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HOW MUCH DID THE MINISTRY IN THE 1950'S REALLY UNDERSTAND ABOUT 'THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD'?

In order to support the present Jewish calendar much has been made of “the teachings that have been handed down by Mr. Armstrong”. Often some of the early ministers under Mr. Armstrong are appealed to for authority, because they too accepted, supported and defended the present Jewish calendar, and still do so.

The reasoning is: Mr. Armstrong and all the leading ministers have always accepted the Jewish calendar as being the one God wants us to use. It becomes **a matter of church government**. And the fact that all the “leading” ministers accepted the Jewish calendar is supposedly proof enough that the Jewish calendar must therefore also have God’s approval.

A question that arises is: just how much understanding about “the government of God” did the men who became “the leading ministers” in this present age really have back then? Let’s examine the facts.

The Ages of the Men Involved

Kenneth Herrmann, who became the Church’s calendar expert, is now 76 years old and living with his son in East Texas. He is still associated with the Worldwide Church of God. He was a student at Ambassador College in 1950, at about age twenty-six years. He already had a BSc degree before going to Ambassador College, which made him “the scientist” in the Church at that time. This means that when he wrote his calendar article for the March 1953 GOOD NEWS magazine, he was about 29-30 years old.

By 1953 Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was 60 years old. Apart from Dr. C. Paul Meredith (the uncle of Roderick C. Meredith) and Harold Jackson, all of the men who were of any influence (i.e., Herman Hoeh, Roderick Meredith, Raymond McNair, Ted Armstrong, etc.) and who became leading men in the years to follow, were only in their early to mid 20’s, all a few years younger than Kenneth Herrmann. And they had a major influence in shaping the direction in which the Church developed from then onwards.

Let’s take a closer look at how things developed.

Forty years later, on January 20, 1993 Dr. Roderick C. Meredith wrote a letter to promote his booklet “*Church Government and Church Unity*”. By then he had founded “The Global Church of God”. On page two of that letter Dr. Meredith wrote:

“So please read this overview of Church Government with an open mind and heart. Yes, *many of us* have made terrible mistakes in this area, *including me*. We have in the past often been too strict, domineering and sometimes unfeeling in dealing with others”. (his emphasis)

Indeed! In the past, when they were all twenty-something year-old evangelists, they made some terrible mistakes! It was brave of Dr. Meredith to be willing to acknowledge this in a public letter addressed to “Dear Brethren and Friends”.

However, what these “terrible mistakes” should tell us is that **they were very clearly not being guided**

by God Almighty! In his own writings during those years when they made those “terrible mistakes” Dr. Meredith repeatedly appealed for authority to “the fruits” which the ministers were supposedly producing. Yet “the fruits” were “terrible mistakes”!

Let’s now look at the booklet Dr. Meredith was introducing with this letter. It is titled “*Church Government and Church Unity*” and has the copyright date of 1993. [I believe that he has since revised this booklet.]

On page 3 under the subtitle: “Our Early Discussions” Dr. Meredith wrote:

“Even after several years of guiding the college, **Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about Church Government, and said so openly a number of times.** Consequently, in the early mid-1950’s, Herman L. Hoeh and I each were inspired to write articles along this line. As hundreds of our older brethren remember, I wrote the article, “*Judging and Discipline in God’s Church*” and, later, “*Whose Opinion Counts?*” and one or two other similar articles”. (my emphasis)

My Comments:

Can you see what Dr. Meredith is saying here? **Mr. Armstrong wasn’t really the one to formulate the ideas about “church government” at all!** It was precisely because Mr. Armstrong “did not understand much about church government” that this doctrine was developed by these young evangelists in their 20’s, a development for which Dr. Meredith claims “inspiration”. He then mentions two specific articles he wrote at that time.

We will examine those two articles. And we’ll see some examples of the “terrible mistakes” in those very articles, yet those articles were supposedly “inspired” by God. That doesn’t really make sense, does it? Would God inspire “terrible mistakes”?

Let’s look further into this booklet to see what Dr. Meredith was referring to.

On page 7 under the subtitle “The misuse of Church Government” he wrote:

“**Many of our ministers** began to use the example of ‘Korah’s rebellion’ and similar examples to imply that-- if anyone ever left this Church even in hurt or confusion -- they were rebelling against the ‘Government of God’ just as surely as Korah and his followers. Everything seemed to become ‘the Government of God.’” (my emphasis)

My Comments:

This was a major problem, turning everything into a “government of God” issue! This very thing caused unbelievable problems and trials and heartaches for a large number of people! The suffering many wives had to endure for decades because their simplistic husbands tried to put the “government of God” teaching of these immature evangelists into practice in their marriages is hard to total up. This very teaching was responsible for destroying many marriages! As Dr. Meredith mentioned in his letter, it resulted in conduct that all too often was “strict, domineering and unfeeling”.

Let’s look at the next paragraph in the booklet, which gives a few mild examples in Dr. Meredith’s own words:

It is constantly claimed that God blessed the work of the Church in those years, and this supposed “blessing” from God is presented as justification that therefore God was pleased with the way things were done and with the teachings the Church accepted.

Specifically:

One justification that is presented for retaining the present Jewish calendar for use by the Church is: look at how God blessed the church all those years we used the Jewish calendar! If that calendar is “wrong” or “sinful”, **why would God possibly have blessed the church so abundantly** while we were using this “sinful” Jewish calendar? And look at the unity we had while we all used this Jewish calendar?!

Because this justification is so blatantly wrong, therefore the reason for presenting the information mentioned in this article is to show that:

the claim of “blessings” is a total myth! It is nothing more than the emperor’s new “invisible clothes”! The claim is totally without substance! In the last thirty years or so the church hasn’t really been “blessed” at all by God! It has in fact been “cursed”, if only we have the eyes to see it!

Talk about “blessings” is nothing more than seeing things that aren’t really there, and not seeing the things that are there!

To establish whether or not the Church was “blessed” by God, exactly what do we look for? Do we look at the Church’s income? Is a lot of money really a proof that God “blessed” the Church? Or do we look at the number of people who received the Church’s literature and who came to attend services? Are A lot of people really a proof that God “blessed” the Work?

Solomon wrote the following in Proverbs 10:22:

“The blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it!”

An increase in money and an increase in membership can certainly be an indication of God’s blessings. But by themselves these things don’t necessarily indicate a blessing at all! They are only an unquestionable blessing from God when the proviso Solomon spelled out is also fulfilled. In plain language: increases in income and in membership are only a blessing from God when:

There is no sorrow attached to these things!

In other words, I don’t believe at all that an increase in the Church’s income is an indication of a blessing from God when that income creates a great deal of sorrow! Likewise, I don’t believe at all that an increase in “Church membership” is an indication of a blessing from God when it becomes absolutely clear that well over 50% of that so-called “church membership” has never come to real repentance and has never at any stage been converted!

The only way to really establish whether or not God in fact “blessed” the Church (be it in the 50’s or the 60’s or be it from 69 onwards to the present) is as follows:

how were the lives of the people who came into contact with the church affected? Did contact with the church produce happiness and joy for these people? Or did contact with the church produce sorrow and pain and suffering and bitterness and resentment for these people?

Whether or not God “blessed” the Church must be evaluated by the fruits that the contact with the Church produced in the people’s lives! Blessings are not indicated by quantity or by amounts; blessings are indicated by quality! The key to blessings from God is always that **God “adds no sorrow with it”!**

There is a reason why today there are so many people who have become bitter and resentful. And the “government of God” teaching is a major component of the reason for this bitterness and this resentment.

I mention these things to set the record straight regarding what are blessings and what are not blessings. I very strongly question that the billionaires and multi-millionaires in American business and commerce have in most cases been “blessed by God”! A closer look at their personal lives will in many cases show very quickly that those individuals weren’t really blessed at all! You can probably think of half a dozen names right off the top of your head of some of these “super rich” people, whose lives were empty and even pathetic. Yet they had a lot of fame and a lot of money.

So let’s get back to the people in God’s Church.

I have on many occasions had to deal with Church people whose lives went from one disaster to another, from one problem to the next, and yet they kept trying to tell me how blessed they were! They might have been involved in a major accident that caused serious injuries and brought financial burdens upon them, but they claimed they were “blessed” because they didn’t get killed in the process. They might have suffered a large loss, but they said they were “blessed” because their loss wasn’t greater.

Their foolish conduct might have gotten them into serious trials, and their subsequent behavior showed that they hadn’t really learned the lesson, yet they stated they were “blessed” because the trials could have been greater. Yes, certainly, we are to have a positive attitude when trials come upon us. But we should also recognize that many times we are “buffeted for our own faults” (see 1 Peter 2:20). And we should also understand the principle of Proverbs 10:22 as explained above. This proverb is something that we should really think about deeply!

“The blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it!”

By this definition the Church has certainly not been “blessed” in the past thirty years!

Difficulties and hardships and trials and sicknesses and diseases and pain and suffering are not really what God means when He speaks about “blessing us”! Deuteronomy chapter 28 spells out what God means when He speaks about “blessings” and when He speaks about “curses”.

As stated above, I have on numerous occasions had to deal with people who were really “cursed”, but who themselves couldn’t see this; in their own minds they kept trying to convince themselves that they were really “blessed”. And I couldn’t really help them to open their eyes to the facts of what was happening to them; they invariably continued in their own delusions.

When we talk so glibly about “God blessing the Church during Mr. Armstrong’s time”, **we are in danger of ignoring the facts** of what really happened; we are in danger of closing our eyes to facts we may not want to see, even as Jesus Christ mentioned in Matthew 13:15:

”For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes they have closed**; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15).

So when we want to talk about “blessings during Mr. Armstrong’s time”, here are some facts we should also consider at the same time:

1) The 35 years of 30% per annum growth stopped in 1968! They went from 1934 to 1968 inclusive. This is established by Mr. Armstrong’s own writings. So even from a “money point of view” things went downhill after 1968!

2) Our incorrect understanding for many years concerning the matter of “divorce and remarriage” caused tremendous suffering to thousands of people. Many of them were completely discouraged from any further study into the Bible and into God’s way of life; they gave up trying to become a part of God’s Church because of the Church’s wrong understanding in this area.

3) Mr. Armstrong himself faced many severe trials right within his own family. Many people deceived him at various times for their own personal ends, and he failed to discern the selfish motives of these people. Mr. Armstrong died without being reconciled to his own family. For some time he was a virtual prisoner in his own home in Tucson, Arizona. And even while he was dying, he was being deceived by those who wanted to succeed him.

Proverbs 16:7 didn’t really apply to Mr. Armstrong’s life, did it?

“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”
(Proverbs 16:7).

Mr. Armstrong’s life was not one of “peace”; it really was one of struggle and hardships, and it wasn’t all just a matter of “Satan persecuting a servant of God”. I am not trying to pick on Mr. Armstrong, but we do need to objectively face the facts if we are going to talk about “Mr. Armstrong having been blessed”. There were many things in Mr. Armstrong’s life that were anything but “blessings”! It is also well known that Mr. Armstrong was susceptible to flattery, and that he was repeatedly taken advantage of by people who used flattery towards him.

4) The “government of God” teaching brought into the Church in the early 1950’s by very young ministers, while “Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about Church Government”, something he admitted openly a number of times, caused much grief and pain and suffering to multiple thousands of people!

The number of sincere people who were insulted and humiliated by “ministers” who were still very young and inexperienced is absolutely staggering! And it was all done in the name of “the government of God”!

This human misery and suffering must also feature in the equation when we want to talk about “the blessings” that were showered upon the Church. In many instances grown men were subjected to a great deal of emotional stress by the way they were treated in the Church’s “Spokesmen’s Clubs” by their ministers.

5) Thousands of marriages, including the marriages of many ministers, suffered incredible stress because the Church taught husbands to be “strict, domineering and unfeeling”! Multiple thousands of wives had their lives turned into misery because of what the ministers taught their husbands about “the government of God” in the family. They endured years and even decades of very harsh and demanding treatment by husbands who didn’t know any better than to do what some young, immature minister told them to do.

6) The fruit of this teaching in many thousands of cases was bitterness at the husband for the way he treated his wife, and bitterness at the Church for encouraging this pathetic behavior in the husband. Thousands of marriages have been permanently scarred by what the Church taught and expected.

7) So when we total it all together: was the misery and pain and suffering that probably more than 10,000 people have endured from the church during the past fifty years one of the “fruits” that God was really “blessing” the Church?

By the evidence we have seen from the two GOOD NEWS articles, isn't it obvious that the minister was king in the congregation, and members had better not dare to challenge his opinions and ideas?! Those very articles (“*Judging and Discipline in God's Church*” and “*Whose Opinion Counts?*”) prove that **Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 are addressed to the ministry of the worldwide church of God**, especially in the 50's and 60's and 70's!

Those two chapters in the Bible present a staggering indictment of “the pastors” of the congregations of God's people, congregations God refers to as “the sheep of My pasture”. Can we not see how many thousands of people were “scattered” (see Jeremiah 23:1) by the harsh, “strict, domineering and unfeeling” treatment they received from these ministers?

These two chapters in the Word of God speak about the fruits our actions as ministers have produced! And there isn't even the slightest hint of “blessings from God” in these chapters. Yet they are addressed to the “Mr. Armstrong-trained” ministry of the Church!

I know that it isn't very popular, but these two chapters are **addressed to us, who are ministers today!** The evidence that the ministry has “scattered God's flock” and driven them away over the past fifty years (see Jeremiah 23:2) is there for all to see, except those who willingly close their own eyes!

Thus:

When we misunderstood the truth about “divorce and remarriage”, we bound heavy burdens on people, and in so doing we drove many people away.

When we treated God's people in “strict, domineering and unfeeling” ways, we also drove many people away.

When we taught people to apply “the government of God” in their marriages, we drove many couples apart. And many were driven away from any desire to want to have any part in such a “government of God” structure or future.

When even an evangelist could give young students the assignment to comment on “*Should a Husband Ever Spank His Wife?*”, the Church was setting the stage for creating stress within future marriages, and driving more people away.

When we taught people to apply “the government of God” in their child-rearing, we were responsible for alienating many children from their parents, and in all too many cases we drove those children away from the Church.

When we offended and insulted the men in the Church at the “Spokesmen's Clubs”, more people were driven away. The preparation for an upcoming speech assignment was often just as stressful for the wife as it was for her husband.

In this regard one simple example from my own experiences with one of these “government of God”

ministers while I was at College will suffice. A visiting minister was asked to evaluate our "Ambassador Speech Club" during my senior year. Before walking into the Club that night he had never set eyes on me before. I didn't know him and he didn't know me. Now before going to Ambassador I had been a commissioned officer in the West German Army, and in the speech I gave that night I spoke about something in connection with my army experiences. Afterwards, in his overall evaluation this "government of God" type didn't really comment about my speech. Instead what he said was: "An officer in the German Army? You're effeminate, that's what you are!" End of speech evaluation! Now the man had to be an arrogant, opinionated, total idiot to come up with that evaluation! I later found out that he himself had a certain military background, and that there was a certain amount of resentment towards "the German Army". (He left the Church soon after this incident.)

While the man's comments didn't particularly phase me, they did provide me with a useful example, which I have used at various times. But the point I want to make here is that this type of insulting behavior was dished out multiple thousands of times at the Church's Speech Clubs around the world by ministers who had been taught by the founders of the "government of God" doctrine. My experience here was far from being an isolated incident! Thousands of men received that kind of arrogant treatment from men who were in many cases young enough to be their sons. And in the many hundreds of speech clubs that I myself have "evaluated" since then, I too have at times made comments that lacked wisdom, discretion and discernment, and which hurt some of the men. I am not without fault in this regard. It is a matter of facing the facts, so that we can go forward, rather than justifying the past.

And of those who were willing to "tough it out" and stay in the Church no matter how they were treated by the ministers, many became hardened and bitter, and they lost the love and zeal and enthusiasm they had started out with. A great deal of the bitterness towards the Church that is today "out there" is a direct consequence of this "government of God" approach in those early years.

Yes, the evidence that Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 apply to the ministry of the Church in this age is there for all to see! And as already stated, I myself am not without some guilt in this regard! We need to face the facts.

8) The Church during Mr. Armstrong's time always had an incredibly high "turn over" of members! That is assuredly not a sign of "blessings from God". The Church also always attracted some people who were motivated by things other than a desire to unconditionally submit their lives to Almighty God; some people had selfish motives of one kind or another. Obviously, such people coming to the Church were not really proof of "a blessing from God" either.

9) What "fruits" are there really to show for the more than one billion dollars that people have contributed to the Church in the past fifty years? Where are the three "beautiful campuses" that the Church bought and developed? What fruits are there for the more than one billion pieces of literature that the Church has distributed in this age? How many converted people are there really? What have all the magazines and booklets and broadcasts and telecasts really achieved? What did Mr. Armstrong's fifteen years of flying around the world to meet with various leaders really achieve? Are there really "any fruits" from those fifteen years of traveling the world? Where?

10) Even at its height the Church was at least 50% unconverted! That's by Mr. Armstrong's own assessment! He repeatedly spoke about his hope that "at least 51%" of us are converted, though he would in personal conversations admit his conviction that the percentage of truly converted people was in fact much lower. So how much "blessing from God" does that indicate?

11) Mr. Armstrong repeatedly indicated that the 30% per year growth came to an end in about 1968. So how blessed has the Church been in the 32 years that have passed since then? How blessed was the Church in the remaining 17 years of Mr. Armstrong's life after 1968? How does the Church today even

compare to where we were in 1968? If anything, the Church today is behind where we were in 1968!

Specifically, exactly what has the Church achieved since 1968? Whatever was built up after that date has today already been destroyed; whatever literature was produced after that date has today already been taken out of circulation; whichever "world leaders" Mr. Armstrong met after that date are today, with very few exceptions, either dead or out of office and unlikely to even remember the name "Herbert W. Armstrong"; whatever money was contributed to the Church has today already disappeared. So exactly what does the Church have to show for the last 30 years? What "blessings" can we list? And while there are indeed a number of people who have come to a real repentance during these past 30 years, at the same time a far greater number of people have turned their backs on the Church.

Speaking about "God blessed the work under Mr. Armstrong" can be a very vague and nebulous thing, which relies very heavily on biases and assumptions.

The facts are: a large number of people came into contact with the Church during Mr. Armstrong's time. As I indicated above, that is not an indication of "a blessing from God" one way or the other. "A large number of people" have also come into contact with computer software produced by Microsoft, and that "large number" proves nothing at all, as far as blessings from God are concerned. The real key is:

how were the lives of that large number of people affected by this contact with the church?

When we consider the matter from this approach, then we find that:

- the majority of those who received the Church's literature or heard the Church's broadcasts never made any direct contact with the Church;
- of the minority who got so far as to actually meet a minister of the Church, the greater part by far never got as far as attending Church services;
- of the minority who actually became baptized members, the majority didn't stay in the Church for very long;
- of the minority who "toughed it out" past the first five or ten years, many eventually became bitter and many had their marriages affected in adverse ways by the Church's "government of God" teaching;
- of those who didn't become bitter, many nevertheless endured severe trials imposed on them by "strict, domineering and unfeeling" ministers;
- of those who were still left at the time of Mr. Armstrong's death, the majority has since either readily accepted false teachings, or gone back into the world's churches, or just become disillusioned and disappeared from the scene completely.

Of all the people who responded to Mr. Armstrong: how many (or maybe I should ask "how few") are still holding fast to God's way of life?

Jesus Christ Himself said at the end of His life on earth:

"Does it make sense? Do we not realize that there is a cause for every effect? Why are people blind to the cause of all this degeneration? ... We repeat, there's a cause for every effect".

2) *WHY WERE YOU BORN?* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1957, 1972 edition

"I repeat: There has to be a cause for every effect. If there is to be peace, happiness, abundant well-being, something must cause it! God could not be God without providing a cause for every desired good".

3) *What Science Can't Discover About the HUMAN MIND* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1978 edition

"No wonder this world is filled with evils! There has to be a cause for every effect!"

4) *NEVER BEFORE UNDERSTOOD, Why Humanity Cannot Solve Its Evils* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1981 edition Subtitle: "A Cause for Every Effect"

"There has to be a cause for every effect. What was the original cause for all the world's seemingly insolvable troubles? This cause has been utterly overlooked by modern science".

5) *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1985 Hardbound Edition

"Why is mankind here on the earth? Did we simply happen? Or was there design and purpose? We say there is a cause for every effect. The effect, here, is man. Man is here".

6) *THE MISSING DIMENSION IN SEX* by Herbert W. Armstrong, 1964, 1971, 1981 edition

"For every effect, there has to be a cause! There has to be a cause for all the world's evils! There has to be a cause for the worsening moral problem!"

7) *DOES GOD EXIST?* by Herbert W. Armstrong, 1957, 1960, 1971, 1972 edition

"And some power or some one had of necessity to do the creating. There is a cause for every effect. And in accepting that inevitable fact, proved by the findings of science, of the existence of that great first cause, you have accepted the fact of the existence and preexistence of the Creator -- God!"

8) *MILITARY SERVICE AND WAR* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1967, 1985 edition Subtitle: "Treating Effect -- Ignoring CAUSE!"

"It's just as simple as this: There is a cause for every effect -- yet the whole society and way of life in the world today is based on treating the effect, IGNORING the cause! Our people do it in treating sickness and disease. They do it in dealing with crime. They do it in working for peace!"

9) *THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL* by Herbert W. Armstrong , 1978 edition

"No wonder this world is filled with evils! There has to be a cause for every effect!"

10) *WORLDWIDE NEWS, SPECIAL EDITION* , March 6, 1981, Pages 6-7, "A VOICE CRIES OUT:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ORGANIZED LABOR?"

"Right now we're all in the same boat, facing the No. 1 problem of human survival! There has to be a cause for every effect. What brought civilization to the chaotic state where for the first time it's possible for man to erase mankind from the earth?"

The point of all the above quotations is this: Mr. Armstrong applied this principle to everything and to every subject! Nothing is exempt from this principle.

It really is a re-statement of what the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Indeed, God is not mocked! So now consider the following very carefully.

One of the main causes for the introduction of doctrinal heresies into the Church during Mr. Tkach's time is this government of God teaching introduced into the Church in the 1950's by a group of very young ministers at a time when "Mr. Armstrong still did not understand much about church government"!

Can we grasp the significance and the consequences of this teaching?

Here is what has happened:

- 1) A group of young evangelists in their early 20's introduced a doctrine into the Church that caused major problems and suffering for vast numbers of people! Remember that by then Mr. Armstrong had been in the Church for over 25 years, whereas these young evangelists had been around for a mere four or five or six years and were barely adults; yet they introduced a teaching about which Mr. Armstrong after 25 years in the Church still didn't understand very much.
- 2) This teaching resulted in ministers running people's lives in autocratic, strict, domineering and unfeeling ways, causing much suffering and grief, and driving many of the people, who actually got so far as to contact the Church, away. These people were scattered and for the greatest part faded into obscurity. That's Jeremiah 23:1-3 and Ezekiel 34:2-10.
- 3) These young ministers demanded respect and unquestioning submission to their decisions, which they claimed were "bound in heaven", from people who were old enough to be their parents and their grandparents. This approach is typical for immature young people, who have not yet learned from years of experience the practical ways of working with people. The zeal and rashness of youth had not yet been tempered by the wisdom of experience.
- 4) but God was not in this "government of God" doctrine! And God was not mocked!
- 5) So God showed His displeasure with this immature teaching by letting "the bad fruits" roll in: broken marriages, unhappy homes, alienated children, a high turnover in Church membership, endless problems and struggles, a fearful and insecure membership which was constantly looking for "ministerial approval" for everything, a fear of being "visited" by the minister, etc. For every bad effect there has to be a cause, as Mr. Armstrong said.

6) These “bad fruits” should have rung some warning bells; they should have shown us that something in our teachings was not right. But we carried on, oblivious to these warning signals; we continued with this “government of God” teaching like a bull in a fine china shop, totally oblivious to the havoc we were creating.

7) Since we didn’t respond to these warning signals, God allowed constantly more problems to come upon the Church, going so far as a major and resources-draining attack on the Church by the State of California in January of 1979.

8) Since these “young evangelists” had with their “government of God” doctrine demanded total and unconditional obedience from people who were mostly older than they were, it was inevitable that GOD would test them in the very thing which they had laid upon the shoulders of the Church membership. When they were about 25 years old, they expected people in their 50's and in their 60's and even older to respect and to accept their judgments, and to look upon these twenty-five year-old ministers as “fathers”.

So God tested them as to whether they would be willing to do the same thing: when they were now in their 60's and 70's, would they submit unquestioningly to “youngsters” in their 20's and their 30's? So God allowed the Church to be “taken over” by a bunch of youngsters who, incidently, were all ten or more years older than the evangelists had been when they introduced this teaching into the Church in 1953. It became clear very quickly that these evangelists and other old-time leaders were not about to carry the same burden that they themselves had laid on the membership about 40 years earlier.

9) The intent was not so much that they should carry the same burden which they had laid upon people 40 years earlier; the intent was really to prove beyond any doubt that what they had introduced in the 1950's was wrong, that it should never have been introduced into the Church in the first place! By placing these ministers at the receiving end of what they themselves had dished out for many years, God was driving home the point that their teachings had not only been “uninspired”; they had been downright wrong.

10) The method by which the heresies were introduced into the Church after Mr. Armstrong’s death depended for its success on this “government of God” doctrine. Without this doctrine it would have been almost impossible for these heresies to find such widespread acceptance amongst people who had been in the Church for decades! It is the “government of God” doctrine that had conditioned the minds of far too many people to accept without question things presented by the ministry.

11) This “fruit” of the “government of God” teaching proves all by itself that this teaching was without inspiration or approval from God. It was a carnal and vain teaching, which elevated the minister high above his congregation. It violated Jesus Christ’s clear instructions.

12) The truth about “the government of God” is that no human being has ever been a part of that government of God!

There is no room for any mortal human being in “the government of God”. The government of God is government BY God and not by human beings! God has thus far not yet established any “government of God”. It is only at the first resurrection, when those in that resurrection will be made “kings and priests” that “the government of God” will actually be established!

Until then God continues to rule like a benevolent dictator, utilizing many servants and even advisors, but without “a government” in place. The angels are servants (Hebrews 1:14) of God, but they are not in a “government”. The 24 “elders” around the throne of God (Revelation 4:4) are advisors to God, but they are not “the government”. Human “ministers” today are exactly what the word really means: servants to

God! But servants don't form the government, they don't rule with God.

It was extremely presumptuous for young ministers in their early 20's to claim that they were a part of the government of God!

Whichever way you want to slice it, God was not going to let that go unchallenged! It is no wonder that this teaching has had without doubt the worst consequences of any error that the Church has made in the past 60 years! It was inevitable that "the punishment" (or "the curse") would come for this presumptuous teaching.

Solomon wrote:

"As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come"
(Proverbs 26:2).

But "the curse" did come upon the Church, and we need to recognize the cause. Dr. Meredith went so far as to acknowledge that terrible "mistakes" were made regarding the teaching about "the government of God". If the young ministers had not persuaded Mr. Armstrong to sanction this "government of God" teaching back in the 1950's, then a vast number of problems would have been averted!

When we want to talk about "how blessed the Church was under Mr. Armstrong", then we should look not only at the large number of people who came into the Church; we must also look at the large number of people that also walked out of the church again because the church made a negative impact on their lives and because they had never at any stage come to a real repentance! And we must look at the vast number of people who were offended and hurt by the treatment they received from the ministry.

So, in our efforts to justify clearly identifiable problems with the present Jewish calendar, let's just quietly drop this "look at how blessed we were under Mr. Armstrong" argument.

Frank W. Nelte