

Just What Is ‘The WORK’?

*And what was it, and how organized, in 1933,
and from A.D. 31-70?*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

The Work of God, and the organization and government of the Church of God, underwent radical changes from A.D. 31-70 to 1933, and also from 1933 to the present.

We need now to stop and get our perspective. Was it as it should have been in 1933? Is it TODAY?

Radical and significant changes have occurred in the world during these intervals. Yet the same Church of God has continued — not, in the years 1927-33, as it should have been. Yet it was the only body of believers on earth that had the true name — the “commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

WHY the Church? — its PURPOSE

The PURPOSE for which Christ built the Church exemplifies its WORK — its activities. And Christ, through the New Testament, gives us the pattern by which it, as a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM (not a human or worldly organization), should be organized to

carry on its WORK.

The PURPOSE, like most things in God’s PLAN, is dual: 1) To ANNOUNCE for a witness to the world the coming Kingdom of God (the true Gospel), to prepare the way for Christ’s coming.

2) To prepare the people whom God adds to the Church to become the Bride of Christ. To “feed the flock” on spiritual food. The Church must overcome Satan, grow in grace and spiritual character and spiritual knowledge to become immortal, divine GOD PERSONS — ruling under Christ as kings and priests spiritually.

The CHURCH shall be built to be the spiritual TEMPLE to which Christ shall come (Mal. 3:1). Yet this Malachi prophecy is speaking primarily of preparing for Christ’s *Second Coming*, as verses 2-5 clearly show.

John the Baptist’s preparing the way before Jesus’ first, *human coming* was therefore a TYPE foreshadowing one in the same power and spirit preparing the way for His coming as KING of kings and LORD of lords to RULE ALL NATIONS. John the Baptist put emphasis on the LAW (or way) of

God, and calling to REPENTANCE. So the apostle leading today’s Church must explain world evils caused by transgressing God’s law of “GIVE” (outflowing LOVE) by living the way of “GET” — calling to repentance and announcing the world tomorrow under the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, by the KINGDOM OF GOD.

What was “the WORK,” and how organized, A.D. 31-70?

In those early apostolic days, beginning A.D. 31, the Gospel was proclaimed to the world solely by the apostles and evangelists — no radio, TV, print or such modern facilities as we have today. Those proclaiming it went forth by foot, donkey or horse, rowboat or sailboat. No means of communication existed except hand-written letters carried afoot or by slow boat.

How organized? How “feed the flock”? The form of organization is outlined in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 primarily. GOD, not man or the world, set the pattern of Church organization, government and operation of its WORK — first

apostles, then evangelists, pastors, elders. Some of these were preaching, others nonpreaching, elders, and there were deacons and deaconesses helping with the more physical matters.

Only five prophets are mentioned in the New Testament and none of these contributed to Church doctrine, beliefs or teaching — or administrative or executive functions. But Old Testament prophets' writings were a source of Church doctrines and teachings.

Beginning A.D. 31 Christ was HEAD of the Church, Peter was chief apostle. After some years Peter and most of the original 12 seem to disappear from view. Jesus apparently had sent them to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” then in Western Europe and Britain (Matt. 10:6, 15:24). They were “lost” in identity and spiritually. They had lost their Hebrew language. After some years of Church existence, the apostle Paul seems to be the chief apostle in the Middle East and Rome. He was *in authority* (II Cor. 11:28, I Cor. 5:3-5, 4:20-21).

The WORK was not complex then as today. The Gospel traveled slowly. There were no modern or mechanical facilities. Paul and others often spoke to small groups (Acts 16:12-13).

But about A.D. 53 the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was being SUPPRESSED, supplanted by another that was *not* the true Gospel (Gal. 1:6-7).

By A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was overrun by the Roman armies, the proclaiming of the true Gospel

to the world had virtually or completely ceased. The name of Christ was preached, and even grace — but grace turned to license to disobey (Jude 4). They took the NAME of Christ, calling themselves “Christians” — proclaimed Jesus was CHRIST, yet DECEIVED the world (Matt. 24:5), as Jesus prophesied. But the KINGDOM OF GOD was not proclaimed. The “law was done away.” For 100 time cycles the Gospel Christ proclaimed was SUPPRESSED! The true Church continued, persecuted, often or mostly meeting secretly.

The “Work” — and how Church organized — 1927-33

I came to know of the true Church of God, fall of 1926, and as it continued to about 1940. Headquarters in 1926 were at Stanberry, Mo. After my original six months in-depth study and research into evolution as a basic approach to all knowledge, and of the Bible that to me proved to be that approach and God's revealed knowledge, I wondered, “Where is the *true* Church?” They were so impotent spiritually (Rev. 3:1), and even in biblical knowledge, yet what they did have was more biblical TRUTH than any other church my researches revealed. They had “the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus,” and the right name — and no other church had. But they were so *small* — so pitifully weak. They were not proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, but “the third angel's message.”

But of what did their “Work” consist, and how organized? They were organized on congregational (democratic) government as a “biannual general conference.” To the best of my knowledge they had less than a thousand members and an uneducated ministry — that is, not college educated. The editor of their church organ, *The Bible Advocate*, seemed their leader. Five members could form a local church, and each church had one vote. Their ministers, who knew the Bible well so far as their limited doctrines extended, went out holding meetings in members' homes, in tiny tents and such means. I inquired of older members, but none knew of a single conversion resulting from the preaching of any minister.

In 1931 the Oregon members split. The half my wife and I had fellowshipped with (never joining) formed a new church corporation as “The Oregon Conference of the Church of God.” I was ordained by this “Oregon Conference.” I preached for them from ordination, June, 1931, through November, 1931, then again from February, 1933, to August, 1933.

The “Philadelphia Era” born

In July, 1933, I started a six-nights-a-week series of meetings for six weeks in a 36-seat country schoolhouse — the Jeans school — eight miles west of Eugene, Ore. Result: 11 new baptized members plus eight of us already baptized — total: 19. It was just over 100 19-year time cycles after

the very first Church was founded by Jesus Christ. I had been ordained precisely, to the month, 100 time cycles after the first apostles were ordained, June, 1931.

On forming of the new little parent church, I ceased working under jurisdiction of the Oregon Conference, although I continued voluntarily as their pastor. The Worldwide Church of God was a newborn fledgling that Christ, the HEAD of the Church, was conducting solely by me, known beginning 1934 as the Radio Church of God. It became the Worldwide Church of God in 1968.

What IS the Work, and how organized TODAY?

As stated above, the WORK of proclaiming the Gospel Jesus brought from GOD was suppressed beginning about A.D. 53, and not proclaimed to the world after A.D. 70, for 100 time cycles.

In our day, 20th century, the churches of "Christianity" proclaim merely *their* message about Jesus. They proclaim that Jesus was the Christ. But they say "the law of GOD is done away," and therefore preach no real repentance. The "Kingdom" has become either "the Church" or some ethereal nothingness "set up in men's hearts." The Gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD was not preached. It was not proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists, one of whose cardinal doctrines was the "investigative judgment," which had the resurrected saints a thousand years with Christ IN HEAVEN. The

Church of God, Seventh Day, of Stanberry, Mo., proclaimed a "third angel's message." The true GOSPEL had not been proclaimed to the world for 1,900 years! — 100 time cycles!

Please do not misunderstand. "Time cycles" are definitely NOT a Church doctrine. But the sun, earth and moon do come into almost exact conjunction once every 19

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years. God uses the relation of the sun and moon to the earth as HIS means of marking off points in TIME. We do not make a "doctrine" out of a "day" measured by the sunsets, the month measured by the new moons as seen from earth or by the lunar year, or the solar year.

But a century of time cycles *is* a definite measure of TIME. And a

century of time cycles after the first birth of the Church was a TIME that God *DID USE* as a time to start a REBIRTH of His Church, when once again just before the close of the 6,000-year duration of the "day of man," and the ushering in of the day of the LORD, His Gospel of the Kingdom would be proclaimed worldwide (Matt. 24:14).

At this point we need to understand a PRINCIPLE by which God always has worked through humans. He has always worked through *ONE MAN* at a time. He worked through Abraham. He worked through Moses, through Joshua, through one "judge" at a time, through Samuel, through David, through Solomon. He worked through Peter and when Peter had left the Middle East, through Paul. These men had, in greater or lesser number, staff assistants under them, but God's WORK was through the ONE MAN AT A TIME!

THIS IS THE "WORK OF GOD" — and *not* a humanly organized institution, operation or organization on the worldly corporate type of organization, function and procedure.

Too many have viewed the Worldwide Church of God, and what we call the WORK, as a secular, man-devised ORGANIZATION, with its board of directors, its vice presidents, department heads and positions of AUTHORITY, some of whom have tried to pull political or corporate business tactics of rug-jerking to elevate *themselves*, and grab for POWER. They have

forgotten that the divine, supernatural JESUS CHRIST — the LIVING Christ — is the HEAD, running this Work HIS way, not the way of this world's corporate enterprises or institutions. To them GOD is NOT IN THE PICTURE.

We must RESTRUCTURE this entire WORK in our own minds and realize it is THE WORK OF GOD, through Jesus Christ who is ALIVE and active, and, on earth, through HIS APOSTLE, whom HE specially trained, prepared and chose, and now DIRECTS, EMPOWERS AND USES!

How Christ started today's Work

It was the living CHRIST who opened the door to radio in the fall of 1933 before His chosen apostle whom He already had specially trained and prepared. After a preliminary super-intense study and in-depth research into evolution (this world's concept and approach to all knowledge) and God's Word, His chosen servant was converted — CHANGED — from carnal mindedness to Spirit mindedness.

In that introductory, initial in-depth biblical study, the living Christ had revealed the BASICS to me that the professing "Christian" churches did not possess. I had gone through seven years of deep spiritual experience. Through me Christ had healed the sick, cast out demons, working supernatural spiritual miracles *besides* opening my mind to His spiritual TRUTHS, even such as no church on earth was proclaiming. It was a spiritual and

knowledgeable experience such as none has today.

The living Christ started me in the smallest manner. He always starts things the very smallest through humans, like the illustration of the grain of mustard seed. A free 15-minute morning "devotional period" for one week was opened to me on radio KORE, Eugene.

The first Sunday in 1934 the full half-hour *World Tomorrow* program went on the air, then under the name *Radio Church of God*.

Feb. 1, *The Plain Truth*, Vol. 1, No. 1, made its humble bow. A mimeographed *Bulletin* was the fledgling pioneer of *The Good News*.

I continued personal campaigns speaking in schoolhouses, a tent seating some 400 and whatever halls or auditoriums I could rent.

My first office was a room in the old Masonic Temple in Eugene. I had engaged the hall for meetings for the public three nights a week at \$10 per month. The room that made an office came with it. Later I rented an inside office, a skylight, no outside windows or ventilation of any kind, at \$5 per month.

I could not afford a stenographer or secretary. My wife was my sole staff. However, this was the 20th century. I was beginning to use the modern facilities of our materially advanced civilization. *The Plain Truth* had started on a borrowed mimeograph. The local A.B. Dick Co. mimeograph dealer allowed me to use his mimeo-

graph for that first 250-copy edition of *The Plain Truth*. However, he didn't want that to continue every month. He found an old ancestor to the mimeograph — a hand-cranked Neostyle, which he sold me for \$10. The first edition stencils were cut on a borrowed typewriter. I also managed to obtain a secondhand typewriter for \$10 for the second month.

So already I was using modern radio — though the smallest in power — a 100-watt station. And now a typewriter and a mimeograph.

But we live in a far, far different world than that of apostles Peter and Paul.

The word *apostle* means "one sent forth" with Christ's Gospel message — the same message Jesus brought from God.

As stated above, Peter was chief apostle and human leader in the earliest years of the Church. After Peter seems to drop from sight, Paul was in charge, on the earthly, human level of the Church. Following this biblical pattern and example, Christ's apostle is human leader under Christ, and in His authority, today.

Why only one apostle today?

We live today in a far, far different world. The world's population has multiplied many times over. In the wake of the invention of the printing press and the typewriter, KNOWLEDGE has increased astoundingly not only, but also the diffusion of knowledge. Unfortunately, that knowledge is virtually 100 percent materialistic. The world is still in the darkness of

spiritual ignorance. It has lost — or rather *never gained* — the TRUE VALUES in understanding.

But escalation of carnal, selfishly motivated diffusion of knowledge, the advent and swift development of modern science and technology, the effects of the machine age, all have made today's world a fast-moving, complicated and complex world utterly DIFFERENT than the world of the apostles Peter and Paul.

Instead of requiring *more* apostles to go forth carrying the message, and directing the oversight of the earthly Work, it requires but ONE! Today that one can speak a message with a microphone and TV cameras before him, and by electronic magic via satellite be SEEN speaking live by vast audiences in other parts of the world. Or he can record a message to be heard and/or seen later on television or radio in any — or many — parts of the world by vast audiences. Or he can write messages on his typewriter, which are reprinted in newspapers, magazines or other means of mass-duplication, distributed and read by thousands or millions of people.

In Paul's day he could be heard by as many people as could hear a natural, unamplified voice. *It would have taken many hundreds of apostles* to convey the message to as many people then as it does today.

Today we have mechanical, organizational facilities so that one man can direct the functions of as many as hundreds of apostles could have done in the days of the Pauline

ministry.

But today, these same advanced mechanical facilities necessitate certain differences in organizational functions and procedures — though basically *THE PATTERN IS THE SAME!*

As the Church grew for 35 years at the unmatched rate of 30 percent increase annually over each preceding year, the use of modern facilities increased. God continually added those He called. Ambassador College was founded in 1947, and later the colleges in Britain and Texas. Dozens, scores, hundreds of God-educated ministers were ordained. We became, by 1968, the Worldwide Church of God.

All this time, it was *the Work of Jesus Christ, through His chosen apostle*, carrying on the Church's operations, fulfilling the DUAL *spiritual* PURPOSES for the Church: 1) proclaiming to the world, for a witness, the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, and 2) feeding the flock — preparing those God called in righteous spiritual character to become the Bride of Christ, to sit with Him in His throne, and under Him to rule the nations.

The WORK consists of proclaiming the Gospel — by radio, by television, in print (booklets, books, *The Plain Truth*, messages in advertising space in magazines and newspapers, the Ambassador College Correspondence Course).

This is a *spiritual* work. Broadcasting, both radio and TV, is done by the apostle. Most booklets and books are written by the

apostle. The "Personal" — most read — usually the lead article and often other articles are by the apostle. Other articles are by staff writers trained in Ambassador College as were all ministers. The Ambassador College Correspondence Course, with thousands studying it, is all the teaching of the apostle. In this Gospel-proclaiming area is the Mail Processing Center, where hundreds of thousands — even millions — of letters are received from listeners, viewers and readers. This center includes ordained ministers, trained by the apostle, who answer letters asking biblical questions and seeking spiritual counsel.

In the area of "feeding the flock," first is Ambassador College, educating and training men for the ministry, and others for various positions in the Work. The teaching is that of Christ's apostle, who is president and chancellor of the college.

The ministry, consisting of hundreds of ordained ministers teaching, as the apostle taught them, in local churches worldwide.

Serving them for the apostle is the Ministerial Services Department.

Also under the apostle and cooperating with Ministerial Services is the Festival Office, planning and arranging the annual Feast of Tabernacles attended in many festival sites around the entire world.

Feeding the flock in print is *The Good News*, monthly, and *The Worldwide News*, a tabloid, semi-monthly, besides the *Pastor General's Report*, weekly to the ministry. □