

Church of God, The Eternal

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Church Government and Delegation

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Dear Brethren:

In any significant endeavor, organization is essential for achieving constructive results. Once any enterprise expands beyond the capacity of one individual to manage single-handedly, sharing the workload with others demands some decisions about structure, authority, and accountability. Without mutual understanding and agreement, it is impossible for two or more individuals to work successfully together toward a common goal. God began to reveal these very principles to Mr. Armstrong once God's work grew beyond the reach of his own personal efforts, at the time Ambassador College first became a reality in the late 1940s. As well, from the first beginnings of this remnant group more than twenty-five years ago, the principles of God-ordained structure became critical in fulfilling our important service to God's faithful people. During that time, a number of ordained men came for a time to assist the minister God used to preserve His Truth, after the church apostasy in the early 1970s. Even though many of these men left over time for a variety of stated reasons, in the final analysis they proved they fundamentally rejected our organizational structure. Thankfully that is not the case today, as ministers who have proven their faithfulness over the years are working together to serve God's remnant body in the United States, Europe, and Asia—all in agreement about the concept of church government—providing for genuine unity and oneness.

As many of you may be aware, for a number of months we have been seeking God's guidance to help evaluate ways to serve the brethren more effectively. With only two ministers here in the United States—and those two serving not only local congregations in Oregon, but those across the nation and in other countries around the world—it is sometimes difficult for us to provide the level of personalized service that might be

needed at any given time by one of God's children. Over the years, the value of our lead men in key areas around this country has grown in significance, supplying some of those critical services in local areas. Yet, we now believe our overall level of service might still be significantly enhanced if we began to use some of these same men in more expanded capacities. The action we are planning is the *ordination* of key men in strategic areas who will have the authority to provide spiritual counseling and anointing for healing, in addition to the administrative work and personal sacrifice they have already been offering. But because the mention of ordination automatically raises the question of authority—what it is, who possesses it, how it is vested, and how it relates to the authority of others—it is important that we address some of the fundamentals of legitimate church government, and dispel some of the false concepts that are rampant in the thinking of many today.

Unfortunately, the very issue of church government—simply meaning God-ordained structure—has become the lightning rod of controversy for many of those who have come and gone—ministers and laity alike—over past decades. And no wonder! When it comes to the work of God among men, there is probably nothing that polarizes or divides people more than the topic of authority in the church. This is especially true among those who have ever been affiliated in some way with God's true church of the last days. After the experiences of many within our parent body, and the fall-out from mistakes made in administrative orientation, it is not surprising that so many have since repudiated significant aspects of authority principles. But as we shall soon see, there are two mistakes that can cause us to reject God's will, and either one of them is spiritually deadly. One is the abuse of authority by leaders in the church for personal advantage. The other is the rejection of God-ordained structure because of the past failings of men. Either orientation is wrong, and puts us at odds with the Truth. How then do we put it all into perspective, and avoid the myriad traps that are lurking in the concepts and writings of men today—men who have rejected God in one way or another—concerning proper church organization?

Service is the Key

The very objective of the Christian endeavor is service. Mr. Armstrong used to say it is the way of "give" instead of "get." "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13–14). Likewise, the very purpose of the ministry is also one of service. The meaning of the Greek word translated as minister, *diakonos*, specifically denotes a

servant, including one who waits on tables. The role of a truly faithful minister is to sacrifice himself totally for the benefit of God's people—His flock—as a dutiful shepherd. Jesus Christ personally taught this principle to His disciples. Just prior to His own death, Christ accentuated this requirement by instituting the foot-washing service at His final Passover.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:12–17).

He emphasized that even He—Jesus Christ—who held the highest office under the Father, did not use that authority selfishly, but to serve the people that He loved. Christ was preparing these chosen men to fulfill a crucial leadership responsibility after He was gone. But lest they should misunderstand the purpose of those offices and begin to focus on personal recognition and advantage, He emphasized by His own behavior exactly how He wanted them to think and act. Was this not precisely as He had conducted Himself within His own ministry?

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . .
I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:11, 14–15).

These disciples were soon to assume responsibility to continue Christ's very work, acting in His name, and by His authority. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20). What was occurring was the first delegation of responsibility to human agents who would join the work of Christ and the Father in establishing and serving the Church—Jesus Christ's very own Body. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matthew 28:19–20).

The Delegation Principle

The principle of delegation has been widely neglected in the assertions of those who argue against definitive structure within the ministry of God's church. Yet understanding this concept makes very plain the real orientation of God. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines delegation as "the act of investing with authority to act for another." Delegation is a principle understood, taught, and practiced in every well-run enterprise. It is the tool that allows someone to enlist the help of others to accomplish his work. The sole proprietor, who runs his business single-handedly, can be very successful without delegating, as long as the work remains within his own capacity to manage. But how often have we heard of a business owner encountering problems once the company becomes too large to manage alone? It requires a whole different set of skills to be able to succeed with an expanded enterprise employing helpers. Primarily, it requires the ability to delegate—to accomplish predetermined objectives through others—rather than doing the work single-handedly.

For delegation to occur, there must first exist a party who possesses some specific responsibility and accompanying authority. This primary individual then selects someone else to act as his agent—to conduct business on his behalf—with the authority necessary to fulfill that charge. The primary party can choose to vest as little or as much authority in his agent as he desires. But certain cardinal principles are imperative to grasp. First, this primary party can never delegate more than the scope of his own vested authority. You cannot distribute to others that which you do not possess yourself. Secondly, the agent can never unilaterally expand or create his own authority. As an agent, his entire responsibility emanates from the existing authority of someone else. Thirdly, if allowed by the primary party, an agent can further delegate any part of his vested authority to another party, who will then be acting as his agent. Any such secondary delegation is automatically governed by the same cardinal principles outlined above.

The best example to demonstrate this model is the very relationship between God the Father, His Son, and the men Christ chose to become apostles. God the Father is owner of heaven and earth, and exercises complete authority over all that exists (Luke 10:21). According to His will, the Father chose to delegate incredible power to Jesus Christ to accomplish a specific objective:

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand (John 3:35).

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14).

Notice next that the responsibility Christ holds meets every definition of delegated authority, including the fact He is limited to that which was vested in Him by the Father, He cannot make Himself equal, and He cannot expand the scope of His own authority for any alternative enterprise.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49–50).

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

Does the fact that the Father has chosen to work through the Son by delegation—rather than perform that work directly Himself—lessen in any way the significance of that authority in the hands of His agent, Jesus Christ? "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23).

As we can see, the use of delegation does not diminish the force of vested authority one iota. As Jesus Christ is acting as an agent in accord with His delegated responsibilities, He carries full authority to represent the Father, as if the Father were there Himself. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). At an appointed time, when that job is completed, Christ will turn that very power back over to the Father, from whom it originally came. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). But in the meantime, how is it that Christ is carrying out His delegated responsibility? Is He doing every bit of the work Himself, or has He also chosen to delegate a portion of His authority to other helpers?

Christ's Delegation

We have already noted that Jesus Christ spent the years of His ministry training disciples for future responsibility. We have also seen that those men were not being trained to set up their own work, but to represent Jesus Christ as His very agents, carrying out the continuation of His personal ministry.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 10:5–7).

According to the very same rules of delegation, these men were restricted in authority to a precise responsibility, even as Christ Himself was limited by the Father at a given time (Matthew 15:24). These men carried no inherent authority of their own, but only that which emanated from Christ, even as He had been given of the Father.

Ministerial Delegation

But is that the end of the chain of delegation? Did these men who became apostles then carry out all of the required work themselves—single-handedly? Not at all! They too were given authorization to select other men to help them fulfill their obligations in Christ's service, and these men were further authorized to ordain helpers in local areas. Notice how Paul exercised authority over his area of responsibility.

To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee . . . (Titus 1:4–5).

Notice, Paul made the appointment. Titus acted as an agent of Paul. In that capacity, Titus was authorized to ordain other helpers who were accountable to him. The charge of those local elders was a function of Titus' authority, as delegated to him by Paul, as commissioned by Jesus Christ at the behest of the Father. Not one of those men had any independent authority, expanded outside that specific delegation chain. Timothy was another one of those whom Paul ordained as an evangelist, and he delegated to this young man authority to act on his behalf within Paul's jurisdiction.

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. . . . Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, . . . Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. . . . That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy [Spirit] which dwelleth in us. (2 Timothy 1:6, 9, 11, 13–14).

Paul is here admonishing Timothy to remain faithful to his ordination in time of distress, remembering his responsibility as a delegated agent of Paul for the work of Christ's ministry. When Paul ordained Timothy, Timothy did not then become Paul's equal, sharing democratically the duties of service to the Gentile churches. No, Timothy's authority was limited to that which was vested in him by Paul. The majority of the book of First Timothy highlights the relationship that existed between them, as one in authority instructing his subordinate. After very specific instruction through the first five chapters, notice the statement of Paul, reaffirming his authority to instruct, in the sight of the Father, the Son, and even the angels. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21).

What is evident is that the principle of delegated authority—even that which the world's institutions understand—is actually the creation of God, and that which exists for the purpose of harmony and order in a collective endeavor. But what about those who claim this model describes a hierarchy, and that Christ did not organize His Church with any hierarchy in mind?

Hierarchy—a Dirty Word?

As *hierarchy* is casually defined by many former members of the church—a system intended to create privileged classes, a promotional ladder for self-advancement, and a pecking-order mentality—we absolutely agree this is not what God intended in His Church. Not at all! But this is not the technical definition of *hierarchy*. Hierarchy is often associated with certain religions—like Catholicism—because of their very structured government. But the word simply means "the organization of people at different ranks in an administrative body" (*Oxford English Concise Dictionary*). It does not necessarily denote the trappings of behavior that are included in specific human organizations. The word *rank* is another one of those terms that makes many former

members of the church recoil. Yet, is there any doubt that Jesus Christ is of a lower rank in authority than the Father? That the apostles were of a lower rank than Christ? That the men they ordained were of a lower rank than they themselves? We can avoid certain terms to try and cater to individual sensitivities, but there is no escaping the fact God's form of order requires lines of authority and accountability which is anything but democratic. The government that we all look forward to sharing when Christ returns will not be a democracy. It is a theocracy governed from the top down. That very principle cannot therefore be wrong. Yet many men—even some who were once in our own fellowship—would have us believe God intended His Church to be governed by democratic equals in a power-sharing arrangement. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we shall see, there is not only a lack of evidence in the Bible for such a premise, there is substantial evidence to the contrary.

Rejection of Authority Prophesied

Before proceeding further, we need to take note that rejection of authority is one of the key indicators of the days leading to Christ's Second Coming. In the last days, God declares His people would become hateful concerning government.

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, *despise dominion*, and speak evil of dignities (Jude 4, 8) [emphasis ours].

To get a dramatic view of what Jude was inspired to write, allow us to quote his thoughts as expressed in *The Living Bible*:

Yet these false teachers carelessly go right on living their evil, immoral lives, degrading their bodies and laughing at those in authority over them, even scoffing at the Glorious Ones. Yet Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, when he was arguing with Satan about Moses' body, did not dare to accuse even Satan, or jeer at him, but simply said, 'The Lord rebuke you.' But these men mock and curse at anything they do not understand, and, like animals, they do whatever they feel like, thereby ruining their souls (Jude 8–10).

The word translated as "dominion" is the Greek word, *kuriotes*, meaning government. This is the translation rendered for the same word in Second Peter, chapter two:

But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and *despise government*. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption (2 Peter 2:10–12) [emphasis ours].

It is a serious offense in the eyes of God to resist His will regarding church organization. It is something that should not be taken lightly, and certainly should not be evaluated out of the thoughts of our own natural minds—that which by nature opposes God's governmental design—even as Lucifer did (Isaiah 14:13–14).

Matthew 20:25–28

There is no passage in the Bible that has been used more to disavow God's intended hierarchy and delegated authority in the Church than Matthew 20:25–28. The setting is the request by James' and John's mother for Christ to give her sons preeminent offices in His Kingdom. The other apostles became indignant at the overt attempt at ladder-climbing. Christ then used this as an opportunity to teach His disciples a crucial object lesson:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25–28).

The explanation given by the "despisers of government" is that Christ was saying that after His ascension, there would be no relationship of authority among the apostles, except that of equal cooperation—in essence, a democracy. But is this true? First, the word translated as dominion in verse twenty-five is not *kuriotes*—meaning

government—but the Greek word, *katakurieuo*, meaning to lord against, and to overcome. It means to rule by tyranny, as in the case of Acts 19:16, in which the seven sons of Sceva were leapt upon by an evil spirit and overcome (*katakurieuo*). Nowhere in this passage, or any other, does Christ tell His disciples there would be no structure in their relationship one with another. He did not say there would be *no government*, but *no tyrannical use of government*! Can this be further demonstrated? Absolutely!

The intent of this entire passage is not to speak against organized structure, but to denounce *inappropriate behavior* of those who *hold* offices of authority. Notice in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, Christ did not say there would be no greater offices, or that no one would be given a chief office, but He addressed Himself to the *behavior* that is appropriate for one who holds such office. The disciples at that time were still clamoring for position for the purpose of personal glory and advantage. It is the very orientation that men naturally take when given an opportunity for power. To emphasize His point and provide a specific example, Christ confirmed in verse twenty-eight that any apostle given higher office must exercise that authority, *even as Christ exercised His own office*. If Jesus Christ were speaking against government structure, why did He use Himself as the example in this case? Does not Christ bear supreme authority over the Church? If Christ were denouncing any authoritative relationship among the apostles, He would not have used His own office as an example. What is clear is that Christ intended to emphasize that anyone holding office—as a delegated representative of Jesus Christ—must behave himself in like manner, devoting himself completely to the service of his charges, even unto death.

Does Structure Negate Cooperation?

It is also asserted by those standing in opposition to God's structure for the Church that the offices of the apostles could not have been configured with greater and lesser authority because the only example is one of collective unity in decision-making. Many scriptures are quoted to show that decisions were made in the church with popular accord, including Acts 1:15–26; 6:3–6; 11:22; 15:22–28, and many other texts. Great emphasis is laid upon the use of the word "they" as the source of decisions, rather than singling out one particular man. There is no doubt that the early Church is a testament to the unity and oneness that permeated the ministry and laity alike, emanating from the Holy Spirit which inspired them all. But do these scriptures—or any others—prove that structured government was not simultaneously present within that Body? This conclusion is unsubstantiated and based upon the presumption that cooperation and real unity cannot exist within a structured body. But is that true?

Once again, what about the relationship between the Father and the Son? We have already shown that there is a definite relationship of authority within the God Family. It is not a democracy. Yet, at the same time there exists perfect harmony and unity between those two Beings. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Obviously, the existence of authority in Their relationship does not impede unity, oneness, and agreement in any way!

What about marriage? Did not God create marriage with very specific authority vested in the husband (Ephesians 5:22–23)? If we are to accept the anarchist view, this very relationship of authority in marriage precludes the opportunity for real unity and mutual accord between a husband and wife. But anyone who respects God's Law rejects such error. When husbands use their authority appropriately, they pour themselves out to serve and sacrifice for their wives. And when wives have the proper respect for authority, they willingly submit to their husbands, in the Lord. If you ever witness a married couple fulfilling these commands, what you see is the *appearance* of an equal partnership! Why? Because the husband and wife are both working together, considering the other in what they say and do, and showing their willingness to sacrifice for the other. The husband is not flaunting his God-given authority for personal advantage, and the wife is not seeking to resist his authority.

If such unity exists in the God Family, and God created marriage to be likewise blessed for a converted husband and wife, are we claiming that the same unity cannot also exist within the church—as an organized Body—where ministers and laity are both led by that same Spirit? Such claim is a direct denial of Jesus Christ and all that the God Family stands for.

Another fallacious assertion is that God intentionally decentralized authority in the first century church to prevent a single leader who, if he were to become corrupt, could lead the entire church into apostasy. Those rejecting God's authority claim none of the apostles were under the jurisdiction of any other, so that the possible corruption of one would be limited in scope, and could not destroy the entire Church. We are told that men always corrupt themselves when given authority, and can never be trusted. Therefore, even though top-down structure will be used in the Kingdom—when ruled by Christ in person—this is not the case within the Church today, under the direction of men. This certainly sounds good on the surface, but is totally unsubstantiated in the Bible. Not only that, but the entire logic of this argument will not withstand scrutiny.

If God did not institute His "preferred" form of government among men in the Church—because they always corrupt authority—how do we explain the laws of marriage? We have already seen that God placed specific authority in the office of the husband. Yet, according to the above theory, since men can never be trusted to use authority correctly, it would seem this weakness should have led God to make husbands and wives equal partners, collaborating together for the good of the family. But He did not do so! The men who write these very concepts would never give up authority over their own families, yet desire us to accept this claim concerning God's spiritual family—the Church.

Was it really God's purpose to prevent a church-wide apostasy by decentralizing authority in the first century? If so, it certainly seems that God failed. The first century Church became corrupted within the first few decades after Christ's death. It was not due to the establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in the third century, as is quoted from certain deceived scholars. No, that departure from Truth within the Church began while the Apostles were still alive, in the second half of the first century! Were not Paul and John both fighting corrupt teachers who had risen up from within to sway the members?

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29–30).

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Corinthians 11:18–19).

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (3 John 1:9–10).

Obviously, that apostasy had already taken place under the very watch of the apostles. If they were all organized in only autonomous, local congregations, and this was a supposed hedge against church-wide corruption, it appears this loose form of government did not succeed after all. Overriding all of this, God said that apostasy had

to occur! Centralized or decentralized government notwithstanding, God's Church was going to depart from the Truth. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This is precisely what happened in the first century church, just as it occurred in the last day church. Some, arguing for democratic, decentralized government in the church today, look upon the poor fruits that came out of our parent body beginning three decades ago, believing it was top-down government that was its downfall, and that the apostasy might have been averted had the church been structured differently. But no, all that occurred was prophesied, and would have happened regardless of the form of organizational structure. We need to recognize that God's will is being performed in every stage of our experiences.

Galatians 2:7–8

What is totally skirted by those attempting to refute delegated responsibility is the clear record of the authority vested in both Peter and Paul by God.

But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, *as* the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) (Galatians 2:7–8) [emphasis ours].

This passage verifies that Paul's authority in serving the Gentiles was *as* Peter's authority over the work to Israel. What does this tell us? We know very little about the direct relationship of authority that God ordained between the Twelve Apostles, who were all sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). But we certainly know a lot more about the organizational structure that existed in the ministry to the Gentiles under Paul. We have already seen that Paul selected men—by inspiration of the Holy Spirit—to help him complete his mission. It required many hands to minister to the needs of congregations scattered throughout Asia Minor. Those men whom Paul ordained, including Titus and Timothy, became accountable to assist Paul in his God-given responsibility. Those evangelists further expanded the number of helpers by delegating part of their authority to selected elders. But the ultimate accountability for that entire region was vested in Paul and included all of the men who were operating as assistants to him in that endeavor.

Likewise, we are told Peter's authority for the work toward the Israelites was *as* Paul's authority in Asia Minor for the Gentiles. While there is no indication that either Paul, Peter, or anyone else had total jurisdiction over both Israelite and Gentile works, we definitely have evidence of these two men exercising authority over significant church enterprises. If the other eleven apostles were sent to unique areas around the world to serve the scattered Israelites, but the overriding commission to Israel as a whole was vested in Peter, how is there any other conclusion but that those eleven apostles derived their authority through Peter as the one Christ selected to be accountable? The anarchists cry foul at this conclusion, seeking to prove that Peter did not exercise such authority because the Book of Acts does not show him wielding authority in any decisive or heavy-handed way. But as we have already noted, we should not be looking for evidence of Gentile tyranny in Peter's behavior to prove he was acting with Christ's authority over the Israelitish work. The evidence of God's Holy Spirit at work would be one of unity, deference to others, agreement, and mutual cooperation, which is exactly what Acts does show.

Our Resulting Plan

So much more could be expounded, but for purposes of this *Monthly Letter* it is our intent to explain the overriding principles God ordained for organizing His Church as a framework for explaining our own activities in these very last days.

As we mentioned at the outset, we feel compelled to expand the delegated authority of some of our key men around this country, to increase the level of service we can provide to the scattered faithful of God. The two of us here bear a worldwide responsibility in supporting the collective flock and the ministry in Europe and Asia. The weight of local responsibilities for the Oregon congregations, maintaining the church office, providing a worldwide sermon tape and *Monthly Letter* program, and continuing our yearly travel schedule, all limit our capacity to handle personally each need that may arise. Yet, we are certain God has provided and will provide the resources needed to care for His priceless flock.

The upcoming ordinations we are proposing will provide the means to serve more effectively this scattered remnant body. We intend to call these men Elders, after the New Testament example, for their duties in designated regions. One man has already been ordained for the Portland, Oregon/Washington region. The men who are yet to be selected are already among those who have proven themselves in delegated duties within this group over many years (1 Timothy 3:1–13). By laying hands upon each one of them,

we will be vesting in them the authority to anoint for healing, and to provide spiritual counseling—that which until now has been reserved within our own personal authority.

One who has been previously ordained for specific responsibilities—as in a deacon—cannot of himself expand that authority. As we have shown, all authority of the helpers derives from him whom God has charged with the overall responsibility. The anarchists will tell you that Stephen and Phillip, who were ordained as deacons (Acts 6:3–6), later surfaced as evangelists (Acts 21:8), without record of any additional ordination. But just because the Bible does not record the event does not mean it did not occur. There is certainly no evidence to support the notion that each man, as led by the Holy Spirit directly, can increase his authority in the church just by demonstrating gifts. If there is not order, which comes by working through authorized servants, there is only chaos and confusion. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). The principle of delegation requires that any expansion of responsibility be legitimate. We intend to certify the legitimacy of our helpers through the Biblical requirement of the laying on of hands.

Brethren, the time has come for us to put away any remaining vestiges of sensitivity from the abuse of authority that occurred in the church decades ago. Many of you have had the opportunity to witness for years the proper application of that authority in the behavior and personal example of the one God has preserved in His Truth since that apostasy. God has provided ample means for us to prove that good fruits are manifested when faithful ministers fulfill their obligation to use authority correctly—even as Christ Himself taught. If we honestly embrace the Truth God has revealed to us, we can have the peace of mind that comes through the Spirit, and we can also enjoy the unity and oneness manifested in the early fruits of the first century church. That opportunity to receive a crown of glory in Jesus Christ's perfect theocracy awaits those who have a legitimate respect for the principles God delivered, including the truth about authority and delegation.

As a steward of that Way of Life,
I remain your loyal and devoted servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned centrally below the typed text.

Jon W. Brisby