NOT restore it, then, He did NOT bring the government, the organization, the authority to rule, back from the Gentiles to His people! Consequently He did NOT reorganize His people, or establish any government, ecclesiastical or civil, among them! This the New Testament Scriptures, also, abundantly prove!

God had proposed to demonstrate, thru His people, what blessings and prosperity would naturally follow a civilization based upon HIS laws. And ALL the laws hand on that great basic principle of LOVE -- love to God, and love to neighbor. The principle of "GIVE" and of "SERVE", not of "GET" and "ACCUMULATE."

But, when His people Israel would not continue governing themselves according to His laws, based on this great fundamental principle, God turned authority of government over the Gentiles, and gave them 2520 years to DEMONSTRATE, by experience, the fruitage of the Gentile ways of lust.

The 2520 years is now up. The Times of the Gentiles have run their course. And just LOOK at the results of this Babylonish Gentile civilization! Governments are overthrown, and now arming to the truth to destroy on another! Business and industry is bankrupt under the principle of competition and strife and self-gain, want and poverty stalk the land, and millions are in want in the midst of plenty! Society is rotten and immoral, crime, racketeering, vice, gambling, run rampant. Religion is in confusion, torn by strife and division, in the grip of the GENTILE system of injecting ORGANIZATION and GOVERNMENT into the Church! Truly, in its every phase, our modern civilization is in BABYLON today!

Praise God, JESUS IS SOON COMING! Yes, coming to RESTORE the Kingdom -- the government, the organization, to the TRUE people of God! Coming to DESTROY all this "BABYLON" which has visited such unhappiness to the world! Coming to reign and RULE.

The 12, The 70, And The 7

But, did not Jesus SET THE CHURCH IN ORDER? Did He not REORGANIZE it again, at His first Coming? Did He not set up a definite "BIBLE FORM OF ORGANIZATION," and establish a definite "CHURCH GOVERNMENT?"

We have always ASSUMED that He did! Yes, we have taken this carelessly for granted! But let us prove THIS point -- let us prove ALL THINGS! Let us search the Scriptures whether this assumption be so!

First, did Christ ever set up an ORGANIZATION, with its boards of HEAD MEN, with authority to GOVERN over the "spiritual affairs," or the "FINANCIAL AFFAIRS" of the Church?

Let us see if we can find such boards, or Scriptures giving them such authority.

True, Jesus did call out TWELVE disciples, who afterward were called "apostles." But WHERE in the Scripture are they called "THE BOARD OF THE TWELVE" -- a term we hear freely used today, under claim of having "the BIBLE form of organization."

WHERE do we read of one of them being appointed as the "CHAIRMAN OF THE TWELVE" or another as the "SECRETARY OF THE TWELVE?" Is THIS Biblical and Scriptural? If so, where is the text?

When Jesus called them, and ordained them, did We give them AUTHORITY TO RULE? Just what did He give them POWER and AUTHORITY to do?

Notice it, in Luke 9:1-2:

"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority" -- for what? To GOVERN? To RULE the Church? Notice carefully! Let us have a BIBLE REASON for all we accept and do! . . . ". . . and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he SENT THEM to" -- He sent them to WHAT? To rule and govern? To have supervision over the spiritual affairs of an organization? Notice it, IN THE BIBLE! "He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."

The word "apostle" means "one sent." The definition in Cruden's Concordance is "one sent forth. Used as referring (1) chiefly to one of the 12 disciples of Christ; or (2) to any of various other followers of Christ who did evangelistic work."

An apostle does not mean one IN authority, but one UNDER authority -- one SENT by the authority of another! The only power and authority Jesus ever gave even His original twelve was to heal the sick, and cast out demons. And He SENT them, not to rule, but to PREACH -- not to BEAR authority, but to MINISTER, to serve!

Nowhere in the Scripture do we find the slightest hint that the twelve constituted a higher-up church board, and nowhere were they even given power to rule, or govern, or decide what doctrines the other disciples must believe.

Were The 12 Continued On?

Is there any Scripture giving plain instruction that the TWELVE were to continue on perpetually as a Church board? There is none!

Yet many have been led honestly to suppose that the apostles were to be continued exactly twelve in number, because a successor was ordained to replace Judas Iscariot. So let us SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES on this point, whether this is so.

What was Jesus' PURPOSE in ordaining twelve disciples? Let the Scripture say:

"And He ordained twelve, THAT THEY SHOULD BE WITH HIM, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils," Mark 3:14.

Not that they should rule the spiritual affairs of an organization. Jesus ordained the twelve in order "that they should BE WITH HIM!"

Now notice WHY He wanted them to be with Him -- and WHY a successor was appointed for Judas!

Judas' successor had to be a man possessing a certain qualification -- because he was "ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection," Acts 1:22.

Notice the necessary qualification. Not ability to govern, nor talent to discern and vote on right doctrine. Look at it in your Bible: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and our among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained TO BE A WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION," Acts 1:21-22.

Do you grasp it? Do you see plainly revealed here the PURPOSE of the twelve?

First, Jesus ordained twelve "that they should be with Him." Later, after His ascension, one of these was replaced. And it had to be ONE WHO HAD BEEN WITH HIM, along with the others, thruout His entire ministry, beginning with the baptism of John!

Why?

"TO BE A WITNESS WITH THEM OF HIS RESURRECTION!"

Search the Scriptures as we may, we cannot find any other purpose for the twelve apostles, except to go out and preach, and heal, and to be WITH Jesus thruout His ministry, in order that they might forever PROVE the TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION!

That was the only reason for the definite number of TWELVE! To suppose that this definite number of twelve was to be continued and perpetuated AFTER THEIR MISSION WAS FULFILLED is absurd!

Is there any statement that others later called "apostles" -- ones SENT to preach -- merely evangelists -- such as Paul, Barnabus, etc., were "one of the twelve?" There is no such statement in the Bible! Rather Paul and Barnabus, after they were called apostles (as in Acts 14:14), went up to Jerusalem UNTO THE APOSTLES, Acts 15:2. And here, at this conference, the Holy Spirit revealed truth TO BE WRITTEN AS PART OF THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES, which were not yet, at that time, complete. Surely no "12 apostles" are authorized by the Scripture to receive such special instruction from the Holy Spirit, to made part of the Holy Scriptures, TODAY! Such an implication is little short of blasphemous!

True, Paul and a few others are called "apostles." But an "apostle" is merely "ONE SENT." If we could find one single Scripture where Paul, or any other than the original twelve, ever were called "ONE OF THE TWELVE", as we freely hear men style themselves today, then we would know the twelve continued on.

BUT THERE IS NO SUCH SCRIPTURE!

The words "The twelve" are NEVER used except to refer to the original 12 which companied with Jesus thruout His ministry, to be witnesses of His resurrection!

There is NO SCRIPTURE even hinting that the twelve were continued. On the other hand, every Scriptural indication is that THEY WERE NOT. Even the authors of "A History of the True Church" were unable to find any continuance of THE TWELVE in the TRUE Church!

That ought to settle the matter. The Scriptures speak of FALSE apostles, and of "them which SAY they are apostles, and are not, but hast found them LIARS," II Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2. Let us beware being deceived. It is the COMMANDMENT KEEPERS whom the Devil seeks, in these latter days, to deceive!

Let us be sure everything we accept is based on true BIBLE AUTHORITY, and not falsely read INTO the Bible by imputing a meaning to various scattered texts contrary to the plain, obvious intended meaning in ITS SETTING!

How About The Seventy?

Now let us look briefly at the "70."

Did THEY constitute a CHURCH BOARD? Was power to govern, or rule, or act as an advisory board in matters of doctrine or church government? Was THAT the purpose for which Jesus appointed them?

The ONLY PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT where "the seventy" are mentioned is in the 10th chapter of Luke.

Beside the twelve, whom Jesus ordained "that they should be with Him," for "a witness of His resurrection," and whom He sent forth to preach, "the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whiter he himself would come," verse 1.

Did they ASSEMBLE -- as a board?

No, they WERE SENT, not together but TWO AND TWO, on a special mission -- preparing for the personal visits of Jesus to these various towns and cities! Instead of assembling as a church board, THEY SEPARATED -- two and two!

What instruction did Jesus give them? Did He vest them with power to RULE, or set them up as an advisory board, or appoint them to be the LEADING elders?

No, He said, "God your ways . . . and HEAL THE SICK . . . and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come high unto you," verses 3, 9. They were authorized only to heal, cast out demons, and preach! That is all!

They returned from this special mission (verse 17), and Jesus gave them power to tread on serpents and scorpions so nothing should hurt them. And THAT IS THE LAST EVER HEARD OF THEM! Their mission was ended!

Brethren, let us be honest! IF the Lord ever intended them to be a continuous church "BOARD OF THE SEVENTY", do you not honestly think we should find some further mention of "the seventy?" Do you not think we should read of this "board" in the history of "the TRUE Church" -- IF they ever were such a board?

No, the simple truth, when we come to "search the Scriptures WHETHER these things be so," is that they never were a church board, and they ENDED their work and mission before Jesus was crucified!

The fact that in one or two instances Moses selected seventy elders for certain duties of that day, BEFORE God took the government away from Israel and turned it over to the Gentiles -- BEFORE He divorced Israel -- certainly has no connection with the seventy Jesus sent on this special mission.

Were The "Seven" A Financial Board?

And now a brief glimpse at "THE SEVEN."

Were they set up as a FINANCIAL BOARD? Were they appointed to receive and handle the TITHES of the whole world-wide Church? Did they ever supervise the financial affairs of the ministry, hiring and firing ministers, and paying them their salaries, or "allowances?" Were they set over THAT business/

Let us not be deceived, but look at this AT IT IS IN THE BIBLE, honestly!

In the early days of the New Testament Church, the brethren sold their possessions, had all things common, and took care of the PHYSICAL needs of their own widows and orphans.

In the 6th chapter of Acts, we notice in the first verse, the Grecians complained against the Hebrews, because their widows and orphans were being neglected in the daily ministration of material needs.

Then the twelve -- the ORIGINAL and ONLY twelve of the Bible, ordained to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, -- called together the disciples and said, "It is not reason that we should leave THE WORD OF GOD, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men . . . whom we may appoint over THIS business," verses 2-3.

They were appointed over BUSINESS -- but what business? Note it IN YOUR BIBLE! The business of WAITING ON TABLES -- of feeding, serving, the MATERIAL needs of the widows and orphans!

And WHY were they appointed? So that the apostles might devote their time to the PREACHING of the Gospel, and the WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION, which they were sent to do, INSTEAD OF this business of ministering to the PHYSICAL needs of women!

The business for which the seven were appointed had nothing whatsoever to do with receiving and disbursing tithes for the ministry and preaching of the Word!

We should like to see any text in the New Testament showing that there ever was appointed any BOARD to act as a TREASURY for the tithes of the disciples, and to receive and disburse the money for the whole church! We say such a thing IS UNSCRIPTURAL and unless SCRIPTURE can be produced for it, such a practice ought to be discontinued!

If there is ONE LINE of scripture for such procedure under the New Testament, the editor of The GOOD NEWS agrees to print it in the next issue -- if any can supply it! This is our challenge, and we await replies!

Jesus' Teaching On Church Government

There is not one single HINT in the New Testament of any Church BOARD with authority to rule, to govern, to decide doctrine, or to handle tithes and church finances (the whole church). In a later number we shall devote an article to explaining Acts 15, which certainly sets no such example.

All authority and power to rule is limited solely to each LOCAL congregation. But there is NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for any super-government, or organization with authority over the local congregations!

The plain teaching of Jesus is JUST THE CONTRARY! Listen! "Jesus called them unto Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to RULE over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise AUTHORITY upon them. But so shall it NOT be among you," Mark 10:42.

The AUTHORITY -- the GOVERNMENT -- the RULERSHIP -- was turned over to the Gentiles for 2520 years -- until Christ RESTORES the kingdom at His Second Coming!

Where Church Government Originated

How, then, did ORGANIZATION, and the idea of CHURCH GOVERNMENT get into the Church? It came out of BABYLON! Spiritual BABYLON -- that is, ROME! The same as nearly all other

false doctrines of Satan.

In the early 4th Century, Constantine, the Emperor, who officially started SUNDAY observance in the Western world, saw his Empire in danger of disintegrating.

At the time a great controversy was raging among the leaders of Christianity, over Dr. Arius' doctrine concerning the origin of Christ, as opposed to the Trinity doctrine.

We quote from Encyclopedia Britannica, (article, ARIUS):

"This controversy over Arius' doctrine reached even the ears of Constantine. Now sole emperor, he saw in the one catholic church the best means of counteracting the movement in his vast empire toward disintegration, and he at once realized how dangerous dogmatic strife might be to its unity. Constantine had no understanding of the questions at issue . . . He summoned a general council (the Nicene Council) It was finally decided against Arius. . . . Constantine accepted the decision of the council, and resolved to uphold it."

Thus it was CONSTANTINE -- the "BEAST" -- who injected and introduced into the church the idea of a BOARD to decide doctrine, and to rule.

Thus it was that CONSTANTINE made doctrine, as decided by a higher-up BOARD, the basis of fellowship and unity in the Church!

Jesus never said "By this shall all men KNOW that ye are my disciples -- if ye all speak the same thing the BOARD OF THE TWELVE vote on." That is the policy of some today -- but it is NOT BIBLE POLICY! Jesus said we should be known to be in the true Church IF WE HAVE LOVE one to another! And doctrine has only brought STRIFE!

In the next century, came the PAPACY In full bloom, starting the idea that the CHURCH is an ORGANIZATION having CHURCH GOVERNMENT!

Listen to authentic history! In the Encyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 7, page 529, we read:

"The first pope, in the real sense of the word, was Leo I. (440-461 A.D.)" To him the plan of government of the Roman Empire was an obsession. He applied and adapted that form of government to the church, forming the PAPACY.

Myers' *Ancient History*, says:

The Church "under Leo I, set up, "within the Roman Empire, and ecclesiastical STATE (government) which, in its constitution and its administrative system, was shaping itself upon the IMPERIAL MODEL."

Truly, an IMAGE OF THE BEAST!

Thus was CHURCH GOVERNMENT introduced into the Western world a century after Constantine (the "BEAST" injected the idea of church BOARDS to decide what doctrines the rest of the church must believe. And thus the very PRINCIPLE of CHURCH GOVERNMENT becomes THE IMAGE TO THE BEAST!

The whole thing is FALSE! It is NOT ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE! It is part of BABYLON! Those who are IN, and MEMBERS of such an organized church government, submitting to doctrines declared by unscriptural boards as a fellowship test, are IN BABYLON, and actually worshippers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST! And God is calling us, HIS people OUT of BABYLON today, before it is too late -- before the PLAGUES fall!

Brethren, let us have the courage to accept the TRUTH, and to COME OUT!

The Purpose Of The Church

Finally, what is the very PURPOSE of the New Testament Church? Is it to BUILD AN ORGANIZATION?

Let us, now, finally understand it.

The first kingdom and government was set up by Nimrod -- the first ancient Babylon (Genesis 10). The Devil is the god of this world, and since Nimrod the kingdoms have built civilizations based upon the Devil's ways of LOVE, of OBEDIENCE, and of GIVE, as defined in GOD'S LAW.

So God formed Abraham's children into AT NATION, giving them HIS LAWS, to show how a nation would be blessed that would build its civilization according to His Commandments. At Mt. Sinai Israel was united to the Lord in MARRIAGE, as HIS GOVERNMENT, both state and church.

But when Israel went after the ways of other nations, breaking the Commandments, God DIVORCED Israel, and gave over the GOVERNMENT, (which included CHURCH GOVERNMENT as

well as state) to the Gentile kingdoms symbolized by Daniel's image and the four "beasts." He gave the GOVERNMENT into Gentile hands UNTIL THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, when the government, church and state, shall be RESTORED to Israel!

When Jesus comes with POWER and great glory -- power to RULE, and the SAINTS possess the kingdoms of this world -- He will make a NEW Covenant with Israel and Judah, which NEW Covenant will be the MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB!

As the Old Covenant MARRIAGE ceremony set up Israel as a NATION, so will the new.

Now TO WHOM will Christ be married, at the Marriage of the Lamb? Notice it, IN YOUR OWN BIBLE -- Revelation 19:7 -- He shall marry HIS WIFE! Note it!!!

Yes, His WIFE whom He divorced. A wife who is divorced is not free to remarry until the death of her husband! And so Christ, Israel's husband, DIED to REDEEM ISRAEL! And now Israel is FREE to marry AGAIN!

And who will the New Covenant be made with? Notice Hebrews 8:8 -- with the same wife He made the first covenant with but later divorced -- ISRAEL!

Then He shall RESTORE the Kingdom to Israel -- both Church government and state. Christ will reign not only as King of kings, but also as LORD OF LORDS -- Church government, as well as state!

Christ's FIRST coming was to REDEEM -- not to restore.

Jesus never set up an organization, nor did He establish any church GOVERNMENT. He did not RE-ORGANIZE the Church!

Instead, He came calling INDIVIDUAL disciples out from among the church organization, sects, and denominations -- out from among the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes -- out from among worldly Gentile organizations and contacts -- He called His saints to be SEPARATE -- to COME OUT!

The very word "ecclesia" from which "Church" is translated, means "called-out ones" as well as "assembly."

The New Testament Church is not a kingdom -- not a church government -- but an assembly of individuals CALLED OUT -- Spirit-filled individuals, and therefore a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM, not an organization.

The OBJECT of the Church is not to build up an organization, or a movement. Let us see this great purpose clearly.

The CHURCH is Israelitish. Not a Gentile Church just called "Israel." It IS Israel. But those who do not come by faith, and who are disobedient, are CUT OFF, the Israelitish-born, while Gentile converts, thru Christ, are ADOPTED into Israel. Thus, spiritually speaking, Israel IS the CHURCH.

And it is the CHURCH who shall be married to Christ -- Israel REDEEMED by the blood of the Lamb of God!

The CHURCH is God's instrumentality thru which, and in which, He is selecting a people for His name -- gathering OUT of "babylon" -- OUT of worldly ways, worldly organizations, various individuals, -- one here, and one there -- to repentance, faith in Christ, receiving of and being led by the Holy Spirit, thus having HIS LAWS written in their minds and hearts -- living, individually, a life of trial and test, of OVERCOMING, that they may be thus fitted and trained for positions as kings or priests in the KINGDOM OF GOD, after Christ's second coming!

The CHURCH of God shall then become the KINGDOM of God. It is the CHURCH which shall be married to the Lamb, establishing God's GOVERNMENT on earth -- restoring the KINGDOM to Israel!

So THE CHURCH is God's instrumentality for overcoming the FAULT of the Old Covenant. That FAULT was disobedience. The NEW will be made with those in whose minds and hearts GOD'S LAW has been written, by His Holy Spirit! (Hebrews 8:10).

And this MARRIAGE will not be made with some one organization! It is THE INDIVIDUAL SAINTS -- not some organization -- which shall possess the government, and rule (Daniel 7:18; Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21, etc.)

His WIFE shall have made herself READY! But how? By a "re-organization", or some "new movement?" What folly! Read Ephesians 5:25-27. The CHURCH is the collective body of individual saints who are sanctified and CLEANSED by Christ! Let us stop speaking of some organization as "the Church," or "our Church!"

Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be ROOTED UP!" Our heavenly Father never planted any super-organization, or established any church GOVERNMENT, or set men IN AUTHORITY over either spiritual or financial affairs, in the New Testament Church.

Any such "plant" was never planted of GOD -- and therefore IT SHALL BE ROOTED UP!

Our fellowship is first with God, and with Christ -- then with each other, and with Christ -- then with each other, in LOVE! The saints, so far as they know one another, are not to forsake assembling together for their mutual edification. For this purpose -- and that all things may be done decently and in order -- the Scriptures give us instruction for ordaining local elders and deacons, in every city -- every local congregation, or Church. But there is no super-organization over and above local congregation IN THE NEW TESTAMENT! And any such "plant" is certain to be ROOTED UP!"

All such organizations and governments came out of BABYLON -- and are today a part of BABYLON!

Brethren, let us have the kind of cooperative FELLOWSHIP, based on LOVE, that was practiced by the early saints, as recorded in the Book of Acts. Let us work together, in unselfish effort to GIVE of the Gospel truth to the world -- to GIVE of the "waters of life" to as many precious souls as we can reach -- to GIVE out the last warning message with great POWER!

But let us drop all effort to BUILD UP A MOVEMENT or AN ORGANIZATION. Let us quit working FOR organizations, and work FOR THE LORD -- and the salvation of souls!

What has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? Nothing but ORGANIZATION -- which has led to politics, ministers lusting for rule and for power -- striving against each other, lining up the brethren on THEIR side, against the other! It is SUCH PREACHERS who have split up and divided our brethren!

God's Word commands us to COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and be separate. God's last warning is, "COME OUT OF BABYLON!!"

Organization and church GOVERNMENT has brought us only strife, jealousies, divisions, bitterness! It is not of God, and it can bear no other fruit.

The CHURCH OF GOD needs more of the POWER OF GOD -- more of HIS LOVE -- of HIS HOLY SPIRIT, that the work may now begin to go forth IN MIGHTY POWER! We ought to be ASHAMED of the pitiful, puny, weak, feeble work that has split up and divided brethren, reached but so very FEW with the message, with almost no real conversions! All this, while leaders desiring power to RULE send out misleading, exaggerated, deceiving statements designed to convince tithe-payers that "the work is progressing." What a mockery! What a tragedy! What a pity!

We praise God that many of the more spiritual HAVE COME OUT! Let us obey GOD!

[emphasis mine]

APPENDIX 2: BIBLE STUDY AND WORSHIP

Many today are bored with the messages they hear. No wonder the youth cannot take it – God’s Word is presented in the most boring fashion, demeaning the most interesting and vibrant book in the world!

They don’t feel inspired, as a result, to undertake intense and indepth study anymore. Their roots are shallower and their interest in various Bible topics has waned.

God’s way is not the way of laziness or leaving it up to others to do one’s own study. There are those that, if you made this suggestion to, would go berserk! They cannot take it! They will not admit it! And even if they agreed with you, they would still do the opposite out of a sense of obstinacy. They metaphorically stomp their feet on the ground and deliberately do the opposite because they are not prepared to ‘go back to the future’ and return to the detail, depth and breadth of what was once studied and taught.

Some prefer the easy to study topics: marriage, child-rearing, hope, faith, obedience. The majority of other topics are forgotten – and the longer they are forgotten, the harder it is to get excited about them again or to study them again. They become too difficult to study (yet they weren’t 20 years ago); or regarded as ‘not essential for salvation’ (how would they know?); or ‘this is not what God is inspiring right now’ and other excuses are used.

But these few subjects (marriage, child-rearing, hope, faith, obedience) are not all there is to God’s Word! We can get them at any Sunday School lesson.

Consider: one can go along to any church of this world (or bookshop) and hear presentations or read excellent materials on those subjects.

But we need to have a closer relationship with God than that. We need to understand His mind and way of thinking as revealed throughout Scripture in a plethora of subjects. We cannot just be a Protestant church that meets on Saturday. We need to be thoroughly involved with God’s Word, talk about it and be interested in it. Just living by its principles is not enough – it must also be discussed – that way it becomes inculcated within us - and by exercising our minds thereby, we are also able to answer questions and defend our beliefs.

We cannot rest on our laurels, thinking that if we abide by the Sabbath and Holy Days then that is all there is to it. For one may indeed observe the Sabbath and Holy Days but accept political correctness or water-down much of the truth. One can reject much of God’s revealed truth while observing the Sabbath. In other words, Sabbath-observance is just not enough.

So, instead of being jealous, Christians need encouragement to be zealous. Pouncing on zeal with false claims is killing it off and undermining the future strength of the Church. For Godly knowledge builds up; worldly knowledge puffs up. As God’s inspired, holy Word states:

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?...
For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD” (Prov 1:22, 29)

Even some in society perceive certain truisms:

“They who lack talent expect things to happen without effort. They ascribe failure to a lack of inspiration or ability, or to misfortune, rather than to insufficient application. At the core of every true talent there is an awareness of the difficulties inherent in any achievement, and the confidence that by persistence and patience something worthwhile will be realized. Thus talent is a species of vigor.” (Eric Hoffer [oh for the jealous to read this!])

“The miracle is this - the more we share, the more we have.” (Leonard Nimoy)

“The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.” (Prov 15:7)

“The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.” (Prov 16:21-23)

Now to those that jealously and constantly attack members that enjoy study and further education, falsely accusing them publicly of this and that, notice what Herbert W Armstrong wrote in *The Autobiography* (volume 1, chapter 2, “Learning Important Lessons”):

“It was late December, 1910. Now the big question came: should I stay in school, and take courses in advertising and journalism in college or university?

“Well, Herbert,” he counselled, “that depends on you and how much ambition and drive you have. It happens that no college or university in the country has yet offered a course in this profession that is worth a plug nickel.

“Now I know,” he continued, “that nearly everybody has the delusion that an education is something you get at school -- and higher education at the university. It's like going to a hardware store or department store to purchase a lawn mower. People seem to have the idea that an education is something they have all wrapped up at the university, ready to hand it over to you when you buy it by paying the tuition. But it has always seemed to me that traipsing across the door-sill of a college classroom, or sitting in an arm-chair, is not putting an education into your mind. **Education comes from study -- from books -- from lectures -- from contacts -- from travel -- from thinking about what you see and hear and read -- and from experience.**

“The reason we have to maintain schools and universities is simply that most people are too lazy -- most lack the ambition and persistence, the drive -- to procure an education outside of schools and colleges. Most people must have someone do their thinking and planning for them, assign lessons and homework, and force students to study and learn by a system of rewards and punishments in the form of grades, and finally, a sheepskin with a degree.”

So, do we really understand what he is saying? Do we agree with him? In any event, when will the watering-down ever end? There is one way – let it end with **YOU!**

Study the Highest Form of Worship
by Dr. John D. Garr
(*Restore!* magazine, vol 3, no. 2)

When Christians think of worship, images of the Sunday morning worship service come to view, with singing, praying, giving, preaching, and sharing the sacrament. Study is perhaps something that is done in preparation for worship, but could Christians ever conceive of study, itself, as an act of worship, even the highest form of worship? When we analyze this concept, however, we begin to understand that intensive study of the Word of God is the most reliable way in which God can speak to us and cause us to understand his will and his ways. Even the most intense and profound subjective experiences must be judged by the written Word of God (II Peter 1:16-19). Study of the Word of God, then, with a view toward doing the Word, is an act of submission to the divine will, the essence of true worship. When we pray, we speak with God; when we study, God speaks to us.

For many centuries study has been at the very heart of the Jewish experience, so much so that much of Judaism has considered study as the highest form of worship. Humbly submitting oneself to the wisdom of God revealed in the Tenach (Hebrew Scriptures) was viewed as worship, which literally meant to "prostrate oneself" before the Eternal. The Hebrew word for worship, *dg's]* (*segad*), means to "bow down or do obeisance to," and it has the connotation of total submission to a superior (as the king). The Greek translation of this word, *proskunevw* (*proskun*), is even more graphic, meaning to "kiss as a dog licking its master's hand."

The decision to study God's Word in order to do His Word is a meaningful act of submission and reverence—in short, it is worship. Study carried out with this motive is the very essence of Jewish learning. This is not study in order to understand; it is study in order to do. Abraham Joshua Heschel encapsulated this Jewish approach to study by saying that the Greeks study in order to understand while the Hebrews study in order to revere. God's Word and ways are ineffable: only by doing them does one understand them.

Study of God's Word in order to mold one's lifestyle to that Word is also worship in the truest sense of the English word worship, which means to "ascribe worth to." When we fully submit our lives to God's Word, when we study what he has said with complete devotion and intensity, we do, indeed, ascribe worth to him: we worship him.

Synagogal Life Reveals the Model

The importance which the Jewish community attaches to study is reflected in the life of the synagogue, the focal point of the Jewish experience since the time of the Babylonian captivity. The word synagogue is from the Greek word *sunagoghv* (*sunagoge*), which was used by the Septuagint scholars to translate the Hebrew *hd;[e* (*Eda*), the word which referred to the meeting of the congregation of Israel. The word synagogue was also used to translate *d[e/m* (*moed*), which meant "an appointed place of meeting" (Psalm 74:8). In ancient times the synagogue was probably the assembly of the people in homes for social interaction, for prayer, and for study. Later, these meetings were housed in buildings designed specifically for such use, which took on the name of the meetings, themselves, and were called synagogues.

The synagogue has had three traditional functions which were manifest in the names given to it: Beit Kneset (House of Assembly or Meeting Place), Beit Tefillah, (House of Prayer), and Beit Midrash (House of Study or Learning). The synagogue was a place where the Jewish people assembled for the interaction of their collective lives. It was probably first a simple meeting (kneset) place of the people or their gathering for the dispensing of justice (*din*) through the rabbinical court. Then it became a place for corporate prayer (*tefillah*), which requires a *minyán* (*quorum*) of ten men, underscoring the Jewish mindset that salvation and interaction with the Divine is a collective, not individualistic exercise. Over time, however, the emphasis came more and more to be on the assembly of the people to study, learn, or investigate (*midrash*) the Torah. A Beit Midrash

was most often attached to the synagogue, and the functions of both tended to overlap. Eventually, the Beit Midrash came to be viewed as more sacred than the rest of the synagogue.

The continuing recognition of the synagogue as a house of study is seen in the fact that many Jews today prefer the Yiddish term *shul* over the term *synagogue* to identify their place of meeting. *Shul* literally means school and probably is related to the Latin *schola*, from which we get the words *scholar* and *scholastic*.

A Holistic World View

The traditional importance that the Jewish people have placed upon education is based in Judaism's holistic view of life. Jews have long viewed all of life as a continuum in which each part of the human experience shares equal importance with every other aspect of life. Jews do not embrace the bifurcated dualism that much of the Gentile world has espoused. There is no such thing as a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material aspects of life, as in neo-Platonism or Eastern Monism. All of life is spiritual and good. Yahweh is the Creator of all things, and he declared all the things that he had created to be "good" and "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This Jewish holistic view of life is encapsulated in Paul's declaration: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself . . ." (Romans 14:14).

Satan never has and never will create anything! He has and always will, however, attempt to pollute everything that God has created for the good of man. God created everything good and set parameters for man's enjoyment of the good that he had created. Satan, however, has successfully enticed men to go beyond God's set limits and to commit sin with virtually everything that God has created, including the grace and the Word of God (Jude 4).

Because of their holistic view of life, Jews do not make a vast distinction between "spiritual" and "secular" knowledge, for all knowledge is from God and is designed for the human good. Elihu of ancient times encapsulated the truth about the origin of knowledge: "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). All knowledge is the product of divine inspiration, often received by men as a "flash of insight." Most of the great inventions and discoveries of history have not been merely the product of accumulated empirical evidence. They have come as a flash of inspiration. Both spiritual understanding and secular knowledge come from the "inspiration" or breath of the Almighty.

If all of life is sacred, then both traditional "spiritual" and "secular" knowledge have relative importance to man. For the Jewish people, there can be no withdrawal from society into monasticism or asceticism that denies the "secular" or material through constant self-abnegation in order to elevate the "spiritual." Gentiles, on the other hand, have thought that nearness to God was measured by withdrawal from the world.

The neo-Platonists who Hellenized the earliest church took their cue from Greek philosophy, which declared that the spiritual good had become entrapped in the material evil. Official Christendom, seeking escape from the material world, concentrated its erudition on the spiritual to the neglect of the natural and cloistered what knowledge it had among a sterile elite, denying it to the "secular" world. This philosophy of education plunged the Western world into the Dark Ages of human ignorance, superstition, disease, and depravity.

The religions that spring from Eastern Monism sought escape into nothingness as the ultimate experience that could be produced by meditation and separation from the material. There was, therefore, no thought of improvement of the human scene. The only hope was escape from the endless cycle of reincarnation. Is it any wonder, then, that the nations which feature this philosophy suffer a profound toll in human suffering and environmental, social, and economic disaster.

For the Jews, on the other hand, the way to be close to God is not withdrawal from the world but involvement in the "nitty-gritty" now and now, taking the knowledge and wisdom that one has acquired and using it to improve the human situation. Man is not on some mindless treadmill of fatalism, a "good" spirit trapped in an "evil" body and in an "evil" world. All of life is to be celebrated to its fullest and is to be dedicated to God and his service.

The Spirit of Improvement

Continual improvement in the earth is the goal of Judaism, as man works in partnership with God for the improvement of his environment—physically, socially, economically, and spiritually. This is, no doubt, the reason that so many Jews have chosen professions which deal with health and welfare. When one understands this holistic approach to life, he cannot have one set of ethics for the "spiritual realm" and another for the "secular realm." He cannot abuse his environment, his society, his government, or his religion.

Jewish emphasis on education, then, is based on the philosophy of continuing self-improvement and the improvement of the world around us. And, that emphasis has produced some of the greatest accomplishments in virtually all fields of learning, as Jews have led the way in the betterment of the human race.

This dedication to improvement of the human lot is in context of God's command to Adam and Eve to "subdue the earth." This is an ongoing work that is generational and universal. Working in concert with God is such a massive job that no one person or no one generation can ever accomplish his plan. Working continually to improve is the essence of the spirit of perfection which is enjoined upon believers. "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," is the command of Jesus. This perfection is not the achievement of some plateau or apex; it is the continual walking with God to make improvement, which requires continual study.

The spirit of improvement is the factor that has contributed to the value which Judaism has traditionally placed on education. It is reflected in the Jewish view that the role of man in the earth is to be the same as it was in the beginning of creation: the keeper of the garden. Jews believe that God has called man into a partnership with himself to work at improvement of the planet to which man has been assigned. If continual improvement is to be made by each succeeding generation, then the knowledge acquired in each generation must be passed on to the next. This was one of the primary reasons for which Yahweh had chosen Abraham, the first Hebrew, in the beginning: "For I know [Abraham], that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19). Jewish perspectives on learning, then, involve both the acquisition and transmission of knowledge.

Being Led Out

The word education comes to us from the Latin *ex ducere*, which means to be led out. It is a simple fact that learning leads us out of ignorance, out of darkness, out of superstition, out of misery, out of suffering. While all of Europe was being decimated by the Black Plague, Jews were spared because they had the knowledge to "be clean, and change your garments" (Genesis 35:2) and to keep their homes free of rodents and the attendant fleas that spread the plague. While Gentile women have been afflicted with high instances of uterine cancer, Jewish women have largely been spared because of the circumcision of Jewish men and abstinence from sexual intercourse during the woman's time of niddah (forbidden), beginning with the onset of menses and continuing for seven days after its conclusion. While the Gentile world has been dominated by superstitions founded in false religions that produced a pantheon of gods or worshipped an impersonal force, the Jews have enjoyed the freedom and fulfillment of worshipping the God who is one and who can be approached as Avenu, Malkenu (our Father, our King). While the world and the church knew that the earth was flat, Christopher Columbus, with the support of the Jewish community, set out toward the east by sailing westward because he knew that "the Lord sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22). And, the list goes on and on. Learning the wisdom of God leads us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

Training Up Children

The importance of educating children is also seen in Solomon's dictum in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This text has often been misinterpreted to mean that if one trains his child in the knowledge of God, the child will never depart from that understanding in his adult life. The true meaning, however, is that parents are responsible for training their children in the discipline to which the child is inclined. How many parents have forced their children to be educated according to their own preferences and have consequently enslaved their children to professions that they despise? It is the responsibility of parents to discern the interests of their children at as early an age as possible and then to see that the child is educated to the greatest degree possible to facilitate his performance

in that field of endeavor in which he is interested.

This truth is seen in the responsibility incumbent upon every Jewish father to teach his children both Torah and a means of livelihood. The home is the center for spiritual growth and the primary source of life training. The acquisition of secular knowledge, then, when subordinated to learning the Word of God, is also an act of worship. It is a response to the commandment of God that man should "work six days a week." In this context, work is also worship, another concept that is foreign to the Christian mind because of the influence of neo-Platonic thought. Indeed, the Hebrew word *abodah* means both "work" and "worship." There is no such thing as a menial job. All work that is done in obedience to the commandments of God is an act of worship and, therefore, of import.

Study For Approval Before God

The importance of studying the Word of God is seen in Paul's instructions to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. . . . from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17). Intense study is necessary to avoid the shame of inaccurately interpreting God's Word. This is in keeping with David's description of the righteous man: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2) The meditation to which David refers is not Eastern Monism's meditation that seeks to focus the energy of the mind on the third eye in the center of the forehead (where the pituitary gland is located) so as to achieve the understanding of one's inherent deity. It is the repeating over and over again (like the rumination of a cow) the words of God until one so ingests the Word that it becomes a part of the very fiber of his being.

This is the vision that keeps God's people from casting off restraint: "He that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18). Without the prophetic vision of the Word of God, people perish. With the understanding of rightly-divided Holy Scripture, one can be taught, corrected, and instructed in righteousness, thereby becoming mature (perfect) and be completely equipped unto all good works. It is then that the light of God's Word can shine through him so that men may see his good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Study is indeed the highest form of worship, for it is our subjection of our human reason to a conscious act of our human will to believe what God has said that manifests the faith that is credited to us for righteousness. When we believe God and act on our faith, we receive the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. When we study God's Word with a view toward obeying it, we become wholly submissive to God and can then walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. In such a state, there is no condemnation to us, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1, 2).

O that men everywhere would seek the Lord and worship before him in the beauty of his holiness, studying his Word and his ways!

"One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that, you will double the danger. But if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce the danger by half. Never run away from anything. Never!"
- Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882, American Poet, Essayist

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