Amazing 2000-Year History of the Church of God

How much do you really know about OUR CHURCH—YOUR CHURCH? Have you supposed it was founded by or through the efforts of Herbert W. Armstrong? IT WAS NOT! Hundreds of you will be ASTONISHED to see the true history of this, our Church—GOD'S Church. This actual true and authentically documented history is breathtaking. Here, then, are the astounding facts! This surprising truth is bound up in the real meaning, revealed at last, of the seven churches in Revelation!

by Herman L. Hoeh

Here is the truth about our church! Almost two thousand years ago a messenger came to this earth bringing startling news of a coming world government!

That messenger was Jesus Christ. His message was the good news or gospel of the kingdom—the coming world-ruling government of God (Mark 1:14)—the very family of God into which we must be born to gain eternal life (John 3:3-5).

Jesus came to deliver this message from God to man. He did not come to preach it personally to the whole world. Instead, Jesus spent his ministry preparing the foundation for the church which would carry his gospel of the kingdom to all nations.

Why Jesus Promised to Build Church

Jesus devoted his ministry to calling out disciples, teaching them the gospel, setting them an example by his own ministry. He authorized them with the greatest commission ever given to human beings—to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in the whole world (Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15).

Before Jesus ascended to the throne of God, he commanded the apostles and disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were imbued with the Holy Spirit, which made them the begotten sons of God and endowed them with the power of God to carry out His work.

Jesus founded his church by sending the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Monday, June 18, 31 A.D.

It was an inspired church, a church in which Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, was living his life and THROUGH WHICH JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH AND PUBLISH HIS GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

What Is the True Church?

The true church is the collective body of individuals, called out from the ways of this present world, who have totally surrendered themselves to the rule of God, and who, through the Holy Spirit, become the begotten sons of God (Rom. 8:9).

Jesus purchased the church by shedding his own blood for it (Acts 20:28). The true church is not some politically organized denomination which one joins or becomes a member of in order to be "saved." Jesus did not die for some one organization called a church.

You can't join the true church; only God can put you into it!

The church is called the body of Christ because it is a spiritual organism whose living, active head is Jesus Christ, in the same sense that the husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:23,31).

Church Subject to Government of God

Notice that from the very beginning the church was subject to the rule of God. It was not a government by the will of man or boards of men. Jesus is the head of the church. He rules the church.

Directly under Jesus, God set the apostles first in positions of authority to carry out God's will, to be instruments in His hand, through which He could spread the gospel and lead the church (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Paul the
apostle was such a man. He was subject to Christ, so yielded to God that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, could make His will known to him and made known to Paul that he was not free to go and to act as he pleased.

Under Paul in authority were the evangelists, such as Timothy and Titus, who assisted the apostles by carrying out the will of God as Jesus revealed it to the apostles. Under the authority of the apostles and evangelists were the pastors and teaching elders in local congregations (Titus 1:5).

This was the government of God. The Father manifested His will to Jesus. Jesus revealed the Father's will to the apostles, who, in turn, revealed it to the evangelists. Through the apostles and evangelists, God's will was manifested to the local churches.

Church Grows in Truth

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus prayed that His church would be kept ONE in the Father's name. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be ONE, as we are" (John 17:21).

The true church—the "church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2)—is not many divided quarreling denominations, but ONE church, composed of many scattered members, ONE church united in Spirit, mind, attitude and heart because its members have totally surrendered their wills to God and have yielded to correction and reproof from the Word of God.

No denomination could be the true church, because none has been willing to admit where it has been wrong, none has received God's correction, none has allowed the Holy Spirit to guide it into truth. The church which Jesus is building is composed of those scattered individuals who have God's Holy Spirit, who admit when they are wrong, as the apostle Peter did when he made a serious mistake (2:11).

Now notice Jesus' promise in John 16:13. He would send the Spirit of truth who "will GUIDE you INTO all truth."

Here is the key which proves who are in God's church. It is composed only of those who are growing INTO truth as God reveals it. The moment anyone ceases to GROW, but wants to retain only what he had five or ten years ago, from that moment on the Holy Spirit ceases to live in him.

False Teachers Prophesied by Christ and Apostles

Now let's notice what was prophesied to happen to the church.

Jesus warned that there would be a great falling away—MANY false ministers deceiving the MANY (Matt. 24:4,5). Paul earnestly warned the elders that from their own number some would depart from the faith (Acts 20:29,30). False apostles and false brethren arose within local church assemblies (II Cor. 11:13-15,26). Soon they outnumbered the faithful who alone made up the TRUE Church of God.

Several years before the apostle John died he had to write his third letter about the fact that the few faithful brethren that were left were being put out of the local assembly (III John 9, 10). Yet they, only, constituted the real Church of God!

Not only did Jesus prophesy that false ministers would deceive the many, but he also said his church would be scattered and persecuted. The church first became scattered in the days of the apostles (Acts 8:1).

But that did not mean the scattered individuals were not part of the church. They were the church because they were joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Those who drove them out became the false church—the church of the god of this world—"the synagogue of Satan." Notice what Daniel says about the church: "And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 11:33-35).

How plain! The true church was forced out of the local organized congregations and scattered. False churches would arise professing to be the churches of Christ. False brethren would betray God's people.

But Jesus promised to be with the faithful remnant to the end of the age—to guide His people into truth.

Where has His church been these 1900 years?

An Amazing Prophecy!

In the book of Revelation is an amazing prophecy. Almost no one understands it, yet it is so very plain. It is the seven churches of Revelation.

Notice Revelation 1:12-13. John sees a vision of seven candlesticks and Jesus in their midst. The Bible interprets the seven candlesticks to mean seven particular church congregations (verse 20). Jesus Christ is pictured as dwelling among the seven churches as though they were a type of the entire church.

There is the answer. Jesus dwells in the entire church. Since this vision pictures Him dwelling only in seven churches, those seven churches represent the entire church!

Jesus chose the seven because they formed a perfect two-fold pattern.

First, they were typical of general conditions among God's people anywhere. That is why we today are admonished to hear what the Holy Spirit says to all the seven churches.

Second, those seven churches, each with its own particular characteristics, were chosen because their location in successive order on a long mail route was typical of seven successive stages of expansion of the church of God through all ages.

Who ARE the Seven Churches?

WHY have all Bible students, until NOW, been unable to identify these churches? It is due to the fact that everyone has assumed, erroneously, that these picture the seven stages of the visible, organized churches which have called themselves "Christian." In other words, it has been assumed that the churches of THIS world are pictured in Revelation 2 and 3 as continuations of the true church in apostolic days.

Everyone, it seems has supposed that, following the apostolic Church, these seven churches picture the course of history in the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches—the churches of the god of this world!

This is not true!

These two chapters of Revelation picture, and convey God's message to (Please continue on page 7)
G and I are presently in Santiago, upon me more than ever before the vital importance of the great work God has commissioned us to do, and the urgency of completing it!

The Work of God

If you are like many of the brethren in God’s Church, you tend to take things for granted! Most of us begin to take each other for granted, and so begin to neglect our real Christian duty toward one another. It is because of this that many weak brethren become disinterested, or, because of hurt feelings, leave the Church! Not only do we take each other for granted, and the material blessings God has heaped upon us, but what is worse, we begin to take the WORK OF GOD for granted!

For instance when some hear of a recent crisis in the finances of the work, or that a radio station is threatening to cut off any program, they begin to think, “Well, it'll all work out somehow.” Instead of becoming so deeply concerned about this work, just as they would if their very lives were in danger, and beginning to FAST and PRAY in deep, sincere ZEAL toward God, some simply sit back and wait for the next Co-Workers’ bulletin. They are sure they will read that Mr. Armstrong has “worked it all out, somehow.”

Could this be you? Do you really become CONCERNED when the very work of God is endangered, or hindered in some way? Do you?

Think of it!

The work of God! Most of us have begun to take that very phrase for granted. It’s just another name, like the “Sears Roebuck Company,” or the “Chrysler Corporation.” Many of God’s own people have begun to take HIM for granted!

But this truly is the very WORK, the DOING of the awe-inspiring, all-powerful God who created the heavens and the earth, who spoke to Adam, who talked and walked with Enoch, who directed Noah to build the ark, who saved Moses and our ancestors at the Red Sea! The God who protected Daniel, who revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar, who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead! It is THIS God whom WE SERVE! It is THIS God, the CREATOR, who is directly IN, who is GUIDING, WATCHING OVER, VITALLY CONCERNED about His own work!

Your Part to Perform

Jesus Christ performed the WORK of God on this earth (John 17:4). However, Jesus only finished the work God gave Him to do. He then commissioned His disciples to go out into all nations and perform the work of God—that of preaching the Gospel to every creature! (Matt. 28: 19-20). That very commission is being performed today, by this work, going out from Ambassador College, at the Headquarter’s Church in Pasadena! Today, we are beginning to fulfill the commission of Jesus in great POWER, reaching out to many nations! Mr. Rea and I are overwhelmed to think that we are possibly the first two representatives of God to be in these darkened countries in this age, if not in the history of the world!

God has given you a definite PART to perform in this great task! You have heard this many times, you have seen it written, you’ve heard Mr. Armstrong preach about the great WORK being done from the pulpit at the annual Feast days. Are you tired of it? Does it BORE you? If it dies, if your very being is not completely wrapped up in this work, then you are not the kind of Christian you ought to be!

In the last article I wrote for the Good News magazine, I reminded you of the great task of judging that God will give to those who are worthy. Part of that judging may be upon the wicked spirits now loose on the earth (I Cor. 6:2-3). But have you ever thought just how much this work NEEDS God's Government?

The Plight of This World

Many times, perhaps, we are allowing our entire concentration to dwell on the fact that God is going to PUNISH this world for its sins, rather than how much God LOVES this world, and all the suffering humans who live in it! Jesus Christ said, “My Kingdom is not of this world!” (John 18:36). He came as a representative of a better kingdom, into which we can be born (John 3:3).

But have you ever fully realized how much this world NEEDS a better way? Do you know WHY God is going to send His Kingdom here?

Here in Chile, conditions are comparatively good, when compared to many other countries of the world. Yet, even here, the sights to be seen would sicken and throw disgust and pity into the hearts of most of you. For example, yesterday I saw a bedraggled man, unshaven and filthy, spank and pick up a small child about 2 years old. The child was wearing only the tattered remains of a boy’s short overcoat, with nothing to cover any of his body from his waist to his bare feet. The temperature was in the low 60’s at this time, with fog and mist in the air—not as cold as it might have been, but cold, nevertheless. The crying child’s bare bottom was filthy, blue and red from the cold and the spanking. I couldn’t help feeling a sudden wave of deep pity for the little boy — since I have three boys of my own at home. I thought, “What if this were my child—and what if that were ME, living here, knowing only the limited sphere of filth and misery that is the lot of the common citizen of Chile?” And I realized it is but for the grace of God that it isn’t me!

The same thing applies to ALL of us!

Mr. Rea visited Valdivia, a city of some 45,000 population about 870 kilometers south of Santiago. The city is almost entirely German. On his return, he was sitting in the train at the station when he saw a small boy, selling flowers outside the train. There was a
great deal of ice on the ground, with ice clinging to the buildings, and the visible breath of people showing the extremely low temperature.

The boy was trying his wares in a thin, plaintive voice, as he stood on the icy ground without shoes, his bare legs showing blue and quivering knee-caps as he tried to earn a meagre sum. Mr. Rea said something about the boy to a well-dressed Chilean (called "Chileno" here) who answered, in Spanish, "Oh, he's just some young puppy.

These are just minor illustrations of an overall picture of national life in some of the poverty-stricken countries of this earth! Perhaps the sight of one starving, freezing infant is more expressive to most than the cold statistics of how many hundreds of thousands die every year the world over from hunger, famine, disease and malnutrition.

Most of us, living in America, or the British Isles, just cannot imagine the squalor in the lives of other human beings!

Remember, God LOVES these suffering humans (John 3:16), and it is because of this great love that He is going to bring a better kingdom to this earth.

Majestically these illustrations have been repeated millions of times, and you have only a partial picture of the actual living conditions of other humans in China, Japan, Russia, India, Africa and the Middle East, in Europe and South America.

These conditions are the net result of SIN! They represent the INEVITABLE outcome of man's attempt to govern himself in the way that seems right to him (Prov. 14:12). God is going to punish this earth, not to make their plight worse, but to teach them, once and for all, that their Way is wrong! Finally, the world will begin to seek happiness in the only way it can ever be attained—God's way!

Thy Kingdom Come!

God's inspired word tells us of imagination-defying times yet ahead. He gravely warns every true Christian: "Take ye heed, behold, I have foretold you all things" (Mark 13:23). Jesus described these very days in His Olivet Prophecy when He said, "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be" (Mark 13:19). The conditions on this sin-filled earth are growing so increasingly violent, so explosive that "except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days" (Mark 13:20).

Do you really yearn for the coming of a better world? Do you constantly ask God, in prayer, to SEND His righteous kingdom even sooner than we expect?

You should! Have you never wondered why Jesus gave, as his perfect example of HOW to pray, a direct admonition to ask for the coming of God's kingdom? Notice! "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. THY KINGDOM COME!" (Matt. 6:9-10). Immediately after acknowledging God's office, Jesus said to PRAY that His kingdom will come!

Probably, if you are like many others, you have begun to think of your salvation merely as a continuation of your life, a continuous existence of you! This is a false concept! You must be changed! (I Cor. 15:50-53). And this entire world must be changed (Rev. 21:4).

God tells us we should be filled with LONGING for the arrival of His kingdom, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (conduct) and godliness, looking for and basting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (II Pet. 3:11-13).

We should regard ourselves as pilgrims; as strangers; as direct men and women of God, who represent this coming Kingdom, and are only enduring this age temporarily in order to finish His WORK before His kingdom does come! (I Pet. 2:9, Matt. 24:14). Our whole beings should be ON FIRE with purpose, with drive, with zeal to accomplish our part in this work, to HURRY the day when the squallor and misery of this worldly system can be forever blotted from the memory of men.

God says every fervent believer will, "according to his promise, LOOK FOR new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

A JOB to Complete First!

Before God is going to send His wonderful kingdom, the World Tomorrow, WE HAVE A JOB to PERFORM. And, believe it or not—His kingdom will NOT come UNTIL that job is finished—whether we continue to be His yielded servants, or whether He must raise up someone else to do it.

A woodman, working in the timber with his double-edged fallers' axe, must wear certain kinds of protective clothing.

\[\text{NOTICE}\]

Booklets explaining the annual Holy Days are being set in type. As soon as they are off the press they will be mailed to you.

\[\text{The GOOD NEWS}\]

August, 1957

Steel supports in his shoes, a metal helmet, heavy trousers, and gloves. If he does not equip himself with the tools of his trade, he cannot effectively cut the giant trees for the sawmill. Observe the neglectful woodman, sitting on a felled log, trying to pick out splinters from his feet because he wasn't wearing the proper kind of shoes! He has to spend so much time mending his own body, taking care of his own problems, that he doesn't have time to do the work the boss has hired him for. Chances are, that woodman will be fired!

What about YOU? Are you a "splitter" in the Body of Christ? Are you a "problem" to the ministers, to others around you—or are you a smoothly functioning, well-oiled part of the machine God has been using to perform His great work? If the very Body of Jesus Christ must spend all its time concentrating on "splinters" it cannot carry out the great commission ahead!

God tells us to be equipped! "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil . . . your girdle about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: PRAYING ALWAYS with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching THEREUNTO with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:11-18).

There is a major part of YOUR JOB in this great work of God. You should be wearing the proper kind of equipment so YOU don't become a problem, and consequently "splitter" to others so they will not. But that's not all!

"And (pray for me), Paul said, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth BOLDLY, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). Do you see? You should be CONSTANTLY, DILIGENTLY praying for Mr. Armstrong, and for all the ministers, that they will "speak boldly" as they ought to speak, in carrying this Good News of a future world filled with joy and happiness to a world now teetering on the brink of disaster.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!" (I Cor. 15:58).

Are YOU really "abounding" in the work of the Lord, LOOKING for the coming of the glorious Kingdom of God? This world NEEDS God's government! You should be helping to hurry the day by praying, without ceasing, "THY KINGDOM COME!"
God’s Church GROWS!

Do you realize how many true churches of God now exist in local areas? You should understand and REJOICE over the many people God is continually adding to His Church. They are YOUR BRETHREN!

by Roderick C. Meredith

T he Eternal has raised up local churches of God in nineteen different cities in the United States, and one in London, England. Nearly every year, new churches are being added!

And throughout the nation and in Britain, hundreds are being baptized to full repentance each year who are unable—as yet—to attend a true church of God. God is adding to His church throughout the world!

These people are our brethren—our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. All of us together who are converted comprise the very body of Jesus Christ—the Spirit-begotten family of the Eternal God.

The relationship is REAL. After all, we are going to spend ALL ETERNITY together in the family of God!

So let’s get acquainted. Let’s pray for each other—rejoice with each other—encourage each other. We should be one family bound together by LOVE (Col. 2:2).

KNOW Your Ministers and Brethren!

You need to be informed of the progress, growth and blessings being experienced by your brethren in the scattered local churches of God. You will then be able to love the brethren, pray for them and have your whole heart and interest in this important phase of God’s work.

Mr. Armstrong has wished for some time to have a regular “Church News” section in the Good News magazine. This will keep you regularly informed of the interesting, significant and unusual events in each local church. It will help you to really “get acquainted” with the ministers and leaders in each church, and to know of their activities and growth. We hope to start this in the very next issue if possible.

But many hundreds of you scattered brethren probably don’t as yet know even where all of God’s local congregations are and who their ministers are! It’s time you KNEW!

First of all, most of you realize that the church here in Pasadena is the headquarters church of the present day Church of God. It is also the largest local church at the present time—with the weekly attendance constantly growing and now approaching 600. Mr. Armstrong, of course, is the Pastor of the Pasadena church—together with his many other duties as President of this great work and of Ambassador College, and being Pastor-General of all the local churches.

Assisting Mr. Armstrong in ministering to the large Pasadena congregation are his two sons, Richard D. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong, and several other ministers including at the present time, Herman L. Hoeh, Dr. C. Paul Meredith, Roderick C. Meredith, Norman A. Smith and George Meeke, Jr. As most of you know, all of these men are kept very busy with many, many duties beside ministering to the local church. A complete list of the duties of each man would fill several paragraphs.

It is sufficient to say that Mr. Armstrong and the other ministers here at headquarters are kept very busy. But the Pasadena congregation keeps growing by leaps and bounds, and we also look for our largest incoming freshman class to enter Ambassador College this fall.

Pacific Coast Churches

Beside the headquarters church in Pasadena, God has raised up a number of local congregations up and down the Pacific Coast. Two of these churches, in California, are ministered to by men who drive each week-end from headquarters in Pasadena.

The present minister of the Fresno church is Mr. Richard Armstrong. The congregation is growing, and now comprises about 53 adult members. Since our first evangelistic campaign in recent years was held at Fresno last August, the church is well grounded in Bible truth and very aware of prophetic events now taking place.

The San Diego church is presently pastored by Mr. Roderick Meredith, and has a growing attendance of about 60 members. This church will soon be five years “old,” and is noted by all visitors for its warmth and friendliness.

In Oregon, the Eugene church of God is the oldest congregation and was once the headquarters of this work. After the departure of Mr. Armstrong and others to Pasadena several years back, its membership and interest began to lag. But it is currently flourishing once again under the ministry of Mr. Raymond McNair with a growing attendance of about 25 members.

I shall pause at this point to explain to many of you scattered brethren that our ministers in the field often handle two or three different congregations! As Jesus said: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (Matt. 9:37).

So God’s true ministers are hard workers—often driving several hundred miles each week ministering to their scattered congregations. But even though their time is limited, each minister is able to give his congregations much spiritual “meat” and personal help.

In addition to the Eugene church, then, Mr. Raymond McNair is also pastoring the churches at Salem and Portland, Oregon. The Salem church is relatively new, but the attendance there is now around 35 and is growing steadily.

Mr. McNair shares the work of the large church at Portland, Oregon, with Mr. Jim Friddle. The Portland church has been established for many years, but is still typified by an active zeal for God’s truth. Its attendance now runs frequently over 100 and is still increasing—as does everything that God builds.

The northernmost congregation on the Pacific Coast at present is the church in Tacoma, Washington, which also comprises many of our Seattle brethren. It is a growing church, whose membership is now approaching 75 adults, plus many children. The new minister in Tacoma is Mr. Jim Friddle—formerly the pastor of the Gladewater, Texas, church.

Churches in Colorado and Kansas

Some of our newest churches are in the Colorado-Kansas area, and we hope later that several others may be raised up here. These churches are relatively small as yet, and their zealous members often drive over 100 miles to attend. They were established primarily through the efforts of Mr. Raymond Cole, but are currently pastored by Mr. Carlton Smith—while Mr. Cole is helping direct
the work in many of our other local churches as evangelist-at-large.

The first of these churches is the one at Lyons, Colorado. As mentioned, its members often drive long distances in order to attend. In spite of this, the attendance usually runs between 35 and 50 persons—depending upon the weather and road conditions.

The church at Pueblo, Colorado, is relatively new but is growing steadily. Its members also often drive some distance to attend, but in spite of this, the present congregation there is usually about 30 persons.

The newest church in this area is the one at Garden City, Kansas. It is a zealous group, and with time will increase greatly in size. The congregation is now composed of about 20 adults.

If you will consult a map, you will see that Mr. Carlton Smith must drive about 1000 miles every week-end to minister to these three scattered churches! In addition, he usually drives other hundreds of miles during each week visiting scattered members of the congregation, praying for the sick, holding Bible studies, helping solve personal and family problems, baptizing people, and attending to the many other duties of a true minister of the Living God!

This is just one example of why God’s true ministers must be hard workers, in good health and completely yielded to God. It is not just a “job” or “profession” — it is their very LIFE!

Churches in Texas and Louisiana

Perhaps our best-known local church is the one at Gladewater, Texas, where our large tabernacle is located. Thousands of our listeners and members have come there for baptism, for counsel and for the annual church festivals.

The current pastor at Gladewater is Mr. Kenneth Swisher, and the congregation there now runs over 100 persons and is steadily growing. Having our own local grade and high school there is an advantage enjoyed by this congregation—as is the case also at Pasadena.

Our first church in Louisiana is located at Minden—near Shreveport—and Mr. Swisher is the minister for this congregation also. The attendance here comprises around 40 adults and is a growing, zealous body of God’s people.

Currently, the churches in Dallas and Houston, Texas, are being pastored by Mr. Jon Hill. The Houston congregation averages about 35 in attendance and prospects indicate that in time it may become one of our largest churches.

The attendance at the Dallas church has been augmented by the evangelistic campaign held there last Spring, and now comprises a growing body of about 70 adults. Because of its central location among our listeners, we expect that the Dallas church also will increase greatly within the next few years.

Some of our oldest listeners and members in Texas compose much of the “backbone” of our churches in Corpus Christi and San Antonio. These two churches are presently under the pastorate of Mr. Burk McNair, and are noted for their zeal and friendliness. The Corpus Christi church has a current attendance of about 50 adults, and San Antonio about 40.

As you scattered brethren should know, the attendance in many of these churches varies because many of the members drive considerable distances to attend. God’s churches are not like worldly “social clubs.” They are composed of people filled with zeal for God’s truth! And the average new visitor to one of our churches is often surprised to see nearly all of the members with their Bibles and notebooks—really concentrating to absorb the message, to study it later at home, to prove it! Even in its local congregations, God’s Church is truly different.

Churches in St. Louis, Chicago, and Milwaukee

Mr. Dean Blackwell is the current pastor of our three congregations in the northern Midwest. The St. Louis church is the oldest of the group, and its current attendance averages about 35 adults.

The church in Chicago is rapidly growing, with a current attendance of about 70. It is still a relatively young church and should increase greatly with time.

One of our newest congregations is the one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although its membership comprises only about 20 adults thus far, it is filled with the “first love” and zeal for God’s ways and truth. It’s small membership is growing spiritually, and we know that the material and numerical increase is bound to follow in due time.

The London Church of God

Last but far from least is our church located in London, England. It is our first church outside of America and—so far as we know—the only such church in the recent history of the Church of God.

The wonderful people in this church are your brethren! Even though separated by several thousands of miles, they are related to you, bound to you—if you have God’s Holy Spirit—by even stronger and more enduring ties than your own physical relatives! Do you fully realize that?

About 25 persons now attend our church—God’s church—in far-off London. The baptized members there are filled with and led by the same Holy Spirit that guided and empowered Peter and Paul and Jesus Christ himself in His earthly ministry! If you could attend there some Sabbath you would very quickly feel at home. Because the lives of these dear brethren, their interests, their goal—all would be the same as any of you whose lives are fully surrendered to God.

If you could visit there some Sabbath, you would soon recognize that these people are your brethren.

Mr. Gerald Waterhouse is the present minister in the London church. He is also the manager of our mailing office in London, and is ably assisted in both capacities by Mr. Frank Longuskie.

You should pray for these brethren (Please continue on page 11)
Amazing 2000-Year History of the Church of God

(Continued from page 2)

THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD—the Church in which CHRIST lives and works—the Church which is HIS BODY—His instrumentality—the Church HE USES! It is the Church that was scattered, persecuted, unorganized—many of whose members have been martyred. This Church is composed of members who, even though begotten by and led by the Holy Spirit, yet are human and therefore not perfect. In the message to each of these seven churches Jesus pointed out things they need to overcome. But they are the people who have and are led by His Spirit, who put themselves under GOD’s government instead of human traditions or self desire or the way that seems right to a man, and who have in the main THE TRUE GOSPEL, even though they often lost vital portions of it.

Notice, chapter 2, verse 1: “These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars (the angels of the TRUE church) in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (these seven churches). Jesus Christ is in these churches. They are HIS churches, not Satan’s churches which falsely masquerade as “Christian.”

And remember, the TRUE Church has not been politically organized, powerful and recognized by the world—but scattered, persecuted, seldom noticed by the world, and even then regarded as heretic.

Now let’s UNDERSTAND who they are, one by one.

The Apostolic Age

The church at Ephesus pictured the apostolic church, a church which patiently labored in the gospel, which met many false apostles but remained nearly steadfast to the truth (Rev. 2:1-7).

There were two 19-year cycles in the history of the apostolic church during which the gospel was carried to the old world. It was exactly 19 years from A.D. 31, when the church was founded, to the time that Paul received the vision to go into Europe! In Acts 16:9 Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia (in Greece) who shouted “Help us!” Paul described this event in II Cor. 2:12-13 where he wrote that “a door was opened unto me of the Lord” by which he meant that a way was opened to preach the gospel in Europe.

Paul went into Europe in the late spring of 50 A.D. After a few months of preaching, he arrived in Corinth in the fall of that year (Acts 18:1) where he remained for a year and six months (verse 11). It was now the beginning of 52 A.D. An insurrection broke out against Paul when Gallio was deputy or proconsul of Achaia (verse 12). A recently discovered inscription in Greece states that Gallio held this position during 52 A.D., which proves that the gospel went to Europe in 50 A.D., just 19 years after the Church was founded!

From 50 A.D. it was another 19 years until the fleeing of the mother church at Jerusalem, when that city was surrounded for the last time by Roman armies in 69 A.D. From that time forward the united power of the Church of God to spread the gospel of the Kingdom ceased. No longer was there a mother church at Jerusalem to whom all churches could look as the standard of truth. It now became a struggle to strive for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). The church had left its first love.

Soon after John finished the book of Revelation, the remnant of the true church, which kept the commandments and believed the gospel of the kingdom, was cast out and scattered over the length and breadth of the whole Roman Empire. This fulfilled Jesus’ warning: “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place” (Rev. 2:5). Jesus removed, or took out, the true Church—the light-giving candlestick—from the unrepentant local congregations where they had assembled (Rev. 2:5).

Thus ended the Apostolic Age typified by the church of Ephesus.

The church at Smyrna arises next. It appeared to be dead—non-existent—yet it was alive, suffer ing persecution. This pictures God’s church during more than four centuries under the persecuting Old Roman Empire. Beside the true church there was also a “synagogue of Satan” developing during this period.

The Synagogue of Satan—What Is It?

Now read Revelation 2:9: “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

Notice, this is a synagogue of Satan. A synagogue is merely the Hebrew word for church. Then Jesus is not speaking of a race, but of a church that belongs to the devil!

This church claims they are Jews. Why? Because Jesus said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). “To the Jew first, then also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

In Romans 11:16-27 Paul explains that Israel and the Jews to whom salvation belonged were broken off because of unbelief. Gentiles were grafted in their place. But once grafted in they were no longer Gentiles—“being in time past Gentiles in the flesh” (Eph. 2:11). Now they were all one in Christ Jesus, “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints” (Eph. 2:19).

“He is a Jew,” says Paul, “which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:29).

So here was a church made up of Gentiles, claiming salvation, claiming to be Jews inwardly, masquerading itself as a “Christian” church.

This synagogue of Satan is the Catholic Church which developed immediately after the Apostolic Age. That church has had many daughters which are also Satan’s churches.

The True Church Persecuted

The world at this time did not recognize which was the true church. “The world knoweth us not” (I John 3:1). It is from the enemies of God’s church that we have scanty records of God’s people, who were now maligned as heretics.

For centuries, Catholic writers mention remnants of the true church within the bounds of the Roman Empire. Sometimes they were individuals, sometimes scattered families, and especially in the Near East there were still a few local congregations preaching the gospel and keeping the commandments. As late as the beginning of the fifth century in Asia Minor, the bishop Chrysostom bewailed members of the Catholic Church, who, upon learning the truth from the scattered remnants of the true church, repented of their ways and began to observe “the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of the great day of expiation” (Bingham’s Antiquities of the Christian Church, bk. XVI, ch. VI).

With the restoration of the Roman Empire in the West under Justinian in 554, the true church fled into the valleys and mountains in Europe. John describes this flight for over a thousand
years in the twelfth chapter of Revelation where he pictures the true church as a woman fleeing from persecution.

A Miracle Occurs

Now notice what John writes to the church at Pergamos: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith" (Rev. 2:13).

The local church to which John wrote was situated in Pergamos, the capital of the Roman province of Asia in Asia Minor—Pergamos was Satan's seat of worldly human government for that province. Just as the local church at Pergamos was situated in a city where Satan swayed human politics, so the next stage in the expansion of God's church occurred within the bounds of Satan's government—the Eastern Roman Empire—where the main body of God's people were still found.

It was about 650 A.D. that God, as if by miracle, raised up among the scattered remnants of his church in Cappadocia and Armenia a man who revitalized his people and spread the gospel. This well-educated man, by the name of Constantine of Manales, was given a gift of portions of the Bible. He was utterly amazed by the truth he found revealed in it after study. Soon he began preaching and with the help of trained evangelists found such a fruitful harvest that there were tens of thousands converted to the truth.

After twenty-seven years of ministry, he was stoned to death in 684, but an officer, Simeon, sent to destroy him, was so stirred by his death that he became converted and carried forth the gospel until he was burned at the stake six years later! Within another hundred years God raised up a third minister, Sergius, to guide his people who were allowing many false teachings to grow in their midst.

The name given to these people of God by their enemies was the Paulicians. The reports circulated about these people were slanderous and false. It was not until almost the beginning of the twentieth century that a book called The Key of Truth, containing many of their teachings, was translated into English by Fred C. Conybeare.

This partially preserved record of God's people proves that they preached the gospel of the Kingdom; that they believed the church was founded not only upon Jesus Christ, but also upon the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20); that they baptized by immersion; that they laid on hands for the "reception of the Spirit" (p. CXXIV). They not only "continued to keep the Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan," but they also observed the sabbath and the festival of unleavened bread (pages CLXII and CLII of The Key of Truth).

The devil was angry with these people who understood the gospel and kept the commandments. Knowing that he could not overthrow their faith by force, he corrupted them by introducing false teachers who taught the "doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14). In turning to Numbers 31:16, you will see that Balaam induced the Israelites to practice idolatry and commit fornication.

Once again Satan, in his wiles to overthrow the church, introduced false
teachers among God's people. These teachers induced many in the church to celebrate certain idolatrous pagan holidays, particularly Epiphany, in honor of Christ's birth and baptism.

Satan also caused many in the church to take part in worldly politics in the hope of safeguarding themselves. Mixing with the politics of this world is called "fornication" in Revelation 17:2. God's church is to be a virgin and remain pure and separate from the world, waiting for the marriage to Christ (II Cor. 11:2).

As a result of these sins, Jesus warned his church: "Repent; or else I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). Most took the warning lightly until it was too late. Trusting in their worldly political alliances with neighboring Arabs, instead of relying on Jesus' protection, they were betrayed and slaughtered—one hundred thousand of them! The faithful few who escaped were driven to southeastern Europe and called Bogomils. "There they thrroved for centuries, and . . . spread . . . their tenets into Bohemia, Poland, Germany, Italy, France, and even into . . . England" (p. CIV).

The Church in the Wilderness

John was inspired to commend the church at Thyatira because the last works of the church were more than the first. But in the local church there was a false teacher who taught some to practice idolatry. Jesus warned them that He would cast them into great tribulation and "kill her children with death" unless they repented (Rev. 2:18-29).

Now let us notice how this description fits exactly the next great expansion of God's people.

As a result of the evangelization of the Alpine regions by the Paulicians and Bogomils of Bulgaria, as God's people were called, there arose numerous ministers and faithful congregations. One of these men was Peter de Bruys who preached the gospel of the kingdom in the south of France (Jones' Church History, ch. 4, sect. 3). Two other preachers of the time were Arnold and Henri. They were charged by the Catholic Church with remaining faithful to the whole law of God and of observing the sabbath (Ecclesiastical History, by Peter Allix, pp. 168-169).

The Lutheran historian Mosheim says of another branch of the church of God in the twelfth century that they held "a notion that the observance of law of Moses, in everything except the offering of sacrifices, was obligatory upon Christians . . . they abstained from those meats the use of which was prohibited under the Mosaic economy, and celebrated the Jewish Sabbath. The second tenet which distinguished this sect was advanced in opposition to the doctrine of three persons in the divine nature."

Yes, they knew that God was not a trinity, but a family!

A crusade was instituted against many of these people in Southern France. Thousands perished. But when it seemed that the first work would soon be ended, there arose an even greater leader among God's people.

It was the close of the twelfth century. In Lyons, France, lived an astonishingly successful and wealthy merchant, Peter Waldo. "One day, while in the company of some of the leading citizens, one of his friends fell lifeless at his side. Terrified by the event, he said to himself: If death had struck me, what would have become of my soul?"

Being a Catholic, Waldo asked one of these theologians what is the perfect way. "Ah! answered the theologian . . . here is Christ's precept: 'It thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up thy cross and follow me.'" (Comba, History of the Waldenses, p. 21).

Waldo disposed of his property by distributing it to the poor. But from his wealth he also had a translation of the Scriptures made. In this translation he noticed the command to the apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. His mind began to understand the Scriptures.

God was using Peter Waldo.

Comba says that "he brought to the study of the Scriptures that practical common sense which had guided him in his business transactions . . . The word of Christ was clear enough; for Waldo it was simply a question of furnishing a literal translation" (p. 243 of Comba's History).

The humble remnant of the church of God listened to him. Soon many new disciples were coming to repentance. "His disciples became almost as many co-workers for him" (p. 26).

Called the "Church of God"

God's church was once again spreading the gospel! A school for ministers was established to provide the trained help to carry the gospel.

Here is a marvelous record from these people, dated 1304: "We do not find anywhere in the writings of the Old Testament that the light of truth and of holiness was at any time completely extinguished. There have always been men who walked faithfully in the paths of righteousness. Their number has been at times reduced to a few; but has never been altogether lost. We believe that the same has been the case from the time of Jesus Christ until now; and that it will be so unto the end." (Quoted in Comba's History, pp. 10-11.)

Catholics admit that these people proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God, that they baptized repentant believers and obeyed the whole law of God.

But just as there was a false teacher, Jezebel, in the local church at Thyatira, so now there were many false teachers and false brethren among God's people who taught that it was all right to have Catholics baptize their children or to attend idolatrous mass once in a while. Others committed spiritual fornication by meddling in politics in the hope of avoiding persecution.

To correct his people God caused a frightful crusade to pass over them 300 years after the death of Waldo. Only a faithful remnant escaped.

Once again we see the repeated fact that after a few generations, the local congregations are no longer composed of truly converted brethren, but of unconverted children and halfhearted believers who either go aside into total error in the face of persecution or else give up their lives for the faith, as Daniel prophesied.

But in 1315, long before the crusade against the Waldenses occurred, the truth of God was carried to England by a German Waldensian preacher, Walter Lollard.

Now let's notice what John wrote to the church at Sardis.

The Church in England and America

The church at Sardis had a name that it was alive but it was dead (Rev. 3:1).

Only a minute fraction of its people were really surrendered to God and holding to the faith once delivered. This is just the picture of the church of God for over 600 years after the preaching of Walter Lollard.

Through the preaching of Lollard and other helpers, hundreds were repenting. Thousands were learning for the first time that Catholic religious holidays came from paganism and that Sunday was not the Sabbath.

But within sixty years after the coming of Walter Lollard, a reform movement under John Wyclif arose in England and nearly engulfed the teachings of the original Waldensian preachers. After a period of persecution, there remained only a few who kept the faith and observed the Sabbath and the annual festivals. When confronted with imprisonment for their faith, several
ministers gave up the faith even though some of their followers remained steadfast (Cox's Sabbath Literature, Vol. 1, p. 162).

It was not until about 1670 that there were enough Sabbath keepers to establish local congregations. They called themselves the churches of God, but the world termed them Sabbatarians and Sabbatarian Baptists.

From England the churches of God spread to America. In 1664, Stephen Mumford, sent to Newport, Rhode Island, raised up a small church mainly from Baptist converts. One by one new churches were established through continued help of the churches in England.

But as always happens, after several generations the children take truth for granted and never really surrender their wills and their lives to God. In less than one hundred and fifty years, the English churches almost disappeared, having cut themselves off from God by turning from his truth, and by adopting the name "Seventh-day Baptists."

In America the number of churches gradually increased as the gospel was spread from state to state. But so nearly dead were these congregations that in 1802, many began to organize themselves together into a General Conference instead of submitting to the government of God for the carrying out of the gospel. At this serious juncture, most of the local churches joined themselves together to form the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference. Some of the ministers began teaching the Trinity doctrine and the immortality of human souls.

Several congregations did not become members of the Conference. For another half century they maintained the truth they possessed, although most of them did not go all the way in obedience to God. John aptly described this period: "Be watchful, and establish the things remaining, which are about to die: for I have not found thy works perfected before my God."

The Adventist Movement

During this time the advent movement among Sunday-observing churches was begun by William Miller. In 1843 several followers of Miller in Washington, D.C., became acquainted with the truth of the Sabbath. It was not until after the miserable disappointment of 1844, however, that the general body of adventists had the Sabbath called to their attention. A small number accepted the truth and soon united with the few remaining Church of God brethren who refused to be affiliated with the Seventh-day Baptist Conference.

They called themselves the "Church of God" and began publishing "The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald." Their first songbook was dedicated to "The Church of God scattered abroad."

With each passing year, new and different doctrines were being introduced to explain away the adventist failure of October 22, 1844. Finally, a meeting was held in Battle Creek, Michigan, September 28 through October 1, 1860.

"This conference also took into consideration the subject of a name by which our people should be called," wrote Loughborough on page 351 of the Great Second Advent Movement. "This again called forth a diversity of opinions, some pleading for one name and some for another. The "Church of God" being proposed, it was objected to on the ground that it gave none of the distinctive features of our faith, while the name "Seventh-day Adventist" would not only set forth our faith in the near coming of Christ, but would also show that we were observers of the Seventh-day Sabbath. So unanimous was the assembly in favor of the latter name that when put to vote only one man voted against it, and he soon afterward withdrew his objection."

In the spring of 1861 another conference was held in an unscriptural effort to reorganize local congregations. The following covenant was recommended for this new church organization: "We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name of Seventh-day Adventist..."

Once again men forgot that they can not organize themselves into the Church of God. They can only organize themselves out of the Church of God.

A Remnant Remains?

When this new name was being forced on the churches, there appeared an article in the April 9, 1861 issue of the "Review and Herald" in which a few brethren from Ohio wrote that they would not give their offerings for any other purpose "than the advancement and extension of the truth and the Church of God."

Within the space of sixty years, two major departures from the Church of God occurred. The ministers would not strengthen that which was ready to perish.

For another seventy years conditions remained almost unchanged. The remaining brethren retained the name "Church of God." Among local congregations only a few individuals repented and strengthened the truth that was ready to perish in their midst. But most of the ministers resorted to organizing evangelistic work on the pattern of state conferences rather than yielding themselves to God's government and direction in the carrying of the gospel.

In fact, instead of the true gospel, most ministers taught a "third angel's message," which they had accepted from the adventist people.

Today's Church Prophesied!

Notice the amazing description of the next event in the history of God's people. John writes to the church of Philadelphia: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:6).

Here is a church with little strength, few in numbers, but which has kept the word of God, one which has not denied the truth. Here is a church which is preaching the gospel because Jesus promises to set before it an open door until the work of the church is completed.

Here is a church which Jesus loves! Here is a church to which He says: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience (which Jesus interprets in Revelation 14:12 as keeping the commandments and the faith), I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

This verse pictures a church which is carrying the gospel just prior to the last great time of trouble that will engulf all the world. This is the Church of God today!

The Gospel Goes to All the World

Jesus chose Paul, who was highly educated, for spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. He later raised up Peter Waldo, a successful businessman, to keep his truth alive during the Middle Ages. In these last days WHEN THE GOSPEL MUST GO AROUND THE WORLD Jesus chose a man amply trained in the advertising and business fields to shoulder this mission—Herbert W. Armstrong.

Paul was struck down. Waldo was shocked by the sudden death of his friend. In like manner God three times swept away Mr. Armstrong's business in order that he might come to understand the truth.

Shortly before this event, God had opened the mind of Mr. Armstrong to understand the Sabbath truth from an elderly Church of God woman. After six months of study, in a persistent effort to prove Sabbath-keeping unscriptural, Mr. Armstrong also surrendered his will to God and accepted the Sabbath.

From this moment forward, God opened the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong to understand one truth after another. The Church of God brethren with whom they associated became so intensely interested that Mr. Armstrong
soon found himself speaking at their insistence—then preaching—to small groups in the state of Oregon!

Not long after his ordination, a momentous juncture occurred. A movement was under foot to organize the local churches of God under human government—a financial board of seven men. By 1953 certain leading ministers demanded that no more new truth be preached to the brethren. They were refusing to repent and allow the Holy Spirit to work through them to establish the truth that was ready to perish!

Most of the congregations succumbed to error. The age of the church of Sardis was over. The church period of Philadelphia was to begin!

A DOOR Opens

The time had come for the gospel TO GO AROUND THE WORLD! Having restated and proven that Herbert and Loma Armstrong would remain faithful to error. The age of the church of Sardis was over. The church period of Philadelphia was to begin!

The church period of Philadelphia was to begin!

The church period of Philadelphia was to begin!

in power around the entire world.

This is the time of the end when prophecies hidden for ages are being revealed. TRUTH is being restored, knowledge is rapidly increasing. But knowledge brings responsibility; it becomes dangerous if it is not rightly handled.

Now notice Jesus’ LAST WARNING to the church. At the very close of this age, when the work of spreading the gospel is almost finished, Jesus addressed the church at Laodicea: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . I WILL SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH” (Rev. 3:15, 16).

This frightful condition will happen to most of God’s people at the very end because they will become spiritually proud of the knowledge God is revealing. Yes, some of you will say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” And Jesus will reply: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

It is time we WAKE UP! If we become complacent, lacking in zeal, looking upon our local church as a social club, instead of having our hearts in the gospel, Jesus will not deliver us from the tribulation.

Notice Jesus’ admonition in Luke 21:36: “WATCH ye therefore and PRAY always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Let’s take these things to heart. Let’s pray and work together to carry this gospel to all nations so Jesus will say to each of us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

God’s Church Grows!

(Continued from page 6)

and their minister in far-off London. They are now helping to lay the foundation of what will soon become a large and powerful work of reaching the British Isles and Europe with God’s truth!

Even as this goes to press, plans are being made to hold two evangelistic campaigns in the Midlands of England possibly within a year! Your heart and interest should be in reaching these people with the very message that Jesus Christ brought to save this world from its miserable ways!

Get Acquainted With God’s People

In this article, we have only sketched some of the many details you need to know about the local churches of God and His scattered people everywhere. We hope to give you MUCH MORE of this information in a regular “Church News” section of this magazine. That is one reason why we are enlarging it to 12 full pages!

Have you noticed?

There is much to tell about the many wonderful people who make God’s work and His churches “tick.” We hope to introduce you to the local elders, deacons and deaconesses in each local church. We hope to give you more information about Ambassador College, and about our grade and high schools and their instructors.

Let’s not forget the wonderful wives of the ministers who help them so much in their service to all of you. Yes, and the “kiddies” too!

Also, we know that you will thrill and rejoice with us to learn more—in a personal way—about the many blessings and miracles God is showering upon His work and people. Perhaps you have heard—in a second-handed or round about way—about some of the miraculous healings and other blessings that God has granted many of our brethren.

But would you like to READ the exact account of these events each month in the Good News magazine?

Are you interested? If so, please WRITE and tell us you are, and make any suggestions you think might be helpful.

The Nature and Purpose of Local Congregations

It is important that you fully realize that you are a member of the very Church Jesus Christ said He would build (Matt. 16:18). But you also need to understand how different is the part played by God’s local churches from the normal worldly conception.

Remember that the primary commission given to God’s Church is to preach the true gospel as a “witness” to ALL NATIONS (Matt. 24:14). In Mark’s account, Jesus instructed: “GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE” (Mark 16:15).

God’s Church is NOT a "club" with its interest and objectives centered upon ourselves and upon local activities. Rather, it is a living, vital organism through which Christ can carry His message as a last "witness" to this entire world!

Secondarily, however, we do find Jesus’ instruction to Peter: “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). And we find numerous examples in the book of Acts
and Paul's epistles showing the pattern of local church congregations. This provides the means of strengthening those already converted by feeding them the spiritual "meat," and helped provide an organized backing and cooperative effort in the evangelistic effort of God's Church.

Teamwork and cooperation is absolutely necessary in carrying the gospel to all the world. Local churches provide the means of learning and carrying out these lessons and procedures. The emphasis should be on the EVANGELISTIC MISSION of God's Church!

Local Church Buildings

In keeping with the evangelistic spirit, we find that the early true Church of God often met in hired halls or in private homes—often not having church edifices or lofty cathedrals as do all the denominational churches today.

During his stay at Ephesus, Paul preached for about two years in the rented hall or 'school' owned by one Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). Later, he taught in his own hired house at Rome (Acts 28:30).

The apostle Paul writes of the "church" which met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-5). Paul addressed Philemon and "the church in thy house" (Philemon 1-2). Following this pattern, most of God's local churches today meet in rented halls, and have sometimes started out by meeting in individual homes.

Yet, having local church buildings is certainly not wrong. It is, in fact, the more ideal thing to do whenever possible. Remember that the original apostolic church first met at the beautiful temple at Jerusalem. And throughout the Old Testament, God designated the temple or tabernacle as the place His people were to meet.

Today, in order to avoid interruptions, inconveniences, cigarette smoke and many other things which detract from the spiritual richness of our church service, we earnestly hope—whenever possible—to provide local church buildings for many of our established congregations. Then we can dedicate the buildings wholly to the service and worship of Almighty God.

Mr. Armstrong has recently learned of a special type of construction which—though of good quality and appearance—is only about a third as expensive as ordinary church buildings would be. Pray with us that God will lead us in this and make it possible for us to have some of our own church buildings before long. What a great blessing this will be in many areas!

Mr. Armstrong will inform you of the further progress of these plans in the near future. Meanwhile, do your part and pray.

In every way, God's Church is GROWING! Is your heart in it? Do you thrill at the news of reaching foreign lands with God's truth? Does your heart rejoice at the news of new churches being raised up—of new church buildings—of hundreds more being converted and baptized in scattered areas?

Are you intensely interested in learning to know more about God's local churches and His scattered people in future articles in this magazine? If you are really in God's Church, they are your brethren.

Remember what Christ—the Living Word—inspired the apostle John to write: "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20).