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GODLY LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a major issue in our world today. When we have good leaders then things usually go well for us. And when we have bad leaders then we usually end up with problems. That was true for Israel in biblical times, and that is still true for us today.

So it is extremely desirable that we have good leaders. But these days good leaders are very hard to find. The majority of those who eagerly vie for leadership positions end up being **bad leaders**, mostly seeking to advance their own interests. And so the problems in our societies continue to escalate. It seems that very few leaders around the world enjoy anything like genuine "overwhelming approval and support" from the people they are leading. Real happiness and satisfaction with the people in leadership positions is rare and short-lived.

When we do refer to certain people as "good leaders", as examples to look up to and to emulate, then that is almost invariably in hindsight! While they were in positions of leadership they were frequently criticized and maligned, but once they are dead or no longer in office, THEN in some cases we acknowledge that they were good leaders. That was also already the case in biblical times, that the good spiritual leaders were criticized and maligned and at times even martyred, only to be viewed as heroes and honored with large sepulchers after their deaths. That's the whole point of Matthew 23:29-30.

And just like the world around us, the Church of God could also use more good leaders. We in God's Church are scattered and divided. Unity is one consequence of good leadership, while **divisions are evidence of an absence of good leaders**.

Yes, in this regard conditions in the world and also in the Church are just as God predicted in the prophecies. Let's take a look at the Scriptures.

ISAIAH CHAPTER 3

Notice how God starts this chapter.

> For, behold, **the Lord**, the LORD of hosts, **doth take away** from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, (Isaiah 3:1)

Here God tells us that He would take away all those who are the main supports in society. God would take away all the mature real leaders. The next two verses continue with this same thought.

> The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and **the prophet**, and **the prudent**, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. (Isaiah 3:2-3)

God would remove all the REAL leaders **on every level in society**, from the top leadership on the national level right down to the lowest levels in small communities and in small enterprises ("the cunning artificer" is the skilled craftsman who starts small businesses). And that also includes the removal of religious leaders and moral leaders, represented by God also taking away "the prophet" and "the

prudent”.

Now the removal of all the mature real leaders in every area of life is not an end in itself. **There is a purpose** why God removes all the real leaders. And that purpose is that the removal of the real leaders effectively also **removes all restraint against evil**, so that the stage is then set for the things that are to happen next. The removal of the real leaders allows Satan to dramatically expand his influence in society at large, because those mature leaders had presented firm opposition to the more perverse, more harmful and more depraved aspects of Satan’s influence.

Notice the next verse.

> And I will give **children** to be their princes, and **babes** shall rule over them. (Isaiah 3:4)

The word “children” in this context refers to YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR 20's AND 30's, who today run much of society. They are the leaders in many areas of life, and they have replaced the mature leaders God has taken away. And as a group these young adults are today by far the most influential group within all of society.

This KJV also contains a mistranslation. The Hebrew word translated as “babes” (i.e. “ta’aluwl”) is only used twice in the whole Old Testament, here and in Isaiah 66:4, where it is translated as “**delusions**”. The word does NOT mean “babes” at all! Rather, it is derived from the Hebrew verb “alal” (used in verse 12) which means “to act severely, wantonly, to make a fool of”, etc. So the Hebrew noun “ta’aluwl” really means: wantonness, caprice, vexation, or even delusions as Isaiah 66:4 implies. But it certainly does not mean “babes”! At best we could say that **it refers to CONDUCT** which can also be associated with “babes”.

Green’s Literal Translation recognizes that “babes” is not a good translation. Notice:

> and I will give young boys to be their rulers, **and caprices shall rule over them**. (Isaiah 3:4 LIT)

The focus of the Hebrew word mistranslated as “babes” is not on physical immaturity, but on **the attributes** of **incompetence** and **irrationality**; in other words, the focus is on mental and emotional immaturity! And that is what the word “caprices” conveys, namely: **impulsive** and unpredictable actions and conduct, whimsical or delusional behavior.

In Isaiah 3:4 God is telling us that He will take away the real leaders in society, and then allow society to be largely dominated by both young people in their 20's and 30's, and by capricious leaders who are irrational, incompetent and even delusional! This is a clear reference to two distinct categories of individuals: firstly young people in general will be very influential in society, and secondly there will be capricious rulers who may be from any age group. Satan can exert a far more powerful influence over all people in the absence of mature leaders who would oppose the worst aspects of his influence. **Irrational, capricious, delusional and incompetent leaders are much more pliable in Satan’s hands**. This condition of bad leadership in society will facilitate the buildup to the cataclysmic events that will surely precede Christ’s second coming.

So notice the consequences of this condition of having incompetent leaders.

> And the people shall be **oppressed**, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself **proudly** against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

(Isaiah 3:5)

The most pronounced consequences of this irrational leadership and of the prominence of young adults in society will be oppression and arrogance; **oppression** coming from the capricious rulers, and **arrogance** displayed by children and by the young generation towards the older generation. And that's our world today.

People will recognize that our leaders are bad (and how emphatically do we recognize this today!), and there will be **a desperate but vain search** for better leaders (verses 6-8). But people will not recognize that the dearth of good leadership is actually a penalty imposed by God (verse 1). And so when we today look for good leaders, on every level and in every area of life we will have to be content if we can find "the best one of a bad lot". The really GOOD leaders have all disappeared.

Then in verse 9 God speaks about the brazen homosexuality that will be extant in such a society. People proudly present their homosexuality, and society meekly shows acceptance and tolerance for this perverse conduct. God shows that in such a context the people who are faithful to God will be protected (verse 10) and the wicked will be punished severely (verse 11).

Now notice verse 12.

> As for my people, **children are their oppressors**, and **women rule** over them. O my people, **they which lead thee cause thee to err**, and destroy the way of thy paths. (Isaiah 3:12)

The word "children" in this verse is another mistranslation, though without unduly major consequences, a mistranslation which none of the translations I have checked has corrected. The English noun "children" here is supposedly the translation of the Hebrew verb "alal", the root word for the Hebrew noun "ta'aluwl" mistranslated as "babes" in verse 4.

This Hebrew verb "**alal**" is used 20 times in the Old Testament. It means "to act severely, wantonly, to make a fool of", etc. It is translated in the KJV three times as "**abuse**", twice as "**mock**", once as "**defiled**", etc. This verse here is the only place where "alal" is mistranslated as "children". There are several words in biblical Hebrew that mean "children" but "alal" is assuredly not one of them.

For example, in Isaiah 3:4 the word "children" is a correct translation of the Hebrew word "na'ar", whereas in Isaiah 3:12 the word "children" is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word "alal". The Hebrew "na'ar" means "children", though it also includes "young adults" in its meaning, as I indicated above.

The correct focus of Isaiah 3:12 is NOT on "children" being the oppressors; the correct focus of this verse is that "**those who act wantonly, severely, recklessly, abusively and perversely**" are the real oppressors of society. And while the focus of this Hebrew word "alal" is not on "children" but on a specific category of conduct, this category of conduct and behavior certainly includes "CHILDREN". And it is because of the whole context, including the statement in verse 4, that "children" are certainly included in the "oppressors of God's people" in verse 12. That is why I have said above that this mistranslation is "without unduly major consequences", though it does somewhat obscure the strong focus of this word on the wrong type of conduct. I might add that it is because of the context in which "alal" is here used that all the translations have opted for translating this word as "children".

In plain language: the translation "as for my people, children are their oppressors" does express one intended application of the word "alal", even though it is strictly not a correct translation. The main problem with translating "alal" as "children" is that this translation incorrectly restricts the application of "alal" to children. The correct focus of "alal" is on **a category of unacceptable behavior** (reckless,

perverse, wanton, abusive, etc.) **rather than** on **an age bracket**. And that "category" includes perverse leaders who are already past the age bracket for "children" (i.e. they are already past the stage of young adulthood).

So in practical terms, if you want to accept the translation of "as for my people, children are their oppressors" that's not a problem; but you need to keep in mind that this statement also **includes all people in influential positions of any age who act "wantonly, perversely, abusively and recklessly"**; the Hebrew text includes but does not limit this statement to "children".

In addition to this, verse 12 also shows that in this context **women** assume a greater role in leadership. God's admonition then is that **they which lead us** (i.e. women, young adults and capricious leaders of any age) "cause us to err" and they "destroy the way of our paths". God is showing that the leadership we have is a major problem, one that leads to errors and to destruction.

The next three verses (verses 13-15) show that God will judge all these selfish leaders.

So to summarize the first 12 verses of Isaiah 3: this passage exposes the leadership in the nations of Israel that will lead people to total destruction! It shows that the leadership on all levels of society, including religion, is going to be bad and selfish. This leadership destroys Israel's wealth and prosperity, and left unrestrained it would also destroy Israel's heritage. All the good leaders have disappeared. To paraphrase an old song:

> **"Where have all the leaders gone, long time passing? Where have all the leaders gone, long time ago? ... When will they ever learn?"**

That's the way things are in the world at this point in time. And with these conditions as a backdrop, the question is: **WHAT ARE THE TRAITS OF GODLY LEADERSHIP**?

Let's start by looking at how different people view leadership.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

The verb "to lead" means both, **to guide on the way**, and also **to direct an action or activity**. "To guide on the way" amounts to leading by doing something, by setting an example. "To direct an action or activity", on the other hand, amounts to leading by giving orders, telling others what to do without the leader himself necessarily getting involved in the activity.

When people elect leaders, then the people generally assume that they have elected these leaders to guide them (their nation, state, city, community or organization) to the desired goals, by the leaders themselves becoming involved in the necessary activities, setting the example for the people in general. The people in this scenario generally assume that their elected leaders will strive to serve them, that they are, in the old-fashioned term, "**public SERVANTS**", and that what is good for the public is the highest priority in the decisions these elected leaders will make. Here in the United States we have specifically embodied this approach to leadership in the preamble to our Constitution with the opening words "WE THE PEOPLE"! In other words, we the people determine what needs to be done, and it is the responsibility of the leaders we have elected to carry out our wishes. That is how we view the people we elect!

The leaders who have been elected, on the other hand, far too often have a completely different perspective. Far too often they believe that their election has given them licence to give all the orders, to decide for the people what the people need to do and how they need to do it. People like this don't see

themselves as public servants at all! Rather, they typically see themselves as "**MASTERS of the public**", where the public supposedly has the responsibility to obey them, and not to question them. They see their role as that of regulating the conduct of the people who elected them. Their own wishes frequently override the wishes of the people who elected them to their offices. This approach to leadership is frequently motivated by a selfish agenda, as evidenced by bribery and corruption. In other words, far too often the attitudes of some leaders who have been elected is best described by the Hebrew word "alal" which we saw in Isaiah 3:12, describing people who act recklessly, abusively and perversely. Such leaders typically feel that as long as they "bring home the pork" every few years they are likely to be re-elected; i.e. they try to bribe their electorate to re-elect them, a tactic that is **frequently** very **effective**, but **always** very **perverse**. But that's how many elected leaders today view their positions.

Then there is a third perspective. That third perspective is the approach of **leaders who have been appointed by other leaders** who are over them in authority. These are all the lower leaders who have been appointed by a higher leader (e.g. cabinet ministers who are appointed by a president or prime minister, officials who are appointed by a governor or by a city mayor, etc.). Here in America we sometimes refer to one high category of such appointed leaders as "czars", a disapproving recognition of the powers that are extended to such appointed leaders. The perspective of such appointed leaders (e.g. our "czars") is typically one of representing the person who appointed them. Frequently **right and wrong are not a criterion** in the minds of such appointed leaders. For them the issue is all too often primarily one of pleasing the person who appointed them. Such leaders can often be pressured into conduct and actions that are morally wrong, while justifying their actions with the statement "**I'm just doing my job**". If such appointed leaders have been appointed by "bad leaders", then there is a considerable likelihood that many of these appointed leaders will also be bad, something that history has demonstrated time and again (e.g. Nazi Germany, etc.).

This brings us back to those leaders who have the power to appoint other leaders below themselves. **What criteria do leaders employ in selecting others to leadership positions** below themselves? Really good leaders will appoint other people to certain leadership positions based on the **character** and the **competence** and the **qualifications** of the people they wish to appoint (think of President Lincoln during the Civil War appointing some generals with whom he had personal disagreements, but who had the qualifications to win military battles). However, people who are REALLY VERY COMPETENT will at times have different views and opinions than those held by the leaders who appointed them. So very qualified people are likely to sometimes disagree with the leaders who appointed them, but who are in fact less qualified in the specific field than the people they themselves appointed for that specific field (e.g. a general appointed by a president with no military background is likely to make better military decisions than the president who himself has no military training or experience). In this type of situation good leaders will not feel threatened by the people below themselves having "better ideas" or "a better understanding" in specific situations relating to their field of expertise. So good leaders will readily accept sound advice from their subordinates, who may also occupy important leadership positions on a lower level.

By contrast, for bad leaders good character and actual job competence in potential appointees to lower positions is not particularly important. For bad leaders "**loyalty**" is the most important consideration in making appointments to specific positions, and to them "loyalty" means: you don't ever question my instructions, even if they are unethical. Bad leaders look for **unquestioning obedience**. Bad leaders don't like their subordinates to "think for themselves"; they view the people they appoint to key positions as mere "conduits" of their own wishes, as in: "your job is to make sure that my instructions are carried out and that things are done my way". Bad leaders don't tolerate others coming up with better ideas to achieve something. Bad leaders frequently try to micro-manage everything. Bad leaders feel threatened by others having better ideas. So bad leaders don't appoint others to contribute originality and efficiency; bad leaders appoint people whom they can control, people who will not

question any instructions and who will justify any wrong or foolish actions with the “I’m just doing my job” response. Bad leaders appoint people whom they can control, people who will be their “yes-men”.

The point for us to note is that all those people who are appointed to leadership positions by someone in a higher position actually reflect on that leader in that higher position. If the appointed leaders are unqualified and incompetent, then that is frequently an indication that the leader who appointed or nominated them is a bad leader, one who primarily looks for unquestioning obedience. If the people who are appointed to leadership positions are competent, skilled, efficient and they achieve good results in their appointed positions, then that also indicates that the leader who appointed them is a good leader. By looking at people in appointed positions of leadership we can get some idea of the leadership qualities of the one who made those appointments.

Our situation today is that the good leaders have by and large all disappeared. Bad and frequently immature leaders have taken their places. And they in turn have in many cases appointed the wrong people below themselves, people whose main qualification is that they will be “unquestioningly loyal” to the people who appointed them, rather than that they are competently qualified for the positions to which they have been appointed, or that they will feel morally obligated to oppose anything that is wrong or bad for the country, club, city or organization.

That’s the reality we face today: the good leaders have mostly disappeared and our only options all too frequently are restricted to a desperate search for trying to find the best one out of a bad lot. That’s not only true in the world around us; to some degree this also afflicts us in God’s Church, and we need to be honest enough to face up to this situation. We in God’s Church also face a dearth of good leaders.

So now let’s look at some requirements and also some qualifications for godly leadership. For the purpose of discussing this subject I will draw a distinction between “requirements” and “qualifications”. I realize that this distinction may seem somewhat artificial, but it will allow me to discuss two completely different areas which are relevant in any discussion of godly leadership.

So for the purposes of this article, the “**requirements**” we’ll consider **apply to all positions of leadership** in any area of life; they apply to the top leaders in a nation or in an organization, and they also apply to all those in lower level leadership positions. The “**qualifications**”, on the other hand, **vary from one leadership position to another**. Someone who is going to run an automobile company needs to have different qualifications from someone who is going to lead a research expedition in the Amazon jungles. Qualifications vary with different leadership positions, but the requirements for all positions of leadership are always the same.

Put another way, the “requirements” we are going to examine will on their own not qualify anyone for a position of leadership. These requirements simply form the foundation for preparing someone with the proper qualifications to fill a leadership position. For leadership positions in the world these requirements are frequently ignored and omitted. But as far as godly leadership is concerned, even if a person has the highest qualifications imaginable but lacks these basic requirements, then he is still completely unfit for any position that demands godly leadership.

We’ll consider four different “requirements” and then we’ll look at “qualifications”. Both are essential, and after we have examined both areas, then we’ll tie it all together. Let’s start with the requirements.

INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER

The very first and most important requirement for any leader is integrity of character! There is no attribute, skill, knowledge or ability in a person considered for a leadership position that can compensate for a lack of integrity in that person’s character. A person who is dishonest, devious or insincere should

never be considered for any position of leadership, irrespective of any other admirable qualifications he may have!

Good character is by far the most important consideration in giving anyone a position of leadership, for the simple reason that such a position will automatically result in the leader receiving considerable **influence over the people he will lead**. And if he lacks character then that negative influence will inevitably have a negative effect on some, if not on all of the people under his leadership.

That's what the example of Satan's lack of character shows us: when Satan lacked integrity then that lack of integrity had an EXTREMELY BAD effect on all of the angels whom God had entrusted to Satan's leadership. Satan utterly ruined the lives of all the angels under his leadership. And all of Satan's other immensely admirable qualifications became worthless. This same principle applies to leaders on the human level: leaders who lack integrity have a negative impact on many of the people under their leadership. And no achievement is worth it if in the process the lives of some people are destroyed. That's the principle of 2 Peter 3:9, that God is "not willing that any should perish". And here I am not referring to "the first death", but to the adverse effects a lack of integrity can have on someone else's character.

Now here is one description of what our world today is like:

> For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them **every one is given to covetousness**; and from the prophet even unto the priest **every one dealeth falsely**. (Jeremiah 6:13; also 8:10)

In reading these prophecies I get the very distinct impression that God was including all the people in leadership positions in this description. Is that how you read it? Our concern here is that covetousness will always destroy integrity! Always and without fail!

Consider Paul's predictions for our age.

> This know also, that in the last days **perilous times** shall come. (2 Timothy 3:1)

That's one other consequence of God removing all the real leaders. Without good leaders life becomes much more perilous for everyone. We face constant threats of grave dangers because some countries are controlled by leaders who act recklessly, wantonly, abusively and perversely, leaders who don't care what consequences their reckless ways may have.

You are already very familiar with the next few verses, which read:

> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (2 Timothy 3:2-4)

Do you accept that this describes the world we live in today? Okay, then here is the question we need to ask:

Just **what kind of leaders can we possibly expect** in an environment like this? Can we really expect INTEGRITY from people who are a part of the society described in these verses? Can you understand why I said all we can hope for is "the best of a bad lot"? I wasn't trying to be derogatory or sarcastic; I

believe that statement literally because verses 2-4 above are to me a description of “a very bad lot”. And I believe that Paul’s description is correct.

Now notice the next verse.

> **Having a form of godliness**, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Yes, I do believe that this applies to people in the world and to their religions. But don’t think for one moment that this is not ALSO a warning for us in God’s Church, because this also accurately describes what happened after Mr. Armstrong’s death 25 years ago, when numerous heresies were presented to God’s people.

All of these things destroy integrity. This whole extensive description in verses 2-5 is powerful evidence of a lack of integrity in society in general, and a lack of integrity in very many people in leadership positions.

Consider also Hosea 4:11.

> **Whoredom** and **wine** and **new wine** take away the heart. (Hosea 4:11)

“Whoredom” refers to immoral sexual conduct, and “wine” refers to the misuse of alcohol to the point of drunkenness. Both of these things, immorality and drunkenness, destroy integrity! That is what God means with the expression “they take away the heart”. We cannot trust people who are either immoral or who are alcoholics, because their own conduct has perverted their sense of judgment. In this verse God mentioned these two things together because they so commonly go together. And our world today is engulfed by a spirit of immorality on an unprecedented scale, a condition which also powerfully defies integrity.

In the Book of Proverbs Solomon explained why integrity is the first and most important requirement for leadership.

> The **integrity** of the upright **shall guide them**: but the **perverseness** of transgressors **shall destroy them**. (Proverbs 11:3)

Their integrity will guide every decision they make. Integrity doesn’t “qualify” anyone to be a leader, but a lack of integrity will always produce bad leadership. The fact that society readily embraces leaders who lack personal integrity is a reflection on society itself, an indication that society by and large lacks integrity. And whenever the Church of God embraces leaders who lack integrity, then that is likewise a reflection on the state of the Church.

That is why it is of the utmost importance that a minister in God’s Church is trustworthy, a man whose integrity we can depend on. As Paul put it, the very first requirement for a minister is that he “must be blameless” (1 Timothy 3:2). When we follow someone’s lead, then we are trusting them to be honest and dependable.

The first requirement any good leader must meet is integrity of character.

STRENGTH OF CONVICTIONS

The second requirement for godly leadership is strength of convictions. It is absolutely required that leaders do have strong convictions. Without strong convictions a person will only be a follower but not a leader. People who lack strong convictions are easily swayed and easily switch allegiances. Think of King Saul in ancient Israel who was swayed by the people to save alive the best animals of the Amalakites (see 1 Samuel 15:9, 24) in violation of God's clear instructions.

We have an example of extreme fickleness in the Book of Acts. When Paul performed a miracle by healing a crippled man, the superstitious people wanted to worship Paul as a god to the point of bringing oxen to sacrifice to Paul (Acts 14:1-13). A few days later the same people stoned Paul because of some perverse accusations (verse 19). The people of Lystra obviously lacked real convictions; on impulse they wanted to treat Paul as a god, and on another impulse they attempted to murder Paul.

In our world today very few politicians have any strength of convictions. The conduct of politicians is almost invariably ruled by expedience. For example, one politician stated quite openly that he'd be happy to run as a vice-presidential candidate for a Republican contender, and not long after that he stated equally openly that he'd be happy to run as a vice-presidential candidate for a Democratic contender. The philosophical differences between these two parties didn't seem to matter in the least to this particular politician. He is, after all, only a politician.

We have the same thing on the religious level.

Those of you who read Mr. Armstrong's Autobiography may recall the incident of a church minister out of work who asked Mr. Armstrong whether he was aware of some congregation that was looking for a minister. Mr. Armstrong replied: "Yes, as a matter of fact I do know of a congregation that is looking for a minister. But that wouldn't suit you because you're a Methodist and they are a Baptist congregation (I may have the denominations mixed up here?). But this man's reply to Mr. Armstrong was: "That's no problem. I'll preach whatever they want me to preach". Obviously that man also had no convictions of any strength; for a salary he would preach whatever people wanted him to preach. That's in line with what Paul predicted, that people with "itching ears" would find teachers to preach the things they wanted to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). And for a salary this man was eminently willing to preach to "itching ears".

We also had many vivid examples of a lack of real convictions in our recent Church of God past. When after Mr. Armstrong's death true teachings were systematically replaced with heretical teachings, a staggering number of ministers were quite willing to preach whatever they were told to preach. They clearly viewed themselves as "I'm just doing my job" and personal convictions have nothing to do with that job, right? The absence of real convictions that became apparent in far too many ministers was appalling.

A very powerful influence on our convictions is exerted by the company we keep. Show me the company you keep, and I will know much more about the strength of your convictions than you will realize!

Solomon referred to this point repeatedly, because it bears repeating.

> He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but **a companion of fools** shall be destroyed. (Proverbs 13:20)

> Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is **a companion of riotous men** shameth his father. (Proverbs 28:7)

My son, **walk not thou in the way with them**; refrain thy foot from their path: (Proverbs 1:15)

The Apostle Paul stated this very plainly:

l communications corrupt good manners. (1 Corinthians 15:33)

The Greek word here translated as “communications” is “homilia”, a noun derived from the Greek noun “homilos”, which means “a company” or “a crowd”. In English we might be inclined to think that “evil communications” refers to “the things we might say to other people”. But that’s not what Paul had in mind. What Paul was saying is that “**evil COMPANY** corrupts our good manners”! And that’s right on the money! When a leader keeps the wrong company, then his judgment will be unavoidably impaired!

The first effect wrong company has on us is that **it lowers our standards** regarding right and wrong! Once we keep evil company and “understand” their point of view, THEN we start to defend the wrong; somehow to us “wrong” is no longer quite as bad as we used to think it is. **Bad company** always produces a compromise in standards, and in the process it **destroys convictions**!

To express this in our context in plain language:

A LEADER WHO KEEPS THE WRONG COMPANY ALWAYS MAKES A BAD LEADER! ALWAYS!

The reason why this is so is that the company we keep reveals our own convictions, or, in the case of bad company, our own lack of real convictions. Would Jesus Christ, for His casual or recreational time, seek out the company of Satan? You see the point?

Solomon understood quite clearly that the company we keep has a very powerful effect on the way we conduct ourselves and on the decisions we will make. And if we voluntarily keep the wrong company, then this will unavoidably have a negative impact on our integrity of character.

God’s admonition to us in this time of stress is: **hold fast that which you have**, that no man take your crown (Revelation 3:11). “Holding fast” presupposes a strength of convictions.

This leads us to the next requirement for godly leadership.

A SOUND UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHT & WRONG

Many people have strong convictions, and that is one of the reasons why we have wars, etc. Many evil leaders throughout history have had strong convictions. But those convictions were evil and perverse.

Our strong convictions must be based on a sound understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Every person in any position of leadership must have a clear understanding of right and wrong; this is the third requirement for godly leadership.

Psalm 111 tells us:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: **a good understanding have all they that do his commandments**: his praise endureth for ever. (Psalm 111:10)

This once again gets back to integrity. Obeying God in the integrity of our hearts is a prerequisite for a good understanding. People who do not have a good understanding make bad leaders. Wisdom and understanding start out from the foundation of respect for and submission to the laws of God.

Many people in leadership positions today lack a good understanding, not surprisingly so, since they break God's laws with impunity. A good understanding is not something we have innately; it is something we can acquire by studying and researching with a mind that is submissive to and responsive to God.

When Solomon became king while he was still a teenager, God appeared to him in a dream, and God told Solomon: ask what I shall give you (1 Kings 3:5).

At that stage of his life Solomon was still very humble, and he could see his own inadequacy for the responsibility to judge and to lead the whole nation of Israel. Solomon understood that he desperately needed a sound understanding of right and wrong. So Solomon asked God:

> Give therefore thy servant **an understanding heart** to judge thy people, **that I may discern between good and bad**: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? (1 Kings 3:9)

This is something every single leader needs to have, because without a sound understanding of good and evil nobody can ever be a good leader.

Here is a key that the Apostle James recorded.

> Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out **of a good conversation** his works with meekness of wisdom. (James 3:13)

The Greek word here translated as "conversation" is "anastrophe", and it refers to conduct and behavior.

So James is here telling us what should be self-evident: **a man's own life provides the evidence for wisdom or a lack of it**! How we live our own personal lives demonstrates very vividly whether we have wisdom and understanding or not. For example, highly intelligent people who make a mess of their own lives and their own interpersonal relationships OBVIOUSLY lack wisdom and understanding. It is not the academic or intellectual achievements that establish "a good understanding"; a good understanding is demonstrated by how we live our own personal lives. In this regard foolish and immoral conduct is always evidence of a lack of understanding.

And obviously, people who lack a sound understanding of right and wrong can never lead by example, in the positive sense. If they could set a positive example for others, then that would be evidence that they do have a certain amount of good understanding.

This brings us to the last of the four requirements for godly leadership.

A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT GOOD ADVICE, TO ADMIT MISTAKES & TO CHANGE

Let's consider the connections between these four requirements for godly leadership. **Integrity** of character has to be the foundation on which godly leadership can be built. But integrity requires strong convictions. **Strong convictions**, in turn, require **a sound understanding of right and wrong**. And since nobody knows it all and since all of us make mistakes and have gaps in our understanding,

therefore a good understanding of right and wrong requires **a willingness to accept good advice** from others, who may in some areas have a better understanding than we do, and a willingness on our part **to admit our mistakes** and to then change.

One of the greatest leaders to ever walk this earth outside of Jesus Christ was Moses. No judge, no king and no prophet of God ever came close to the dedication and commitment and effectiveness with which Moses led Israel through the most difficult period of its history. Yes, we understand that God was leading Israel during those 40 years. But it was because of the unconditional way Moses submitted himself to God, that God was able to use Moses in such a powerful way.

We are all familiar with the account where Moses very meekly accepted and implemented the advice his father-in-law Jethro gave him. That is recorded in Exodus 18:15-25. By that time Moses had already been used by God to perform a number of powerful miracles. Many other men in his situation would by that point in time have had a rather inflated ego, one that would have been offended by someone else in a lower position telling them what they must do.

In this case Moses had not done anything wrong, and therefore it was not a case of Moses having to admit any mistake. But Moses did accept good advice, acknowledging that Jethro “had a better idea”. This was an expression of Moses’ humility.

And that is really what this fourth requirement for godly leadership boils down to: **humility**. Being willing to accept good advice and being willing to admit mistakes is what real humility is all about. Someone who will not admit mistakes clearly lacks humility.

Let’s look at Proverbs 14:12.

> There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

This principle applies to everyone, including you and me, and also including all people in leadership positions. We all have the tendency to lean on our own understanding. It is in recognition of this fact that all leaders should also seek wise counsel. As Solomon wrote a few chapters earlier:

> Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)

We need to be sure that “our understanding” is based on “trusting in God”, i.e. we must convert our own understanding into one that is based on seeking to understand God’s mind and will and intentions. Proverbs 3:5 presents us with a contrast between two opposing positions. Most human beings will trust their own understanding, which can be fatal (“the end thereof are ...”). On the other hand, the understanding of every godly leader must be based on a trust and a confidence in God.

And godly leaders must readily recognize that “they don’t know it all”, and that they therefore also have a need for good advice from other people. They need to freely accept the principle of Proverbs 11:14.

> Where no counsel is, the people fall: but **in the multitude of counsellors there is safety**. (Proverbs 11:14)

In this regard God’s admonition through the prophet Isaiah also applies:

> Woe unto them that are **wise in their own eyes**, and prudent in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:21)

Every leader should listen to different points of view on all general issues that require a decision, issues that don't involve morality.

However, we also need to clearly understand that on matters of morality, where God's Word clearly spells out what is right and what is wrong, there is no room for "alternate points of view", and in those matters a leader should not be open to "new ideas". Morality is never negotiable, and if a leader does not have a clear and non-negotiable understanding regarding matters of morality, then he should not be a leader!

To be quite clear here:

A leader should consider input from people with different ideas regarding how to deal with a given situation, such as (on the national level) whether to make war or peace, how to deal with economic matters, how to implement certain laws, how to respond to provocative situations, how to achieve certain goals and plans, etc. But a leader should never listen to other people's input regarding questioning any of God's laws or even godly principles of conduct (e.g. suggestions regarding doing away with the Sabbath, or condoning immoral conduct, or subtly doing away with obedience to God's laws in general, etc.).

In other words, a godly leader also needs the discernment to recognize valid input which merits discussion and evaluation, and plain bad suggestions which in one way or another suggest "calling evil good and calling good evil" (see Isaiah 5:20), and which should be rejected out of hand. A leader must never listen to attempts "to call evil good", because just being willing to listen to such wrong suggestions gives these suggestions an air of validity. And once such bad suggestions have an appearance of: "we're not saying that this is necessarily right, but we should at least discuss it", THEN they are usually unstoppable. Every example of "calling evil good" starts out with "let's at least discuss it openly ... what are you afraid of?", and it ends up with the evil being fully accommodated. That's the way it always goes!

It's not a matter of a godly leader somehow "being afraid of discussing" certain things (e.g. like legalizing homosexuality); it's really a case of: God's instructions in the matter under consideration are clear-cut and therefore there is really nothing to discuss! Any "discussion" only lends credibility to the evil someone is attempting to call "good", and such credibility needs to be denied. In other words, a godly leader must discern when to apply Proverbs 26:4 to any matter put to him.

> **Answer not a fool according to his folly**, lest thou also be like unto him. (Proverbs 26:4)

So while leaders need to be willing to listen to good advice, we should keep certain parameters in mind, lest someone thinks that people in authority must somehow listen to everything that anybody may choose to present to them. Any suggestions to disobey God's laws should never be listened to by a godly leader.

As far as admitting the mistakes we make, leaders need to also heed Proverbs 9:8.

> Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: **rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee**. (Proverbs 9:8)

Perverse and immoral conduct needs to be rebuked. **Bad decisions** need to be confronted and

pointed out. **Flawed understanding** needs to be exposed. But it is a fact that most of us will resent someone pointing any of these things out to us. And it doesn't matter how gently people may try to point out our mistakes to us, most of us will still feel strongly rebuked by such an experience.

But this is where the wise men are separated from the scorners. Sooner or later we all need some correction. In those situations the most important thing is always not the correction itself but **how we respond to correction**. The fool responds with justifying himself and / or with anger, while the truly wise man will respond with appreciation and gratitude and with an admission of his guilt or responsibility or lack of understanding.

King David responded with admitting his guilt (2 Samuel 12:13). **Job** responded with acknowledging his lack of understanding ("I uttered that I understood not", Job 42:3). **King Saul** responded with justifying himself (it was the people's fault that all the animals were spared, 1 Samuel 15:15). **King Uzziah** responded with great anger before God smote him with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:19). Two of these men (King David and Job) responded like the wise man, and two of these men (King Saul and King Uzziah) responded like the scorner.

Now let's notice something.

Three of these men were kings. All three of them had done something that was wrong and which needed to be addressed and confronted. And **all three of them were "read the riot act"**; none of them were mollycoddled or handled with kid gloves. They were openly and squarely confronted with their wrong actions. And when **the Apostle Peter**, the leading apostle in the Church at that time, engaged in wrong conduct towards the non-Jewish members of the Church, then the Apostle Paul confronted Peter about this issue **openly in front of the whole Church** (Galatians 2:14).

When leaders do something wrong, then they all too often believe that they are entitled to special treatment, that they are entitled to "discretion", so that they don't lose face before the people. That was King Saul's main concern, when he said to Samuel "**yet honor me now before the elders of my people** and before Israel" (1 Samuel 15:30). Yes, I have done something wrong, but help me to save face.

Somehow it is okay to correct common people in public without any regard for "their public image". It's okay for common people to lose face; after all, they don't have much face to lose to start with, right? But leaders are in a different league; leaders need to be corrected with enormous discretion, right? After all, we wouldn't want the leader to feel bad just because he did something wrong, would we now?

Can we not see the hypocrisy in this approach? But it goes much further than this. We need to understand that **when leaders are corrected "discreetly", then in most cases they never change**! Even in our age that has been the case far too often. Many people in God's Church know that in years gone by a number of ministers were corrected "discreetly" for immoral conduct, only to later go back to the same wrong conduct.

It doesn't work when we try to correct people, who have openly done something wrong, by dealing with them "discreetly" to allow them to save face. The key we need to understand is that when we do wrong then **God does not allow us to save face**! God confronts us openly with the issue. Any attempt to correct a leader discreetly is obviously also an attempt to let that leader to at least some degree "get away with it" by maintaining an appearance that the leader didn't really do anything wrong. Some things are strictly personal, that is true. But any wrong conduct by a leader that in any way reflects on his leadership position (e.g. a church pastor preaching godly morality while himself engaging in immoral conduct, a pastor preaching the moderate use of alcohol while himself being an active alcoholic, a man taking on a national cabinet position in the department of finance while himself not paying his taxes, etc.)

needs to be dealt with openly.

King David was humiliated in front of the whole nation by one of his own sons ravishing some of David's concubines (2 Samuel 16:21-22). King Uzziah was humiliated in front of the whole nation by being struck with leprosy and living the rest of his life in isolation (2 Chronicles 26:20-21); the whole nation knew what had happened to their king. The Apostle Peter was corrected in front of the whole Church, and this was then recorded in Galatians so that all future generations could also know about this correction.

It doesn't work when we try to correct people in leadership positions discreetly!

This has got nothing to do with the leader's office. A leader's conduct and actions always have the potential of influencing many other people. And therefore when a leader needs to be corrected, then it also needs to be done in a way which will ensure that the people who might be influenced are warned. When problems need to be confronted and dealt with, then that needs to be done openly and honestly, but also without malice or vindictiveness.

Anyway, a willingness to accept good advice and to admit our own mistakes is the fourth requirement for godly leadership.

These four requirements form the foundation for godly leadership. Without these four attributes nobody should be given any leadership position. But by and of themselves these four requirements are also not enough for a position of leadership. In addition to these four attributes a person must also have specific job qualifications for a position of leadership. So let's now look at actual qualifications for a specific position of leadership.

SPECIFIC JOB QUALIFICATIONS

The four attributes of integrity, strength of convictions, a good understanding of right and wrong, and a willingness to admit mistakes, to accept good advice and to change represent the character of the individual who is seeking a leadership position.

Built on that foundation different positions of leadership require different qualifications. In many though by no means all cases such job qualifications involve some form of higher education, i.e. they demand additional knowledge and learning and understanding. Many positions of leadership depend on a very specific course of study. In some such leadership positions higher learning takes precedence, and in others experience takes precedence. However, all positions of leadership require some level of experience on a lower level to at least make someone potentially eligible for the leadership position in question. A leader by definition is supposed to have more experience than the people he will lead. After achieving the lowest level of leadership, in many areas advancement then depends on being "promoted up the ladder" in an organization or government structure or company.

Such specific job qualifications are not my concern in this article. However, it should be clear that people without any significant experience in the field in which they are seeking a position of leadership should normally be considered unqualified for the position.

Before someone is given the responsibility as lead architect to design and to supervise the construction of a 60-story skyscraper, that architect must certainly have more experience than having designed one very nice single-story house with four bedrooms. Before someone is given the responsibility to lead an expedition up Mount Everest that person must certainly have more experience than having on one occasion climbed one of the peaks in Yosemite National Park. Before someone is considered for the top position in the National Department of Agriculture he should certainly have more agricultural experience

than once raising two horses on his five acre country estate. Before being considered to run a national ministry of finance someone should certainly have demonstrated more financial responsibility than having repeatedly declared personal bankruptcy. And before being given the responsibility to lead a country a potential candidate should at least have the experience of having successfully run some or other organization.

There always are some **specific job qualifications** that are essential for a specific position of leadership. As I have already mentioned, these are not my concern here. But they **ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT**! And without such job-specific qualifications most people, including those with all the right character attributes, should be considered ineligible for a specific position of leadership.

For example, even if I meet all four of the character requirements, I will still be totally unqualified to seek the position of Governor of Texas, simply because I have no experience whatsoever that would equip me to govern a state. I mention this as an illustration, because we have any number of people who seek to become governors, even though they have no experience whatsoever in working with legislatures. They look at the glamor of the high office and they want it! And they expect us to ignore their total lack of experience. Often they feel that if they can just TALK CONVINCINGLY, that then they are somehow "qualified" to govern a state. They obviously don't understand the huge, immense difference between talking and leading. "Talking" is not at all the same as "leading" or "governing".

The point is that in most cases the character requirements for good leadership are not enough to qualify someone for a specific position. In most cases there must also be additional very specific job qualifications. And it is typically these specific job qualifications that people in this world look for when seeking someone for a leadership position. In many cases people don't actually care about the character qualifications, and they will readily give some leadership position to a person who lacks one or more of those four character traits we have discussed.

What we need to understand is that without the four character requirements we have discussed, even the highest job-specific qualifications will not qualify someone to exercise godly leadership. The individual with the highest possible job qualifications to ever be given a major leadership position was Satan. Satan had been "an anointed cherub" who had been at the very throne of God (Ezekiel 28:14), and you can't possibly get higher "job qualifications" than that! Yet, as we all know, Satan fouled up! And the reason Satan fouled up was not because he didn't have enough qualifications for the job God gave him; the reason Satan fouled up was because he lacked the character for the job. Satan focused on self, the exact same thing very many people who are in leadership positions today do.

Solomon has the reputation for being the wisest man to have lived. God had given Solomon "a wise and an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:12). But in his old age Solomon "did evil in the sight of God" (1 Kings 11:6), and then God "was angry" with Solomon (verse 9).And Solomon ended up being a bad leader! After Solomon's death the people said to his son Rehoboam:

> Thy father **made our yoke grievous**: now therefore make thou **the grievous service** of thy father, and **his heavy yoke** which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. (1 Kings 12:4)

God had given Solomon all the possible job-specific qualifications he could have needed. Solomon was better equipped to govern in a godly manner than any other man. But by the end of his life Solomon lacked integrity and strength of convictions (building pagan altars in Jerusalem proves he lacked convictions, 1 Kings 11:4-8). And these flaws in his character made Solomon a bad leader who ruled over his people in a very selfish way. And the people suffered!

So:

The four requirements for godly leadership on their own are in most cases insufficient to qualify someone for a position of godly leadership. Job-specific qualifications are still needed, and can frequently be obtained by further study or training.

On the other hand, someone with very high job-specific qualifications but a lack in any of the four basic requirements is disqualified from exercising any godly leadership. To make such a person eligible for a position of godly leadership, what is required is not further training or study, but a maturing and growth in character, a growth in convictions and in commitment to God. Put another way, without these character attributes someone is unfit to lead, irrespective of any job-specific qualifications.

Now you, the reader, obviously realize that our primary concern is not with leadership in the world. This is not about leadership in government or leadership in a mountain expedition or in developing some new product or in designing a skyscraper or even in being a good community organizer. In those areas God has taken away all the good leaders, as we saw earlier, and there is very little that we can do about that.

But let's now look at God's Church. We are really concerned about leadership in the Church of God. So now let's focus on what is of concern to us.

JOB QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY

There are a number of misunderstandings about the ministry and the job qualifications for a minister. Let's look at this matter. When qualifications for the ministry are mentioned people usually turn to Paul's instructions to Timothy and to Titus. Let's start by looking at those instructions.

> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, **apt to teach**; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:2-7)

While we are at it, let's also look at Titus.

> For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, **that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers**. (Titus 1:7-9)

Now keep in mind the perspective we have followed thus far in dividing the requirements for godly leadership into two broad categories: firstly there are the character requirements for any leadership position, and then there are the additional job-specific qualifications. This principle applies to leadership positions in the world and it also applies to ordination into the ministry of God's Church. Before a man can be ordained he must, in addition to character qualifications, also meet job-specific qualifications.

Let's evaluate the above instructions from this perspective. First let's examine the section from 1 Timothy chapter 3.

We should be able to recognize that **ALL THE REQUIREMENTS EXCEPT ONE APPLY TO CHARACTER**! There is no need to repeat the list. Everything, except for one point, applies to the man's

character and his manner of life, his personal example of living a Christian life. These points in one way or another all tie into the four “requirements” we discussed earlier.

So note very carefully!

All of these points make the man a good example of living a Christian life. They all reveal that he has the right character for the job. But here is the point most people in God’s Church have never really understood.

> **BY THEMSELVES ALL OF THESE POINTS TOGETHER DO NOT QUALIFY THE MAN TO BE ORDAINED AS A MINISTER!**

If the man has all of these attributes he is an excellent example to the congregation, and he is without question a fine Christian! But he is still not yet qualified to be a minister! The reason is that none of these attributes are job-specific for the ministry! They are simply requirements that ANY potential candidate for the ministry should meet, for that matter, that ANY MEMBER of God’s Church should meet.

The only job-specific qualification for the ministry that Paul has stated in this passage is THE ABILITY PAUL REFERS TO AS “**APT TO TEACH**”!

To state this in very plain terms:

> **UNLESS A MAN HAS THE ABILITY TO TEACH THE TRUTH OF GOD TO GOD’S PEOPLE, HE SHOULD NEVER BE ORDAINED AS A MINISTER!**

This is something even Mr. Armstrong did not fully understand, as evidenced by some of the men he ordained (more on this later). And many others have never really understood this either.

Let’s look at the instructions in Titus. Here in Titus the instructions also all refer to the man’s character until we come to the last part. Paul told Titus that after the potential candidate for the ministry had been taught the truth of God, he then had to have THE ABILITY “to exhort and to convince” people of the truth; in other words, he had to have **the ability to teach the truth of God**.

So in both these sets of instructions regarding who should be ordained into the ministry, Paul spelled out THE BASIC CHARACTER REQUIREMENTS as a foundation. And on that foundation the man considered for ordination had to ALSO clearly have THE ABILITY TO TEACH THE TRUTH OF GOD.

Let’s now look at Ephesians chapter 4.

> 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**: (Ephesians 4:11-12)

The expression “He gave some” tells us that all of these responsibilities Paul lists here are **A CALLING** from God! God calls a man to be a minister, rather than the man himself deciding that he wants to be a minister (e.g. Simon Magus in Acts 8:18-19 wanted to be a minister). But HOW can we know if God has called someone to be a minister? If you are a minister, HOW DO YOU KNOW that God really called you into the ministry? Before we answer this, let’s consider the purposes for which God calls men to these different responsibilities.

Here Paul lists **three purposes**. The **first** one Paul called “the perfecting of the saints (i.e. the members of God’s Church). This responsibility requires the man TO TEACH GOD’S TRUTH, TO MAKE GOD’S WORD PLAIN TO GOD’S PEOPLE! So the first responsibility listed **is a teaching responsibility**.

The **second** purpose Paul called “the work of the ministry”, and here we should not confuse Paul’s use of the word “ministry” with our modern Church of God use of the word “ministry”, because that is not what Paul meant. It is an anachronism for us to take Paul’s statement “for the work of the ministry” and to apply that to mean “the work of a church pastor” in our age.

The Greek expression translated as “for the work of the ministry” is “eis ergon diakonias”. The Greek word “ergon” is the root of our English word “energy” (i.e. “en” + “ergon”) and it means “**physical works**” which require the expenditure of energy. The Greek word “diakonia” is the root of our English word “deacon” and it means “the carrying out of instructions by a servant or an attendant”.

What Paul 2000 years ago referred to as “the work of the ministry” has nothing at all to do with what WE TODAY think of as “the work of the ministry”! What Paul was referring to with this expression is what we would today refer to as “**THE WORK OF DEACONS**”, i.e. all **the non-teaching physical tasks** that need to be carried out for the effective functioning of a church congregation. And while a minister can certainly perform any and all of these tasks as well, they are not responsibilities that require ordination into the ministry in order for a man to fulfill them.

> **In our context today we would classify all the things Paul meant with the expression “the work of the ministry” as NON-MINISTERIAL DUTIES!**

A number of translations recognize that this Greek expression does not refer to teaching but to physical works of service. The following translations render this Greek expression as “for a (or the) work of service” or as “for works of service” or as “to the work of serving”: NAS, NIV, Williams, Diaglot, World English Bible, etc. The point is that translators understand quite clearly that the Greek text here is not speaking about what is today referred to as “the ministry”; it is speaking about performing physical tasks.

The **third** purpose Paul called “for the edifying of the body of Christ”. This is again a reference to the man’s responsibility **to teach the truth of God to God’s people**. We are “edified” by coming to a clearer and fuller understanding of God’s Word and God’s purposes, and a clearer understanding of the mind of God. This all requires teaching, the communication not only of knowledge, but also of understanding.

So **these three purposes** Paul spells out in Ephesians 4:12 **are really only two purposes**. **First** Paul focuses on the teaching responsibility aimed at educating church members in the truth of God. **Secondly** Paul then focuses on all the non-teaching physical works that are needed to ensure the smooth functioning of a congregation of God’s people. **Thirdly** Paul then reverts to the first point, the teaching responsibility. This was a way of emphasizing the importance of the first point. This was a common technique employed as a teaching tool to express strong emphasis.

Jesus Christ used the same tool, to emphasize what is really important. For example, in teaching us how to pray Jesus Christ gave us a general outline recorded in Matthew chapter 6. You are able to quote those words from memory. In Matthew 6:12 Jesus Christ said “and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”. In verse 13 Jesus Christ then moved on to the next thoughts (“and lead us not ...”). Then, immediately after concluding with “amen” Jesus Christ WENT BACK TO the thought of forgiveness in verse 12. And so verses 14-15 deal specifically with forgiveness, even though verse 13 had actually moved past that point.

The point is that going back to a previously stated point and restating it in slightly different words was a commonly used method for directing special emphasis onto something. In Matthew 6 Jesus Christ used this technique to emphasize the extreme importance of an attitude of forgiveness. And in Ephesians 4:12 the Apostle Paul used this technique to emphasize the paramount importance of **teaching** God's people the truth of God. Unless God's people are taught from the Bible it is extremely difficult to "GROW IN KNOWLEDGE" of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18). Correct teaching is the tool that makes growth possible.

So the two purposes Paul mentions in Ephesians 4 are:

1) The TEACHING of the truth of God, emphasized by repeating this point.

2) The NON-TEACHING responsibilities involving physical works.

Teaching the truth of God is the responsibility of the ordained ministry ("apt to teach"). And the non-teaching physical works are primarily the responsibility of deacons and deaconesses.

Now let's look at the different positions Paul listed in verse 11. There are five mentioned here: **apostles**, **prophets**, **evangelists**, **pastors** and **teachers**. The designation "teachers" here represents "**ordained ministers**", where "apt to teach" is a requirement for ordination into the ministry. All five of these designations apply to men who are what we today think of as ordained ministers.

The word "**apostle**" means "one who is sent", i.e. a messenger. And that is precisely what the **prophets** were in Old Testament times; they were God's messengers bringing God's messages to the people of Israel. We should note that the positions of apostles and prophets primarily involved carrying a message from God to some people. This was not necessarily a teaching responsibility; it was primarily a responsibility to carry a message. Think of the word "apostles" as a New Testament word for "prophets".

The original responsibility of the apostles was to take the message they had been given by Jesus Christ into all the world. Notice Matthew 24:14.

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

This was not a teaching responsibility, but simply a responsibility to take the message they had been given by Christ. That's the focus of the job of an apostle. And the job of a prophet had the same focus.

The word "**evangelist**" means "one who brings good news". That meaning is basically the same as the word "apostle". The difference between "an apostle" and "an evangelist" is that "an apostle" was someone who had received the message he was to carry directly from God, just like the prophets of Old Testament times. "An evangelist", on the other hand, is someone who did not receive that message of good news directly from God; "an evangelist" is someone who received that message from someone else who had taught him that message, or from studying the books of the New Testament which some other men had written down. The focus for an evangelist is still not as much on teaching as it is on taking a message that has been committed to him to the people in general, although teaching God's truth was certainly included in the responsibilities of an evangelist. Put another way, the New Testament work of the apostles who had been commissioned directly by Jesus Christ (and that certainly included Paul who also had been commissioned directly by Jesus Christ, see Galatians 1:11-12) was to be continued not by future apostles but by evangelists, until Matthew 24:14 has been achieved.

The only men who can occupy the position of an apostle are those who have received their commission (i.e. their message) directly from Jesus Christ, with clear instructions from Christ regarding what they are to do with that commission, even as Jesus Christ specifically commissioned His original apostles (see John 15:16,19), who were to be witnesses of His ministry. Other men may do the same job, but because they were trained by the men before them (or by the writings in the books of the Bible written down by men before them) instead of being trained by Jesus Christ Himself, they will be “evangelists”. It’s basically the same job, but it acknowledges a different way of having obtained one’s information and understanding. Do you follow?

So when back in the 1920's and 30's the Church of God Seventh Day very easily ordained numerous men as “apostles”, they obviously were totally clueless regarding what distinguishes “an apostle” from “an evangelist”. And the Church of God Seventh Day also certainly did not have any authority whatsoever to ordain anyone as an apostle. Men who carefully and conscientiously study the Bible to come to an understanding of what the work is that God wants them to do can be evangelists (since they may be involved in bringing a message of good news about God’s coming kingdom), but they cannot be apostles, because they didn’t receive their training from Jesus Christ personally.

THAT ATTRIBUTE, OF HAVING BEEN PERSONALLY TRAINED BY JESUS CHRIST, IS THE MAIN DISTINCTION BETWEEN AN APOSTLE AND AN EVANGELIST!

We should understand that it is not really a matter of one being a higher rank than the other. It is really a case of acknowledging a different way of having been taught: either by Jesus Christ personally, or through diligent study and teaching by other men. In the first century context “apostles” were certainly higher ranking (for lack of a better term) than any of the evangelists at that time, for the simple reason that all of the evangelists at that time depended totally on teaching from those original apostles (which included Paul). But not all of the original apostles were equally effective. And some evangelists in subsequent centuries might well have performed a more powerful work than some of those original apostles, and they might well have had a greater influence and greater authority than some of the original apostles? That’s neither here nor there. What I am trying to illustrate with this point is that evangelists are not necessarily “lower” than apostles; they have merely obtained their knowledge and understanding by a different method (i.e. second hand) from the way apostles were taught and instructed (i.e. directly by Christ).

The word “**pastors**” refers to people who take care of “the sheep”. This is the first category of individuals in this list of Ephesians 4:11 whose specific focus is on the Church, the individuals who have responded to the messages that were brought by apostles and evangelists. Pastors look after the people God has called, by teaching them a greater understanding of God’s truth, by expanding on the initial understanding these people had when they first came into God’s Church. Pastors have the responsibility to nurture the spiritual development of church members by helping them to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of God’s plan and purposes, helping church members to grow. The word “pastor” designated a position of responsibility for a whole congregation, in the same way as one shepherd was responsible for a whole flock of sheep. And pastors absolutely must have the ability to teach the truth of God.

The word “**teachers**” is a translation of the Greek word “didaskalos”. This word is used 58 times in the New Testament. **It is used 41 times to address Jesus Christ**; in 40 places it is translated as “Master” and once as “teacher”. In the other 17 places it is translated 9 times as “teacher”, 7 times as “master” (i.e. references to someone other than Jesus Christ) and once as “doctors” (Luke 2:46). There is no indication whatsoever that the designation “teacher” is somehow supposedly “below a pastor”, not when the word is used 41 times to address Jesus Christ, far more often than any of the other words in this list are used for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is assuredly not “below a pastor”.

In this context Paul used the word “**teachers**” to refer to the group we today refer to as “**ordained ministers**”. This word **highlights the ministry’s teaching responsibilities**!

The point is that there would be more ministers than there would be congregations. And since each congregation has only one pastor, THEREFORE the other ministers are referred to by the term “teachers”, which conveyed a sense of great respect, as witnessed by its frequent application to Jesus Christ and also its frequent translation as “master”, as well indicating the minister’s foremost responsibility, which is to teach!

And again, we need to understand that at Paul’s time pastors were not somehow on a higher level of authority than other ministers referred to as “teachers”. The word “pastor” simply indicated a specific responsibility, that being the leadership of a specific congregation. Other ministers designated here as “teachers” might have been considered of greater or lesser influence in the New Testament Church based on their individual abilities to serve God’s people with spiritual understanding, when compared to the effectiveness of a specific pastor.

Here is what we should understand about these five positions Paul listed in Ephesians 4:11. They were NOT intended by Paul to present some kind of top-down hierarchy, with supposedly constantly lesser levels of authority. Paul was doing nothing more than enumerating five different types of responsibilities. But these five positions were not in some kind of pecking order, as in “I’m a prophet, and you are only a pastor, so therefore I am over you”. They just pinpointed different details pertaining to each of these five responsibilities. That’s all! Also note that in this context Paul made no attempt whatsoever to imply any kind of hierarchy of authority. It just isn’t there!

Next, the New Testament Church started with no ideas of any kind regarding some kind of hierarchy for the ministry. Everybody in the Church acknowledged the apostles as the obvious leaders, especially after Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead (Acts 5). But apart from that there was no structure of authority at all.

Now with the rapid growth to 3000 and then to 5000 members (Acts 4:4), some kind of organization was obviously needed. The only spiritual offices these Jewish Christians were familiar with were “priests” and “prophets”. They understood that in this age nobody in the Church is a priest. But prophets were people who had been specifically commissioned by God to take God’s messages to the people of Israel. And the designation “prophet” was still in use. Jesus Christ was called a Prophet (Matthew 21:11; etc.), John the Baptist was called a prophet (Matthew 21:26; etc.), Anna was called a prophetess (Luke 2:36), and they understood that there is still “an Elijah to come” (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:11), and that “Elijah” will be in the mold of “a prophet”.

So the early Church continued to use the word “prophet” in a very loose way, sometimes applying it to anyone who was not a pastor but who still preached in services at times, basically synonymous with “teacher”. So Agabus was referred to as a prophet (Acts 21:10), as were also Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). In Acts 13:1 the distinction between “prophets” and “teachers” seems rather vague, and they were lumped together as one group.

The point is that Paul and all of the leaders in the first century didn’t yet really understand that the designation “prophet” was in the process of being replaced by the designation “apostle”, and that after the first century, except for very rare exceptions, both terms would no longer be applicable to anyone in the Church. The reason is that both, the prophets and the apostles had always received their instructions directly from Jesus Christ, without going through another human being or even relying on any written instructions. But God was phasing out that system of interacting with human beings, as Paul came to understand by the time he wrote the Book of Hebrews. Paul explains this in the opening two verses.

> **God**, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Paul is saying that in the Old Testament God used different ways to communicate with man. The position of “prophet” is an acknowledgment of one particular way God used to communicate, i.e. by giving specific men exact messages which they were to deliver to Israel.

Now when Paul says “God has in these last days (i.e. in the NT) spoken unto us by His Son”, Paul is saying: **GOD HAS DROPPED THE OLD METHOD OF SPEAKING TO US**. INSTEAD OF SPEAKING TO US THROUGH PROPHETS, GOD NOW SPEAKS TO US THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!

Paul is telling us that the office of prophet was in the process of being phased out by Jesus Christ. First Christ replaced the category of God’s servants known as “prophets” with a new category of servants of God called “apostles”. Then, since these apostles would all die, Christ inspired them to write down and to supervise the writing down of the things Christ had taught and commanded those apostles. The key is that God ensured all subsequent generations would have access to the things God had “spoken unto us by His Son”, by having the gospels written down and having those gospels supplemented by the Book of Acts and all of the NT epistles plus the Book of Revelation.

While Paul is only showing us “step #1" in these two verses in Hebrews, we should be able to discern that this “step #1" was going to be followed by “step #2". Those two steps would complete the transition from God dealing with Israel through prophets (most of whom were put to death) to God now dealing with mankind through His written Word, the Bible, anticipating a time when both literacy in general and access to the Bible would be common place and abundant.

So here are these two steps that we need to understand:

STEP #1 = God phases out working through prophets by replacing them with apostles.

STEP #2 = God phases out working through apostles by having detailed accounts of Christ’s ministry, supplemented by instructions for church members (i.e. the epistles), written down. These written records become God’s way of interacting with mankind, replacing the short-term system of having worked through apostles.

And so after the first century both, prophets and apostles had been phased out of the system God uses to interact with mankind. However, this is only the general picture.

God obviously reserves the right to instruct any man whom God may choose DIRECTLY (like Christ did with Paul) in order to carry out very specific instructions, or to convey very specific messages. That type of interaction would automatically mean that the man God is dealing with in that way would be either “a prophet” or “an apostle”, both of which inherently imply direct receipt of information or instructions from God to carry out a specific job.

For example, this will be the situation for “the Elijah to come”; he will be either a prophet of God or an apostle of God, both terms designating the same type of relationship with God.

Now IF we wish to claim that **Mr. Armstrong** was “an apostle”, then that claim can obviously not be based on some obscure “ordination certificate” issued by the Church of God Seventh Day, since they issued the identical type of certificate to many other men as well. The whole Board of the Church of God Seventh Day consisted of “12 Apostles”, hardly something that deserves serious consideration, since it was obviously not inspired by God.

Any claim that Mr. Armstrong was an apostle is really a claim that God dealt with Mr. Armstrong directly, as God did with the original apostles and with the Apostle Paul through visions. But **if Mr. Armstrong received SOME of his understanding** from other men (e.g. from the early students who then became ministers, etc.) or **from intensely studying the Bible**, then he wasn't really an apostle. Note again Paul's very emphatic statement that he had not received the things he taught from any other man, including any who might have been servants of God; the only way Paul received his understanding was "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12).

I am not trying to put down Mr. Armstrong. I am trying to explain the distinction between these different terms "prophets, apostles and evangelists".

There is another point that is worthwhile to consider here. It was at the Feast of Tabernacles in Belknap Springs, Oregon in either 1951 (attendance was 150 that year) or in 1952 (attendance was 450 that year) that Herman Hoeh gave a sermon in which he said:

"Mr. Armstrong is not a prophet. Mr. Armstrong is an apostle!"

This statement stunned everybody at that Feast service. After the closing prayer Mr. Armstrong went up to Herman Hoeh and said in a very emphatic tone: "**Don't you ever say that again**!" (This story was told to me personally by Harold Jackson who was present at that Feast in Belknap Springs.) I might add that when Herman Hoeh preached that sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles, he had not yet been ordained into the ministry; he was only ordained a few months later (if not a year later?), in December of 1952, along with four other men. Two months later two more men (the McNair brothers Raymond and Marion) were also ordained, bringing the total number of ministers under Mr. Armstrong's leadership to seven evangelists.

It might be worth noting that this assertion that Mr. Armstrong was an apostle was first made by an unordained young man, and that Mr. Armstrong's SPONTANEOUS reaction to this suggestion was **indignation**! That's the truth! However, Herman Hoeh had planted a seed in Mr. Armstrong's mind. And it took another almost 20 years before Mr. Armstrong became comfortable enough with the title "apostle". It was from around 1970 onwards (though you may find occasional earlier uses of this title) that Mr. Armstrong would commonly refer to himself in the third person as "God's Apostle", clearly using this as a title for his perceived office.

However, it is appropriate to ask whether Mr. Armstrong's initial spontaneous response was correct, or whether he still lacked the understanding regarding the office God had given to him? The question we should also ask is: is it actually POSSIBLE for someone to be an apostle of Jesus Christ without actually KNOWING that God had called him to be an apostle? Is being called to be an apostle something the man himself has to somehow "figure out" without God actually somehow informing him of this status?

Keep in mind that "apostle" is really the New Testament equivalent of "prophet". So we should ask: was there ever a prophet of God anywhere in the Old Testament who didn't actually KNOW that he was a prophet of God? Is there any apostle in the New Testament who didn't KNOW that he was an apostle? Recall that being either a prophet or an apostle requires receiving direct information from God (which is what the NT apostles received) in an unmistakable manner.

Also IF Mr. Armstrong was NOT an apostle in the 1930's and 40's and early 50's, AT WHAT STAGE did he then become an apostle? What had changed?

I believe that Mr. Armstrong himself started to entertain the idea of being an apostle more AFTER he started to have meetings with presidents and prime ministers, a thing that developed after his initial contacts with King Leopold of Belgium in 1967. And while Mr. Armstrong certainly had personal contacts

with a large number of world leaders, none of whom are of any consequence today, 25 years after Mr. Armstrong's death, **those meetings were insignificant** in the spiritual messages they conveyed. Mr. Armstrong always used great caution in any religious statements he made to these world leaders. Those meetings with world leaders most certainly did not constitute "a witness" for those leaders, let alone for their countries. Claims along those lines are plain ludicrous.

Also, I personally heard Mr. Armstrong recount how he had given Franz Josef Strauss a strong private warning, telling him that if he would become the leader of a united Europe that he then needed to be sure to not misuse the power that would then be vested in him in that position. It should be absolutely clear beyond any doubt that God had not sent Mr. Armstrong to Franz Josef Strauss, a man who has now been dead for many years, and who never in his life ever achieved the position of national leader in Germany, let alone the position of leader of a united Europe. Would God send an apostle TO GUESS who will be the human leader of a united Europe?

Further, at the time of that Feast in Belknap Springs the Church had not yet developed the idea of a hierarchy in the ministry, since no man had yet been ordained by Mr. Armstrong. It was only after those original seven men were later ordained as evangelists, that THEY then developed the idea that the ministry needed to be structured, kind of like the military from the top down. This ensured that most men who would be ordained after them would not also be ordained as "evangelists"; most future ministers would have to be "promoted up" to this rank of evangelist. When Mr. Armstrong ordained these young Ambassador students, he looked at the example of the young man "Timothy" whom Paul had ordained as an evangelist, and so **in ordaining "his young men"** it seemed natural to Mr. Armstrong to likewise ordain them as evangelists. But at that ordination ceremony Mr Armstrong with absolute certainty did not have any kind of hierarchy in mind, whereby these seven men were now "on the top rung of the ladder" under Mr. Armstrong himself.

He thought of Timothy, not of hierarchy!

When we understand that "evangelist" is a job description, and not at all some kind of ministerial "rank", then it should be absolutely clear that certainly not all seven of those men should have been made evangelists, since that job description didn't fit all of them. The same is certainly true for Stanley Rader, whom Mr. Armstrong ordained as an "evangelist for financial affairs", to allow Stan Rader in the capacity of being a church official to defend the Church against the State of California. There is no such thing as "evangelist for financial affairs", or "evangelist for radio and TV broadcasts" or "evangelist for church administration" or "evangelist for any executive position". Those are all **bogus reasons** for making someone an evangelist. It is not for us to redefine the responsibilities of an evangelist! And evangelists are not like vice-presidents in a bank or a corporation; the designation "evangelist" was never intended to be a title.

Furthermore, there isn't any evangelist in any of the churches of God out there TODAY who would NOW even remotely consider ordaining some young men in his congregation or in his college in their mid-twenties as "evangelists". That possibility is today as remote as trying to hit a golf ball across the Grand Canyon.

I may be missing something and I may be overlooking something, but I get the strong impression that **Mr. Armstrong really was "an evangelist"** and not "an apostle". And he absolutely, without any reservations was certainly "a teacher" of God's truth.

But we also need to understand that the whole concept of a hierarchy in the leadership of God's Church was developed by the small group of young evangelists at some point AFTER 1952. For more than his first 25 years in God's Church Mr. Armstrong never viewed the ministry as having any kind of hierarchy, like apostle at the top, then evangelists, then pastors, then preaching elders, then local elders and finally

local local elders (i.e. a term formerly used for local elders not in the employ of the Church).

This hierarchy which they developed was then read into various Scriptures, like Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. The truth is that in Ephesians 4:11 Paul was simply enumerating different functions within the ministry, but without implying any form of authority by one group over another group. And of the five groups mentioned by Paul during his time, the first two groups have already been phased out by God (in favor of speaking to us by His Son), with possibly very rare exceptions still ahead? So today in God's Church the ministry can only consist of evangelists, pastors and teachers, where the term "teachers" refers to ordained ministers who are not pastors of specific congregations. In our age it is customary to refer to the ordained men who do not pastor specific congregations as "ministers" rather than as "teachers". Either term is valid, though "teachers" more directly conveys the correct focus for the job of a minister.

Let's now consider one basic point.

A SPIRIT OF COMPETITION

Mr. Armstrong time and time again explained that **Satan is the author of a spirit of competition**. This is something he taught even before he started Ambassador College. For example, in the "Co-Worker's Bulletin" dated August 4, 1947 (i.e. just before Ambassador College started) Mr. Armstrong wrote:

> "1900 years ago the Creator sent into this world His Son, bearing the most vital Message ever given to mankind. That Messenger, Jesus Christ, foretold these present days. He knew WHAT'S WRONG with the world. This world is simply not living right! It's in the grip of **a society based on the spirit of competition**, greed, vanity, ORGANIZED by MEN. The Great Teacher foresaw where it would lead -- straight to this chaos in the time of the end ..." (my emphasis)

He used this expression "the spirit of competition" in very many of his writings, including "The Mystery of the Ages", "The Missing Dimension in Sex" and many other articles. I don't need to present additional quotations in this regard. The Church understood quite clearly that Satan is the author of competition.

Now the point is this:

> **EVERY HIERARCHY THAT INVOLVES DIFFERENT LEVELS OF AUTHORITY AND PRESTIGE IS INHERENTLY AND INTRINSICALLY A COMPETITION!**

When the young evangelists back in the 1950's developed the concept of a hierarchy for the ministry, one in which they themselves would all start out at the top, they were introducing a spirit of competition into the ministry! So almost from its inception in Mr. Armstrong's time the ministry was based on a spirit of competition.

And let's call a spade a spade!

That spirit of competition which DOMINATED the ministry from the 1950's onwards was very, very blatant! It was well-known that there were two evangelists who were constantly vying for preeminence with each other, like the Charlie Chaplin movie about Hitler and Mussolini in the barbershop. It was pathetic to witness (as I did back in the 60's) how the one evangelist was constantly trying to assert his higher status relative to certain other evangelists. At the same time there was another man who, when he was ordained as a local elder, set himself a time-frame for achieving the rank of evangelist. And he

did achieve it “right on schedule”. When the young men were ordained upon graduation from Ambassador College, there was the spirit of competition where some were ordained as “local elders”, while others were IMMEDIATELY ordained as “preaching elders”; they had “competed better” for a higher status in the ministry.

One of the original evangelists would tell men who were later raised to the rank of evangelist: “now remember, you are just a baby-evangelist”, to let them know that he still had seniority over them. It was a spirit of competition!

> The entire hierarchy in the ministry was based on and developed from a spirit of competition, the author of which beyond any doubt was Satan! Those early ministers could preach about the spirit of competition that pervaded the world, while at the same time being oblivious to the fierce spirit of competition within the ministry itself, where many ministers were striving to get ahead, to that next rung up the ladder in the ministry’s hierarchy.

We need to recognize and also to acknowledge that the entire system of hierarchy within the ministry of the Church of God was instituted at the explicit inspiration of Satan! Satan is the real author of the “evangelist down to pastor down to preaching elder down to local elder” system! This hierarchy is assuredly not of God! The fruits it has borne should tell us that. We can’t claim that Satan is the author of the spirit of competition in the world “out there”, and at the same time turn a blind eye to a system that encouraged ministers to compete for promotion within the ministry! If a minister wanted to get ahead he had to work on becoming a powerful speaker.

Anyone who does not acknowledge the spirit of competition that pervaded the ministry back then is simply not being honest. And it doesn’t matter whether the spirit of competition is found in the world or whether it is found in the leadership of God’s Church; it always comes from the same source.

Before we also look at 1 Corinthians 12:28, let’s now ask the question: HOW can we know if a man has been called by God to be a minister? Can a man just choose the ministry like he could choose any other vocation? Just how does this work?

HOW TO DISCERN GOD’S CALLING TO THE MINISTRY

Where membership in God’s Church in a general sense is always subject to the premise that “no man can come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draw him” (John6:44), we should understand that this verse also applies in principle to membership of the ministry, that no man can become a minister of Jesus Christ except he is specifically called to that responsibility by God. For example, that’s what happened to Barnabas and Saul (who became Paul) in Acts 13:2, that they were specifically called by God for a specific job.

We have always understood that **it is not really the act of baptism that makes a person a member of God’s Church**. It is really the receiving of God’s Spirit that makes a person a Church member. That is the reality. However, in practical terms we all accept that a person is a member of God’s Church if that person has been baptized, simply because we cannot with certainty know whether that person has received God’s Spirit or not. So it is sadly true that very many people have been baptized who in fact never repented, and who therefore also never at any point had God’s Spirit. And therefore such baptized people were in actual fact also never REALLY members of God’s Church; they were only “tares” (Matthew 13:24-30). I assume that we all understand this?

Likewise, we have also always understood that what makes a man a minister is not the ordination ceremony; what really makes him a minister is IF GOD HAS CALLED HIM TO THAT POSITION! In

practice we assume that all those who have been ordained by someone over them are ministers. However, the truth is that **IF GOD HAS NOT CALLED SOMEONE TO BE A MINISTER, THEN NO AMOUNT OF "ORDAINING" CAN MAKE THAT MAN A MINISTER OF GOD**! You know the principle, "no man can come to Me except ...", right? So even if Simon Magus had somehow been able to con Peter into ordaining him into the ministry, he still would not have been a minister in God's eyes.

The truth is that very many men went through "an ordination ceremony" when in actual fact in God's eyes **THEY WERE NEVER AT ANY TIME "MINISTERS OF GOD"!** In God's eyes no "tare" has ever qualified for the ministry of His Church! There is thus the possibility that some of the men who are not called by God to be ministers, but who are nevertheless "ordained" end up being **false ministers** and false apostles (see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The truth is that over the past 60 years the Church of God has had **hundreds of false ministers**! Put another way, over the past 60 years hundreds of tares have managed to find their way into the ministry. All of them were ordained either by Mr. Armstrong himself, or by men who were authorized by Mr. Armstrong to ordain other men into the ministry. We may as well call a spade a spade.

Now since God did not call us into the ministry with an audible voice, then how can we today know for sure that God has called us into the ministry? Does God leave us with uncertainty? Have we been called to the ministry if we think we've been called to be ministers? Or is the proof of our calling to the ministry demonstrated by another minister (Mr. Armstrong, an evangelist or a pastor or Regional Director, etc.) having decided to ordain us? Because someone else DID ordain us, is that not proof that God has called us to the ministry? Just how does being called to the ministry really work?

This brings us back to the requirements for the ministry we looked at earlier. Recall that every minister must meet not only all four of the general "requirements" for the ministry (integrity, strong convictions, etc.), but that every minister must also have the job-specific qualification of being competent in teaching God's truth to God's people. Anyone who cannot effectively teach God's truth to God's people should NOT be a minister, because that is what being a minister in this age is all about, teaching God's people the truth of God.

Now the four character requirements are fully under the control of every man himself. They are independent of any calling from God. God does not give any man integrity or strong convictions. These are things we have to develop on our own by the way we choose to use our own minds. Similarly, every man must come to a basic understanding of right and wrong without needing any divine revelations in this regard (we are talking about men who have already previously been called into God's Church by having had their minds opened to God's truth). Every man in the Church who is a potential minister must by himself be able to grasp that murder is wrong, that stealing and lying are wrong, that committing adultery is wrong and that it is wrong to break the Sabbath or to take God's name in vain or to covet the things that belong to other people. And likewise, every man must by himself also get to the point where he is willing to admit his mistakes, where he is willing to accept sound advice, where he is willing to change in those areas where he has transgressed.

All these things are under our own control, and they don't require either revelation or input from God for any man who is already in the Church. So this means that God does not really influence the development of any of these four basic "requirements" for the ministry. Therefore we cannot look to any of these four character requirements to determine whether God is calling someone to the ministry or not. Can you grasp this?

Let me try to make this clear.

We can and must look to **1 Timothy 3:2-7** (the same applies to Titus 1:7-9) to determine whether or not a man is **potentially eligible** for the ministry. Clear conflicts with any of the character points mentioned

in this description (e.g. evidence of immorality or of shady financial dealings or of not really being in charge in his own family, etc.) disqualify the man from being ordained. Conflicts with these character points can show us that a man should NOT be ordained.

But full compliance with all of these character points can never tell us that the man actually SHOULD be ordained. Whether the man who meets all these character requirements should be ordained or not, THAT CAN ONLY BE DETERMINED FROM **ADDITIONAL INPUT** COMING FROM GOD HIMSELF!

Everybody in the Church today has access to the Bible. But that doesn't mean that everybody actually understands the Bible. God always controls who understands the Bible and who doesn't understand it. That's because the things of God are simply not understood by the natural human mind (1 Corinthians 2:11), and it takes the spirit of God to enable us to understand. The truth of God has to be "spiritually discerned" (verse 14).

So when we submit our lives to God and come into God's Church, then God will open our minds and give us an understanding of His Word. As the Bible is explained to us, so we can understand it, where the same explanations presented to people outside of God's Church would seem like "foolishness" (verse 14 again).

So now comes the crux.

Simply because we have had our minds opened and we now UNDERSTAND certain biblical truths, that by itself does NOT mean that we actually have THE ABILITY to teach God's truth to the other people God has called into His Church.

> **GOD CONTROLS WHO SHOULD BE IN THE MINISTRY AND WHO SHOULD NOT BE ORDAINED INTO THE MINISTRY BY GIVING TO, OR WITHHOLDING FROM, A MAN THE ABILITY TO TEACH THE TRUTH TO OTHER PEOPLE!**

While most people in God's Church understand the basic teachings and a great deal about the Bible, they do not really have THE ABILITY to teach the whole Bible to other people! That is an ability which God gives to all those that GOD wants ordained into His ministry!

If God has not given a man the ability to teach the Bible to His people, then that is God's sign that the man in question is also not called to be a minister! He can be a fine Christian, someone who meets all of the character attributes listed in 1 Timothy 3:2-7. But God has not called that man to the ministry unless he is also "**APT TO TEACH**"!

That is the job-specific qualification for the ministry. Paul clearly included this qualification in verse 2. Paul spelled out the same qualification in slightly different words to Titus, when Paul said that the man must be able to use sound teachings to exhort and to convince those who want to argue. To deal with "gainsayers" (Titus 1:9) requires a thorough grasp and clear understanding of the whole Bible and the ability to effectively communicate that understanding; we don't "convince the gainsayers" by rattling off our twenty favorite Scriptures. To deal with gainsayers we must be able to effectively respond to any Scripture that is presented to us, lest the gainsayers have us "stumped".

An assumed premise for the ministry is that we ministers "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). In the next verse Paul contrasted the "we" referring to the ministry with the "you" referring to the unordained members of the Church, who were still "carnal" (1 Corinthians 3:1). "The mind of Christ" also has the ability to explain the words of Christ (recorded in the Bible) correctly and appropriately; it has the ability to teach the truth of God correctly.

And that is really the heart and core for understanding whether God has called a man to the ministry or not. Does he really have the ability to teach the truth of God or not? Yes, he must certainly meet all the character requirements, and flaws in that area automatically disqualify the man from being a minister. But it is the added and job-specific ability to correctly teach God's Word that ultimately establishes whether the man has been called by God to be a minister or not. God's calling to the ministry always involves God giving the man that ability to teach God's truth. And if a man doesn't have that ability, then that is the sign that he also has not been called to be a minister.

THE WAY TO ESTABLISH THIS ABILITY TO TEACH

Okay, so now we have looked at "WHAT" it is that identifies God calling a man into the ministry. Now let's consider "HOW" we can establish that ability to teach.

We obviously should not go around ordaining men to then try to find out if God has actually given them that ability to teach His truth. This is something we need to establish BEFORE a man is ordained, not afterwards. And in this regard the Church during the 60's and 70's had a reasonably good system, though it ended up being hijacked.

The system was one of letting the men "PRACTICE" teaching the truth of God. In the colleges the Church had speech clubs in which the men could give "practice sermonettes". In addition there were also the public speaking classes, which in the last two years of study also focused on giving sermonettes. So in these speaking situations the minister in charge of the class or the club had the opportunity to evaluate the "potential ministers" in action, trying to explain God's Word in numerous different contexts. Unfortunately this process was somewhat hijacked by the focus being turned to "speaking techniques" and "making a positive impression", at the expense of assessing whether the speaker was actually an effective teacher of the Word of God or not. A powerful speech delivery on some really irrelevant subject (e.g. a great story) by one man was always esteemed more highly than an unimpressive delivery of a clear explanation for some or other "difficult Scripture" by another man. Those conducting these speech sessions focused far too much on "speaking effectively" (even if the subject was Mickey-Mouse), and far too little on "clarity of biblical explanations".

Speaking effectively is of no value UNLESS the man also has a good understanding of what the Bible actually teaches. It's a matter of priorities, because many people who don't have the ability to teach God's Word to others, DO have the ability to communicate effectively on other subjects. FIRST there must be a clear understanding of what the Bible actually says and means, and THEN the ability to communicate effectively can be put to good use.

In addition to these speaking opportunities, at the colleges the Church also had a program of letting selected senior students go on member visits with ordained men. It was to be a learning experience for these senior students. A wise minister would give his "second man" opportunities to answer various questions from members on such visits. The way a young man would handle questions from members in such visiting situations would also reveal his level of understanding and his ability to teach that understanding correctly to the members (or prospective members). The minister in charge of the situation thus had the opportunity to evaluate the young man's abilities in this area.

In practice most "second men" mostly sat and listened to the minister do all the talking. But the potential was there to evaluate how this student might perform if he was the minister in charge a few years down the road. And if the minister and the second man got on well on the personal level, then the minister would usually evaluate the second man's performance as positive.

Now the bottom line is this:

When men at the College or in the local church speech clubs were asked to prepare a sermon or sermonette, it very often quickly became apparent that “this man cannot really explain the Scriptures correctly”, or “this man cannot really organize a sound presentation of a subject like faith or prayer or the resurrection or... etc.”.

I have seen time and time again that **some men** simply cannot develop a logical presentation of a biblical studies subject, and that is not because they are still new in the Church. It is really because God has not given them the ability to teach His word to God’s people. Don’t confuse someone talking about “good principles of living” (which you can find in Readers’ Digest, etc.) with the ability to make clear the truth of God.

This is the principle which Paul mentioned in the context of deacons. Notice:

> And **let these also first be proved**; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. (1 Timothy 3:10)

Paul’s use of the word “also” tells us that Paul expected Timothy to apply the same principle to ministers, that Timothy would first “prove a man” before considering ordaining him into the ministry.

The instructions are there, and the right intentions were there to implement them. But it didn’t always work out that way. If you are presently a minister and you have at your disposal a college for training young men in God’s Word, let me ask you a question:

> Would you, with your background in the Church today, seriously consider ordaining young men in the 20's ON THE DAY THAT THEY GRADUATE FROM YOUR COLLEGE?

Or would you feel more comfortable letting them first spend some time “in the field” to prove whether God is really calling them into the ministry or not, and after seeing their performance over a period of time in a ministerial capacity, THEN deciding whether to ordain them or not?

What would YOU do today?

We all know what happened, right? During the first 15 or so years of Ambassador College MANY MEN were ordained at graduation, with very little experience in ministerial capacities or in any other area for that matter. That wasn’t a good idea, was it? It is not surprising that a large number of those men, who really were still “novices”, dropped out of the Church altogether. Paul’s warning against this practice is clear:

> **Not a novice**, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)

Would this (being a novice) apply to a man who is ordained into the ministry the day he graduates from College? How many of those men who were ordained right upon graduation have forsaken God’s truth? What does this tell us?

Today we all view this question from the perspective of having been in the Church for 30 or 40 or 50 or more years. And seen from that perspective, at graduation from college a man is surely still a novice. So it was a serious mistake to ordain men at graduation or even before graduation. And very many of those early ordinations prove this point, because very many of those early ordination ministers are no longer

around.

Anyway, the way to establish whether God was really calling a man into the ministry or not was to evaluate HIS ABILITY TO TEACH THE TRUTH TO GOD'S PEOPLE! And the hundreds who have since shown that they are quite prepared to teach heresies obviously never really had the ability to teach the truth in the first place.

MANY WERE ERRONEOUSLY ORDAINED

When the men Mr. Armstrong first ordained developed the idea of a hierarchy for the ministry, this created a wrong focus. A hierarchy always involves prestige and status; people want to be as high up the ladder of recognition and prestige as possible.

We should not mistake leadership with a hierarchy of titles. God set certain people to be leaders in His Church. The Apostle Peter was the God-appointed leader of the early New Testament Church. But that didn't involve or imply a four or five step hierarchy below Peter, with each step identified by its own title. As already discussed, Ephesians 4:11 was not intended by Paul to establish some form of hierarchy.

However, once those early ministers in the 1950's established the hierarchy from apostles down to local elders, this took the focus away from the actual qualifications for the job of the ministry. The hierarchy in the ministry became a vehicle for expressing recognition for a certain status within the Church. And the ability to actually teach the Word of God was pushed into the background.

The result was that very many men who didn't really have the ability to teach the Bible were ordained into the ministry. For some men ordination was recognition for services rendered in areas as remote as being responsible for the Church's finances or mailing department or printing facilities or radio and television studios. Others were ordained because they were good public speakers; they could powerfully move an audience ("Boy, that was a powerful sermon by Mr. so-and-so, wasn't it?"). They could appeal to the emotions, if not to the minds.

Men learned to tell stories with nice Christian lessons attached to their stories, so those stories would qualify as "sermons". That's what happens in the churches of this world, that church services are "story-telling time". And mostly those stories were certainly entertaining. Public speaking techniques were "tweaked" and exploited to make an impression on the congregations of God's people. And often the actual teaching of God's Word, correctly explaining what it actually means and how it applies to us, was short-changed. Some ministers would overwhelm their congregations with a huge number of scriptural references without ever explaining the real significance of those Scriptures ("I don't have time to turn there, but write down these ten Scriptures for you to look up when you get home."), in that way disguising their inability to accurately expound all those Scriptures for the benefit of God's people.

The frequently heard comment "brethren, write down these verses we don't have time to turn to" was always a dead giveaway that the man wasn't going to teach what the Scriptures mean; he was simply giving his people a reading assignment. There is a vast difference between "reading the Scriptures" and explaining the Scriptures to God's people. Telling people to write down Scriptures that were not actually discussed in the sermon was always an indication of a lack of ability to teach the Scriptures.

Yes, many men were ordained into the ministry who did not really have the ability to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2;15). The proof for this statement is overwhelming, isn't it? All we have to do is look at the large number of ministers who willingly went along with every heretical change that the Tkach administration introduced after Mr. Armstrong's death. None of those men should ever have been ordained into the ministry, because they certainly lacked strength of convictions, amongst other things. And if they really had the ability to teach the truth, then they wouldn't have gone along with the heresies;

as the Apostle John explained “if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us” (1 John 2:19). Can you see the principle?

The fact that large numbers of ministers accepted one or more heresies and forsook the truth proves that those men should never have been ordained into the ministry in the first place. And if the job-specific qualification for the ministry (i.e. having the God-given ability to teach the truth of God) had not been glossed over in the process of those men being considered for ordination, then most of them would not even have been ordained in the first place. In many cases it was obvious that they couldn’t correctly explain the Scriptures.

I once had a “Regional Director” over me who died a few years ago. He never once gave a Bible Study, as in going through any book of the Bible verse by verse. He had a fear of doing that. When he was on occasion forced into that situation he would simply give a sit-down sermon on “7 points to have a happy marriage” or “10 points on child-rearing” or “8 points on principles of health”, and to all of these points he duly attached a Scripture or two. But he wouldn’t ever go through any book of the Bible verse by verse. That is something he feared greatly. Needless to say he happily went along with all the changes that were introduced after Mr. Armstrong’s death. The point is that it was a gross mistake to ever ordain the man in the first place!

Mr. Joseph W Tkach Senior was the same way. He couldn’t explain any part of the Bible if his life had depended on it. But he ended up as Pastor General, even though all along he was totally unqualified to be a minister. His appointment as Pastor General was a graphic illustration of Isaiah chapter 3. And Mr. Armstrong made a huge, huge mistake when he ordained Joseph Tkach as an evangelist. The man wasn’t even qualified to be in the ministry!

I mention these examples not to get at the men involved, because that is all water under the bridge; I mention this to illustrate that “the aptitude to teach the Word of God” was non-existent in some ordained men from the top office in the Church right down to the bottom. In an attempt to further destroy the ministry’s ability to teach the Word of God, the Tkach administration introduced a program they called “D.E.L.S.” (Deacon & Elder Lecture Series).

The main purpose of that program was explained in the first lecture. That purpose was to stifle any real unfettered thinking amongst the ministers. Ministers were to view themselves as “conduits”, responsible for channeling the heretical teachings coming from the Church’s headquarters on to the local congregations. The deacons were to be the watchdogs, watching that the local pastors would toe the line and not speak against the heresies emanating from headquarters. Local pastors were to endorse whatever was sent to them. And Satan’s intention (he was the real author of that D.E.L.S. program) was to eradicate the ability to teach the truth of God from the whole ministry of the Church, replacing that ability with the “you just preach what we tell you to preach” approach. That’s what D.E.L.S. was really all about!

Similarly, it was in most cases a huge mistake to ordain deacons into the ministry. Anybody with the right character could become a deacon simply by being willing to serve in physical ways. That didn’t require any input from God. Deacons are not required to have the ability to teach God’s Word, and most deacons didn’t have that ability, which is a gift from God, given for a very specific purpose. However, once a man had been “a faithful deacon” for many years, it was almost expected to ordain him as an elder “as recognition for the years of selfless service”. **That was also a huge mistake!**

Most deacons, including Mr. Joseph Tkach Senior, should never have been ordained into the ministry, simply because their lack of ability to teach God’s Word demonstrated that **God was not calling them into the ministry**. Ordaining deacons into the ministry graphically illustrates the problem with a hierarchy of positions!

BECAUSE there was a hierarchy, THEREFORE there was also the need for a way to extend "PROMOTIONS" in recognition of the services rendered. A hierarchy conditions everybody TO EXPECT promotions for some people from time to time; that's the nature of a hierarchy. This is not to imply that everybody was striving for promotion. But if in a hierarchy nobody is ever promoted, THEN people lose motivation to do well. A hierarchy encourages "incentive working". And since deacons were at the very bottom of that "totem pole", THEREFORE the only way for the local pastor to express his appreciation to a deacon for his years of service was for that local pastor to recommend his deacon for ordination as an elder.

But "recognition for years of faithful service" is never ever a reason for ordination into the ministry! Never!

Can you understand how that thinking totally missed the point of the distinction between deacons and elders? There is no such thing as "a local elder is one step up from a deacon". That type of thinking is as carnal as you can get!

The truth is that there is FAR LESS of a gap between "an evangelist" and "a pastor" and "a teacher" and "a local elder" than there is between a local elder and a deacon. The requirements for evangelists, pastors, elders and "teachers" (as used in Ephesians 4:11) are identical: all of them have the same character requirements and all of them need to have the ability to teach the Bible. But the requirements for local elders and for deacons differ vastly in that deacons are not required to have the ability to teach God's Word.

This is not to say that SOME deacons were subsequently correctly ordained into the ministry, because they clearly exhibited the ability to soundly teach God's truth to God's people. In such cases the pastor usually made the mistake of first ordaining the man as a deacon, when he really should have noticed the man's ability to clearly teach God's truth. The correct approach here would therefore have been to ordain him into the ministry directly. It is not as if GOD somehow "called" a man to be a deacon, and then later GOD "upgraded" that calling to the ministry. In those cases it is really a matter of mistaken identity, when the pastor initially didn't recognize that the man was being called to the ministry. A calling from God to a specific job is not something that God constantly "upgrades" to a higher rank. That's just not how God works!

To be quite clear here: **it is ludicrous to imagine** that God in 1960 (for argument's sake) called a man to be "a local elder", only to want to see that man's status "upgraded" to "preaching elder" in 1962, only to then want to see that man's status UNGRADED FURTHER to "pastor rank" in 1965. And then, because the man gave a few powerful sermons about "fornication in the Church" (or some similar subject), God in 1966 really wanted to see that man's status UPGRADED SOME MORE to the rank of "evangelist", at which rank the man could then smugly sit until retirement, in the full knowledge that he had reached "the top of the ladder". In this scenario why didn't God make up His mind back in 1960 that He, GOD, was really calling the man to be "an evangelist"? Why would God make use of this method of "corporate climbing" to reveal His intentions for the man in the first place?

To me personally it is now quite clear that **Satan is the true author of this whole power structure** from apostle down to local elder. IT IS EXACTLY THE VERY THING JESUS CHRIST WARNED HIS APOSTLES NOT TO DO!

Can we not understand that James and John wanted the positions of "top authority" in the Church when they asked Jesus Christ:

> They said unto him, **Grant unto us** that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy

> left hand, in thy glory. (Mark 10:37)

We all know how Jesus Christ replied:

> But Jesus called them to 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**: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: (Mark 10:42-43)

How is it that the young evangelists in the 1950's could not understand this, when they set about establishing **A STRUCTURE TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY**? The sole purpose of the "from the evangelist down to the pastor down to the preaching elder down to the local elder" structure was "to exercise authority"! How many different ways does Jesus Christ have to say "**it shall not be so amongst you**" before we get it?

It bears repeating:

The sole purpose for the "evangelist down to local elder" structure was to provide a means to "exercise authority"! And that is PRECISELY what Jesus Christ told His Church NOT TO DO! I mentioned earlier that "children" in Isaiah 3:4 refers to young people in their 20's and 30's. And it is a fact that this hierarchy in the Church was first developed back in the 1950's by young men in their 20's, by "children" in Isaiah 3:4 terms! **It is difficult to avoid applying Isaiah 3:4 to the things that happened in the Church from the 1950's onwards!**

I am not interested in explanations that are "plausible". Many things can be quite plausible without being true. And what I am always interested in is THE TRUTH, not "plausibility"! Plausibility does not set us free; it is the truth that sets us free. And I really want to be "free" of the things that were wrong in our past. When leaders need to have their mistakes pointed out to them, it never works if this is done "discreetly" to allow those leaders to save face. God didn't let kings Saul and David and Uzziah save face. Paul didn't let Peter save face. **People who are allowed to save face seldom change.** The truth needs to be stated.

There's not much we can do about the past. But we should learn from our mistakes, and avoid the same mistakes in the future. And establishing a hierarchy amongst ordained ministers was a huge mistake!

This article is already twice as long as I had initially hoped it would be. I obviously cannot address every possible question in one article. But I have not deliberately overlooked any Scriptures that might be considered in this context. There is always a correct answer for every Scripture that can be presented on whatever subject is being discussed, because the truth ALWAYS sets us free, and the truth is never afraid of dealing with whatever other Scriptures might be presented. And I have never side-stepped any Scriptures that have been presented to me to challenge the things I have said.

I don't want to write another 40 pages for this article. I want to conclude as quickly as possible. But before I conclude I want to address 1 Corinthians 12:28-29, because those verses are often presented as "a trump card" by those who want to endorse a hierarchy for the ministry. And I am certainly not side-stepping these verses.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28-29 EXAMINED

Here are these verses.

> 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? (1 Corinthians 12:28-29)

So what is Paul telling us in verse 28? Is he telling us that the Church has a top-down hierarchy with apostles at the very top and “diversities of languages” at the very bottom? Exactly what was it that Paul wanted to convey to us?

For a start, let’s look at the overall picture without examining Paul’s use of “first, secondarily, thirdly” in this verse; that’s something we’ll do later.

The complete context of this chapter is that Paul is explaining that **the Church is an organization of diversity, not of hierarchy**!

Thus: THE FOOT is diverse from THE HAND (verse 15), but neither does the hand have priority over the foot, nor does the foot have priority over the hand. Neither one is somehow “more important” than the other.

Likewise: THE EAR is diverse from THE EYE (verse 16), but neither does the eye have priority over the ear, nor does the ear have priority over the eye. Neither one is somehow “more important” than the other.

Likewise: THE EYE is diverse from THE HAND (verse 21), and THE HEAD is diverse from THE FEET (also verse 21). Again neither one has priority over the other.

Paul has thus presented four different comparisons. In all of those Paul consistently emphasizes each one’s dependence on the other, and in no case does Paul imply “more importance” to one specific category.

Paul’s focus is on THE COMPOSITION OF THE WHOLE BODY. It is one body composed of many members (verse 20). This is Paul’s analogy to the Church, which is one entity composed of different individuals who fulfill many different functions.

Consider the following:

IF Paul really had intended to imply any kind of hierarchy for the individuals in verse 28 that make up the Church, THEN it is almost inescapable that Paul would have drawn the analogy between “**THE APOSTLES**” being to the Church what “**THE HEAD**” is to the body. In any inference of a hierarchy in the Church such a comparison of “the apostles” to “the head” is unavoidable. Look, if YOU believe that God organized the ministry in such a top-down hierarchy, and YOU are thinking of an analogy to the human body, then THIS COMPARISON INSTANTLY COMES TO YOUR MIND! You know that this is true.

But this “almost unavoidable comparison” of the apostles being to the Church what the head is to the body DID NOT COME TO PAUL’S MIND WHEN HE WROTE THIS CHAPTER! It didn’t come to Paul’s mind because Paul was not thinking of hierarchy!

The way Paul worded verse 21 makes quite clear that this “obvious” comparison was not at all in Paul’s mind. Here is what Paul wrote:

> And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: **nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you**. (1 Corinthians 12:21)

Paul was not thinking in terms of the head's supposed preeminence. **Paul was really thinking in terms of interdependence**! Focusing on the head's interdependence with every other part of the body totally contradicts any supposed focus on hierarchy for verse 28. If we omit verse 28 for the moment, then there is nothing whatsoever anywhere in this chapter of 31 verses that would imply "hierarchy". The whole analogy Paul has presented has a completely different focus than hierarchy.

So the context and focus of the whole chapter contradicts the interpretation that verse 28 refers to hierarchy. But if Paul didn't mean hierarchy, then what did he mean?

In verse 28 Paul lists 8 different categories, an analogy to the different parts of the human body he had listed earlier. Those 8 items are:

1) apostles (Greek "apostolous")

2) prophets (Greek "prophetas")

3) teachers (Greek "didaskalous")

4) miracles (Greek "dunameis")

5) gifts of healings (Greek "charismata iamaton")

6) helps (Greek "antilepseis")

7) governments (Greek "kuberneseis")

8) diversities of tongues (languages) (Greek "gene glosson")

The above translations of the Greek words are basically fine, except that we might note the following comments:

The Greek word "**dunamis**" translated as "miracles" really means: POWER, MIGHTY WORKS, whether they are "miracles" or not.

The Greek word "**antilepsis**" translated as "helps" really means: help in a general sense, probably intended by Paul as a reference to helping the poor and needy in the Church. In the Greek LXX this word is used to mean strength and defense.

The Greek word "**kubernesis**" translated as "governments" really means: to steer, to provide good direction to the community. In our modern understanding this word is probably best rendered as "leadership".

So let's have a clearer version of Paul's 8 categories. This is what it should look like.

1) apostles

2) prophets

3) teachers

4) people who perform mighty powerful works, including miracles

5) people who had the gift of healing the sick

6) people who helped the poor and needy in general ways

7) people who could provide GODLY LEADERSHIP

8) people who had the gift of speaking several different languages

Now is this supposed to be some kind of hierarchy for eight different groups? Or should we infer a hierarchy for just the first three groups? What is the purpose of this list? Isn't it obvious that Paul was highlighting diversity and not hierarchy?

To illustrate this:

Is providing help in a general way for some people (point #6) more important than providing godly leadership (point #7)? Are people who are used by God to perform "mighty works" (point #4) really less important than teachers (point #3)? WHY is the God-given gift of supernaturally speaking several different languages, a gift Paul claimed in abundance (1 Corinthians 14:18) supposedly the least important item on this list, when the purpose of that gift was surely "to teach" people who spoke those foreign languages as their mother-tongue? What is really the difference between "the gift of healing" (point #5), which is after all a miracle, and "mighty powerful works, including miracles" (point #4). Since both involve "miracles", isn't this really just a splitting of hairs?

Would the people who had the ability to provide godly leadership (point #7) not have been either apostles or prophets or teachers (points #1-3)? Didn't some of the apostles also speak in tongues? Didn't some of the apostles also do mighty works and perform mighty healings? Again, aren't these divisions here really a bit artificial? WHY separate all of these things? And if this was supposedly some kind of hierarchy here, then where in the hierarchy would you slot in those men who fitted into two or more of these eight categories?

Did some of the apostles also qualify for ALL of these eight categories? That is, could some of the apostles (let's say Paul himself) not also be seen as: a prophet, a teacher, someone who performed mighty works and also healed the sick, who helped the poor and needy, who provided godly leadership and who spoke numerous different languages?

So what is the point of a hierarchy, when ONE MAN can quite literally simultaneously qualify for all eight categories? Now we can say that in our context today all the supposed ranks in the ministry below an evangelist "come with the territory"; i.e. an evangelist is obviously also qualified to fulfill any of the duties and responsibilities of the ministers with lower "ranks". But that analogy falls flat!

For an evangelist in Paul's day, miraculously speaking foreign languages or being a good leader wasn't necessarily guaranteed. Those points didn't automatically "come with the territory".

So WHY did Paul present these eight categories of individuals in this list? And WHY did Paul use the words "first, secondarily, thirdly"?

It's really quite simple:

Paul has drawn an analogy between the Church and a human body. He has already stated that the human body is composed of many different members (verse 20). Paul's inferred point is that the Church

is likewise composed of many different members. And in the same way that not every part of the human body is an eye or an ear, so also not every member of the Church is an apostle or prophet or teacher or worker of miracles, etc. That's the point Paul is making in verses 29-30.

So in verse 28 Paul is looking for examples to illustrate the diversity in the Church. Yes, he stretches it a little bit because he wanted to present as many "different categories" as possible, in order to illustrate his analogy more fully. So the distinction between "miracles" and "healings" is a bit artificial. But so what? This is nothing more than an illustration to highlight diversity, which illustration Paul was using as a teaching tool, to convey understanding to us.

In other words, when we read this list, we might say: "Oh, I get it. You mean some people in the Church are writers, some are good speakers, some are great administrators, some are technical people with camera and television experience, some are skilled in dealing with legal issues, etc. Is that the kind of diversity you mean, Paul?" And the Apostle Paul would very likely have said something like: "Yes, now you are getting the point I am trying to make. We have tremendous diversity amongst us. But irrespective of where any of us fit into that diversity, I'll show you what's even more important for us to focus on. I'll show you **'a more excellent way'**" (verse 31).

That's really the picture Paul is presenting. In Paul's mind the list in verse 28 was really INSIGNIFICANT compared to the MORE EXCELLENT WAY he wanted to bring to their attention. Verse 28 is just a quick off-the-cuff list Paul composed on the fly, to be precise "on the fly" to his goal of explaining godly love (chapter 13). Verses 29-30 make quite clear that Paul used verse 28 as nothing more than an illustration.

So why first, second and third?

Paul wasn't using these ordinal numbers to indicate hierarchy. Paul used these ordinal numbers **to indicate CHRONOLOGY**!

In presenting different categories within the Church, Paul took a chronological approach. He is not speaking about Israel in the Old Testament. He is speaking specifically about the NT Church of God. And in that context the word "prophets" is NOT a reference to the Old Testament prophets! Not at all!

All the individuals Paul lists in verse 28 could be found in the New Testament Church of God! All of them! Paul was speaking about "prophets" in the NT Church.

So here is what Paul, who himself wasn't around when the Church first started, had in mind:

The way this whole picture of the Church of God with many different features developed was as follows:

FIRST Jesus Christ called and chose His apostles. They were the nucleus when the Church started in Acts chapter 2 (e.g. Peter's prominent role on that occasion).

The first new category of influential individuals that was then added to the Church were prophets, a category with which all the Jewish Christians were quite familiar. So we see in Acts 13:1 that there were "certain prophets" in the Church in Antioch. Two men from the Jerusalem Church which went with Paul back to Antioch were also "prophets", their names being Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). Another prophet in the Church in Judea was a man named "Agabus" (Acts 21:10). They were called "prophets" because at one time or another God used them to convey a direct message to someone in the NT Church.

So Paul, in reconstructing how "this body with many members" had developed then said "SECONDARILY prophets". This was in a chronological sense! That's how the Church developed. The

first set of influential leaders were the apostles. Next came the New Testament leaders referred to as “prophets” because God used those specific men to carry His messages to specific people. While the man “Ananias” in Damascus is only identified by Luke as “a certain disciple” (Acts 9:10), he could equally well have been identified as “a prophet” because God commissioned Ananias to carry a very specific message to Saul (who became Paul). The men who performed that type of responsibility in the early NT Church were “prophets”.

The next set of leaders that developed in the Church were the “teachers”, a title that is very commonly applied to Jesus Christ. This is a reference to THE ORDAINED MINISTRY shown in the process of developing. These were the men who expounded the teachings of the Old Testament (the NT had not yet been written) to those people who continued to come into the Church.

So in a clearly chronological sense Paul referred to this group as “THIRDLY teachers”. This referred to the ministry once it expanded beyond the original apostles and those men God was using as prophets. The word “teachers” was synonymous with “ministers”, and there really was only one category of ministers (in addition to apostles and prophets).

Here in this ordinal numbering Paul left out the term “pastors” which we saw in Ephesians 4:11, where “pastors” are mentioned ahead of “teachers”. The omission of “pastors” here in 1 Corinthians 12:28 also shows that Paul was NOT thinking of a hierarchy with his use of first, second, third. The reason should be obvious: If you really do have a recognized hierarchy consisting of five or six steps, THERE IS NO WAY THAT YOU WOULD SOMEHOW EVER FORGET TO INCLUDE ANY OF THOSE FIVE OR SIX STEPS, when it is your explicit intention to present that hierarchy to your readers. That sort of lapse of memory is just not on!

Next, after the ministry of the NT Church has been identified as “teachers”, then various other influential activities were added somewhat randomly to the Church’s experiences. So instead of saying “FOURTHLY”, Paul simply said “after that ...” and “then ...”. There was no way to organize the remaining categories into anything like a chronological order because these powerful and frequently miraculous things occurred more or less simultaneously in different congregations.

And note! With these last five categories (i.e. categories 4-8 in our above list) Paul wasn’t really thinking of any of the apostles who did some of these things. Paul was really thinking of these things manifesting amongst unordained members of the Church. And from this perspective these things all manifested amongst unordained church members AFTER apostles, prophets and teachers had become recognized in the Church. With these last five categories Paul was wanting to include ordinary church members in his analogy about the body.

So much for 1 Corinthians 12:28.

I realize that there are still other Scriptures that might be raised by someone. But we’ve looked at enough things on this subject of godly leadership to leave that for some other occasion. So let’s summarize that we have covered.

IN SUMMARY:

1) We are living in the age where God has taken away all the real leaders, as explained in Isaiah 3. This is also largely true for God’s Church. In the past 25 years we simply have not had another leader of the caliber of Mr. Armstrong.

2) Leaders frequently see their role from a completely different perspective, when compared to the perspective of the people under their leadership.

3) The four basic character requirements for godly leadership are: integrity of character, strength of convictions, a sound understanding of right and wrong, and a willingness to accept good advice, to admit mistakes and to change.

4) Every leadership position also requires job-specific qualifications. The most important job qualification for the ministry is the ability to teach the truth of God, to explain the Bible correctly to God's people. This ability is a gift from God.

5) Any man who does not have this ability has not been called by God to the ministry, and should therefore never be ordained as a minister. This has nothing to do with the man's character. And ordination into the ministry should never be seen as a reward for faithful service. The ministry is a calling to a teaching role.

6) We thoroughly examined Ephesians 4:11-12.

7) We discussed the differences and the similarities between OT prophets and NT apostles. (By the way, "the difference" between these is that "prophets" applies to the Old Testament, and "apostles" applies to the New Testament.)

8) We discussed the differences between apostles and evangelists. The creation of the position of evangelist owes its existence to the fact that God was going to phase out the position of apostle. If God had not intended to phase out the position of apostle, then the position of evangelist would never have come into existence.

9) It is now my conviction that Mr. Armstrong was an evangelist and not an apostle.

10) It was an enormous mistake by the leadership in the Church to create a totally artificial hierarchy for the ministry. I suspect that this hierarchy represents one specific application of Isaiah 3 in a Church of God context.

11) That hierarchy in the ministry is a clear manifestation of a spirit of competition.

12) The way to discern whether God has called a man to the ministry is, in addition to evaluating the character requirements, to examine his ability to teach the truth of God to God's people, to make the Bible plain.

13) Any man who was ordained but does not really have this ability Paul called "apt to teach" should not really be a minister! This ability called "apt to teach" is the foremost reason for ordaining any man, who meets the character requirements, into the ministry. And this teaching ability is the main means by which God reveals whom He is calling into the ministry.

14) At the time of the end, when Jesus Christ's return will be imminent, it is likely that God will once again call some people to fulfill the roles of either "apostle" or "prophet", because they will be used by God to deliver God's messages to certain people. Until then it is highly unlikely that God will call anyone to either of those two positions.

15) We also examined 1 Corinthians 12:28.

And that's it for now.

Frank W Nelte