

Are Christians
Responsible
for Proving
ALL Things?

Are Christians Responsible for Proving *ALL* Things?

By Robert G. Theophilus

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD. The information provided is for the benefit of former members of the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and of current and prospective members of God's Church.

Does God require that all truly converted Christians become able to prove all things for themselves? If so, why would it be important for them to be able to do so? Find out what God requires of all true Christians. Your salvation depends on it.

Preamble

Please Note: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (**bolded** and/or in **blue**) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of the “Holy Spirit” before we begin this study. If we say that who or what is the “Holy Spirit” is the question that needs to be answered, we are starting from the assumption that there exists such a being as the Holy Spirit and that it is a separate and distinct being from God and the Word. The question which should be asked is who are the beings the Bible tell us are holy, whose composition is spirit and who have existed eternally? Either the Bible plainly tells us who are the separate and distinct beings that existed from all eternity who created all things (spirit beings and the material universe) or we have no way of getting an answer to our question.

The Holy Spirits of the God Family

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Eloheem” which is the plural form of “Eloah which means “God”. The word “Eloheem” refers to “gods.” It is a uniplural noun like family, group, team, etc. In the beginning, there was therefore more than one God being in existence but how many were there?

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was God and there was another being with God who was also God, the Word. How can these two beings both be God; isn't that impossible?

The word God indicates the kind of existence of these 2 beings: their nature is to be God in the same way that all human beings have the same human nature. However, having the same nature does not mean that all human beings constitute a single being; indeed, they are all separate and distinct beings with their own personalities. God and the Word have in common the same nature or, level and type of existence, but they are separate and distinct beings just like all human beings who have the same human nature are separate and distinct beings.

God the Father

We read in the Bible that God became a father when the Word became flesh (Php 2:5-8) by being born of woman after having been conceived in the virgin Mary by the holy spirit being called God (Luke 1:35). God from that point on became God the Father and the Word, who was born as the flesh-and-blood Jesus of Nazareth became God's Son or the Son of God. He was both fully God (his father was God and fully human (his mother was the virgin Mary).

Jesus was God the Father's only begotten son at the time when He was conceived in Mary's womb but He was not to be the only one begotten of the Father. God the Father is the holy spirit being in the Godhead that calls men to salvation.

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou [God the Father] gavest me have I lost none.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Word and Spokesman

The Bible term for being called is to be spiritually begotten by God the Father (1Pe 1:3). When we are begotten, we become a spiritual embryo that can be born again as a glorified spirit being with eternal life. Those begotten of the holy spirit God the Father who follow their calling are then able to come to the holy spirit being called the Word and Spokesman (John 6:44; 65; 18:9) who then teaches them. The glorified Jesus-Christ as God the Father's Word and Spokesman is the holy spirit being that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus had to first be glorified for it to be possible for Christians to have access to the holy spirit called the Word and Spokesman because the glorified Christ is the holy spirit being who works in the minds of God's saints (John 14:17) in the same way that Satan is the evil spirit that works in the minds of the children of disobedience (Eph2:2).

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [Christ] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [On the day of Pentecost, it would be in them and in all true Christians.]

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [Satan] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their calling are then taught by the holy spirit called the Word and God the Father's Spokesman.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Ghost

The expression "Holy Ghost" used in the Bible is in error as there are no ghosts in the Godhead but rather 2 beings that are holy (John 17:11; Isa 6:3) and spirit (John 4:24).

Joh 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

These 2 God beings who are holy and spirit are the holy spirit beings of the God family who existed in the beginning at the creation of all things.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

And, the Word who was with God is before all things i.e., *nothing* existed before He created them whether made of spirit or matter.

Col 1:15 **[Christ]** Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him [the Word who became Jesus-Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no biblical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

God is a Family

Throughout the Bible we can find many verses which clearly indicates the existence of family relations between God and the Word and God's called, chosen and faithful.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

God is clearly a family in which many can be ultimately born again by a resurrection from the dead to eternal, glorified spirit life in God's Kingdom.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [**God's Son**] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:18 And he [**the glorified Christ**] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ was the first to be born again by a resurrection from the dead to be followed by many brethren.

Bible Writing Convention

The practice in the Bible has been to simply use the expression "the Holy Spirit" without indicating which God personage in the Godhead the expression represents. Over time, because of this practice, just about everybody has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct God being in the Godhead but, there is no single verse or group of verses in the Bible that prove the existence of such a third being in the Godhead. The words "holy" and "spirit" are adjectives that describe the nature of God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the "Holy Spirit" or simply the "Holy Spirit" in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of

which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

The Word is the holy spirit being in the Godhead who carries out the instructions and wishes of the holy spirit, God. He is the faithful son who seeks to do his father's will in all things. He is the member of the God family that did the work of creating the heaven and the earth, who ruled over ancient Israel through Moses and his human successors, He is the one who became a man who suffered and died to be God the Father's perfect sacrifice for sin and make the salvation of mankind possible, etc. and He came to reveal the Father to those who follow the Father's calling.

Making Things Clearer

In this study, when referring to God's spirit who, depending on the circumstances can be the holy spirit personage called God the Father or the holy spirit personage called God the Word and Spokesman, I will not capitalize either of the adjectives "holy" and "spirit". This is in order to not perpetuate the false impression in the minds of readers that there is a 3rd being in the Godhead called the "Holy Spirit." Instead, I will refer to either of the holy spirits in the God family as being God's spirit without capitalizing the word "spirit" to make it plain that we are not referring to a third God being in the God family called the "Holy Spirit" but to one of the 2 God beings in the Godhead.

God's family is presently made up of 2 holy spirit beings to which are to be added thousands and possibly millions of other holy spirit beings when God's plan of salvation for mankind has reached its end. The saints that endure in the faith until the end of their natural human life, will be resurrected as individual holy spirit beings in God's Kingdom when it is established.

There are two studies which you can read regarding what is the "Holy Spirit" and decide for yourself in light of the Bible-based evidence offered if such a being exists in the Godhead. These studies are: [What is the Holy Spirit? Cliff Notes Version](#) and [Who or What is the Holy Spirit?](#)

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Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) always said with great emphasis, that we were to check everything he taught the Church against our Bible to see if it was true or not. He said repeatedly “Don’t believe me, believe your Bible.” HWA never ceased reminding Church members that they were not to rely on men, not the ministry, not even himself the Pastor General of the Church.

Many will also recall how during their counseling for baptism, they were always told to verify with their Bible what they were being taught and that they had to prove it for themselves and not just take the ministry’s word for it.

But somehow, a disconnect set in between the requirement to prove all things which HWA kept saying we should always do and the approach taken by the ministry in their Sabbath day sermons and Bible studies. It became apparent that none of their teachings were to be subject to too much questioning and whatever answers were given were to be considered as having provided the required information and be accepted.

The general understanding in the Church was that the ministry had the responsibility for explaining the Bible to the members and that the members should not do their own Bible studies as they might go off into error. The ministry was the criterion of truth; after all, aren’t they there specifically to teach us?

As a result, many were the members who thought that all they had to do was attend services, listen attentively to the sermon, go home or stop off at a restaurant with friends, have a good meal and that was it; they had fulfilled their Christian duty.

But does the Bible teach that Christians are to solely rely on what the ministry (men) teaches them, turn out the light and go to sleep; that individual Christians have no personal responsibility for studying the Bible to ensure that what is being taught them is true or not?

Mr. Armstrong always taught that the individual Christian is responsible for his own salvation; not Mr. Armstrong, not the ministry; no, YOU, the individual Christian.

Even so, what does the Bible have to say about members' responsibility to check the ministry's teachings with their Bible and does the Bible agree with what HWA always taught the Church on this subject?

Let's start off by examining what the Bible has to say about the role of the ordained ministry when there is one. Church history shows that for most of its existence, the church was not organized nor did it have a full and functioning ministry.

Ministry – Helpers of our Faith

In 1 Thessalonians, God through Paul is giving the Thessalonians and Christians throughout the ages, instructions in how they should live their lives. A long list of things is given of what Christians need to do and as part of this list, we find the following requirements:

1Th 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

1Th 5:13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Church members are to have great respect for the ministry who is working for their benefit when remaining with the truth. However, although much respect is owed the ministry, it does not follow that they have the authority to tell the brethren what to believe or the ability to impose their views on Church members as this next verse makes clear.

2Co 1:24 Not for that we have **dominion** over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for **by faith ye stand.**

The ministry is there to help but **it does not have the ability nor the authority to control what you believe i.e., have dominion over your beliefs** (your faith). This is true for the ministry and for all other men. God has given mankind free moral agency which means that there is no power on earth or in the spirit world that can force him to believe something he has not chosen to believe. If there were such a power in existence, men would not be free to choose and could not be held responsible for their actions given they would have been taken under the irresistible influence of a higher power.

True Christians stand or continue to be part of God's Church on the basis of what they choose to believe, their faith. If what they choose to believe is the truth then they continue to be members of God's Church. What one believes is a personal choice that no other man or spirit being can change and it is what makes it possible for that person to have or not have, the faith of Christ.

Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we [the apostles] have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Here Paul is saying that they, the apostles, have had to believe in Jesus-Christ that He was the son of God and the promised Messiah for them to be justified by the faith of Christ i.e., to have Christ's perfect faith imputed to them which is what justifies them i.e., makes their salvation possible through forgiveness of their sins.

Christians stand by their faith, what they choose to believe and are saved by the faith of Christ, if they choose to believe Christ.

Eph 2:8 For by grace [the unmerited forgiveness of your sins which results from God the Father imputing the faith of Christ to you] are ye saved through faith [which is the truth of God that you have freely chosen to believe when God revealed it to you]; and that not of yourselves: it [grace] is the gift of God:

Grace is a free and unmerited blessing from God which makes it possible for you to understand the spiritual truth of the Bible through God applying Christ's sacrifice to your sins. They are then forgiven and this allows the holy spirit God the Father and the holy spirit God the Word to dwell in your minds and teach you.

Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The faith or truth that Christians believe is not due to anything that a man has done for them (including the ministry) or that a man can do for himself; it is by revelation from God to those God has chosen to call; there is no other way of ever knowing it.

1Co 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us **by his Spirit**: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Eph 2:10 For we **[Christians]** are his workmanship, **[it is God working in us through the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman; not men]** created in Christ Jesus **[through Christ who is God the Father's spokesman to Christians i.e., God the Father's called and chosen ones (See Heb. 1:2 below)]** unto good works, **[of obedience to God in all things]** which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days **spoken unto us by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

The ministry is there to help Christians in living their lives according to the truth they have been given to know, not to control what they believe. Christians believe what they believe because they have been called by the holy spirit God the Father who revealed to them the truth. A true ministry, whenever one comes into existence (not often) can only be the helpers of our joy; the joy we have of knowing the truth revealed to us by the holy spirits of the Godhead; they are not the author of our faith nor the finisher of our faith. We are spiritually begotten or conceived by the holy spirit God the Father and we are Christ's workmanship. Christ is the holy spirit that works in the minds of Christians as the author and the finisher of their faith.

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus **the author and finisher of our faith**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And, He is the one who teaches them all things.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Please be sure to read the Preamble to this study if you haven't already done so to understand who is the "Holy Ghost" you find mentioned in different verses of the Bible.

Christians are not the workmanship of the ministry; their calling was not the ministry's doing. Their calling was through the holy spirit God the Father and their continuing education in the truth is by God the Father's Spokesman to His chosen ones, the holy spirit God the Word. Paul makes this very clear in the following verse.

1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.[in knowledge and understanding]

Knowledge, truth, faith (the truth of God Christians believe) and spiritual growth all come from God; not the ministry who are but men chosen by God to be helpers only ; they plant and water but God gives the growth or increase in knowledge and understanding. Christians are God's workmanship (the Father's and the Word's); not men's.

A truly converted ministry, when there is one in existence, plays an important but secondary role in the lives of true Christians, those called and chosen by the holy spirit God the Father. Their role is to teach them the foundational truths of God's Church — those that are known, we don't have them all — which God placed in His Church through the apostles. They have no power to force anyone to believe what they teach. They have no power to convert anyone; to bring anyone to the knowledge of God's truth; or to force anyone to keep on following the truth once they have decided to abandon it. As HWA always used to say to illustrate this point: "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." In other words, God has given mankind absolute free moral agency and we will examine just what it means for man to have free moral agency in the following paragraphs.

Absolute Free Moral Agency

Having absolute free moral agency means there is no power in heaven or on earth that can force someone to believe something against his will. God has decreed that man must choose. Choosing to obey God or not when called has to be his choice. No one can take away his power to choose; otherwise, man could not be held responsible should he make the wrong choice as it would have been made through the influence of an irresistible superior power. It wouldn't be man's choice anymore; it would be that superior power's choice.

In the following verses of Deuteronomy, God is not only speaking to physical Israel but to all of mankind who in due time will be called. Some

are called now, all those living during the Millennium will be called, and all those resurrected at the beginning of the Last Great Day will be called. All of mankind who have ever lived will be called and have to choose life or death.

Deu 30:15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

Deu 30:16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Deu 30:17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

Deu 30:18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose** life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

God commands man to choose. He leaves him free to choose life or death, blessings or cursings but He urges man to choose life **though He will not force him to do so.**

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led **[not forced]** by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

It must be his own, freely taken, decision. At the time of our calling, God opens our eyes for us to be able, for the first time in our lives, to see the true difference between good and evil to which mankind has been blinded since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. At the time of our calling, for the first time in our lives, our minds are opened up to become able to choose between good and evil as defined by God and not ourselves. God leaves us entirely free to choose one or the other. He has the power to force us to choose one or the other but He has chosen not to do so.

God has given man absolute free moral agency i.e., he cannot be forced

to believe something against his will. Therefore, it follows that neither the ministry or any man for that matter, has the power to convert anyone, to force someone to believe something contrary to what he has chosen to believe or to force him to keep on believing the truth he once had should he choose to no longer do so.

The role of the ministry is then one of teaching the foundational truths of God's Church to those who are teachable i.e., that have been called by the holy spirit God the Father, who have accepted their calling, and who chose to continue to believe the truth of God. They then have God's holy spirit the Word and Spokesman dwelling in them giving them understanding of the spiritual truth of God as they pray, meditate and study their Bible. That is how they remain teachable.

No man can force another man to believe something against his will and this is why men can only be helpers of the faith or joy, as the Bible calls it, of the truly converted.

And, individual members remain fully and personally responsible for proving with their Bible all that is taught them by men and for rejecting any teaching that cannot be proven true with their Bible.

God's command to Christians is to prove all things, to hold on to what is good and to reject what is false.

1Th 5:21 Prove **all** things; hold fast that which is good.

And, Christians are to be studying their Bible on an ongoing basis to become able to correctly understand the truths it contains.

2Ti 2:15 **Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [correctly understanding] the word of truth.

What does the Bible have to say about the role of the priesthood or ministry as we would say today?

The Role of the Priesthood

One of the places in the Bible where God talks about the reason why there is a priesthood is in the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi. In this book we have a description of the spiritual state of ancient Israel. They had not remained faithful and the priests whose responsibility it was to teach the law were no longer faithfully teaching the people the truth they had been given by God through Moses.

In Malachi 2, God is talking about the attitude of the priests towards the law. A contrast is made between Levi in whom God is pleased because as a priest he taught the law as it had been given by God to Israel and the priests of the time of Malachi who had ceased to be faithful teachers of the law and who were misleading the people.

Before I continue with this aspect of what is required of priests, I need to point out that the first and most important requirement is obedience to God. Being a priest and being faithful in teaching the law is not the basic and primary requirement for being a priest though it is a critical one; obeying God in all things is the basic requirement that makes it possible for one to become a priest if required to do so by God. Accepting the responsibility of being a priest is but one manifestation of one's overall attitude of obedience to God in all things.

One is first a servant of God and being a priest is only one of the many possible ways of serving God. **All truly converted Christians are ministers, priests and servants of God.** The daily sacrifice that they offer God is themselves dying to their old ways of living and with a mind regenerated by the presence of the holy spirits of the Godhead in their minds, living in newness of life.

Now, returning to the requirement for priests to faithfully teach God's law.

Mal 2:4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. **[God here is telling Israel of Malachi's days that His covenant would be with Levi, who obeyed Him and not with those who are disobeying Him.]**

Mal 2:5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. **[Levi's attitude was to obey God.]**

Mal 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: **[he taught God's law without changing any of it]** he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they **[the people]** should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. **[The role of the priesthood in the never converted physical nation of Israel was to pre-**

serve the law given to Israel by God and the people were to come to them to be taught. The priesthood was to be God's faithful messengers preserving, bearing and teaching God's truth to Israel given them by Moses.]

Mal 2:8 But ye [the priesthood or teachers of Israel in the days of Malachi] are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. [The priesthood was no longer preaching/teaching the law as they had received it from God through Moses as Levi had done; they had corrupted the covenant of Levi which was to obey God. By their perverted teaching of God's law, they had caused many to break the law.]

The role of the priesthood today (when a true one exists which is not very often) is simply to teach the Church the truth God gave to His Church through the apostles and which were, in part, restored by HWA. The ministry is not at liberty to teach anything else or to teach the truth in ways that changes them. They have the responsibility to teach but no power to coerce or compel Christians to believe the truth or to remain with the truth or to bring them back to the truth once they have decided to forsake it.

In summary then, the role of the ministry is to be the helpers of true Christians' faith as they have no power to convert anyone or to keep anyone converted as man has been given absolute free moral agency by God. They plant and water but it is God through the action of the holy spirit the Word and Spokesman who makes possible the spiritual growth of the brethren who are God's workmanship not man's.

And most importantly, this should be of great concern and interest to us, we have seen that the priesthood of ancient Israel did not remain with the truth and became a source of error for the people causing them to break the law by following their incorrect teaching of it.

Was this situation to be any different as we move into the New Testament era of God's Church? Does God say the brethren could be fully confident the ministry would never mislead them and does First Era Church history show that the ministry was fully trustworthy?

First Era Christianity

The first era church after a good start on the Day of Pentecost quickly began to be persecuted. Opposition came from the established

pagan religions of the time which include the Jewish religion which is not God's religion. The time of the Jews' calling is yet future to our time. They are still waiting for the Messiah to come. They do not know the true God nor will they know Him until the time when salvation is opened up to all of mankind during the Millennium and the Last Great Day. At first, persecutions on the Church came principally from them but there were soon joined by other pagan religions of the day and opposition even arose right from within the membership of the Church as we will see.

What did the non-ordained or regular members of the true Church then do? This is of vital interest to us today as our very salvation depends on what we do when having to deal with false teachers rising up within God's Church or coming in from the world pretending to be converted and seeking to change the truth of God from within the Church.

It all comes down to the fact that God holds individual Christians responsible for proving all things (1Thess 5:21; Acts 17:10-11) from the pages of their Bible; they are not to trust in any man no matter how trustworthy he may seem to be or how faithful he has been in the past.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Unfaithful Ministers in God's Church

In the book of Acts, chapter 20, Paul is speaking to the elders of the Church and in doing so he gives out a grave warning to the Church; especially, to the brethren.

The context is that Paul was on his way to Jerusalem (Act 20:22) and had stopped in Miletus from where he called for the Church elders that were in Ephesus to come to him.

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

He wanted to speak to them one last time to warn the Church of what

would happen after his departure. Paul knew they would not see him again. He would be taken to Rome where he would die at the hands of the Roman authorities.

Act 20:25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

He had a grave and disturbing warning message to them and to God's Church through the centuries.

Not only would the Church be under attack from without [the grievous wolves that would enter the congregations of God's Church (Act 20:29 quoted below)] by men perverting the truth given the Church as a way of building a group for themselves; it would also be under attack from within.

Some of the elders of the Church, whose very reason for their existence was to protect the truth given the Church from false teachers, would themselves become false teachers misleading the brethren.

Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. [The congregations would be infiltrated by men coming in from without the Church pretending to believe the Church's teachings as a means of gaining access to and the confidence of Church members to facilitate the spreading of false teachings within the congregations.]

Act 20:30 Also of your own selves [the elders of the Church] shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. [And, even some of the elders who were appointed for the very purpose of protecting the congregations from false doctrine, would become a source of error, teaching lies to get a following for themselves.]

Paul instructed Titus to ordain elders in every city whose mission would be to safeguard the truth given the Church from those who were trying to mislead it.

Tit 1:5 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 had been appointed as an elder by Paul and Paul here tells him to appoint elders in every city to protect the Church from false teachings as the next verse makes clear.**]

Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. [**Elders were to be appointed from men holding fast to the truth as it had been taught to the Church by the apostles so as to be able to rebut the false teachings (See Titus 1:13) of those whose goal was to draw a following after them as a means of making a living for themselves; the gainsayers (See Titus 1:11.)**]

Tit 1:10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: [**the Jews**] [**A lot of the early opposition to the newly-founded congregations of God's Church came from the Jews but not exclusively, false teachings would also come from some of the elders of the true Church as we will see.**]

Tit 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake [**out of a desire to make money for themselves**].

Tit 1:12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

Tit 1:13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; [**The elders are to strongly reprimand all those seeking to spread false teachings within the congregations.**]

Tit 1:14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Elders were to safeguard the truth of God and rebut those trying to spread false teachings in the congregations of God's Church but would the brethren be able to rely on the elders to never mislead them? Elders are also but men. What does God through Paul tell the Church about them?

In 1st John we read of John telling the faithful to be careful and make sure that those who were seeking to teach them were not false teachers who had made their way into the congregations of God's church.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [challenge, test, prove] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets [teachers claiming to be speaking the truth of God] are gone out into the world.

There were also men in the congregations of God's Church who were driven by an intense personal desire to be leaders in the Church and who in order to do so did not hesitate to take over certain congregations.

In 3rd John, we find that John was not able to visit certain congregations because they had been taken over by men who wanted to have the preeminence i.e., they wanted to be leaders in the church but they had not been appointed to be leaders by anyone; they wanted to have their own group. They refused to receive John and his fellow teachers and forbade those in their congregation who would allow them to visit (John and those with him) from doing so and expelled them from the Church.

3Jn 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

3Jn 1:10 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.

Doesn't that sound like a perfect description of what occurred after HWA's death where different men in the church wanted the preeminence and sought to create their own group of followers and excluded everybody else who refused to follow them calling them Laodiceans and false churches of God?

The false teachers of those days and of our days who had taken over certain congregations had one goal in mind and Peter is most eloquent and so very clear in telling the Church what was the goal of these false teachers and of these false leaders.

2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that

bought them, [these were converted individuals who turned away from the truth; the Lord had bought them i.e., their sins had been forgiven, they were part of God's Church] and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2Pe 2:2 And many [of those in the congregations of God's Church] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Please note that it is the "many" not the "few" in God's Church who would follow after the false prophets that would arise in the congregations of God's Church. These false teachers would raise up large groups calling themselves Christians but not holding on to the truth delivered to the Church by Christ through the apostles. And they would cause men to speak evil of those holding on to the truth given the Church by the apostles, calling them heretics and, as history shows, this has happened and continues to occur unto our days. They became the large, visible, dominant churches of this world's false Christianity.

2Pe 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

These false teachers would come into the congregations of the true Church pretending (feigning) to agree with the Church's teachings and would pervert (change) the teachings of true Christianity out of covetousness i.e., because of their strong desire for fame and money; to have a group follow them as great leaders and teachers of the truth and out of a desire to live luxuriously off of their tithes and offerings.

There has been no lack of such occurrences since the death of HWA. The Restored Church of God has an insatiable hunger for money and the Philadelphia Church of God bought land, built a gated community for its ministers, constructed an auditorium on professionally landscaped land and purchased a jet airplane worth millions of dollars which is hugely expensive to maintain and operate for its Pastor General. And, there are many, many others all pursuing the same goal of making merchandise (using their followers as a means of making money like someone selling goods) out of those that follow them and providing a life of luxury for themselves at their expense.

A favorite and widely used deception by modern-day false prophets is to have the words "church of God" somewhere in the title of their organization as they have learned that this is the name of the true Church in the Bible. It has proven to be quite effective in attracting people to their organizations including previously truly converted Christians.

In the book of Jude, the faithful are exhorted to earnestly contend for the faith (the truth) once delivered to the saints by the apostles as their congregations were under attack from within by false teachers who had come in among them spreading false doctrine to get a following for themselves.

Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith [truth] which was once delivered unto the saints. [the truth given them by Christ through the apostles]

Jud 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, [who have come into the congregations of the true Church pretending to believe the truth taught by the Church] who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, [teaching that Christ's death on the stake freed up men from having to obey the law and gave them permission to sin without fear of punishment as God's grace will always be more abundant than men's sins.] and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. [denying the existence of God the Father and that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah or Christ.]

1Jn 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. [These men were of the spirit of antichrist.]

Again, we see here, a warning being given that there would be men that would infiltrate the Church in order to corrupt it with false teachings and seek to have members follow after them as a means of making a living for themselves.

Should Christians have an absolute trust in the ministry in full confidence that they would never or could ever mislead the Church? Does God say that it is a bad thing to question what the ministry teaches comparing their teachings against the Bible to make sure they are not deviating from the truth?

In the book of Revelation, we have an example of what God thinks of those who are watchful not to be mislead by false teachers. There were some in the days of the Ephesus Era Church who wanted to be thought of as being apostles. What did the faithful then do? Let's read on into Revelation 2.

Rev 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These

things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them [checked their teachings against their Bible] which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

God was very pleased with Ephesus Era Christians who did not blindly accept what was being taught them; checked it out against their Bible and correctly made the determination that those who were saying they were apostles, were liars.

How about us today, would God be similarly pleased if you were to do like the Ephesian Era Church and continuously check out with your Bible the teachings of the ministry and have the strength of character to cease following those men whom you find to be liars; to separate yourself from those congregations calling themselves Church of God but who are not holding on to the many truths God restored to His Church through HWA?

Absolutely!!!! He would be very pleased.

So far, we have seen that from its very beginning, the true Church was under attack from without from men feigning (pretending) conversion so they could spread false teachings within the Church to try to have as many as they could of God's people follow them instead of the truth as a means for them to make money. Some have presented themselves as being apostles (Rev 2:2) when in fact they were not and God praised Ephesian era Christians for having found them out to be liars. Other false preachers would arise from some of the very elders appointed by the Church to guard the truth against false prophets.

By now, it should be clear that Christians have to be careful about accepting as truth, without verifying with their Bible, the teachings coming from the ministry who are but men. Basically, Christians have to verify everything taught them as made evident by the fact that false teachers have even claimed to be apostles in an attempt to mislead true believers.

False apostles and false prophets (teachers), Church elders; basically, all those teaching the Church are but men of which some can and will turn away from the truth. This has been happening since the foundation of God's Church. The common element is that all are but men susceptible to temptation and as the Bible makes overly clear, more than a few have failed to stay with the truth and became false prophets or teachers. The

Bible tells us in many and different ways that Christians are not to place their trust in men; their trust is to be in their Bible and they should verify all that is taught them against their Bible to make sure it corresponds with the truth of God.

And, true Christians should cease following those who they have been proven to be liars after comparing their teachings to the Bible; if they don't, then they are making a decision with the gravest of consequence for their salvation.

Recent Church history makes manifest just how quickly and easily false apostles and prophets arise to take advantage of the Church and use it for their personal enrichment and to flatter their egos by having a group follow them.

Ephesian Era Christian successfully detected the false apostles that arose in their days not by reading what other men said about these false prophets or discussing the matter with the ministry or talking about it with their friends. They found them to be liars by checking the teachings of these false apostles against their Bible.

There may be some that at this point still remain unconvinced that God holds them personally responsible for making sure they are not been misled by false teachers and that they have to separate themselves from any congregation where the leader is proven to be deviating from the truth.

So, let's see if the Bible gets even clearer on this matter.

God's Command to Christians of all Ages

The Bible clearly shows that Christianity would suffer throughout its existence from false apostles, false prophets and, even, from Church elders and teachers that would cease following the truth.

I understand this realization flies in the face of the very commonly held belief that Church members are to rely on the ordained ministry given this was widely taught and enforced by the ministry who typically did not endure having their teachings questioned for any length of time. Persistent questioning of their teachings resulted in disfellowship and shunning. The membership quickly came to understand it was best not to question too much the teachings of the ministry and, if they did ask questions, that it was wise to accept the answers given them without raising further questions.

It is understood that God wants that the ordained ministry when it is holding on to the truth to be held in high esteem for the work that it does but

this does not translate into members having to blindly agree with all their teachings as the Bible makes abundantly clear.

What then should true Christians do?

The Bible, the only sure means we have to discern truth from error, holds the answer.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Christians are to prove ALL things. And, how are they to prove all things whether they be good so they can hold on to the good and reject the bad. Christians throughout their lives have to be evaluating all things against the Bible to ensure they are conducting their lives in accordance with the truth of God **and** to ensure they are not being misled by false teachings.

True Christians are to be like the Bereans mentioned in Acts 17:10-11.

Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

What did they do?

They diligently consulted their Bible dictionaries; searched through their lexicons and their concordances; reviewed various Bible commentaries; they held meetings among themselves to discuss Paul's teachings; they consulted other members of the ministry, etc.

NO; they searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether what Paul was teaching them was true.

The Bible is the infallible Word of God and is the one and only sure way of discerning truth from error. Christians are not to put their trust in men, no matter how much they may believe some men to be trustworthy. Not even HWA could be or wanted to be trusted; he always told the brethren not to take him at his word and to check out for themselves in their Bible what he was teaching them **and** if they found he wasn't telling them the truth, NOT to believe him.

The Bereans listened to Paul with an open mind but they did not accept as true what Paul taught them without verifying the truth of

Paul's teachings with their Bible. Modern day Christians are certainly to listen to the ordained ministry respectfully — when there is a true one in existence — and with open minds but, like the Bereans, they must also always verify their teachings against the Bible. God holds them personally responsible for doing so. The individual Christian is responsible for his own salvation.

What About Today?

As we have seen, from the very beginning God's church came under attack from false teachers that surreptitiously made their way into the congregations of the true church and tried to turn the faithful away from the truth they had been given in order to have them follow them and become the means for them to make a living.

True believers were cast out of the congregations of the true church as they came to be dominated by false teachers. **The true believers did not compromise their beliefs to remain with these congregations.** False teachers arose from **within** the church itself in addition to those that came into the church from **without** pretending to agree with the truth but who, once part of congregations, began to spread false teachings.

Since the death of HWA, the faithful remnant finds itself without a true ministry.

Some are assembling with others whom they judge to be holding on faithfully to the truth and listen to voice recordings by HWA. Some are also listening to tapes from ministers who were part of the Church in the days of HWA. It should be noted that regarding these ministers, almost none of them have remained with the faith so care should be taken not to be misled by them.

However, many have not been careful and placed their trust in men? Paul tells us the fate of those who have remained **children in the faith.** When the ministry does its job, the result is as stated in Eph 4:14.

Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

New Christians start off as babes-in-Christ but they are not to remain in that state. They are to become mature spiritual adults by constant study of the Scriptures and by proving all things taught them by the ministry when there is one in existence. What happens when Church members

have been relying on men and have put their confidence in them?

They simply follow those same men when they start preaching error and they become part of the different so-called churches of God founded by them.

Many false prophets have arisen in our days even while the Church was under the administration of HWA. Members of the ordained ministry, even in the days of HWA, broke away from the church to start new congregations. There were many in the Church who followed them.

Those that put their faith in men were all blown by the winds of false doctrines coming from the mouths of these false teachers into the many false churches of God that arose before and after Mr. Armstrong's death.

These former members of God's Church are now at peace and sitting contentedly in these false churches of God thinking all is well but all is not well. Their salvation hangs in the balance and their fate will be decided on whether they personally make the effort to prove or not their teachers and what they will do about it if they find them to be false teachers. The Bible example is that true Christians refused to compromise the truth they had so as to fit in with the congregations raised up by false teachers. They were consequently expelled or they left of their own accord.

This is the vital reason why God commands all true Christians to prove all things. It is also the reason why God had recorded in the Bible what happened in the days of the first era Church of God. It is a vital lesson and a grave warning to brethren of all times.

Men, even truly converted men who have become part of the ordained ministry can never be relied on to always preach the full truth of God to the brethren. Being but men, they are vulnerable to temptation and, as the Bible very clearly shows, there are many that have not and will not endure with the truth.

Men simply cannot be trusted no matter how trustworthy they may have been in the past or how much of a high office they hold in the Church.

Paul, an apostle personally trained by Christ, told the Corinthians to follow him as long as he was following Christ and, if ever they found he was not following Christ, they were not to follow him but rather follow Christ. Mr. Armstrong used to say the very same thing and he was the Pastor General of the Church.

1Co 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The best of men cannot be relied on to always be faithfully teaching the truth of God. This is why God makes Christians personally responsible for continuously proving the teachings of the ministry with their Bible.

It is your **only** sure protection from false teachers.

Your very salvation depends on it.

Knowing this, what will YOU do?