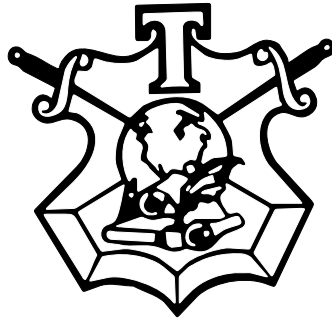


# **APOSTASY –**

**End Time Churches  
of God Gone Astray  
– *the Shocking Inside  
Story of What Really  
Happened***

**William F. Dankenbring**



Triumph Prophetic Ministries  
PO Box 842  
Omak WA 98841  
[www.triumphpro.com](http://www.triumphpro.com)  
triumphpro@aol.com

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## Chapter 1

# Crisis in the Worldwide Church of God

After being a member of the Worldwide Church of God for 30 years, after having attended Ambassador College from 1959 to 1963, and receiving a Master of Arts degree from that institution in 1970, and after having written scores of articles, booklets and Correspondence Course lessons for publications of the Church, including the PLAIN TRUTH, GOOD NEWS, TOMORROW'S WORLD magazines and the Bible Correspondence Course, in January, 1987, I suddenly found myself "out" of the Church --suspended one week, and summarily "disfellowshipped" the next week --all without the benefit of a single "hearing," or "trial," or opportunity to defend myself or to answer the "charges" brought against me!

How did such an incredible thing happen? How did it occur?

Why, after being a faithful and long-time member of the Church for 30 years, and after enduring such heart-wrenching events as the crisis in 1974 when over 150 ministers left the Church, and the Receivership crisis of 1979-1980, when the state of California took over the Church operations to determine the truth regarding alleged improprieties in management and misuse of tithes and Church funds --why did I exit the Church in the opening month of 1987?

No story is more saddening, more heart-rending, and more terrible to contemplate. And yet it happened!

### *The Strange and Unbelievable Scene*

At one time I was one of the leading writers for the PLAIN TRUTH magazine. I was assistant to the Managing Editor, Dr. Herman L. Hoeh; and supervised the editorial staff, ran the editorial planning meetings, and wrote from one to three articles every issue

of the magazine. My title was "Associate Editor," but it did not begin to describe all the various duties which I performed.

During those halcyon years the future seemed bright and beautiful. But even then storm clouds were gathering on the horizon, and the Church of God was soon to experience a massive "hurricane" of epic proportions.

What happened?

In 1972, when the Church of God failed to flee to a place of safety, which Herbert W. Armstrong had been predicting ever since the middle 1950's, many members and ministers became disillusioned. Herbert Armstrong's old booklet, which had been distributed by the millions of copies, entitled *1975 in Prophecy*, had in effect foretold the second coming of Jesus Christ by the fall of 1975! But this scenario was obviously not correct. And many people were upset, disillusioned, and some were outright disgusted.

On top of that major disappointment, the news broke in 1972 that Garner Ted Armstrong had been guilty of a problem of long-standing --adultery and fornication on a massive scale. Although the news did not reach the Church membership, because Herbert Armstrong covered it up by use of apostolic authority, and threatened to put anybody out of the Church who tried to pry into the matter, because of the severity of the problem Garner Ted was temporarily disfellowshipped from the Church, and sent into exile in Colorado.

Ted's "love life" was later the center of attention in an article which ran in *Penthouse*, a leading pornographic "girly" magazine. At the same time a thick, full color magazine called "Ambassador Review" ran a feature cover article entitled "In Bed with Garner Ted." Apparently, after all the facts were in and witnesses and ministers finally went public, the truth of the matter was that Ted had been sleeping with various babysitters, Ambassador College co-eds, and various harlots and whores from Hawaii to Mexico City, from Nevada to India! In Hawaii a young prostitute with whom he was about to have a secret "tryst" suddenly recognized him as the speaker on the "World Tomorrow" television show, and the sudden realization virtually "blew" her mind!

This example of rampant hypocrisy startled the ministry, as well as the fact that Ted had begun a serious [to him] "affair" with a stewardess on the Falcon Jet, owned and operated by the Worldwide Church of God. In fact, at one point he was thinking seriously of divorcing his wife Shirley and marrying Gail. The Church shipped Gail off to parts unknown and forbade Ted to ever get in touch with her again. [Gail died not long ago. A friend of hers avows that she was never Ted's girlfriend, but that he *raped* her and the Church covered it up!]

After his short sojourn in exile, Ted was brought back into the Church, and was put back into high office, resuming all his former duties. In the meantime, however, over

150-200 ministers defected from the Church, including evangelists Albert J. Portune and Charles Hunting.

The year of the massive defection was 1974. This was the year when Ted returned to power, and began to consolidate his position in the Church by removing from high office all those whom he did not consider to be "loyal" to him, personally. Rod Meredith was shipped off to England, to get him out of the way; Raymond McNair was shipped off to pastor a small Church in Missouri.

Ted set about to create a new "team" at headquarters which would be loyal to him. In the process he removed Herman Hoeh from managing the PLAIN TRUTH, and allowed his own appointed replacement, Art Ferdig, to terminate the entire full-time PLAIN TRUTH writing staff, including myself, Pat Parnell, Rick Peterson, and Bill Whikehart. I was replaced by two individuals --one who was later confirmed to have been a blatant homosexual and who shortly thereafter left the Church, and the other who was later indicted by the Internal Revenue Service for tax evasion and fraud, who spent time in jail, and who finally escaped a long prison term by turning state's evidence against his associate in the tax scheme. Their particular rip off was to sell phony "ministerial credentials" by mail and help people set up phony religious institutions, to evade taxes.

I had been on a trip for the PLAIN TRUTH to Mexico at the time the massacre of the editorial staff occurred. Upon my return, I suddenly found myself "terminated," with no explanation except the supposed need to "cut the budget " But one associate at the time said to me as I left, "You are one of the walking wounded." Indeed, I did feel terribly hurt and let down by the experience. Yet my faith in God was strong. I knew that "all things work together for GOOD to those that love God" (Rom.8:28-29). Therefore, deep within my heart of hearts, I knew that God would use this tragedy for a great blessing, and turn disaster into victory and tragedy into triumph!

It was at that time that God led me to begin Triumph Publishing Company, on a shoestring of money and lots of shoestring "faith." I first published THE KEYS TO RADIANT HEALTH, and followed that with THE FIRST GENESIS: A NEW CASE FOR CREATION. Then I published a full color book for children called CREATION BOOK FOR CHILDREN, shortly followed by a book on Bible prophecy entitled THE LAST DAYS. About this time, Raymond McNair agreed for me to publish his manuscript on the LOST TEN TRIBES, but wanted to rewrite portions of it first. As he plunged into the task, he became absorbed in writing an entirely new book, which I published as ASCENT TO GREATNESS.

Later, when I was about to publish the sequel to that volume, entitled IN SEARCH OF THE LOST TEN TRIBES, he reneged on our agreement, and backed down, costing me several thousands of dollars for money spent in promotion and type-setting. By this time he had been brought back from exile in Missouri and appointed the Vice Chancellor of Ambassador College, under Herbert Armstrong.

During these years, the Church of God never persecuted me or condemned me for publishing these books, even though they were not under the auspices of the Church. For several years I was even allowed to advertise in Festival brochures, and purchased advertising space to do so, selling the books at bookstores and markets at various Festival locations.

### ***The Disaster of the Receivership -Crisis***

Meanwhile, in 1979-80 the Church experienced its worst disaster ever --the Receivership crisis, when the state of California took over the plant in Pasadena, because of allegations of wrong-doing financially. At first Evangelist Wayne Cole, who was in charge of the Work in Pasadena, wanted to cooperate with the Receiver, but Stanley Rader, the top legal advisor to Herbert Armstrong, advised against it, and suddenly Wayne Cole found himself fired, and Herbert Armstrong appointed Stanley Rader to run the campaign of resistance against the court appointed receiver.

At this time Joseph Tkach, a local elder in the Pasadena area, was chosen to manage various "sit in" demonstrations by employees of the Church and members, to gain publicity and notoriety, .and to win sympathy of all Church-minded people everywhere. All members were told to send their contributions to Tucson, Arizona, where Herbert Armstrong was then living, to keep the monies away from the hands of the receiver and his team. The fight went on for about two years before the legislature of California passed a new bill, called the Petris bill, which took away the state's authority to investigate the financial dealings of religious institutions.

After the retirement of Stanley Rader, Herbert Armstrong began to depend more and more on Joseph Tkach and Ellis LaRavia. Both of these men were elevated to the office of evangelist by Herbert Armstrong, at the same time Stanley Rader was, during the Receivership crisis. When Rod Meredith protested the ordination of Stanley Rader, Herbert Armstrong "disfellowshipped" him for six months, and exiled him to Hawaii until he got over his problem. He was forbidden to have any contact with Church members.

Since being appointed over the entire Church Administration, under Herbert Armstrong, in 1981, Joseph Tkach has been the effectual ruler and leader of the Worldwide Church of God, although he carefully cleared everything he did with Herbert Armstrong. He did not want to lose his job as all his myriad predecessors had. The job of being in charge of Church Administration had historically been a short-tenured one! A veritable "musical chairs" of successors had come and gone, beginning with Raymond C. Cole, David Antion, Wayne C. Cole, Roderick C. Meredith, and now --Joseph Tkach!

### ***The Beginnings of Persecution!***

It was after this change took place that I began noticing a new spirit or attitude on the part of the Church toward Triumph Publishing and the books I published.



First, in a Pastor General's Report dated April 23, 1982, the author of an unsigned article (the Work's index to periodical literature assigned it to Joseph Tkach, indicating he either wrote it personally or assigned it to be done by his office!) admitted that

"Mr. Dankenbring is classified as a member of God's Church. But that does not imply his privately-sold writings have the approval or endorsement of the Church."

The author went on to castigate me with a literary whip, accusing,

"Human nature seems to want to use God or God's Church, for personal gain or profit."

He then lumped me in with the moneychangers in the Temple! He accused as follows:

"The moneychangers used God's temple as a place of business to sell at a profit to God's people." The author went even further, lumping me together with false ministers who make merchandise of the people of God. He quoted, "In II Peter 2:3 God warns, I And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.' Yes, SELLING FOR PROFIT their words in writing to the members of God's Church."

He added,

"Perhaps the selling of doves and things for sacrifice was not in itself wrong, but exploiting God's HOUSE as a place or means of selling to God's people was. "

Obviously, the attitude of Church leaders toward the books published by Triumph Publishing had noticeably changed -- for the worse!

This nasty diatribe was sent out to the entire ministry of the Church; but the Church leaders never, never, never contacted me about it first! If they had such a grievance against me, should they not have spoken with me about it first? Didn't Jesus say, "Moreover, IF thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault BETWEEN THEE AND HIM ALONE. . ." (Matt.18:15).

But they never did this! And when I called Joseph Tkach about it on the telephone, he did not return my call. When I called him a time, he merely promised that he and Ellis LaRavia would get together with me about it --but he never kept his promise! At the time, of course, I did not know or realize that it was HE or his office who were responsible for the article!

***Et tu, Brute!***

Have you ever been viciously stabbed in the back, by a supposed "friend"?

Finally, just before the death of Herbert Armstrong in January, 1987, he appointed the man whom he had come to rely on to manage Church Administration to be his successor, and apparently gave him his own authority, offices and titles, including "Pastor General" over the Worldwide Church of God. Thus in just a few short years a man rose from the position of lowly local elder to the supreme human position over the entire Worldwide Church of God, with an annual income of \$150-200 million!

At this time it still remained to be seen how Joseph Tkach would handle his new responsibilities. At the funeral of Herbert Armstrong he said, "I cannot hope to fill his shoes, but I can follow in his steps." But has he been really doing that?

During the year and one half since he took over as the head of the Worldwide Church of God, great changes have begun to take place.

Where is it all leading?

What kind of leader is Joseph Tkach? On the surface he appears smiling, kind, humble, friendly and gregarious. But what is he underneath the pleasant exterior? What is he REALLY like?

Jesus Christ said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in SHEEP'S CLOTHING, but inwardly they are *RAVENING WOLVES*."

"Ye shall know them *by their fruits* " (Matt. 7:15-16).

***"I Can Follow In His Steps "***

I do not wish to speak evil of anybody, much less anybody in a position of authority. Even Christ, when He was prosecuted by the Pharisees and the High Priest, men in high authority, opened not his mouth and did not revile them, or rebuke them at that time. He suffered at their hands, even unto death (1 Pet2:21-23).

I do not despise government in the Church. I have been subject to Church government, within the laws of God, for over a quarter of a century, and never rebelled against government. Contrary to what some may accuse, or assume, government is not my problem. But abusive government IS the problem of those who abuse authority! I followed orders, and "proved" myself, for years, even in areas and things where it was not necessarily required. I worked for six months watering, mowing and weeding the lawn of a minister of the Church, while being an "assistant" in the field ministry. I "PROVED" MYSELF, my loyalty to God and to His truth!

But the greatest test came when the CHURCH LEADERSHIP ITSELF DEPARTED FROM THE TRUTH OF GOD, and hurled me out of the Church without a hearing, in a vicious kangaroo court, and denied proven TRUTH of God!

My problem was not "Church government "

Christ's problem was not government.

But what happened? The very Church Jesus built -- the "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38) -- by the time of Christ had fallen into the hands of apostate Pharisees and Sadducees, and its leaders SLEW HIM! The very Church leadership crucified the Messiah!

Peter said to the assembled Pharisees, and members of the "CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS," on the day of Pentecost, 31 A.D.,

"Men and brethren. ...God has made that same Jesus,  
WHOM YE HAVE CRUCIFIED, both Lord and Christ"  
(Acts 2:29, 36).

It was the very Church, of God that went astray, and with selfish, self-seeking, self-appointed leaders, they rejected the Messiah, the Son of God, and killed Him! The "Government of God" was abused, misused, and perverted!

Jesus ALLOWED this to happen!

He *allowed* the "government of God," established of God, to condemn Him wrongfully, and to murder Him. Why? So He could pay the penalty of our sins. Also, although few realize it, so He could set us an EXAMPLE, that we might follow His steps, and thereby develop the same kind of holy, righteous character as He has!

I do not "despise government" Nor do I wish to ever "speak evil of dignities" (II Pet2:10). However, even as Christ did not fear to rebuke and blast the Pharisees, in Matthew 23, nor do I fear to call a spade a spade, and to denounce evil where and when I see it --even inside the Worldwide Church of God!

### ***The REAL Problem -- CHURCH GOVERNMENT Gone Awry!***

The tragic truth is, that even today, as 2,000 years ago, it is the CHURCH GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS DETERIORATED, AND GONE ASTRAY, AND FORSAKEN THE TRUTH OF GOD! And it has begun on a wide basis to CAST OUT all people who refuse to go along with its insidious and nefarious changes in doctrine, and "new truth," which is really apostasy in the GUISE of "truth"!

If I see someone going the way of Cain, or running greedily after the error of Balaam, for physical wealth and reward, it is my duty to point out the sin (Jude 11).

When Paul was being judged by the Pharisaical court, and the high priest commanded an officer to smite him on the mouth after Paul had proclaimed his own personal sincerity (Acts 23:1-2), Paul said to him, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"

Those who were present said to Paul, "Revilest thou God's high priest?"

Paul replied, "I wist not, brethren, that was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (verse 5).

### ***My Personal Situation***

Even so, even though I was cast out of the Church of God in a vicious pogrom, in January, 1987, without a trial or hearing, in a manner totally contrary to and inconsistent with the LAW OF GOD, in a venal, visceral miscarriage of justice, I did not revile the minister who was sent to perform the operation. And I did not revile or falsely accuse Larry Salyer, the head of Church administration, or Joseph Tkach, who sinfully authorized the blatant act, of spiritual murder. Rather, I kept silent about the matter.

When I was told of the decision, which was based on a catalogue which I had sent to my mailing list containing an article on the 2300 days prophecy -- though much of this material had been previously presented to many ministers in the Church, and none had disagreed with it or told me of any disagreement, including Joseph Tkach and Herman L. Hoeh!) -- I immediately phoned to set up an appointment with Dr. Hoeh, or Mr. Salyer. Neither one returned my phone calls. I asked Mr. Reier, the local pastor of the Imperial A.M. Church to set up an appointment for me to see Mr. Salyer. He later phoned and said he was unable to do so.

Was this a shocking, reprehensible, blatant miscarriage of justice inside the very Church of God?

Was I a "wheat" being victimized by a sinister cabal of cruel, lustful, greedy, proud "tares"?

The truth will become known. Jesus Christ said that ALL the wicked deeds of men will be exposed to the bright light of day. He warned, "Beware of the LEA YEN of the Pharisees, which is *hypocrisy*. For there is *NOTHING COVERED that shall not be revealed; neither HID that shall not be known*. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be **PROCLAIMED UPON THE HOUSETOPS**" (Luke 12:1-3).

***"Your SIN Will Find You Out"***

Those who seek to cover over their sins, and to exercise hypocrisy in judgment, shall all be exposed and revealed, eventually, for the entire world to see -- just as all the tares will be bound up in bundles and cast into the fire, in front of the eyes of all the righteous!

Moses wrote it so plainly, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

There will be no hiding these enormous sins from the searchlight of the Word of God. As Paul wrote, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; either is there any creature that is not MANIFEST in his sight: but all things are NAKED AND OPENED unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb.4:12-13).

Nothing can be hidden, or swept under the carpet, from the gaze of Almighty God!

Why is there such gross mismanagement and error being committed in the Worldwide Church of God, today? Clearly, the Church shows forth all the fruits of the LAODICEAN CHURCH so vividly described by Christ in Revelation 3:14-19. One only needs to read these verses, carefully, prayerfully, and slowly, to realize that the description fits the Worldwide Church of God to a "T" since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong -- and was making rapid strides in that direction ever since the death of Loma D. Armstrong in 1967, nineteen years prior to her husband's death (one 19-year time cycle).

Jesus Christ knew it would become thus in these "last days," the generation living at His return. He declared, "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues (churches)" (Matt.10:17). Such a church council condemned me -- in absentia, behind my back! Such a synagogue or Church, the Worldwide Church of God, "scourged" me and whipped me right out of the Church!

Can we grasp the enormity of such a crime? Can we grasp the shocking horror of such an egregious miscarriage of justice?

Can we remember the words of Christ, who said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall *REVILE you, and persecute you*, and shall say ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the *PROPHETS* which were before you" (Matt5:11-12).

Luke records the words of Christ:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall SEP ARA TE YOU FROM THEIR COMP ANY, and shall REPROACH you, and cast out your name AS EVIL, for the Son of man's sake. REJOICE ye in that day, and LEAP FOR JOY: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke 6:22-230).

These things do happen, today. Times have not changed. The more things change, " the more they stay the same. True servants of God suffer being CAST OUT, reproached, denigrated, falsely accused, slandered, reviled, and persecuted, today, so ostensible, so-called "ministers" of God, and those in spiritual authority supposedly in "high places," just as happened two to three thousand years ago!

Therefore, when these things happen to me, I do rejoice, knowing that God will make everything right, in His own time.

It is an "ugly" thing to have to describe such a terrible miscarriage of justice. I know that God will defend me, when the time comes, however. He will be the Defense Attorney and prosecute the false witnesses who lined up against me! I would hate to be in their shoes! Christ will both defend me, and judge the wicked false accusers, one by one. The wicked Pharisees, the evil tares, He will have His angels gather together, and cast them screaming into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone and sulfur.

It is a "bad" thing to realize that during the past 20 years, the Worldwide Church of God has gone so far downhill, so far astray. It was a gradual, almost imperceptible, thing. But as Herbert Armstrong got older, and missed the steadying influence of his remarkable wife, people began to misinform and mislead him. He was always susceptible, it is said, to flattery, and the devil sure knows how to take advantage of a person's weaknesses! The flatterers began to creep out of the woodwork and to shovel it on him with buckets and trowels. They worked on his vanity, and told him how great and wonderful he was. They bowed and scraped and competed among themselves in showing how "loyal" and "humble" and "subject" they were. They out did themselves and each other in their sickening display of saccharine sweetness and smiling flattery. Thus the "politicians " arose to high office in the Church of God setting the stage and preparing the way for the full-fledged Laodicean Church, and the end-time apostasy prophesied to occur!

Right now before our eyes there is a "great falling away" occurring (II Thess.2:3). Only this "falling away" or apostasy is *not* of people from the Church, but of *THE CHURCH* from God's truth!

History shows this has happened in every church age!

During the past 19 years the Church has become totally confused over the divorce and remarriage question. It has become totally confused as to what constitutes sin, throwing out the definition Herbert Armstrong often used and understood.

It has rejected truth on divine healing, and totally embraced all the surgeries and methodologies and techniques of modern medicine, accusing Herbert Armstrong of being misinformed and totally wrong. In so doing, it has said that any and all medical practices are all right, and nothing to be rejected --it is up to the individual! By so ruling, recently, it has said that all those who "died in faith" -- including Mrs. Lorna D. Armstrong in 1967 -- died needlessly, foolishly, and should have resorted to surgery performed by the doctors of the world!

Thus, during the past 19 years, the Church has strayed far from the simple truths and commandments of God. Especially during the past year and a half it has plunged recklessly, headfirst into error and disobedience to God's law!

***"When Will They EVER Learn?"***

As the folk song of the 1960's goes, "When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?" Yes, *WHEN?*

Are your eyes open to perceive the truth?

Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast HID these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto BABES: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21).

He added, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see" (verse 23).

Your eyes are indeed "blessed" if your sight has been spiritually restored, so that you can see and understand the true nature of the Worldwide Church of God, and its leadership, today! This is no small revelation. It is a truth that the majority are not privy to understand. For this reason you have much to be thankful for!

But once we see this truth, clearly, what should we do about it?

Should you fellowship with such a Church? Should you remain a member?

The truth should be plain: Those who attend the Laodicean Church must be or become Laodicean! "Birds of a feather flock together!" "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov.13:20). There is little choice in the matter. The whole influence of the fellowship and the ministry is to encourage "the Spirit of: Laodicea" -- the "worship of men," denial of the Word of God, stress upon "authority," and a constant temperature of lukewarmness.

In order to overcome the Laodicean syndrome, one must COME OUT of Laodicea!

But how can you do that? How can you REPENT of being Laodicean?

In other words, those who remain IN Laodicea need to “BE ZEALOUS THEREFORE, AND REPENT!” (Revelation 3:19). Repent of the sins of that Church - the blindness, the nakedness, the commandment-breaking, the self-righteousness. To do that, one must reject the errors in the Church -- and if you do that, and don't leave, willingly, then they will surely put you out once they find out about it!

Don't kid yourself. You cannot play with fire, and not become burned. You cannot fellowship with a straying, erring Laodicean Church, and not become infected, contaminated, and poisoned by it, spiritually!

Sooner or later, you must face up to the facts and COME OUT of it!

Paul wrote, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees (do you feel weak?); and make straight paths for your feet (in the laws of God), lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be HEALED” (Heb.12:11-13).

If you have been Laodicean, or fellowshiping with Laodiceans, then YOU NEED TO BE HEALED! You need spiritual tonic -- the Word of God. You need to BATHE yourself in the Word of God, and it alone. You need to draw close to God. You need to come out of and forsake SIN!

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE (most are not listening, yet!), and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”! That is, your fellowship -- rather than being with like-minded compromising Laodiceans -- will be direct with CHRIST HIMSELF, through His Word!

Christ continued, “To him that OVERCOMETH (comes out of Laodicea and that blind, stupor-like, naked condition) will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev.3:20-21).

### ***Should You Continue in FELLOWSHIP with the LAODICEAN CHURCH?***

Do you need to fellowship with Laodiceans in order to be saved? Be very careful how you answer that! As I wrote before, God says, “He that *walketh with WISE MEN shall be wise*: but a *COMPANION OF FOOLS shall be DESTROYED*” (Prov.13:20).



Do you want to be destroyed? Do you want to imbibe the Laodicean spirit and attitude of, "I'm all right, Jack!"? Do you want to earn the wrath of God, and be thrust straight into the Great Tribulation?

What does God say about our fellowship? Should you continue fellowshiping with LUKE-WARM, INSIPID, TEPID, SPIRITUALLY SHALLOW "CHRISTIANS" -- EVEN WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS ABOUT TO "SPEW" THEM OUT OF HIS MOUTH? (Rev.3:16).

Should you continue to listen to their sermons week after week, month after month, just because you don't know where to go, or where else you might find "fellowship"?

GOD says -- "*Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth thee to err from the words of KNOWLEDGE*" (Prov.19:27). If you listen to erroneous doctrine, and sweet platitudes, and spiritual "tripe," would you not gradually absorb it into your being, and become like it? Would it not insidiously, gradually, like a cancer, begin to destroy your spiritual body -- your spiritual "cells" -- and ultimately take your life?

Fellowship is a very important matter. But most important is with WHOM we fellowship! Our most important fellowship is not with each other, but with God the Father and Jesus Christ, our Saviour, through His written Word! As the apostle John wrote, "And truly OUR fellowship is *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*" (1 John 1:3).

If we are close to God, and studying His Word daily, as we ought, is it always necessary that we also attend weekly Sabbath services, especially if there are none in our area where we can be assured of hearing truth unmixed with error?

OF COURSE NOT!

It is better to draw close to God, and to depart from the evil congregation, which God calls the I! congregation of the dead. I! Otherwise, you will be influenced by those around you, and you, too, will become more and more tepid, lukewarm, justify changes, accommodate yourself to doctrinal errors, and rationalize and explain them away. You will gradually lose your fear of God, and become deadened to sin, insensitive and unfeeling. You will gradually turn into a spiritual robot

God says:

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall REMAIN in *the congregation of the DEAD*" (Prov.21:16).

Don't let that happen to you! Your eternal LIFE and salvation are at stake!

Since 1986 and the hi-jacking of the Worldwide Church of God, enormous changes have occurred in that Church body. Many doctrines have been changed, turned inside out, obliterated, and the church has marched straight back into the jaws of Babylon – “confusion.”

Many have left that church and formed new churches – Philadelphia Church of God led by Gerald Flurry, Living Church of God, United Church of God, and a host of smaller churches and groups.

A tragic and sad state of affairs has occurred. The end-time Church is more divided and ever. Each man seems to want to raise up disciples after himself. But where is the “love of the truth” amongst all these scattered, remnant groups?

How many are hungering and thirsting after knowledge – truth – and willing to admit it when they are wrong in their teachings?

How many are even willing to admit that Herbert Armstrong himself could have been wrong in some of his basic teachings, and did not possess all the truth?

How many are willing to repent and change when proven wrong? How many are willing to sift through all the evidence, and not take their beliefs for granted?

It is high time we face up to these questions. Apostasy – departure from the TRUTH of God – is rampant and widespread in these “last days”, this “end of the age,” this “crisis at the close”.

This book will expose some of the strange history of the Worldwide Church of God, its off-shoots, and the bizarre and shocking behavior of leading ministers, apostles, evangelists, and ministers which has been covered up, hidden from view, and vigorously denied by top leaders.

You need to know the truth. You need to understand! As Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, said, “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt.7:20).

Let us carefully examine these “fruits.”

## Chapter 2

# End-Time Apostasy Exposed!

What went wrong with the Worldwide Church of God?  
Why all the amazing, incredible doctrinal changes on the one hand, making the Church more acceptable to the main-stream "Christian" world, and the rejection of proven new truth on the other hand? Here is a step by step analysis of the most incredible story of our age!

Jeremiah prophesied of the flagrant End-Time rebellion that would occur within the very Church of God at the close of the age, before the coming of the Messiah. He was inspired to write: " A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority [pretending it is "God's Authority"!], and my people LOVE IT THIS WAY. But what will you do in the end?" (Jer.5:30-31).

Thousands today put their trust in "Church authority." They believe smugly that their church is "the ONLY Church of God." They confidently trust their ministry never to mislead them. They think to themselves, "If there is wrong in the Church, God will correct it in due time. I don't have to worry about it God would never let the ministry go astray, or lead us astray. Why, after all, this is God's own Church! "

Jeremiah prophesied that people would make that very boast, during the End Time! He wrote: "This is what the LORD Almighty , the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord! ' If you REALL Y change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods, to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever

and ever. But look, you are TRUSTING IN DECEPTIVE WORDS that are worthless" (Jer.7:3-8).

### *Modern Church Idolatry*

People who have the attitude, "This is the Church of God, the Church of God, the Church of God!" and who put their trust in the "Church of God" are foolish and, as God Himself says, are "trusting in deceptive words." God thunders, "Behold, ye trust in LYING WORDS, that cannot profit" (Jer.7:8, King James Version).

The apostle Paul gave us a similar warning. He declared, "Now the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will ABANDON the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through HYPOCRITICAL LIARS, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4: 1-2). The Greek word for liars or lies, as used in this verse, is *pseudologos* -- and this is the only place it is used in the New Testament. The usual word for "lies" is *pseudos*. But this is talking about "lying words," or speech in the context of hypocrisy -- something which conveys the subtlety of very cunning lies and deceptions, something beyond just normal run-of-the-mill "lies."

These "lies" are carefully thought out and arranged and orchestrated clever DECEPTIONS, which seem close to the truth, and may even appear true, at first glance, or to the superficial observer. But these "lies" are Satan's subtle misinformation, his clever alterations, and cunning hiding of the truth under a covering that SEEMS right on the surface. It may even SOUND like the truth --but is not! Something is not quite correct --something is very cleverly altered, to deceive and delude people! To trust in such lies leads to DEATH!

In other words, Satan gives the truth a little "spin." He "shades" the truth ever so slightly, to alter the meaning and emphasis. The lies that are hardest to detect are those that are slight twists or variations on the truth. So slight that they may still sound like the truth, and may seem virtually indistinguishable from it! But they are COUNTERFEITS of the real truth, and lead people into apostasy and spiritual error! Satan knows that by injecting little "shadings" of the truth, he can eventually change entire doctrines and major beliefs, in time --he can inject sufficient error to cause God to frown upon His erring people, and have to punish them. Satan knows that blatant lies would be rejected by most people, so he is very assiduous and subtle in his approach!

To assume that you are protected from Satan's deceptions just because you are a physical PART of the Church, is a dangerous assumption! Adam and Eve may have assumed that they were in no danger, because they were right in Paradise --the Garden of Eden! But the serpent's cunning still caught Eve off her guard, and she was deceived

rather easily and quickly! God warns us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor.10:12).

God says of His End Time Church, "The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the LORD; so they do not prosper *and all their flock is SCATTERED*" (Jer.10:21).

### *What Is Your Real Attitude?*

But part of the problem of the End Time Church of God is the attitude of the PEOPLE. They themselves have strayed from the straight and narrow path, and have compromised their faith and diligence in serving God. They don't want to hear stem, hard truth; they prefer pleasantries, novelties, and philosophy. God warns, "GO now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that in the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. These are rebellious people, DECEITFUL children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us PLEASANT things, prophesy ILLUSIONS. Leave this way, get off this path [quit correcting us and rebuking us, we don't like it!], and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!'" (Isa.30:8-11).

Because of this lackadaisical attitude of nonchalance about spiritual things, God says, "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression, and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern"(verses 12-13).

Amos also rebukes the End- Time Church of God people for their tremendous complacency. The prophet thunders, "WOE to you who are COMPLACENT in Zion, and to you who FEEL SECURE on Mount Samaria [that is, the capital city of Ephraim, prophetically the United States!], you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come! II (Amos 6: 1 ).

### *Those Who "Put Off" The Evil Day*

Just as is happening in the End Time Churches of God, today, Amos prophesied, "YOU PUT OFF the evil day and bring near a reign of TERROR. You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches ["lounge lizards"]. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph [the sick economy, the ravished land, the gang violence, the injustice and collapse]. Therefore you will be along the FIRST to go into exile, your feasting and lounging will end" (Amos 6:3-7).

The “mother” whom thousands put their trust in --the Church of God --will be punished and destroyed, God says, for it is no longer truly His Church because of its sins and compromises with the truth and perversions of true doctrine. The prophet Hosea writes, "YOU stumble day and night and the prophets STUMBLE with you. So I will DESTROY YOUR MOTHER [the Church, which is the "mother of us all" -- Gal.4:26] -- my people are DESTROYED from lack of knowledge. Because you have REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I also reject you as my priests ["ministers"]; because you have ignored the LAW of your God, I also will ignore your children. The more the priests increased [the more the End Time Churches of God grew and increased in numbers and size], the MORE THEY SINNED AGAINST ME," God warns; "they exchanged their Glory for something disgraceful. They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in PROSTITUTION [whoring with the civil governments of the world, the world's educational accreditation committees, and committing spiritual “incest” with the world's churches!] but not increase [their growth and income will suffer], because they have deserted the LORD to give themselves to PROSTITUTION, to old wine [old pagan erroneous doctrines] and new [bizarre new interpretations], which take away the UNDERSTANDING of my people. ...*A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God*" (Hos.4:7-12).

God Himself is soon going to punish His End Time Church with furious rebukes and stern plagues -- a spiritual whipping like the Church has never before received. He will do this because of the serious corruption that exists in high places in EVERY REMNANT CHURCH OF GOD IN EXISTENCE! This warning applies directly to the Worldwide Church of God, The Church of God International, the Philadelphia Church of God, Living Church, United, and all others which have similar problems and totalitarian, tyrannical "Church government" systems which are modeled after the concept of “Babylon”!

### *Laodicean Rebellion and Intolerance*

Jesus Himself rebukes this End Time Church of God, calling it the "Laodicean Church" generation and age --the FINAL prophesied Church era to appear in the world, shortly before His second coming! He declared: "To the angel of the Church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness [because they are not faithful and true], the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are LUKEWARM -- neither hot nor cold -- I am about to SPIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are WRETCHED, PITIFUL, POOR, BLIND AND NAKED. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your

eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So BE IN EARNEST AND REPENT. Here I stand at the door and knock. If ANYONE [He is appealing to individuals, not entire church groups, but one by one to individual persons, one by one] hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:14-22).

Notice! This account describes the vast, whole, ENTIRE REMNANT CHURCH OF GOD! It is the LAST GENERATION! It is spiritually blind and naked, but thinks it is rich and very spiritual, proud of its supposed "knowledge," but really pitiful in God's sight It is so far removed from the ways and true paths of God, that Christ is not even INSIDE this "Church" --He is pictured as standing OUTSIDE "looking in" -- KNOCKING ON THE DOOR, hoping that someone, at least a "few," may open the door and let him into their own individual homes!

The Laodicean Church is proud of its apparent "wealth. " It also is a Church which highly values its own human or church traditions. Interestingly, there are only two Greek words in the New Testament, which, when their letters are added up, they each add up to the number 666 -the number of the Beast (Rev.13:18). Those two words are -- tradition, and wealth. The Laodicean Church, therefore, has characteristics which are very similar and close to the very MARK OF THE BEAST of Revelation! It has allowed its wealth and tradition to get in the way of God's Laws, and serving God out of a pure and undefiled heart and mind! The love of money leads to all kinds of perversions, and putting tradition ahead of and above the very LA WS of God leads to sin, and wickedness.

Thus the Laodicean End-Time Church of God is in VERY BAD SPIRITUAL SHAPE! Jeremiah describes this Church generation, saying, "Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones tremble. I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and his holy words. The land is full of adulterers. The prophets follow an EVIL COURSE and *use their power unjustly*. Both prophet and priest are godless; EVEN IN MY TEMPLE [even in God's CHURCH, the "Temple of God" -- Eph.2:20] I find their wickedness,' declares the Lord. Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished,' declares the Lord. 'Among the prophets of Samaria [the United States, where most of the End Time Churches of God are head-quartered!] I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by BAAL and led my people Israel astray" (Jer.23:9-13).

### ***Church "Authority" Becomes Church "Tyranny"!***

Abuse of power is one of the common characteristics of End Time ministers of the Laodicean churches of God. Immediate suspension from Church, or even

disfellowshipment, at the drop of a hat, seems to be the rule rather than the exception in Worldwide, Philadelphia, Living, United, Continental and International Churches of God. They are all in the same boat, except for the "fine print" Their similarities far outweigh their differences -- especially in the area of Church Government! They have all virtually become, to one degree or another, the "Synagogue [Church assembly] of SATAN" (see Rev.3:9). That is why God literally calls His true people OUT of these apostatizing, sinning, deceptive, wicked congregations and assemblies!

Initially, when Herbert Armstrong began serving God, he did not found a Church but rather an evangelical work. As it grew, and members were baptized, he called it the "Radio Church of God." In those days he acknowledged that the Church of God, Seventh Day, and others, were also parts of the body of Christ.

But after the Church grew big, and powerful, individuals began referring to the "work" as "the Church." By the late '50s and early '60s Herbert Armstrong himself began denying the fact that others could also be part of the body of Christ, and began calling virtually all other groups "counterfeits." This trend continued and grew more flagrant, as the Church increased in power, income, and membership.

There is a mortal danger in any organizational structure, whether ecclesiastical or secular. As growth continues, management systems are brought in, and faith and inspiration become overlooked and neglected. Systems replace faith; numbers crunching replaces inspiration. Human logic and reason and planning take the place of looking to Christ and expecting miracles to do the Work! Specially designed "co-worker letters" are sent to people to maximize the monetary returns --taking advantage of widows, older people, and those who are ignorant of the methods of modern evangelism!

The organizational trap swallowed the Worldwide Church of God, and a hierarchical structure developed, with the ministerial elite on one level and the plebian masses of Church members down at the bottom. Soon ministers were expected to always be called "Mr." and never addressed by their first name! The examples and instruction of Christ and the early Church were completely ignored and bypassed.

Jesus Christ said, "The kings of the Gentiles LORD IT OVER THEM; and those who exercise AUTHORITY over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater" the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-27).

As hierarchies develop, brethren begin looking to the lofty ministers as their spiritual guides and masters, and not to Christ! The ministry becomes an inflated, self-



serving, ego trip! Humility is swallowed up in pride and pride leads to arrogance!

Herbert Armstrong incorporated the Radio Church of God in 1948. One 19 year time cycle, later, Lorna D. Armstrong died --in 1967. One 19 time cycle later, Herbert W. Armstrong died -- in January, 1986! These numbers illustrate the fact that God was working with the Church of God, during this time, even though mistakes were made by the human leaders. Perhaps the greatest single mistake made by Herbert Armstrong was the establishment of a governmental system of hierarchical superiority --the so-called "pyramid" structure --which is nowhere taught or commanded in the Scriptures. Rather, as Herbert Armstrong himself wrote in a 1939 article on Church Government, the pyramid structure of Government comes straight out of BABYLON and is PAGAN to the core! But as the Church grew, he felt the need to establish lines of authority, and began ordaining various "levels" of ministers thinking he was following God's way, not realizing that ministerial "gifts" are NOT "ranks," but divinely distributed GIFTS of the Spirit of God (I Cor.12:1-11). GOD is the one who appoints spiritual offices --not men! (I Cor.12:27-31 ; Eph.4:9-13).

By establishing a ministerial hierarchy, Herbert Armstrong was falling into the trap of Satan the devil, and setting up a GENTILE form of Church Government, the very thing Jesus Christ warned against and condemned (Matt.20:24-28; 23:8-12). He thereby created and injected the seeds of the Church's eventual destruction and take-over by Satan the devil!

### ***How Satan Entered In and Took Over***

As the organization grew, so did the infiltration of Satan's agents and influences -- his secret "tares" to do his bidding and work (II Pet2:1-3; Jude 3-4). They looked "good" on the outside, and dressed snappily, and acted like loyal, obedient servants, and so Herbert Armstrong was deluded, misled, and deceived, and ordained WICKED MEN to high offices. He himself admitted at times that he was a very poor judge of character. That is why, less than one year before his death, Herbert Armstrong wrote in the June 24, 1985 Worldwide News, at the conclusion of an article entitled "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God" the following words:

"A final personal word In a few days I will be 93 years of age. For some years now, there have been some, like vultures, waiting for me to die. They would like to come back and take over the leadership of the Church in my stead I have been deeply concerned about this, but in no sense worried This is the Church of God, not of any man. Jesus Christ is the living Head of this Church. I am not. . . .

"When I have, even rarely, mentioned my concern in this category, the response of members has always been the belief that God will keep me alive. I hope that He will, and I do try to take every care of my health and physical condition, but

whether God keeps me alive 10 more years, or only 10 more minutes is entirely in God's hands. Brethren, put your faith in Christ and the living God and not in me. *If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders; to select one of them to continue leading you until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory. Pray that God will keep YOU in His Church until He replaces this evil world and brings the wonderful, peaceful and blessed Kingdom of God.*"

Herbert Armstrong wrote this in June 1985 -- just six and one half months before his death! Strange, isn't it, that only a few days before his final death, or thereabouts, a mysterious "letter" appeared, supposedly "signed" by Herbert Armstrong, ostensibly empowering one Joseph W. Tkach, a relative neophyte and uneducated non-Israelites, to take over the reins of the Church! Strange, isn't it, that Herbert Armstrong AT NO TIME gave verbal, powerful, unconditional and clear instructions to the Council of Elders, to select Tkach, and NEVER made the announcement verbally, himself!

Did Satan the devil pull off a master-stroke at the death and passing of Herbert Armstrong? Was the "passing of the baton" a notorious, nefarious FRAUD? Was Herbert Armstrong, while on his death bed, surrounded by only a few "trusted" aides, deceived, and taken advantage of! The horrendous possibilities are mind-boggling! Are we so naive?

Herbert Armstrong fully intended for the Council of Elders to select his successor, knowing full well his own limitations and weaknesses. Why then, are we supposed to believe that he suddenly "changed his mind" while on his death bed?

There is an interesting prophecy in Isaiah, where God says: "Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind, but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD?" (Isa.42:18-19). In his old age, Herbert Armstrong was partially deaf and partially blind. This is a prophecy referring to him! He made many mistakes, yet he was a servant of God.

I don't think Herbert Armstrong saw, grasped, or was fully aware of the DANGER he was in, as he lay on his death-bed, and no clear decision having been made as to his successor! Books have been written pinpointing the evidence that Pope John Paul was actually MURDERED in the Vatican by a conspiracy of high-ranking cardinals, to perpetuate their own authority and doctrines. Other books have recently been written suggesting powerfully that John F. Kennedy was actually ASSASSINATED in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, in a CIA-FBI conspiracy, perhaps engineered by Lyndon Baines Johnson, his "successor," who was not going to be his running mate when Kennedy ran for re-election. Was Herbert Armstrong also the victim of a cabal, a sinister PLOT of Satan the devil, to take over the Church?

### ***The Church After Herbert Armstrong***

Since his death in 1986, the Worldwide Church of God has suddenly veered off into doctrinal heresies and distortions, reconciling doctrines with Protestantism, and seeking to find favor in Satan's world! The Church has **VEERED OFF THE TRACKS** and plunged into error and wickedness --a full-blown Laodicean condition which Jesus Christ condemns!

Now we are living in the **FULL-BLOWN LAODICEAN ERA** of the End Time Churches of **GOD!** Prophecy has been relegated to the dust bin; Herbert Armstrong's booklets are all in the process of being "revised " and "rewritten. " His book *Mystery of the Ages* has been thrown out on the trash heap. The identity of the lost ten tribes of Israel is no longer taught or believed by the Church leadership! Joseph Tkach then began to claim that he is "BORN AGAIN!" and so is every believer. He claimed the Kingdom of God is already here, now, in the Church -- something Herbert Armstrong **NEVER** taught! He claimed the purpose of human life is **NOT** to become "God" as "God is God," and that Jesus Christ was never **REALLY HUMAN** at all! *Where will the diabolical Satanic heresies END?*

What should **MEMBERS** of such a Church do about their affiliation? And what about members of the other apostate, Laodicean churches, whether on the right or left "wing"?

### ***The Oppression and Slavery of Gods People***

Isaiah the prophet thunders, " **AWAKE**, awake; put on thy strength [the whole armor of God --Ephesians 6:10], O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments" --the robes of righteousness (Isaiah 52:1, Rev.19:10-12). "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the **LORD**, that my people is taken away for nought? *they that rule over them [their shepherds or "ministers"]* **MAKE THEM TO HOWL** . . . saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is *blasphemed*" (verse 5). They blaspheme God's name by their practices, their filthy deeds, their disfellowshippment procedures, their false doctrines, their calling God's **TRUE** servants and prophets "false prophets," "Satan-inspired," and other epithets. They blaspheme God by their every action and word, every day, as they abuse, beat, and browbeat the sheep under their control.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "The word of the **LORD** came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the **SHEPHERDS** of Israel; prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign **LORD** says: **WOE** to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost You have **RULED THEM HARSHLY AND BRUTALLY**. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My

sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them" {Ezek.34: 1-6).

God thunders, "I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will REMOVE them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves; I will RESCUE my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them" (verse 10).

God Himself will also judge between the sheep, individual Church members who have conflicts and who mistreat each other. He says, " As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. . . . See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be PLUNDERED" {Ezek.34:17-22).

Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, both have a severe "bone to pick" with the End Time Church of God generation --the people of God today. God says to His flock, His people, who have strayed into the paths of sin and Laodicean compromise and error: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your INIQUITIES have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt Your lips have spoken LIES, and your tongue uttered wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web [the name "Tkach" literally means "to spin a web"!]. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched.

"Their COBWEBS are useless for clothing [rendering people "naked" spiritually!]; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood [to disfellowship so-called "dissidents"!]. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths [they "cover up" the sins of the ministry , and refuse to judge individual cases with righteousness, but always support the "minister," right or wrong!]. They have turned them into CROOKED ROADS; no one who walks in them will know peace" (Isa.59: 1-8).

### *God's Rebuke and Warning*

This is a very serious rebuke and stem correction. This is a description of the End Time Laodicean Church, with all its "glory" and wickedness! The oppressed sheep of this Church cry out, "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We

look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. LIKE THE BLIND" -- Laodiceans are "BLIND," remember -- "we grope along the wall, feeling our way like MEN WITHOUT EYES. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the DEAD. We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away" (Isa.59:9-11).

In the middle of Great Tribulation, many of the people of this remnant Church will finally cry out to God, confessing their sins and wickedness. They will pray, and say, "For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities, rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; TRUTH has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. TRUTH is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey" (Isa.59:12-15).

In their distress they will finally call on God, in deep remorse and repentance for their sins, and God will forgive them, and wipe away their iniquities. He will deliver them from the Great Tribulation, those who remain alive, and Christ Himself will rescue them (verses 16-18). "From the west, men will fear the name of the *LORD*, and from the rising of the sun, they will REVERE his glory .For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the *LORD* drives along. The Redeemer will come to Zion [the remnant Church in captivity], to those in Jacob who REPENT of their sins" (Isa.59:19-20).

What about you? Will you repent now? Or will you have to experience the pangs of bitter travail and Great Tribulation to bring you to your senses?

God has called prophets and watchmen to WARN His erring, sinning, straying people to RETURN to HIM, before it is too late! That cry and warning is going out! God thunders, "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice LIKE A TRUMPET. Declare to my people their REBELLION and to the house of Jacob their SINS" (Isa.58:1).

God tells His people, "I have posted WATCHMEN on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night You who call on the *LORD*, give yourselves NO REST, and give Him no rest, till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa.62:6-7).

## Chapter 3

# Where and How the Worldwide Church of God Went Wrong

From its hey-day in the late 1960's, to today, the Worldwide Church of God has undergone significant changes, both in policy, operations, and basic doctrines. What does it all mean? Did Joseph Tkach really carry on the legacy and tradition of Herbert W. Armstrong? What happened to the Church that Herbert Armstrong thought he was leaving to his successor?

Initially, when Herbert Armstrong began serving God, he did not found a Church but rather an evangelical work. As it grew, and members were baptized, he called it the "Radio Church of God." In those days he acknowledged that the Church of God, Seventh Day, and others, were also parts of the body of Christ.

But after the Church grew big, and powerful, individuals began referring to the "work" as "the Church." By the late '50s and early '60s Herbert Armstrong himself began denying the fact that others could also be part of the body of Christ, and began calling virtually all other groups "counterfeits." This trend continued and grew more flagrant, as the Church increased in power, income, and membership.

There is a mortal danger in any organizational structure, whether ecclesiastical or secular. As growth continues, management systems are brought in, and faith and inspiration become overlooked and neglected. Systems replace faith; numbers crunching replaces inspiration. Human logic and reason and planning take the place of looking to Christ and expecting miracles to do the Work! Specially designed "co-worker letters" are sent to people to maximize the monetary returns -- taking advantage of widows, older people, and those who are ignorant of the methods of modern evangelism!

## *"The Organizational Trap"*

The organizational trap swallowed the Worldwide Church of God, and a hierarchical structure developed, with the ministerial elite on one level and the plebeian masses of Church members down at the bottom. Soon ministers were expected to always be called "Mr." and never addressed by their first name! The examples and instruction of Christ and the early Church were completely ignored and bypassed. Jesus Christ said, "The kings of the Gentiles LORD IT OVER THEM; and those who

exercise AUTHORITY over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-27).

As hierarchies develop, brethren begin looking to the lofty ministers as their spiritual guides and masters, and not to Christ! The ministry becomes an inflated, self-serving, ego trip! Humility is swallowed up in pride and pride leads to arrogance!

Herbert Armstrong incorporated the Radio Church of God in 1948. One 19 year time cycle, later, Loma D. Armstrong died -- in 1967. One 19 time cycle later, Herbert W. Armstrong died -- in January, 1986! These numbers illustrate the fact that God was working with the Church of God, during this time, even though mistakes were made by the human leaders. Perhaps the greatest single mistake made by Herbert Armstrong was the establishment of a governmental system of hierarchical superiority -- the so-called "pyramid" structure -- which is nowhere taught or commanded in the Scriptures. Rather, as Herbert Armstrong himself wrote in a 1939 article on Church Government, the pyramid structure of Government comes straight out of BABYLON and is PAGAN to the core! But as the Church grew, he felt the need to establish lines of authority, and began ordaining various "levels" of ministers thinking he was following God's way, not realizing that ministerial "gifts" are NOT "ranks," but divinely distributed GIFTS of the Spirit of God (I Cor.12:1-11). GOD is the one who appoints spiritual offices -- not men! (I Cor.12:27-31; Eph.4:9-13).

By establishing a ministerial hierarchy, Herbert Armstrong was falling into the trap of Satan the devil, and setting up a GENTILE form of Church Government, the very thing Jesus Christ warned against and condemned (Matt.20:24-28; 23:8-12). He thereby created and injected the seeds of the Church's eventual destruction and take-over by Satan the devil!

### ***Herbert Armstrong's Own Sense of Church Government***

Interestingly, Herbert Armstrong wrote an article in 1939 in which he lambasted the concept of a centralized and powerful Church government. In that article he argued that the power really rested with the people and local leadership of the Church, and that power should rest with each church and local ministry in charge of its own government and affairs, under Christ. He went so far as to declare that centralized Church government was patterned after the government of the Roman Empire, and thus traced back to ancient Babylon!

It is reported that in October, 1975, Herbert Armstrong ordained to the ministry a certain Marc Segall (who later changed his name to Courtenay), who graduated from Ambassador College in 1973. He later served as a full-time elder for 20 years in the Church. According to Marc Courtenay, Mr. Armstrong told him, at his ordination, that in retrospect, he felt that the concept of church government he had written about in

1939 would have worked, but that he had been afraid he would lose control if he adopted it.

John Robinson, editor of *In Transition*, and a former minister of the Worldwide Church of God, spoke with Courtenay, and Courtenay confirmed the accuracy of the report. Robinson writes:

"He said he was seated next to Mr. Armstrong during a meal when the conversation took place. Mr. Courtenay said he had at the time recently read Mr. Armstrong's 1939 article on government.

"I asked Mr. Armstrong about the article,' Mr. Courtenay recounted. 'At first he gave me the standard explanation that he hadn't fully understood government at the time.' Mr. Courtenay said he then gently pressed Mr. Armstrong on the issue and asked him again about the article.

"He said that Mr. Armstrong became reflective and then gave him a more thoughtful, candid response.

"He said that the New Testament reflected a collegial approach to church government and that what he wrote in 1939 was the ideal. Mr. Courtenay said Mr. Armstrong added that if he had had more faith he would have continued that practice, but he 'was afraid of losing control.'

"I asked Mr. Courtenay if anyone else heard the conversation. He said his wife, Lisa, had. I talked with her at length on the phone . . . She said the conversation was as her husband remembered.

"It was on the day Marc was ordained,' she recalled. 'In fact, Mr. Armstrong ordained Marc. After the ordination we were at a restaurant eating with Mr. Armstrong and some other ministers.'

"She said she remembers the conversation clearly. She said there were times when Mr. Armstrong would speak candidly, and that was one of them" (*In Transition*, Jan. 31, 1997, "WCG governmental history traced up to Tkach era," by John Robinson, p.24).

### ***Approaching the Transfer of Power***

As the Worldwide Church of God organization grew, and the money poured in, problems also grew in size and scope. In 1974, a rebellion among the ministry led to scores of ministers leaving the Church together, with one or two thousand members. In the 1970s, liberal elements in the Church sought to invoke changes in major doctrines, and conservative ministers balked at every suggested change, leading to more defections and terminations.

Some doctrines were changed, such as the Divorce and Remarriage doctrine. Others were altered slightly, such as the healing doctrine, although many people were left confused on the healing issue, since ministers seemed to imply that "faith" for healing was required of members to be considered in "good standing," and yet members were permitted also to seek the services of medical doctors, if they so chose.



In 1978, Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong had a falling out, leading to their irreconcilable separation, and Ted started up his own Church, the Church of God, International. In the meantime, Herbert Armstrong seemed to come to depend more and more on Stanley Rader, attorney for the Church. In 1979 the state of California put the Church in receivership, due to complaints and a law suit filed by disgruntled ex-members, and Herbert Armstrong depended on Stanley Rader to lead the fight against the state. He did so and in the process he and local elder Joseph Tkach were ordained as "evangelists" in the Church by a grateful Herbert Armstrong.

Were these men truly converted Christians who deserved such a ministerial rank? Or were they false shepherds who had stolen in amongst the flock? Were they men of God, or agents of Satan who had wormed their way into the ministry? Jesus Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:20).

Throughout history, beginning in the first century of the Church, Satan influenced evil men to infiltrate God's Church, and rise up to positions of leadership. The early apostles had to wrestle with them constantly and wrote of their nefarious workings (Acts 20:28-31; II Pet.2:1-3; Jude 3-4). Such men, no doubt, looked "good" on the outside, and dressed snappily, and acted like loyal, obedient servants -- yet sooner or later, began to teach error, and began to go astray and apostatize.

Even so, Paul, Peter and Jude foretold the same sort of apostasy would occur in the last generation, before the coming of Christ! (II Tim.3:1-11, 4:1-5; II Peter, and Jude). Paul wrote, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the return of Christ] shall not come, except there come a FALLING AWAY FIRST, and that man of sin be revealed . . ." (II Thess.2:3). The "mystery of iniquity" was already at work in Paul's day, he said (v.7), but it would rise to a consummation of deceitfulness and pinnacle of powerful delusion, in the last days (v.8-12), so that those who do not have a "love of the truth" will be deceived, led astray, and ultimately destroyed -- judged and punished with the wicked.

Who can deny that massive changes have occurred in the Worldwide Church of God since the death of Herbert Armstrong, twenty-three years ago? Over ninety major and significant doctrinal changes have been documented by observers of the Church!

It should be obvious, that Herbert Armstrong made a serious error in judgment when he picked his successor -- or allowing the process to occur in the way it did. On the other hand, perhaps he was trusting in "faith." But it appears he put a lot of "faith" in the men around him, who it turns out were untrustworthy and plotting scoundrels, several of them seeking to gain control of the Church in opposition to each other.

Strangely, Herbert Armstrong himself has admitted many times that he was a very poor judge of character. Yet even he suspected that there were men waiting for him to die, so they could take over the Church. Perhaps the biggest visible threat he saw was in his own son, Garner Ted Armstrong, and that is the reason why he refused to meet

with his son or allow him to gain a foothold back in the Church, refusing to reconcile with him out of distrust. He may also have had Stanley Rader in mind, as it was reported that Rader had plotted to have Herbert's wife Ramona to have Mr. Armstrong committed to an institution in Arizona as being incompetent and unable to function and perform his duties. Whether or not these allegations were true, it was reported that a tape recording had been made of such a conversation between Ramona and Rader, and later played for Mr. Armstrong on board the Gulfstream jet, as it flew over Los Angeles. According to those supposedly in the "know," it wasn't until this time that Herbert Armstrong really woke up to the danger that Rader posed for himself and the Church, and determined to have him removed from all Church responsibilities -- even if it cost the Work "millions" to force Rader into retirement, and pay off his contract.

At any rate, concerns about successorship was heavily on the mind of Herbert Armstrong the year before he died. That is why, less than one year before his death, Herbert Armstrong wrote in the June 24, 1985 *Worldwide News*, at the conclusion of an article entitled "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God" the following plaintive, thoughtful words of concern:

"A final personal word. In a few days I will be 93 years of age. For some years now, there have been some, like vultures, waiting for me to die. They would like to come back and take over the leadership of the Church in my stead. I have been deeply concerned about this, but in no sense worried. This is the Church of God, not of any man. Jesus Christ is the living Head of this Church. I am not. . . .

"When I have, even rarely, mentioned my concern in this category, the response of members has always been the belief that God will keep me alive. I hope that He will, and I do try to take every care of my health and physical condition, but whether God keeps me alive 10 more years, or only 10 more minutes is entirely in God's hands. Brethren, put your faith in Christ and the living God and not in me. *If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders to select one of them to continue leading you* until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory. Pray that God will keep YOU in His Church until He replaces this evil world and brings the wonderful, peaceful and blessed Kingdom of God."

Herbert Armstrong wrote this in June 1985 -- just six and one half months before his death! Strange, isn't it, that only a few days before his final death, or thereabouts, a mysterious "letter" appeared, supposedly "signed" by Herbert Armstrong, which seemed to appoint Joseph W. Tkach, Sr. -- a man who never amounted to much, and was a local elder for years -- a man who was uneducated, of Russian stock, and who never finished high school, let alone ever graduated from any college or university, including Ambassador -- to take over the reins of the Church!

Strange, isn't it, that Herbert Armstrong AT NO TIME gave verbal, obvious, unconditional and clear instructions to the Council of Elders, to select Tkach, and appoint him as the "Pastor General" of the Church?

Judging by what is known, it was his *intent* that the Council of Elders would pick

his successor. He did not want to do it himself. He wasn't sure who to pick! Therefore he never made it clear who his successor would be.

But in the weeks before his death, as he lay sick and weak, in bed, his health failing, it seems circumstances raced ahead of him, and he was unable to really handle the matter of his successor in a public, assertive, wise manner. So we are left with questions -- theories -- and more questions.

According to John Robinson, publisher of *In Transition*, a monthly newsletter published for the remnant churches that came out of Worldwide in the past several years, Herbert Armstrong *intended* for Joseph Tkach to answer to the Council of Elders, after Armstrong's death -- so said Aaron Dean, Herbert Armstrong's personal assistant, at the time. But according to Dean, within months of Armstrong's death, Tkach grew restive and tired of the "constraints" that had been placed on him, and according to Larry Salyer, a high level Tkach minister at that time, Tkach demanded that WCG lawyer Ralph Helge draw up papers to make the changes necessary for Tkach to receive all Armstrong's titles and powers.

The Council of Elders, which had always been a "rubber stamp" kind of group, anyway, acquiesced and caved in to Tkach's demanded "changes," and enabled him to accomplish his desire. They were, of course, accustomed to "government from the top down," and being "under authority," as that is the form of government Herbert Armstrong had been using for many years. So they apparently did not "smell a rat." They naively failed to do as Herbert Armstrong had willed for them to do, and allowed Joseph Tkach to seize complete power and control over the Worldwide Church of God!

Whether this story is entirely true or not, I do not know. Other mind-boggling possibilities and explanations of events in the last few days of Armstrong's life have been whispered, circulated, and suggested, concerning the means by which power was really transferred from Herbert Armstrong to Tkach -- including rumors of skull-duggery, deceitful manipulation of an aged man who naively trusted his aides, suggestions that important documents were signed unwittingly, which Herbert Armstrong never fully understood or read, and even suggestions that Armstrong's signature may have been "forged" on certain letters which appeared to appoint Tkach as his successor and transfer power to Tkach.

Some rumors have even been in circulation which suggested the possibility of foul play -- even murder. The last night anyone saw Herbert Armstrong still alive, there was no nurse in attendance. There was no security guard in his room, or nearby. Interestingly, the last one to see him alive was none other than his trusted assistant Joseph Tkach, Sr., who was to replace him as Pastor General of the Church and "apostle." After Tkach left his bedside that night, no one entered Armstrong's room until the next morning, when his body was found dead. Contrary to an article which appeared in *The Worldwide News* at the time, he died in his bed, and not sitting up in his wife's favorite chair.

Did Satan the devil pull off a master-stroke at the death and passing of Herbert Armstrong? Was the "passing of the baton" a notorious, nefarious FRAUD? Was Herbert Armstrong, while on his death bed, surrounded by only a few "trusted" aides, deceived, and taken advantage of? The horrendous possibilities are mind-boggling!

### ***Whatever Happened to the Council of Elders?***

Herbert Armstrong fully intended for the Council of Elders to select his successor, knowing full well his own limitations and weaknesses. Why then, are we supposed to believe that he suddenly "changed his mind" while on his death bed?

There is an interesting prophecy in Isaiah, where God says: "Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind, but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD?" (Isa.42:18-19). In his old age, Herbert Armstrong was partially deaf and partially blind. This is a prophecy referring to him! He made many mistakes, yet he was a servant of God.

I don't think Herbert Armstrong saw, grasped, or was fully aware of the possible danger he was in, as he lay on his death-bed, with no clear decision having been made as to his successor. Books have been written suggesting that Pope John Paul was actually murdered in the Vatican by a conspiracy of high-ranking cardinals, to perpetuate their own authority and doctrines. Other books have been written suggesting that John F. Kennedy was actually assassinated in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, in a massive conspiracy, involving U.S. government agents, the CIA, FBI, as well as the Mafia. Some have suggested the murder of the president may have been approved and engineered by Lyndon Baines Johnson, his "successor," whom Kennedy had ruled out as his running mate when Kennedy ran for re-election.

Was Herbert Armstrong also the victim of a cabal, a sinister plot of Satan the devil, to take over the Church? Whether or not his death was due to sickness, or foul play, the results of his unwillingness to name a successor early on, and his lack of creating a real functioning Council of Elders, proved to be the "Achilles heel" of the Church. The "fruits" of the government and leadership of the Church since his death prove beyond doubt that he would personally be gravely disappointed in the decisions and leadership of his successors.

### ***The Church After Herbert Armstrong -- the Laodicean Era Rises Up!***

Since his death in 1986, the Worldwide Church of God has suddenly veered off into doctrinal heresies and distortions, reconciling doctrines with Protestantism, and seeking to find favor in Satan's world! The Church has VEERED OFF THE TRACKS and plunged into error and wickedness -- a full-blown Laodicean condition which Jesus Christ condemns!

Now we are living in the FULL-BLOWN LAODICEAN ERA of the End Time remnant Churches of GOD! Prophecy was soon relegated to the dust bin; Herbert Armstrong's booklets were all carefully "revised" and "rewritten." All his own original writings have been scrapped, including booklets on "Who Is the Beast?", "The Key to the Book of Revelation," and "Revelation Unveiled At Last!", his *Autobiography*, and all his foundational doctrinal booklets!

His book *Mystery of the Ages*, praised at first, was soon thrown out on the trash heap. His book *United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* likewise was soon withdrawn from circulation, and quietly destroyed. Prophecy and the identity of the lost ten tribes of Israel is no longer of major concern or interest to the new Church leadership.

For years I have been watching, documenting, and observing, as the Worldwide Church of God, under Joseph Tkach, changed EVERY MAJOR DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH once taught by Herbert W. Armstrong!

I have been warning members and ex-members since 1987 of the fundamental, awesome changes taking place, as the Church plunged heedlessly headlong back into the mainstream of Protestantism and modern "evangelical" Christianity -- so that it now receives raving reviews from such "Christian" magazines as *Christianity Today*.

One of the major doctrines of the Church in times past was that "Christians" are not really "born again" until the resurrection, when we will be literally "born" of God -- born into His Universe-ruling Family! But now the Worldwide Church of God, under Joseph Tkach, Sr., now deceased, and currently run by his son, Joseph Tkach, Jr., teaches that Christians are "born again" at reception of the Holy Spirit!

Worldwide no longer believes in a 6,000 year plan of God. Nor do they stress the millennial reign of Christ over the nations. The Church actually claims the Kingdom of God is already here, now, *in the Church* -- implying that if anybody leaves the Church, they are cut off from God's "government" and will wind up in Gehenna fire!

Yet, at the same time, Worldwide now accepts ALL Christian churches and denominations as being part of God's "true church" -- including even Catholics, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, you name them -- all, that is, *except the churches which have sprung out of Worldwide itself due to its massive changes!* These churches, such as Global, United, and Philadelphia Church of God are looked upon as sects, cults, and heretical bodies, serving Satan the devil.

The greatest changes in Worldwide today, however, plain as the nose on Jimmy Durante's face, is the new teaching that the New Covenant abolishes the need to observe the Sabbath, the Holy Days of God, and all elements of the "Old Covenant"! Even "unclean meats" may now be eaten and devoured with cheerful abandon and gluttonous desire.

Truly, if Herbert Armstrong were alive today, he would roar with thunderous indignation. He would put the scoundrels currently running the Worldwide Church of God out of the Church quicker than you can say "Joe Junior"!

Worldwide Church of God now endorses Christmas observance, Easter Sunday observance, and the Good Friday-Easter Sunday crucifixion-resurrection scheme. They preach "grace" and claim the "law" of God is abolished and is contrary to grace.

And the most amazing thing of all, to me, is that scores of thousands of people appear to be going along with their historic rejection of the truth of God, and turn to apostasy and rebellion against the laws of God!

How blind, how weak, how deceived, can once "enlightened" people be?

Like the proverbial frog that is put into a pot, and the heat turned up gradually, so that it feels comfortable and warm, until its energy is sapped and it loses its strength, so that as the water begins to boil, and bubble violently, it dies a scalding death, so these erstwhile "Christians" and children of God are APPROACHING SPIRITUAL DEATH -- *AND DON'T EVEN SEEM TO REALIZE IT!*

### ***What Does God Say to Do?***

Where will the diabolical, Satanic heresies END?

What should MEMBERS of such a Church do about their affiliation? And what about members of the other apostate, Laodicean churches, whether on the right or left "wing"?

Isaiah the prophet thunders, "AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength [the whole armor of God -- Ephesians 6:10], O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments" -- the robes of righteousness (Isaiah 52:1, Rev.19:10-12). "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? *they that rule over them [their shepherds or "ministers"] MAKE THEM TO HOWL*, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is *blasphemed*" (verse 5). They blaspheme God's name by their practices, their filthy deeds, their disfellowshipment procedures, their false doctrines, their calling God's TRUE servants and prophets "false prophets," "Satan-inspired," and other epithets. They blaspheme God by their every action and word, every day, as they abuse, beat, and browbeat the sheep under their control.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the SHEPHERDS of Israel; prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: WOE to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have

RULED THEM HARSHLY AND BRUTALLY. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals . My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them" (Ezek.34:1-6).

God thunders, "I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will REMOVE them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves; I will RESCUE my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them" (verse 10).

God Himself says, "As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. . . . See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be PLUNDERED" (Ezek.34:17-22).

Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, both have a severe "bone to pick" with the End Time Church of God generation -- the people of God today. God says to His flock, His people, who have strayed into the paths of sin and Laodicean compromise and error: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your INIQUITIES have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken LIES, and your tongue uttered wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity.

"They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web [the name "Tkach" literally means "to spin a web"!]. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched. Their COBWEBS are useless for clothing [rendering people "naked" spiritually!]; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood [to disfellowship so-called "dissidents"!]. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths [they "cover up" the sins of the ministry, and refuse to judge individual cases with righteousness, but always support the "minister," right or wrong!]. They have turned them into CROOKED ROADS; no one who walks in them will know peace" (Isa.59:1-8).

### *God's Rebuke and Warning*

This is a very serious rebuke and stern correction. This is a description of the End Time Laodicean Church, with all its "glory" and wickedness! The oppressed sheep of this Church cry out, "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We

look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. LIKE THE BLIND" -- Laodiceans are "BLIND," remember -- "we grope along the wall, feeling our way like MEN WITHOUT EYES. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the DEAD. We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find one; for deliverance, but it is far away" (Isa.59:9-11).

In the middle of Great Tribulation, many of the people of this remnant Church will finally cry out to God, confessing their sins and wickedness. They will pray, and say, "For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities, rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; TRUTH has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. TRUTH is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey" (Isa.59:12-15).

In their distress they will finally call on God, in deep remorse and repentance for their sins, and God will forgive them, and wipe away their iniquities. He will deliver them from the Great Tribulation, those who remain alive, and Christ Himself will rescue them (verses 16-18). "From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will REVERE his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along. The Redeemer will come to Zion [the remnant Church in captivity], to those in Jacob who REPENT of their sins" (Isa.59:19-20).

### *The Job of God's WATCHMEN*

What about you? Will you repent now? Or will you have to experience the pangs of bitter travail and Great Tribulation to bring you to your senses?

God has called prophets and watchmen to WARN His erring, sinning, straying people to RETURN to HIM, before it is too late! That cry and warning is going out!

God thunders to us, "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice LIKE A TRUMPET. Declare to my people their REBELLION and to the house of Jacob their SINS" (Isa.58:1).

God tells His people, "I have posted WATCHMEN on your walls, O Jerusalem [the Church]; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, *give yourselves NO REST, and give Him no rest*, till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa.62:6-7).

God says to His modern day watchmen,

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word that I speak and GIVE THEM WARN-



ING FROM ME. When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or SPEAK OUT TO DISSUADE HIM from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself" (Ezekiel 3:17-19).

God also warns us of the alternative:

"Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But IF YOU DO WARN the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he TOOK WARNING, and you will have saved yourself" (Ezek.3:20-21).

If the wicked repent, and turn from their sins, God will forgive them. But if they are warned, and refuse to repent, their blood is upon their own head -- they are responsible (Ezek.18:14-23). On the other hand, if the righteous man "turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? NONE of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is GUILTY of and the SINS he has committed, he will DIE" (Ezek.18:24).

### ***End-Time Apostasy and You***

The apostle Paul warns us that many will be deceived and carried away by this terrible, end-time apostasy because "they refused to *love the truth* and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe THE LIE and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (verses 10-12).

What is "the lie" which these people will swallow, hook, line and sinker? It is not just any old lie -- it is THE lie -- the very lie that Satan deceived Adam and Eve with in the Garden of Eden! It is the lie that God lied when He told Adam the day he sinned he would die. It is the lie that if we follow Satan's ways we will become as "gods" to know good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5). It is the lie that Satan brings truth and God is a liar, the Word of God cannot be trusted, that the doctrines of the Bible are false, that we can change them and still be saved! It is the lie that we should believe a NEW gospel -- the gospel of "human salvation" instead of the "kingdom of God," which Jesus and the apostles all preached! It is the LIE that we are "born again" at conversion, when we "accept Christ," rather than at the resurrection, when our bodies are changed to SPIRIT!

The Phillips Translation has this passage, "The lawless man is produced by the

spirit of evil and armed with all the force, wonders and signs that falsehood can devise. To those involved in this dying world he will come with *evil's undiluted power to deceive*, for they have *refused to love the truth* which could have saved them. God sends upon them, therefore, the full force of evil's delusion, so that *they put their faith in an UTTER FRAUD* and meet the inevitable judgment of all who have refused to believe the truth and who have made evil their playfellow" (II Thess.2:9-12).

What about you? Do you still have the "love of the truth"? Or have you "lost your first love," like the Church of Ephesus? (Rev.2:4).

How important is TRUTH and doctrinal purity to you? does it make any difference? Are you willing to compromise "a little bit," with error and falsehood? Are you willing to stand by and accept doctrinal "changes" which you have not "tested," or "proven"?

The apostle Paul exhorts each one of us, "Continue to WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12). Peter exhorts, "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. For *if you do these things*, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet.1:10-11).

### ***"COME OUT from among Them!"***

In the midst of all the apostasy occurring all around us, where do you stand? What are YOU going to do about it? Your own eternal salvation -- and that of your family and children -- is at stake!

God gives us perfectly clear instructions on handling such matters in His Word. Some try to tell us, today, that the appropriate action is to *do nothing -- stay right where you are -- and WAIT for God to CHANGE Worldwide and bring it back to the Truth!*

Is that what *God* says?

God commands us to have *nothing whatever to do with apostates!* Solomon wrote, "CEASE, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to ERR from the words of knowledge" (Prov.19:27). How can you *cease* to hear such instruction *if you continue to listen to it every week?*

God commands us further: "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and *MEDDLE NOT with them that are given to CHANGE:* For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" (Prov.24:21-22).

Some today even admit that the Worldwide Church of God has become "the synagogue of Satan." They admit that the leadership of the Church is led by Satan the devil. Yet, on the other hand, they claim that as true Christians we should continue to submit to church authority, in Worldwide, and WAIT for God to bring the

Church back to Him!

But is this how God works? When the various churches of God went astray in the first century, and became the "synagogue of Satan," did God bring those churches back to Him?

No, absolutely NOT!

The Gentile churches throughout the Roman Empire, in Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, and other major cities, which eventually became the Roman Catholic Church, NEVER RETURNED TO THE TRUTH OF GOD!

In other words, those very churches which led the charge into apostasy in the first century, and departed from the truth, *NEVER RETURNED!* In the centuries that followed, they only strayed further and further from the right path!

The lesson ought to be terribly clear to us of this generation. *To stay in an apostate church, waiting for it to repent, and God to bring it to repentance, is STUPID -- INSANE -- AND SPIRITUALLY DEMONIC!*

Paul makes the course of action we ought to take when the Church we have belonged to departs from the truth perfectly clear. He writes: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial [Satan]? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God has said, 'I will live in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore COME OUT FROM THEM, and be SEPARATE FROM THEM, says the Lord, and TOUCH NOTHING UNCLEAN; then will I welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (II Cor.6:14-18, NRSV).

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, also makes the truth abundantly plain. He says we should have nothing to do with the pagan, apostate "Babylonish" churches -- including those which at one time had the truth of God!

John writes: "Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'COME OUT OF HER, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her PLAGUES" (Rev.18:4).

That plain language! I fear for those people who refuse to depart from an apostate church, who listen to the pied pipers of rebellion, who wistfully deceive themselves into thinking that *if they just hunker down and quietly remain, GOD will straighten out the Church!* In all history, *God has NEVER done that!* Rather, *He lets them go -- and increases their punishment -- until He casts them into GREAT TRIBULATION!* And *if they STILL do not repent -- they will end up in the LAKE OF FIRE!*

What about you? What ARE you going to do about it? What Church do YOU attend, today? God commands, "*Choose you this day whom you will serve*" (Josh.24:15, KJV).

## Chapter 4

"How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!" (I Sam.1:19-25)

"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and *be sure your sin will find you out*" (Numbers 32:23).

## HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!

For many years I have remained silent. I have said nothing. But about ten years ago, after 30 years as a member of the Worldwide Church of God, things came up that propelled me to expose the plain truth. The incredible TRUTH about Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong would make the Jim and Tammy Baker scandal seem like small potatoes by comparison. Since that time, new scandals . have arisen, causing this "problem" to explode onto the scene once again. In this up-to-date article, you will read things never put in the "official" autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong. Prepare yourself to be shocked -- staggered -- and utterly dumfounded!

My connection with the Worldwide Church of God began in 1956, when I first heard the "World Tomorrow" program on radio station KVI, 590 on the dial, at 10:30 p.m. in the evenings, while living in Seattle, Washington. I was a high school student at the time, and became a member of the Church after being contacted by a minister, Jimmy Friddle, the following year. In 1959 I became a freshman student at Ambassador College, the Church's "West Point," and graduated in 1963. I worked in the Letter Answering Department upon graduation full time, and then began writing articles for the Church magazines in 1965.

I remained a faithful employee of the Church and "the Work," as we called it, until 1974, when a crisis of believability struck the Church, and reports began to surface of serious wrong-doing on the part of Garner Ted Armstrong, and a cover-up perpetrated by his father, Herbert W. Armstrong. At that time, in a massive "budget cut," I was terminated from employment in the Church's editorial division, along with several others. Hurt and depressed by the sad spiritual condition in the Church at that time, I began publishing religious books, an area the Church seemed to have no interest in -- books to

"keep alive" the truth of God.

I remained a member of the Church until precisely one year after the death of Herbert Armstrong in January 1986. At that time, Joseph Tkach, the new leader of the Church, decided he had had enough of my independent publishing work, and had me "disfellowshipped from the Church." It was January, 1987. I was permitted no opportunity to defend myself, or to meet with a council of ministers -- my fate had been decided, I was accused of rebellion and being a "false prophet," and simply informed I was "suspended" one week, disfellowshipped the next, and "marked" the third week!

Then on Thursday evening, December 3, 1987, a strange thing happened. Joe sent a messenger to my home. He told me that Joe wanted me to know that Joe himself had not written a particular article which had appeared in the Pastor General's Report in 1982 which been very defamatory and critical of me and my book publishing company, called Triumph Publishing.

In fact, Joe's messenger said, it was Herbert Armstrong himself who had authored the article, dictating it to Aaron Dean, his personal secretary. According to Joe Tkach, Herbert Armstrong was furious at the fact that in the preface of *Overcoming Satan*, a book I had published in 1981, I wrote a short "In Deepest Appreciation" column in which I expressed my "deepest gratitude, heart-felt appreciation, and warmest thanks" to Herbert W. Armstrong -- "the most dynamic man I have ever known."

In January 1982, I had sent a copy of this book to Aaron Dean, asking him to show them to Herbert Armstrong, with a letter I sent to him. I was seeking to renew my acquaintance with the apostle over the Church of God, whom I had not spoken with personally in over 15 years. I was expressing my support for the Church, the Work, and my 100 percent backing for his attempt to "get the Church back on the track." At the same time, I was trying to help him understand about the vital books I was publishing under Triumph Publishing Company.

But the messenger from Joseph Tkach said that when Herbert Armstrong, who was about 90 years of age at the time, read that short column in my book he went into a rage and told him to disfellowship me, for I was using his name to make money and sell books! The messenger from Joe said that Joe at the time flatly refused and told Herbert Armstrong he wouldn't do it. And so the matter ended, except Herbert Armstrong dictated -- Joe Tkach said -- the slanderous diatribe which then appeared in the Pastor General's Report in April 1982. Even Joe Tkach, supposedly, could not stop its publication when the "apostle general" issued such an article.

When I heard this news, it at first made me feel satisfied, on the one hand, if it were true, that Joseph Tkach was not responsible for the attack on me in 1982. Rather, his messenger said, he supposedly attempted to *defend me three separate times* when Herbert Armstrong wanted to disfellowship me. But was it really true? If so, why hadn't he told me any of these things at the time? Why was I left in the dark for five years? Or were these just self-serving *lies* concocted by Joe Tkach to make me think well of him after he

had disfellowshipped me from the Church?

About that time, I checked an "Index to Church Literature" which was kept in the Ambassador College Library, and found a list of all the articles I had written while in the employ of the Church in the 1960's and 70's -- about a hundred articles and booklets. Then I saw a reference to the article in the Pastor General's Report which had attacked Triumph Publishing Company and accused me of "merchandising the brethren." And guess what I discovered? Listed as the AUTHOR of the nasty little diatribe against me was the name of none other than JOSEPH W. TKACH! *Not the name of Herbert W. Armstrong!* Was this just a case of Joe trying to transfer blame from himself to Herbert Armstrong? Apparently so!

I had been a member of the Church since 1957. Since 1974 I had published the truth of God, independently, as God made the means available, and during the following 12 years I published 19 books -- surely a miracle of God! When I left the Church employment I had nothing but a few thousand dollars severance pay and a typewriter -- no organization, no support, no salesmen, no promoters. Even the Church offered no help whatsoever, despite the quality and usefulness of the books I was publishing. Although the Church never condemned the books, it never praised them either. The attitude over the years seemed to be to "damn with faint praise," as the old Navy expression has it. There seemed to be an air of jealousy over my book writing and publishing on the part of the leadership of the Church. Nevertheless, I remained a member until Joe Tkach himself had me "disfellowshipped" based on trumped up charges in 1987.

Looking back on that visit from Joseph Tkach's emissary, it seems that *even then* Tkach must have had a very negative attitude toward Herbert Armstrong, the man who had allegedly "hand-picked" him to be his successor over the Church. Over the years, I had come to learn many unhappy truths about Herbert Armstrong myself -- disillusionment had set in with many of his teachings in 1974 -- and his cover-up of his son's sins orchestrated by Herbert Armstrong at that time. The truth was depressing, and it took me years to climb out of that giant cloud of depression. What was the truth about this mysterious man? How did he become a religious teacher and minister? What were his original motives? What were the facts about his life-style? And what about his son, Garner Ted Armstrong? What is the true story about these men?

It's time the facts were known.

### ***The Mystery of Herbert W. Armstrong***

So many today seem to almost worship the memory of Herbert Armstrong. Since his death on January 16, 1986, Joseph Tkach has taken the Worldwide Church of God in the completely opposite direction, and revoked and changed ALL the basic teachings of the Church. He himself has proven to be a Judas Iscariot - a modern day "son of perdition." Yet the question remains -- why did Herbert Armstrong ever appoint this man as an "evangelist" in the Church during his later years? Why did he appoint him to be his

"successor" when he died? Why did he put so much trust in this man, who has proved to be a heretic and false teacher who has trampled on ALL the fundamental teachings that Herbert Armstrong imparted to the Church?

What went wrong? Where did Herbert Armstrong go astray? There is much more to the saga and life story of Herbert W. Armstrong than many thousands of people imagine. The truth will boggle your mind. The evidence shows, today, in retrospect, that Herbert Armstrong was a great teacher of many truths of God, many of which he restored to the Church during these end times -- but he was also a deeply flawed man of God.

When I think about the life of this man, and the Church and religious Work he built, I feel much like David felt, when hearing of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David lamented their deaths, with the song quoted at the beginning of this article. He sorrowed for them, even though Saul had totally disqualified himself from office. Even though Saul had been God's selected, chosen "anointed," he had begun abusing his office and finally sinned greatly and totally disqualified (I Sam.15). Even after that point, however, God left him in office for many more years, until the time came for David to be given the throne.

So I have pondered about the truth about Herbert W. Armstrong. The parallels between the lives of King Saul and Herbert Armstrong are plentiful. But there are other amazing Scriptural parallels, also.

### *The Real Unwritten Biography*

In the days of the Judges of Israel, a young child was born who was destined to be a prophet of the Lord God. His name was Samuel. He grew up in the Temple of God, under the auspices of the high priest, one whose name was Eli.

Notice what Almighty God had to say about His own anointed high priest, the one occupying the highest spiritual office in the land. "Now Eli was VERY OLD (much like Herbert Armstrong became!), and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

"And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them" (I Sam.2:22-25).

Eli had a very serious problem in the sight of God. He was overly indulgent of his own sons, who were committing adultery and fornication with the women of Israel. They were seducing them at the very tabernacle of God! Yet beyond this rather mild reprimand, and "slap on the wrist," Eli did nothing about the problem. The story continues:



"And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest . . . ?

"Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering . . . and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves FAT with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

"Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

"Behold, the days come, that I will CUT OFF THINE ARM, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house... And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age" (I Sam.2:27-33).

As Samuel grew older, God then spoke to him in a vision, regarding the fate of Eli. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle (this was a prophecy of the coming judgment on Eli's house, and also a prophecy of the future Great Tribulation! Eli was merely a TYPE of a leader of the Church of God during this end-time generation!). In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house (family) for ever for the INIQUITY WHICH HE KNOWETH; *because his sons made themselves VILE, and he restrained them not*" (I Samuel 3:11-13).

Does God change? Is He a respecter of persons?

Malachi was inspired to write, "For I am the Lord, I change NOT; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal.3:6).

God will deal with any modern-day servant of His who lives and acts like Eli, just as He dealt with His servant Eli, over 3,000 years ago! And he will deal with their adulterating sons just as He dealt with the evil, fornicating, womanizing sons of Eli!

Make no mistake! As the apostle Paul surely wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal.6:7).

The sad tragedy and truth is, our generation has seen and witnessed another "Eli and son"! It is possible that the modern "Eli" repented late in his life, of his "indulge" of his remaining son, who also was a high-ranking minister in the Church -- but God Himself will have to be the judge of that.

*The 1974 Debacle and Exodus*

In 1974 many ministers left the Worldwide Church of God. The reason many of them left has not been thoroughly understood. The truth has been buried under an avalanche of false accusation, rumor, and official denials and pronouncements from the pulpit. But the truth should make you shudder with horror, and lament like Jeremiah, and pray like Nehemiah, for the sins of God's people and God's Church!

Be sure these covered up sins shall not go unpunished in the sight of Almighty God! Let's investigate the facts -- just the facts -- and see what the evidence tells us.

As in the tragic case of Eli, whose sons perished when the Philistines attacked and seized the ark of God, the historical record proves beyond any doubt that Herbert Armstrong's own son, Garner Ted Armstrong, was guilty over a quarter of a century of committing adultery and whoredom with hundreds of women, including paid prostitutes around the world and young Ambassador college co-eds, many of whom later became married to ministers in the Church!

I first learned of this shocking revelation in 1972, when Ted Armstrong was "exiled" temporarily from the Church and sent to Colorado. According to reports, he had committed adultery with a young stewardess on his Falcon jet. He was so enamored of her that he wanted to divorce his wife Shirley and marry the stewardess. According to a recent e-mail I received from a friend of the girl, who died of cancer in 1998 and left a wonderful family behind, the actual facts of the case are that Ted Armstrong victimized her. She was not his "mistress" at all, but she told her friend, who knew her very well, that Ted was a "crazy man" who would manipulate and lie with complete ease. She was his stewardess for about four months. Says the confidant, "She ran away from him when he raped her in a motel room after tricking her into believing she was going with him on a church trip. She ran away from him and moved back to Minnesota and he chased after her. He would sleep in his car waiting to get a glimpse of her. She was absolutely petrified of him." So far as I know, these are the real facts of the case!

This shocking revelation was then topped by the news that this girl, whose name was Gail, was not the first of Ted's sexual interests. He had been living a secret life of Playboy preacher for all the length of his ministry! I learned that he had been committing adultery with a girl in 1965 when another minister of the Church was also accused of committing adultery. The other minister was fired; but Ted wasn't even reprimanded or suspended from his job as first vice president of the Work and Church at the time!

Over dinner one evening, this whole sordid story was poured out to me by the former executive secretary of Herbert Armstrong. She had several girls come to her with their problems, and the problem was "Ted." He was having several affairs. When Mrs. Swaney tried to talk to Herbert Armstrong about it, Mrs. Loma Armstrong defended Ted. Ted later accused Mrs. Swaney of having a demon, and she was fired from her responsible job, disfellowshipped from the Church, and ostracized by all her former friends in the Church. Years later Mrs. Swaney was allowed back in the Church, but she was never rehired by the Work. Eventually she died, a true sister in Christ. She had

suffered virtual "martyrdom" for her role in the Ted Armstrong affair.

It was in 1972 that an associate in the Work of God confided to me that Ted Armstrong had been having affairs with an estimated 200 or more girls during his ministry as an evangelist in the Church, while he preached on the radio and television. *Two hundred!* Some of these were former students at Ambassador College, baby sitters, and female employees of the Work -- girls I had known as friends and acquaintances at Ambassador College!

One man, a friend of mine, whose name was Jerry Horton, worked in the radio studio at the College. One day he was taking some material up to Ted Armstrong's office. The door was ajar, so he began to go in -- but then he noticed a strange phenomenon. On the couch was Garner Ted Armstrong, having sexual relations with a young, pretty college co-ed! Hurt, shame-faced, and infuriated inside, Jerry quietly retreated. But he never forgot the sight. Shaken to the core, this traumatic discovery caused him to lose all respect for the leadership in the Church, and he eventually left.

When astonishing facts regarding Ted Armstrong's moral turpitude threatened to become public in 1972, I remember a painful Bible study in Pasadena when Herbert Armstrong announced the "exile" of his son to Colorado. I remember painfully how God's "apostle" threatened the entire listening congregation, warning them NOT to try to find out what Ted had done -- it was kept an official mystery, a secret. All Herbert Armstrong admitted at the time was that Ted had some sort of "breakdown," and had been under a lot of "pressure" from his many responsibilities. In other words, he lied to the entire Church of God, and performed a masterful "cover up" that made the "Watergate Cover Up" of President Nixon look amateurish by comparison!

What were the actual facts?

In *The Broadway to Armageddon*, a book written by former minister of the Worldwide Church of God, William B. Hinson, several sensational, shocking facts are pointed out. In his informative, very helpful book, Hinson quotes another former high ranking minister, Al Carozzo, whom I knew personally many years. He and I used to play softball together on the Church league softball teams. In answering questions put to him by ministers, Carozzo admitted, "Yes, it is true that Herbert W. Armstrong forced Ted and Shirley to get married. The fact that Shirley was pregnant was a source of great embarrassment for Herbert. Rod Meredith relates the profound embarrassment he experienced when Herbert Armstrong tried to explain how Shirley gave birth to a premature eight pound baby boy. It is a matter of record substantiated by scores of people who were there."

Carozzo continued: "Herbert Armstrong had known about Ted's sexual shenanigans from the very beginning. By the beginning I mean 1952 and before. The majority of the Evangelists *did not know* years in advance of Ted's exile in 1972."

When asked how many women Ted had had affairs with, Al Carozzo answered:

"Absolutely yes, Ted admitted to having affairs with over 200 different women . . . He said 'by conservative estimate' there were 200 women. This was on January 30, 1972, in his home in Pasadena" when he made this confession.

In a full-color, quality publication called *Ambassador Report* which was published in 1977, Al Carrozzo wrote a thorough expose of Garner Ted Armstrong's sexual misdeeds, entitled "The Profligate Son." In it Carrozzo quotes Ted Armstrong as telling him in a private meeting, at 10:05 A.M., May 16, 1973, "Al, let's get one thing straight! I'm a no good, fornicating, adulterating son of a bitch!"

Carrozzo goes on, "This was not the first or the only time Ted ever admitted that he was an adulterer. In spite of repeated public denials, Ted has privately admitted that he has been guilty of flagrant, continuous adultery and fornication for almost a quarter of a century -- as a church member, an executive, and an evangelist!"

Carrozzo points out how he first learned of Ted's problem in 1965 when the "whole sordid affair was swept under the rug, while Ted came out lily-white." In 1967 the husband of one of Ted's victims informed Carrozzo that his wife had had sexual relations with the handsome radio evangelist. When Al confronted Ted with the allegations, he admitted it was true, but blamed the girl for flaunting her exciting body in front of him, until in weakness he gave in. Al did not pursue the matter further, as Ted talked him out of telling his father.

In an article in the *New Times*, dated December 4-10, 1997, entitled "Honey, I Shrunk the Church," by Ron Russell, we find an astonishing report made about Ted Armstrong's infidelities, and his own personal admissions. The author interviewed Al Carrozzo, who had been an evangelist in the Church. Carrozzo told him a strange story. The author wrote:

"The word had leaked out during the 1960s, the result of a minister having been caught having sex with an Ambassador College coed. It was a big scandal on a campus where Herbert had forbidden girls to wear makeup and where holding hands was a punishable offense. Before being excommunicated, the fallen minister let it slip that Ted also had been sleeping around.

"His comments prompted Carrozzo, then dean of students, to conduct his own investigation, which convinced him that it was true. Among Ted's avowed conquests were dozens of wide-eyed college women, including some who became ministers' wives. Carrozzo says -- adding that he shared his knowledge with a superior who told him that Ted had been fooling around for years and that Herbert had given up trying to do anything about it. Much later, the former dean says, he confronted Ted after listening incredulously to a distraught young married woman confess to committing a carnal sin. After much hesitation, she declared that the younger Armstrong had seduced her. 'He admitted it,' says Carrozzo. 'Then, I'll never forget, he said: "Put me behind bars, slip my food to me, keep me in solitary confinement, but just don't take my microphone away because I must preach the message God has given me"' (New Times, Dec.4-10, 1997, p.16).

But in mid-1971 Ted's problem once again surfaced. Ted's promiscuity became known to top administrators in the Church, and Herbert sent him on a leave of absence

for several months. Members of the Church were led to believe Ted was gone for "health reasons."

During these events, Herbert Armstrong was never candid to the Church. He covered everything up and threatened anyone who would pry into matters with expulsion and disfellowshipment from the Church! In his own mind, I suppose, he thought he was "protecting the Church." But as he allowed his son to return, without evidence of TRUE repentance, the problems continued.

After Ted was brought back, and allowed to preach at the Feast of Tabernacles sites in the fall of 1971, things once again came to a head. During his stay at Squaw Valley, after he preached a sermon entitled "What The World Needs Now Is Love, Sweet Love," Ted spent that very night in the arms of his mistress, Gail, who was an Ambassador college student, and the stewardess of his Falcon jet, which he used to fly around the country. That very night, Ted and the young girl shacked up in a Lake Tahoe cabin on the south shore. Once again Church investigators discovered Ted's adultery -- caught him red-handed, in the act. And his father was again notified.

In a subsequent letter to the members of the Church, Herbert Armstrong wrote that Ted felt he would be up to speaking at all the Festival sites, but after speaking at Squaw Valley "his fourth site, tensions had built up until his nerves were at razor-edge, and he could not continue."

This was of course a carefully constructed "lie," obviating the true nature of the discovery of Ted's "problem." Once again Herbert Armstrong prevaricated, and rather than face the unvarnished truth of the situation, and publicly rebuke his philandering son, he chose to deliberately lie, to once again *cover up* the adulterous liaison! Herbert knew perfectly well why Ted was unable to continue preaching after Squaw Valley. To say that Ted's nerves were at "razor-edge," and therefore he could not continue, was a blatant DECEPTION -- an absolute LIE! Herbert Armstrong knew better. But he had known of his son's problems all along, just as Eli the high priest had. And he did not want the truth known to the membership whose tithes and offerings supported the Church. He felt that the revelation of Ted's promiscuity would be devastating to the Church's finances and income. So the charade continued.

Shortly after this, Ted was "exiled" to Hawaii with his wife and two close friends. The friend was to "watch" Ted every second. He evidently failed. For while Ted was in Hawaii "recuperating," a letter arrived at the Ambassador College Mail Receiving Department from a woman who managed a massage parlor (euphemism for "whore house") in Hawaii. The woman complained that there was a young masseuse in her employ who had been trying to come out of a life of sin, and who often watched Ted Armstrong on television. This young masseuse had been "horrified into nightmarish disillusionment" Carrozzo writes, when she recognized Ted one day, sitting in the massage parlor, waiting to be "serviced" by one of the prostitutes! The madam indignantly wrote that her masseuse was extremely upset from seeing the suave preacher there, especially after learning of his real reason for being there! (It wasn't to preach the

gospel to the whores!)

After this incident, Ted was sent to Colorado to ostensibly "repent.." After spending about two months in "exile," he was brought back, however. Soon, Ted's adulterous affairs were once again discovered. Herbert Armstrong was forced to take further action. Al Carrozzo explains what happened:

"Around 10:30 p.m. Garner Ted came home from a Los Angeles Laker basketball game and was stunned to find his father, most of the headquarters leadership, and Stan Rader waiting in his living room. Upon learning the purpose of their visit, he flew into a reactionary rage during which he openly admitted he had had illicit sexual relations with some 200 women -- and that was his 'conservative estimate' -- during his two decades of association with his father's church. Among his consorts were literally dozens of youthful, wide-eyes coeds, plus several who became executive or ministerial wives. On this occasion Ted was given an official letter of disfellowship" ("The Profligate Son," by Al Carrozzo, *Ambassador Report*, 1997, p.46).

During this meeting Ted admitted he had been having an intimate sexual affair with an Ambassador College stewardess ever since the summer of 1970. This clandestine, adulterous affair continued unabated, until Herbert Armstrong had been informed of it in the summer of 1971. At that time, Herbert Armstrong took no action at all. Says Carrozzo, "Instead of removing Ted from the ministry for good -- as he had done with other ministers guilty of adultery -- he precipitated a vast cover-up, much like former President Nixon attempted. There is one major difference though: Herbert had been covering up Ted's sexual looseness since the early 1950s" ("The Profligate Son," by Al Carrozzo, *Ambassador Report*, 1997, p.46).

Ted Armstrong was again exiled to an A-frame in Colorado, for several months. During this time David Antion was commissioned to write a research paper on "Qualifications for the Ministry," for Herbert Armstrong. Antion's thorough paper, citing Biblical references in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, showed that Ted for his vast womanizing was no longer qualified to remain a minister in God's Church, according to the Bible. However, Al Carrozzo continues his account, apparently neither Ted or his father Herbert accepted the conclusions of the paper. Says Carrozzo of the situation:

"At the time, the leading ministers and I all thought Herbert really wanted to know about Ted's qualifications, but later we found out he was trying to learn all the main arguments against his son's return so he could persuasively refute them. Herbert forwarded Antion's paper to Ted, who promptly dismissed it, claiming the Biblical arguments didn't apply to him because he had been 'called to preach the gospel from his mother's womb.' This defense, then, turned out to be Herbert's argument in favor of Ted's return to full status and authority, in spite of Herbert's earlier pronouncement that Ted, even if returned, would not occupy ministerial office" (*ibid.*, p.46).

In contrast to Herbert Armstrong's handling of his son's flagrant and continuous adultery, it might be germane to mention that when another minister was caught having committed a single act of adultery in 1968, he was fired from his job, put out of the ministry, and disfellowshipped from the Church. Not only that, but his sin was detailed publicly before the entire student body of Ambassador College in a special assembly for

students and employees.

On June 8, 1972, Ted was reinstated to an elevated position in the Church, and allowed to make radio and television broadcasts. On July 20, he was reinstated to full rank as an evangelist in the Church, and placed back on both college and church boards, and named executive vice-president of the Worldwide Church of God.

Did Ted Armstrong ever really repent of these carnal sins of adultery and lustful passion? He certainly professed repentance -- many times. Al Carrozzo, who counseled with him many times concerning his adulterous affairs, writes about Ted's amazing ability to shed crocodile tears and to show incredible "remorse" when confronted with his sins. He declared,

"Later it dawned on me that Ted is a sterling actor, a powerful persuader -- one who can make you feel guilty for even approaching a delicate subject. One Worldwide Church evangelist summed it up succinctly: 'Ted can charm the rattle off a snake.' Unfortunately, he charms people too. Glib as an orator and possessing awesome mental dexterity, Ted can change black into white, turn silk into wool, and refine sin into baseless allegation and rumor" (*ibid.*, p.44-45).

However, in a newspaper interview in 1987, in Orange County, California, the Pasadena *Star News* asked Ted Armstrong about the allegations of his having committed adultery in the past. The writer wondered if Ted Armstrong had really been guilty of sexual sins, in the mid-1970s. Here was an excellent chance for Ted to "come clean" about his womanizing past and admit the truth, showing the sincerity, if any, of his repentance!

In the January 4, 1987 article, the reporter asked Ted Armstrong about the charges of adultery and womanizing which were made back in 1974. His answer? The article declared:

*"Armstrong FLATLY DENIED old stories that he had sexual encounters with Ambassador students and other women. 'There was never a whisper of anything immoral and hadn't been for years and years.'"*

The tragic truth is that Ted Armstrong has *never "come clean" publicly* about his horrendous immorality and sexual sins under the cover of evangelical saintliness. He has never admitted that as a "man of God" he seduced women, countless women, and bedded them like a satyr -- a sex-crazed monster.

Showing his own utter hypocrisy, in a meeting with ministers of the Worldwide Church of God in Big Sandy in 1974, Ted Armstrong personally suspended four ministers -- Walter Sharp, Dale Haynes, Bob McKibben and Jim Morrison -- who were all concerned about Ted's "qualifications" for the ministry. During this seven and one half hour meeting, Ted *denied* ever having full sex with any woman other than his wife. He admitted having fallen for *one* "silly young girl," as he then put it, but he denied

having gone "all the way" with her. So he himself continued the "cover-up" and refused to admit the plain truth, which by then, had become common knowledge among the field ministry! Those who complained -- or who sought the truth -- were simply FIRED!

This hypocritical "cover-up" continued throughout the seventies. Herbert Armstrong NEVER made public mention of his son's sexual indiscretions, adulteries, and wickedness. We will see shortly the probable reason why Herbert was so loathe to publicly attack or humiliate his son, and to rebuke him for his on-going hedonistic charade.

Only after Ted himself was disfellowshipped from the Church, for other reasons, in 1978, did any one in an official capacity in the Worldwide Church of God admit to Ted's adultery. Interestingly, it was Stanley Rader, Herbert Armstrong's personal assistant and the attorney for the Church, who had the temerity to admit Ted's adultery in public. He did this on the Tom Snyder late night television show.

What does Almighty God think of these things?

Ted Armstrong seems to think that he can do anything -- that he was "born to preach the gospel." In his own words to one critic, he exclaimed, "My father and I are ABOVE THE LAW!" According to him, the normal qualifications for being a minister in God's Church, as they are outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, are not applicable to him -- because he was "specially called" to preach, regardless of how he lives his life!

Paul wrote to Timothy, explaining, "A bishop then must be BLAMELESS, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, OF GOOD BEHAVIOR . . ." (v.2). To Titus, Paul writes that an "elder" in the Church must be "blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, HOLY, temperate: Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught . . ." (Titus 1:6-9). How does Ted Armstrong "stack up" alongside these Scriptures?

What does the Word of God say about his kind of attitude and conduct?

Jeremiah the prophet, under divine inspiration, thunders, with the message of God, to these modern day "prophets" and "ministers" - - regardless of WHO they themselves think they are --

"For the land is full of adulterers . . . For both prophet and priest are PROFANE; yea, IN MY HOUSE have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. . . . And I have seen FOLLY in the prophets ... they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people to err. I have seen also in the prophets . . . an horrible thing: *they commit* ADULTERY, and walk in LIES: they strengthen the hand of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as SODOM, and the inhabitants



thereof as GOMORRAH" (Jer.23:10-14).

The adultery and lies of Garner Ted Armstrong, a modern "son of Eli," and the sins of Herbert W. Armstrong, a modern "Eli," will not go unaccounted for or unpunished. God will not be mocked!

Has Garner Ted Armstrong ever repented of his sins of adultery and sexual immorality? Frankly, he has never even publicly confessed to them in clear and unmistakable language. Wrote Al Carrozzo about twenty years ago, when Ted's sins had surfaced at that time,

"Has Garner Ted changed? Did he really repent? One thing is sure: Ted 'repented, many, many times. He has been called 'the professional repenter.' He can cry on cue" ("The Profligate Son," *ibid.*, p.47).

### ***Shocking New Revelations***

In more recent days, of course, the sins of Garner Ted Armstrong have returned with a "vengeance." Just a few years ago he was caught and filmed on video-tape in a massage parlor in Tyler, Texas, attempting to force himself sexually upon a massage therapist, Sue Rae Robertson. As a result of his being caught on video-tape, in the act of masturbating himself in front of the masseuse, singing a song to himself, and trying to force himself on the masseuse, the masseuse and her husband SUED both Garner Ted Armstrong and the Church of God, International, in court for damages and legal fees. The case was later settled.

However, bad as this was, the Church of God, International Board of Directors finally FIRED Ted Armstrong from all positions he had held in the Church. According to a letter sent out to all Church members, they have found out that he has been having an ongoing sexual relationship with a female Church member in the Tyler area. According to reports, Ted Armstrong had taken this woman, less than half his age, on vacations to Disney World, and it was even alleged that she became pregnant!

In the letter to the membership announcing the action they were taking against Ted Armstrong, dated December 7, 1997 -- interestingly, "Pearl Harbor Day" -- three ministers and members of the Board wrote:

"Contrary to his accusations, it has absolutely nothing to do with church politics or a power play. *What is at issue is Mr. Armstrong's privilege to carry ministerial credentials from the Church due to recent disclosures of a very personal nature.* [Their emphasis.]

"Inside of the last three months, the Ministerial Council learned of conduct on the part of Mr. Armstrong that disqualifies him as a minister. *This new information involves a long-time relationship with a woman in the church.* [My emphasis.]

"With prayerful consideration and open-mindedness, the Council, after hours of deliberation, *unanimously* concluded that Mr. Armstrong's conduct, measured against the scriptural qualifications for a minister, gives us no choice but to remove

him as a minister" (Letter dated December 7, 1997).

Had Ted repented? He professed repentance, even in 1998. In his letters to the members and leaders of the Church of God, International, written in December 1997, he declared that the Board of that Church has done him a great injustice -- and that they were guilty of treachery and betrayal! He alleged that he has "repented" of any sins he may have committed, and accuses them of breach of confidentiality of things he told some of them in private ministerial sessions.

Nevertheless, as Jesus Christ Himself declared, "You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore *by their fruits you shall KNOW them*" (Matt.7:16-20).

By "fruits," Jesus means fruits of RIGHTEOUSNESS and OBEDIENCE to God's Law! He does not mean human works, financial figures, or "numbers" of members brought into a "church"! He Himself goes on to state with firm clarity and finality:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? *and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

"And then will I profess unto them, *I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from me, ye that WORK INIQUITY*" (Matt.7:21-23).

Truly, the prophet Jeremiah was right when he wrote, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD" (Jer.8:12).

Jeremiah also warns us to beware of those who are flagrant sinners -- who are "addicted" to sin. He declared, "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal ("the Lord"), and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name [that is, God's Church], become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD" (Jer.7:9-10).

God says of such men, "How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed ADULTERY, and assembled themselves by *troops in the harlots' houses* [dens of prostitution]. They were as fed horses in the morning; *every one neighed after his neighbor's wife*. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer.5:7-9).

Jeremiah wrote with deep insight, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

We had been waiting for twenty five years to see true remorse and sincere repentance in the life of Garner Ted Armstrong. Alas, it never came. Of course, as long as there was life, there was hope. But when one "repents on cue," as it were, over many years, and it always turns out to be false, people tend to become harder and harder to convince. With his last profession of remorse and repentance, has Ted gone "once too often to the well"?

Toward the end of August in 2003,, famed evangelist Garner Ted Armstrong was hospitalized for complications arising from pneumonia. He was placed in intensive care and then removed to a regular room in the hospital in Tyler, Texas, after his breathing returned to normal. But he reacted adversely to an antibiotic and had to be returned to intensive care once again. Ted's liver was damaged and he appeared to be in a coma. He died 1:30 pm, Monday afternoon, September 15, 2003. Funeral services were held Thursday of that week, at the Croley Funeral Home in Gladewater, Texas. His death, at the age of 73, came as a shock to his family and church, who fully expected him to recover and be healed. As his condition grew worse, however, the church leaders called on the church for a day of fasting and prayer. Nevertheless, a few days later he died.

### ***Like Father Like Son?***

But there is an old saying which says, "The acorn falls close to the tree." There is another old saying, "Like father like son." What about Herbert Armstrong? What was the real reason he never publicly acknowledged the egregious sins of his son, even when he disfellowshipped him *three times*, and finally banished him from the Church *permanently* in 1978?

As enormous and terrible as the sins of Garner Ted Armstrong, the long-time voice of the World Tomorrow radio and television program, really were, in many respects the sad truth about Herbert Armstrong himself is even more difficult to believe. Herbert himself was deeply flawed, in many ways. It is time we take a close look at the true life of Herbert W. Armstrong. Those who worship Herbert Armstrong, and regard him as the "End-time Elijah," are in for a shock! But anybody willing to face the truth -- without fear or flinching -- will be strengthened spiritually as a result.

### ***The Life of Herbert Armstrong***

Initiating a vast cover-up of his son's sins of continuous adultery is one very blameworthy act for which Herbert Armstrong will no doubt be held accountable by Almighty God.

However, the record shows also that Herbert Armstrong, while he led the Worldwide Church of God during more than fifty years, himself was also guilty of gross sins and abuse.

Former minister David Robinson details some of the evidence in his shocking book, *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*, written in 1980.

After the death of Loma D. Armstrong in 1967, his wife of nearly 50 years, Herbert W. Armstrong was very lonely. He confided to David Robinson and several other ministers at Big Sandy how lonely the evenings were without a woman, and how badly he needed one. He told them about a romance he had been having with his secretary who was about 25 at the time. He thought he had been in love with her. Others have told me that he even fondled her breasts at times, but she wanted nothing to do with him. Eventually they were separated by the intervention of Ted Armstrong.

Nevertheless, sex was often on the mind of Herbert Armstrong. Herbert Armstrong confided to David Robinson at Big Sandy, Texas, that his wife Loma had been a very poor bed partner, so he would often just turn over and relieve himself through masturbation. He then told Robinson that he still masturbated -- the last time had been just two weeks previously.

Herbert Armstrong then got up, reached into his briefcase, and pulled out a small black book and showed him the last entry. As Robinson writes, "HE HAD KEPT BOOKS ON HIS OWN MASTURBATION! He said, when checking over the record, it occurred about every two weeks" (p.80).

When Robinson asked him when he started masturbating, Armstrong replied he could never remember when he didn't.

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Herbert Armstrong fancied himself a great authority on sex and marriage. In his book *God Speaks Out on the New Morality*, he wrote, "On the other hand, masturbation is a form of PERVERSION. It is a SIN!"

Strange, for one who wrote such words, that he himself had been one who constantly indulged himself in this "perversion" -- this "SIN"!

### ***"Incest!"***

During the years when he was "used of God" to begin the "Philadelphia" Church of God, he was also committing the heinous sin of incest with his own daughter! For ten years this incestuous relationship continued, into the early 1940s. This fact is very thoroughly documented, for those willing to look at the evidence.

Chapter twenty of David Robinson's book *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web* is simply titled, "Incest!" Incest has long been regarded as one of the most traumatic of sins performed against one's own children or relatives. As shocking as it may seem to some, as unbelievable and cruel as it may sound, Herbert Armstrong committed this evil sin over a period of some ten years with one of his daughters!

Writes Robinson: "Incest is a terrible and unnatural crime, an extreme perversity. That is why I was shocked beyond measure to hear that Herbert Armstrong was, himself, guilty of this vile sin. I learned of this in the summer of 1979 from members of his own family. The story, sordid beyond imagination, was told in awful detail.

Robinson continues, "One family source was Garner Ted Armstrong. Last summer, as HWA attacked his own son in such savage fury, his son was in the depths of despair. His emotional mix included anger and deep hurt. In such a state he told secrets that otherwise would have been locked within him forever. He said he had learned in 1971 of his father's incredible conduct during the '30s and '40s. The story came directly to him in lurid detail, but he kept it sealed in his own consciousness for all those years. But, in the spring of 1978 while in his father's house for the last time, his father had threatened to 'destroy him.' Ted, in response, replied, 'Dad, I will destroy *you*. I know about you and ----- (He was speaking of the younger of his two sisters.)

"His father had been on a high-handed autocratic binge. But at that comment he sat down quietly and responded, 'Well, Ted, there have been times when I have been very far away from God'" (Robinson, *Tangled Web*, p. 266).

Robinson goes on, "None who have objectively heard of the incest story in its awful detail doubt it. *This* is a vital chapter left out of HWA's own autobiography. This sin occurred over a long span of years -- about ten years -- from the 1930s into the 1940s -- for a decade after his ordination to the ministry, according to his own family members" (p. 267).

*The Ambassador Report* (April 1984) relates, "In 1971 Garner Ted Armstrong paid a visit to his younger sister Dorothy. He had long been suspicious of the kind of relationship his father and sister maintained during his youth. They chatted over a few drinks and then Ted told her bluntly of his suspicions. She did more than admit the allegations. With candor she related detail after shocking detail.

"For a number of years GTA kept the information to himself. But Dorothy did not. She divulged the same information to many others including David Antion (GTA's brother-in-law) and Lois Chapman (who had been married to the late Richard Armstrong, Ted's older brother)."

Dorothy told Ted and others that Herbert had begun fondling and heavy petting her in 1933 when she was thirteen years old, but he did not begin going "all the way" with her until three years later, when she was 16. What happened was, one day she came home from a date and informed her father she had been "half raped."

This report was traumatic enough. But after hearing the story, Herbert decided it was time to show her how sex should really be done. It was 1936 and Dorothy was 16 years of age. He took it upon himself to teach her about sexual intercourse by having sex with her himself! From that moment the incestuous relationship lasted for many more years.

On one occasion in a hotel room Dorothy so strongly resisted her father's advances that the hotel manager came knocking on the door to find out why they were making so much noise. Herbert told him that his "young bride" was a little uncooperative due to inexperience. Satisfied, the manager left.

"Dorothy has claimed that Herbert then overpowered her, and after tying her to the bed and gagging her, proceeded to rape her" (*Ambassador Report*, April 1984).

During those year while Herbert was preaching the gospel and ministering, he would sometimes take Dorothy out dancing on Friday nights. When she asked him if he wasn't afraid Church members would discover what he was doing, he told her gruffly that they were well trained in Sabbath observance and would never see them.

In 1980, shortly after the Robinson book appeared, Henry Cornwall, then one of Herbert Armstrong's assistants, asked him point blank if the chapter about incest was true. Herbert told him it was. Later his wife Ramona, who also had a copy of the book, asked Herbert about the incestuous relationship. He admitted to her it was true, also, and pleaded with her not to let it get in the way of their marriage. He blamed the problem on his first wife Loma.

Dorothy has said that her sexual relationship with her father continued into the early forties. She married Vern Mattson in 1943. Around the time of her engagement however, her father told her that her marriage need not put an end to their own special relationship!

The July 1984 issue of *Ambassador Report* stated that one reason Herbert Armstrong was able to exert great coercion over his daughter wasn't only because he was her father, and physically stronger, but also because he repeatedly told her, "God gave you to me."

It is interesting that although David Robinson's book first exposed the incest committed by the errant apostle, the publication of his book was vigorously fought by the Worldwide Church of God attorneys, who attempted to suppress it. Although they totally failed in their attempt, it is interesting that since publication they did not assert even once that the incest allegation was untrue. Dorothy Mattson, Herbert Armstrong's younger daughter, never denied the truth of the allegations, either.

A friend of mine, when he learned of these allegations years ago, went directly to Mr. Vern Mattson, who had married Herbert Armstrong's younger daughter. He was a golfing buddy and friend of Mattson, so he asked him point-blank if the accusations and rumors were true. Mr. Mattson sadly informed him that they indeed were factual. In fact, when Mr. Mattson himself learned of the truth of Herbert having had sex with the woman who later became Mattson's wife, he was furious, and in a rage took a pistol, and burst into Herbert Armstrong's private office, waving the pistol around. Herbert, shaking like a leaf, apologized profusely and promised to never do such a thing again.

According to the law of God, we should not receive an allegation against a man, unless it be confirmed by two or three witnesses. The evidence against Herbert

Armstrong is very strong and convincing. He was not the man thousands thought him to be. As a spiritual leader, he was not above the Law of God, and one day he will have to appear before the Throne of God to answer for his actions.

Some may object that these sins occurred over 40 years ago (when Herbert Armstrong was in his forties and fifties). They are now "water under the bridge." That, of course, may well be true. Certainly God can forgive sin, if and when it is sincerely and totally repented of.

### *Sex and the Single Apostle*

But the towering sin of hypocrisy, deceit, lying and immorality that continued right up until Herbert Armstrong's last years is another matter entirely.

Robinson wrote in 1980, "Herbert Armstrong has been 'in love' a number of times during the past decade. He said himself he had been 'in love' with Amy [his secretary on the fourth floor of the Hall of Administration] when she was 25 years old. He reported this to a group at Big Sandy in 1974. He did say, when it was over, that he thought it might have been infatuation.

"But earlier there had been the young Filipino girl whom he had brought over to this country, according to widespread reports. However, he never did bring her to church with him! He apparently kept her under wraps" (p. 88).

Along these lines, a former evangelist in the Worldwide Church of God -- Albert J. Portune -- told me personally that Herbert Armstrong had brought two Filipino girls to the U.S. and had put them in an apartment in Pasadena -- nobody knows what for. However, later upon learning that one of the girls had found another boy friend, her own age, he grew furious and shipped them back to the Philippines! Knowing about his preoccupation with sex, the purpose those nubile young girls served for him seems rather obvious.

Another woman, secretary to the head of the Personal Correspondence Department manager some years ago, told my wife and I she was privy to a mysterious secret concerning Herbert Armstrong. This woman's credentials and respectability are impeccable. She told us that one day an elderly woman who was a Church member came into the office and began talking to her. She told her she lived in an apartment house in Pasadena, and across the hall from her own apartment there lived a prostitute. She knew the woman was a prostitute.

One day, she saw two men -- whom she says were Stanley Rader and Herbert Armstrong -- go into that woman's apartment. She was shocked. So the next time she saw them coming, she stood in front of the other woman's door, barring their way. When they asked her why she was there, she explained that she didn't think God's apostle should be visiting a prostitute! They denied that they were aware that the woman was a

prostitute, and beat a hasty retreat, and she never saw them there again.

However, the incident so distressed this elderly church woman, that she felt she had to confide in someone -- and that is the reason she showed up at the office of the Personal Correspondence Department, to speak with the minister.

### *Herbert Armstrong Remarries*

Herbert Armstrong remarried when he was in his mid-80s. Ramona Martin, his new wife, was a divorcee who was in her forties. Although some might consider such a "September-March" marriage unusual because of the disparity in age, this alone would not necessarily invalidate a marriage where there was true love. What few realize, however, is that there is evidence which would have come out at their divorce proceedings which would have shown that Herbert and Ramona were sleeping together, having a sexual relationship, *as much as THREE YEARS prior to their "legalizing" their relationship!*

Herbert Armstrong, who was 91 in 1984, divorced his wife Ramona, 45 years of age, on May 11 of that year, after seven years of marriage. After a bitter divorce fight, the couple settled out of court, thus ending their seven-year-old marriage.

In the divorce proceedings, reported the *Los Angeles Times* (May 12, 1984), "Armstrong's lawyers had sought to *limit evidence of a sexual nature.*" Ramona's attorneys felt such evidence was crucial, however, to their case. According to Ramona's attorney, the couple had an "understanding" about Herbert's "*prior incestuous conduct with his daughter for many years.*"

Ramona's own intimate relationship with Herbert Armstrong predated their marriage by a number of years, according to *Ambassador Report*. The *Report* asserted in the April 1984 issue, "In recent months Ramona has admitted to friends that *she and Herbert maintained a sexual relationship for THREE FULL YEARS PRIOR TO THEIR MARRIAGE*" (emphasis mine). The *Ambassador Report* article continues,

"At some point along the way Ramona had some misgivings and so asked Herbert what he would do if he discovered some man in the church was involved in a non-marital sexual relationship with one of the church women. He answered that he would immediately disfellowship them both. 'But, questioned Ramona, 'isn't what we are doing also wrong?' To her surprise Herbert said, 'No.' When she asked why, Herbert explained, '*Because I am an Apostle!*'"

During the divorce trial, Ramona said she was sterilized in 1976 at Herbert Armstrong's insistence. (In *The Tangled Web*, David Robinson claimed Herbert Armstrong admitted this same thing to him personally.) However, Herbert and Ramona were not married until April 1977! This "footnote" to the marriage of the elderly "apostle" to the younger woman provides further insight into the thinking of Herbert Armstrong. Why did Herbert insist Ramona become sterilized in 1976, unless they were already having sexual relations at that time? Was he afraid that Ramona might become pregnant, while they were still unmarried, and he might be the father of a bastard child?



Was he remembering the fact that his own son got Shirley pregnant before they were married, and the shame and consternation it caused him at the time?

We can only guess at the answers, until those who were involved are more forthcoming.

However, when I stop to think about these shocking, disturbing revelations about a man many believed was "God's true apostle" for this end-time generation, I can only shake my head for sadness and grief, at the sad spectacle of a man of God straying so far from God and His commandments!

Truly, as David lamented the fate of Saul,

*"How are the mighty fallen!"*

The sex life of Herbert Armstrong would normally be something of a private nature, something the public would not be interested in. However, when a public figure such as Herbert Armstrong preaches one thing and lives in a totally inconsistent manner, that is something else again. For fifty years or longer, Herbert Armstrong preached the Word of God. He stood for chastity, fidelity, and thundered against adultery, fornication, and sexual vices. For many years, he claimed the marriage relationship was a "GOD PLANE RELATIONSHIP." Yet when it came to his own life, the truth becomes much more mundane, carnal, and physical.

As shocking as it may seem to many who read this, because of the enormous respect they have held toward Herbert Armstrong, the sad facts of the case are that he was much less than he appeared in public. His private life reads more like a lurid novel fantasy, than the life of a true, bona fide servant of God.

Other men who knew Herbert Armstrong personally, testify to his being drunk and inebriated on many occasions. One former minister, Dale Hampton, himself a recovered alcoholic, told audiences that in fact Herbert Armstrong was an "alcoholic." After Herbert heard this, he canceled Hampton's special ministerial program dealing with alcoholics in the Church. Al Carrozzo sums up the truth in these poignant words, saying that 1973 was a "Year of Revelation" to him:

"During this time I maintained a wait-and-see attitude. It was difficult to make myself believe that the two men I respected most -- Garner Ted and Herbert Armstrong -- were total frauds! It was even more difficult for me to believe that Herbert was less than 100% sincere and honest. However, on May 22, 1973, at 1 p.m., Ted left me with no doubts as to his father's real motivation, intentions, and modus operandi. In a private, three-hour meeting in his office, Ted told me he specifically disagreed with his father on many issues, including doctrine. He explained that his dad desperately wanted to be accepted by the world, and that was the reason he was traveling around the world continuously, seeking the favor and audience of world leaders.

"Ted admitted that he had seen his father 'stone drunk' on dozens of occasions. He stated that his father had told him that he (Herbert) would do anything to keep the 'Work' afloat -- including lying, stealing, and bribery. I was shocked, of course, but

I later saw Herbert 'stoned' on several occasions and caught him in numerous lies. I began to see those lies in his member and co-worker letters, and these lies have to this very day" ("The Profligate Son," *ibid.*, p.46-47).

Shocking as these statements no doubt are, to many people, Carrozzo goes on:

"The year 1973 was one of revelation for me. I learned of Ted's profound and long-enduring sexual activities. Herbert's total cover-up, corruption at the highest level in the WCG, Herbert's pleasure blasts around the world under the guise of preaching the true gospel, squandering of vast sums of money on extravagant art treasures, exploitation of gullible and hard-pressed people, gross doctrinal error, and suppression of human beings -- mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Yes 1973 proved to me that dishonesty was a way of life with Ted and his father, and that way of life hasn't changed to this very day" (p.47).

Al Carrozzo came to his conclusion back in 1973. Of course, much more evidence of sin and dishonesty have come to the fore since that time.

When I read first-hand accounts of the many "sins" of a man who claimed to be "God's apostle" on this earth during these end times, and who on occasion hinted or claimed that he was the "prophesied Elijah to come" at the very end, I can only shake my head in horror and disgust.

How could such a man be "Elijah"? How could entire churches today literally revere his memory and idolize him? Personally, when I think of the evil things he did, and how abusive he often was in the conduct of his ministry, and unfair in judgment, I can only think of the terrible words of Christ Himself who said, in a prophecy for the days just before His second coming,

"But and if that EVIL SERVANT shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to SMITE his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the DRUNKEN; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall CUT HIM ASUNDER, and appoint him his portion *with the hypocrites*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.24:48-51).

For years I suffered in silence and said nothing. I watched as the Church drifted away from some of the foundational principles of the Word of God. I watched, horrified, as Herbert Armstrong compounded error on error, and at times falsely accused and attacked his fellow servants. For years I saw his famous volcanic temper work its way. I saw him threaten, bully, and bluster others in sheer indomitable intimidation.

I kept silence. What could I do about it? What could I say? Who would listen to me?

So, in 1974, upon being terminated from the position of being a writer for the Church and its magazines, I began the lonely work of publishing the truth of God, in books, as God made me able, and as He opened the doors. I wrote and published such books as *The Keys to Radiant Health*, *The First Genesis: A New Case for Creation*, *Beyond Star*

*Wars, The Last Days, Escape from Armageddon, Overcoming Satan,* and others. I remained in the Church, but operated on my own, as God blessed my endeavors. I turned my attention to serving God as he enabled me.

But in the meanwhile, these terrible buried truths gnawed at my stomach. I was greatly depressed by the state of the Church, and more directly, the sad state of the "apostle" who was leading the Church, and his sinning son. It made no sense. Why would a man of God allow these things to happen? Even more, why would God in heaven allow such things to go on in His very Church?

I was baffled.

I thought to myself, no wonder Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong died, willingly, in 1967. If she had lived to know of these terrible revelations about her own husband, it would have been a terrible jolt. But on the other hand, how much did she really know? Was she aware all those years? Did she suspect?

Who knows?

But one thing we can all know, if we trust God and have faith in Him. God will not justify or excuse the wicked. No matter how righteous and pure they may look on the outside, Jesus Christ said of such miserable hypocrites,

**"WOE unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear *beautiful outward*, but are within full of DEAD MEN'S BONES, and of ALL UNCLEANNESS. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are FULL OF HYPOCRISY and INIQUITY. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . . Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, *how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*" (Matt.23:27-29, 32-33).**

A more fitting description of the hypocrisy and venality of some of the most "righteous appearing" men of God, and so-called modern "apostles," during these "Last Days," I could scarcely begin to remotely imagine.

### ***Should These Things Be Made Public?***

Some people might ask, "Why do you bring up these old sins of the past? Isn't this just a form of muckraking? Shouldn't we just forget these scandalous things? Aren't you engaging in wallowing in filth and mud-slinging? Besides, if Herbert and Ted have sincerely repented of their sins, then shouldn't we forgive and forget them?"

Those are honest questions. However, any truly accurate, historical account of the facts would not be honest if any relevant part of the story were left out. God forgave David his sin with Bathsheba, *but He still recorded it in His Word, the Bible, for all to*

*read!* He still made a PUBLIC EXAMPLE of it before all Israel! Even though David repented bitterly, that did not allow him to escape public exposure and rebuke!

It is true that love covers a multitude of sins (I Pet.4:8). However, God also inspired to be written, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num.32:23). God also tells us, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov.28:13).

Neither Herbert Armstrong nor Garner Ted Armstrong ever confessed the enormity of their sins, publicly. For years they covered them up and hid them from view. David's sins were written about in Scripture. But the sins of Herbert Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong were NEVER admitted to the Church membership! They were denied, covered up, whitewashed, and glossed over. Those brave individuals who sought to have them revealed were summarily disfellowshipped and put out of the Church!

What does Almighty God say about spiritual "cover ups"? The apostle Paul wrote, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. *Them that sin REBUKE BEFORE ALL, that others also may fear*" (I Tim.5:19-20).

The Living Bible has this, "If he has really sinned, then he should be *REBUKED IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CHURCH.*" The Good News Bible says, "REBUKE PUBLICLY all those who commit sins, *so that the rest may be afraid.*"

When sins are covered up, made little of, ignored and swept under the carpet, this encourages other ministers to play around, commit adultery, fornication, sexual perversion, thinking they can get away with it. It also encourages a spirit of immorality among the Church membership in general as well. In a Church where sin is tolerated, sin will soon become the rule!

Should such sins be kept secret? Should they be covered up, to protect the office and image and prestige of the guilty?

The apostle Paul declared, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather REPROVE THEM. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Eph.5:11-12).

What is God's attitude toward spiritual "cover-ups"? "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an *abomination* unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov.6:16-19). Those who commit adultery and cover it up, and then disfellowship those who seek justice to be done, are guilty of ALL these sins!

Let us not hide our eyes from the truth. How does God view the sins of one who rapes and commits incest with his own daughter for ten years? The Word of God says, "If a man has sexual intercourse with a woman and with her mother, it is a GREAT

EVIL. All three shall be *burned alive* to wipe out wickedness from among you" (Lev.20:14).

Not only did Herbert Armstrong have sex with a woman and her daughter -- he did it to his OWN daughter! Not just once, but repeatedly, over TEN YEARS! And then he covered it up for over 40 to 50 years!

Therefore I make no apology for having to write these things, and exposing the TRUTH, no matter how unpalatable it may be. It is high time the truth were told! We need to have the courage to face the truth, honestly, unafraid -- no matter what the consequences! I know it seems like a dirty job. But somebody has to do it! And it seems of all those who came out of Worldwide, during the past ten years, *I am the only one who has been publicly willing to confront these things head on!*

*Why is that? Why haven't the leaders of Worldwide faced these issues all these years? Why hasn't Living Church of God and Roderick Meredith admitted these things? Why hasn't United Church of God faced up to the truth? Why hasn't Gerald Flurry and his "Philadelphia Church" admitted the truth?*

*Is it because they are fattening their pocketbooks by idolizing the memory of Herbert Armstrong, and sucking in millions of dollars from naive, gullible, well-intentioned but foolish followers who don't know the truth?*

Jesus Christ said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Free from the shackles of deception and sin! But sometimes, we must face it, the truth *hurts!* It hurts to *be* deceived, and it hurts to have to *admit* we have been deceived!

### ***"With Force and CRUELTY"***

In prophesying of an "evil servant" who would rule the flock before His second coming, Jesus said he will "cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.24:51).

In the prophesy of Ezekiel 34, God thunders, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool (from the flock), ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick . . ." (Ezek.34:2-4).

Ezekiel prophesied against end-time ministers in His very own church, against the very "shepherd of Israel," when he wrote, "Neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; BUT WITH FORCE AND WITH CRUELTY HAVE YE RULED THEM" (Ezek.34:4).

### ***"The Scattered Sheep"***

The prophet Zechariah foretold of these days, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; SMITE THE SHEPHERD, and the sheep shall be scattered [the scattering of the sheep will occur in the Great Tribulation shortly to come!]; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech.13:7). Who is this end-time shepherd, who was to be "smitten," that is, die, and then the sheep would be "scattered"?

As long as he was alive, Herbert Armstrong ruled the Church with an iron hand. For the most part, he kept the Church together, united at least on the surface, and fought off all who attempted to change doctrines and to divide the flock. But after he died, difficult times came upon the flock, and in the twenty-three years since his death the Church has been rocked to its foundations! Hundreds of factions and groups have split off from the parent Church, and the former Worldwide Church of God has been shrunk in size to a mere shadow of its former self. Its heyday of glory has past, and Church membership has shrunk from 125,000 to about 31,000. Income has shrunk from over \$211 million in 1990 to a comparatively paltry \$38 million. All but about 200 of its headquarters staff, which once number 1,200, have been laid off. The "successors" to Herbert Armstrong, hand-picked by the apostle-general himself, unfortunately, have taken his church, buried his legacy, and destroyed his writings, and changed most of the significant doctrines of the Church -- *while claiming his approval and authority for so doing!*

Among the off-shoot Churches, the Arcadia-based United Church of God, headed by David Hulme, claims a membership of about 18,000. Global Church of God, headed by Roderick C. Meredith, claims about 4-5,000 members, and Philadelphia Church of God perhaps about the same. But of the former members of the Worldwide Church of God, an estimated 40,000 or so no longer bother to attend *any* church, having become jaded, dispirited, and unhappy with the whole lot! Truly, as the Word of God prophesied, "the shepherd was smitten" and the "sheep scattered"!

But the prophecy in Zechariah goes on to state that *two thirds* of the Church of God people will suffer greatly, and will be "cut off and die" during the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's Trouble (compare Jer.30:7). The "third part" shall be brought "through the fire," and God will "refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried" (Zech.13:8-9).

### ***"The IDOL Shepherd"***

In these last days, many members of the Worldwide Church of God, and all of its split-off groups, such as Philadelphia, Global, and United Church of God, are for some reason or another BLIND to the faults and flaws of Herbert Armstrong. Many refuse to admit he could do any wrong, that he could have made MAJOR mistakes in his life. They hold him up on a pedestal; they virtually WORSHIP the man, although they would deny it if you mentioned this to them. Others have gone to the opposite extreme. They pillory and ridicule the man, accuse him of being a great deceiver, charlatan, wolf in sheep's clothing, and a spiritual FRAUD! They "throw the baby out with the bath water" and reject the good along with the evil!

Many people today are blind to the real truth. When we look at the fruits of his life, with honesty and willingness to face the facts, then we find that Herbert Armstrong was seriously flawed. He was far from perfect. However, Almighty God did use him mightily at various points in his life to restore and recapture certain major truths of God's Word. Nevertheless, God also allowed him to make incredible mistakes and blunders -- both in prophetic utterances, in certain doctrinal teachings that impacted severely on the lives of people, and in his method of government of the Church of God.

There is an amazing prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. Some have wondered if it is actually a prophecy of Herbert W. Armstrong. Dr. Herman L. Hoeh, years ago, raised this possibility to me as I sat in his office. It was around 1972. We were discussing the Work of God, and Herbert Armstrong and some of the problems in the Church. Herman Hoeh turned to the prophecy of Zechariah 11, where we read that God told His prophet, "Take unto thee yet the instruments of a FOOLISH SHEPHERD. For, lo, *I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall NOT visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat (live high and mighty off the tithes of Gods people!), and tear their claws in pieces.*

"Woe to the IDOL shepherd [an "idol" shepherd is one who is *worshipped* and esteemed like a "god"!] that leaveth the flock! [Herbert Armstrong was noted for his many trips abroad in his private corporate jet plane, meeting and hobnobbing with the princes of this world, leaving the Church behind]. The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his *right eye* [as he grew older, Herbert Armstrong went blind in his right eye and almost blind in his left eye]: his *arm* shall be clean dried up, and his *right eye shall be utterly darkened*" (Zech.11:15-17).

What was Herbert Armstrong's "arm"?

For many years, his right arm was his son, Garner Ted Armstrong. Could this prophecy be a reference to the fact that Ted Armstrong would himself eventually "dry up" completely, spiritually? With all the evidence of Ted Armstrong's incessant philandering and womanizing, even almost up to his death in 2003., he certainly did become totally "dried up" as to being the "right arm" of Herbert Armstrong! In fact, he has been his "enemy," leading a competing branch of the Church of God, since 1978 when he was finally disfellowshipped by his father!

Is this a prophecy that Garner Ted Armstrong -- Herbert Armstrong's "right arm" for MANY YEARS -- the one whom he at one time appointed as his heir and successor, even as David so appointed Solomon his son to succeed him three thousand years ago -- that he would go astray and become "clean dried up" spiritually, bereft of the Spirit of God? Look at the evidence! Let's face the facts, honestly, boldly, courageously, without pity or compromise!

Almighty God Himself speaks of this end-time shepherd as a "foolish" shepherd.

Herbert Armstrong in his later years, and during various times of his ministry, was indeed a very "foolish" man. An old saying says, "There is no fool like an old fool." In his later years, Herbert Armstrong often completely misjudged people. He himself "ordained" as evangelists in the Church the likes of such men as Stanley Rader, church attorney, and Joseph Tkach, who later betrayed both his memory and his doctrinal teachings. Was this not an example of outright "foolishness"?

Yet in the prophecy of Zechariah, God refers to this "foolish shepherd" (Zech.11:15) as one who He said "I will raise up" (v.15). This shepherd was specifically prophesied to *not heal* that which was broken, but would live off the fat of the people. Herbert Armstrong's teaching on "healing" for decades referred to drugs as poisons, and medicine as "idolatry." Thus in fact he taught against the medical establishment and taught those who went to doctors had no faith in God. As a result of this teaching, many heart-wrenching stories can be told of church members, refusing operations, who lost their eyesight, who died

when a simple operation could have saved them, and many small children were sacrificed to this false teaching. In retrospect, this example of church fanaticism did untold and incalculable evil.

This end-time shepherd whom God says He "raised up" (Zech.11:16), also spent MILLIONS of dollars on expensive jewelry, original paintings, candelabra, ornate salt cellars, and fabulous dinner settings for his table. He lived in a mansion in Pasadena, and owned other mansions in Big Sandy, Texas and Bricket Wood, England. He flew around the world in his own jet airplane, and commanded a salary from the Church of over \$250,000 a year plus an unlimited expense account. As the prophecy states, "he shall eat the flesh of the fat."

Does Herbert Armstrong fulfill this amazing Biblical prophecy? Think about it.

Gene Scarbrough, who has been an elder in God's Church for over forty years, was ordained in 1967, and came out to Pasadena, California, in that year to serve full-time in the ministry. He told me that years ago his daughter Peggy, spent some time visiting with Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong, who took a liking to her. While they were together one time, Mrs. Armstrong reminisced about how the Work and Church began. While reflecting on how the ministry of her husband Herbert and his eldest son, Richard David Armstrong, originally got started, Mrs. Armstrong told Peggy, "They got into it for the money!"

This type of candid statement would not be surprising if heard from the lips of an enemy of the Church. But, coming straight from the lips of Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong, it packs a wallop!

Another friend corroborates the above story in part. According to his information, Garner Ted Armstrong once told a teacher in the church at Big Sandy and a personal friend that when his father was in the aluminum siding business back in Oregon, he got a call from far away to make a bid on a job. Herbert jacked up the price because he didn't want the job, the location was so distant. To his surprise, the customer said, "When can



you get started?" It turns out the customer was the minister of a Seventh Day Adventist Church, and had plenty of money from tithes and offerings. According to Ted Armstrong, upon returning home that evening, Herbert -- who all his life wanted to be considered successful in business and make lots of money -- told his wife, "Honey, I now know how we're going to get rich!"

Contrary to his own *Autobiography*, then, it seems clear that at least originally Herbert Armstrong got into religion to make money. During his ministry, he certainly accomplished this feat. Along the way, however, it seems clear that he also learned a great deal of spiritual and Biblical truth which he began teaching. It is also possible that as he learned Bible truth, that Herbert Armstrong came to true repentance and conversion. As he began to learn much truth, he began to preach it. Only God truly knows the depth of his ultimate sincerity.

### ***"Tried Them Which Say They Are Apostles"***

God says to His Church of Ephesus, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast TRIED them which say they are APOSTLES, and are not, and hast found them LIARS . . ." (Rev.2:2).

The apostle Paul wrote, "*For such are FALSE APOSTLES, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works*" (II Cor.11:13-15).

Paul was saying there are ministers who have entered the Church of God down through history who have not been true apostles of God. They misled the Church. They claimed to be apostles, even transformed themselves into apostles, but God Himself never made them such.

God commands us to beware of such men. They may appear just like a true minister of God, but they are spiritual "tares" in the sight of God and will burn up in the lake of fire!

What about Herbert W. Armstrong? Was he a true apostle of God, although severely flawed? Or was he a false apostle?

The apostle John tells us, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY [TEST, PROVE] THE SPIRITS [messages, attitudes, teachings] whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

Like many others, I carefully checked up and investigated the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong back in the late 50s and early 60s, before I became involved with the Church and became a member. At the time, I was convinced that what I had read and proved was true. I studied diligently. I looked up every Scripture. I proved Christmas was pagan,

Easter was pagan, the Sabbath should be observed, and even the annual Holy Days should be remembered and observed.

As time went on, I found that many of Herbert Armstrong's teachings were truly based on the Bible, and I could prove them. But some others I came to see, over the years, were in error to one degree or another.

Many of these doctrinal "shady" areas came to the light in the mid-1970s. At that time, many ministers left the Church for two essential reasons: First, they despised the cover up and misuse of authority shown by Herbert Armstrong in dealing with his son's sexual sins. Second, their were honest questions and disagreements on certain doctrines. Some of these questions were discussed and changes were made; others were buried and suppressed at the time. Nothing could be changed except what Herbert Armstrong wanted to change. At that time, he made a change in Pentecost, changing the manner of "counting," and he made a more fundamental change in the doctrine of divorce and remarriage. Interestingly, with the change that was made, he gave himself the "right" to marry a divorcee! Most other areas demanding investigation and change -- such as the doctrine of divine healing, wearing make up, and the like -- were ignored.

Over the years I have come to see that flawed as he undoubtedly was, in many areas, nevertheless, Herbert Armstrong did teach the truth of God in a way unlike any other man I ever knew. It was sad for me to see him gradually go further and further astray, after the death of his wife in 1967.

### *The Example of Solomon*

The fact that a man can make many mistakes, and still serve God is evident from the Scriptures. How such a man will be judged by God is an altogether different matter.

During his early life Solomon was a man who feared God, and was used by God to write the Biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. He was the wisest, most understanding man who ever lived, apart from Christ. Solomon's wisdom was so famous that kings and queens from around the world came to hear his wisdom, including the Queen of Sheba. He possessed vast scientific understanding as well, being a student of animals and plants.

Soon after Solomon became king, God came to him in a dream, and then said to him, "Lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (I Kings 3:12).

God allowed Solomon to build the Temple of God in Jerusalem, even as He allowed Herbert Armstrong to build the "house for God" in Pasadena.

But did all this guarantee that Solomon would remain faithful to God? Solomon had the same kind of problem as Herbert Armstrong -- sex. We read, "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the

Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in unto them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will *turn away your heart after their gods*: Solomon clave unto these in love.

"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives *turned away his heart*.

"For it came to pass, *when Solomon was old*, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and HIS HEART WAS NOT PERFECT with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon DID EVIL in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.

"Then did Solomon build an high place Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

"And the Lord was ANGRY with Solomon, *because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice*, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

"Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, *I will surely REND the kingdom away from thee*, and will give it to thy servant" (I Kings 11:1-11).

Notice the incredible parallels. Solomon, like Herbert Armstrong, had a problem with "sex." It undoubtedly caused him grief throughout his life. Even so Herbert Armstrong's sexual problems lasted all through his marriage. Some might blame his first wife for being frigid and say she caused some of his problems. Whatever the case, his incest with his younger daughter has been carefully documented. His masturbation throughout his life was admitted to by himself. Other stories of adultery have surfaced from time to time. His sexual sins after the death of his first wife have also been reported and documented.

The comparison between Herbert Armstrong, to whom God granted much precious, divine knowledge, during the years of his ministry, and Solomon, to whom God granted great wisdom and understanding, cannot be denied.

And both of them, as they grew old, began to compromise with the truth and knowledge of God. Both of them became autocratic and tyrannical demagogues and abusive in their administration of authority. Of course, this goes hand in hand with

departure from the laws and commandments of God, two of which are: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and, "Thou shalt not bear false witness."

Solomon became a despot. After God sent a prophet to tell Jeroboam he was to become king over ten tribes of Israel, Solomon learned of it (he had "eyes" and "ears" throughout his kingdom, like the CIA), and "sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon" (I Kings 11:40). Solomon sought to stop the prophecy from being fulfilled! He was no longer the "friend" of God. He had become God's enemy!

Even so, Herbert Armstrong went astray during various stages of his life, as he himself admitted to his own son. Even during the last years of his life, he sinned. He sinned against God, and like Eli, he put his son before God. When he finally put his son out of the Church, it was not for the reasons of adultery and immorality, but because of a difference in opinion over administrative decisions in the Church.

Like Solomon, Herbert tried to cover up his own sins, and his sexual weaknesses. No mention of these things can be found in his official autobiography. Not even a hint!

How, then, will God judge this man?

How will God judge Solomon?

In the examples of faith listed in Hebrews 11, the name of king Solomon is conspicuously absent. Does this mean he will not be in the Kingdom of God, at the resurrection of the righteous at the coming of Christ? Apparently so. He will come up in the second resurrection, it would seem, with those who have not yet proven faithful, and will be judged according to his "works."

In his old age, the high priest Eli went astray from God, and sinned grievously, bringing upon himself and his family the wrath of God. In his old age, Herbert Armstrong likewise sinned grievously against God, and ruled the Church of God with an iron tyrannical hand. How will God judge him?

In another Scriptural parallel, God Himself chose Saul to be king over Israel. In the beginning Saul was very humble and meek. He even "hid among the baggage" when they came to make him king! (I Sam.10:22). But after he became king, Saul never quite turned wholeheartedly to serve the Lord. He himself became a "problem" to the congregation of Israel, and at one time in misguided zeal even threatened to kill his own son Jonathan who had brought great victory to Israel (I Sam.14:44-45). Saul began to listen to the people rather than the simple commands of God (15:24). He "feared the people."

In the beginning, I do not doubt the conversion of Herbert Armstrong and the way God used him in his ministry. In the early years he discovered much new truth, the Sabbath, holy days, healing, truth about hell fire, the mortality of the soul, the identity of

the "lost ten tribes of Israel," the pagan origin of Christmas, Easter, and many other foundational truths. But like Saul, as he grew and the Church grew, Herbert at times became a

"problem" to himself, his own family, the Church, and to God. Like Saul, he turned away from the pure and simple commandments of God, and His law, and at times became a "law unto himself."

What shall we say, then? How will God judge such a man? Frankly, I don't know. That is something that God Himself will decide.

### *God's Warning*

God's Word warns us not to place our trust or hopes in mere mortal men. In fact, God warns, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9).

God commands us, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:3-4).

No man can save us or give us salvation. Only God and Jesus Christ can do that! As Peter said in the book of Acts, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

As the apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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.

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:1-4).

We should keep our eyes focused on Christ. We should keep our eyes riveted, fixed on the Lord.

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water at night, while the sea tossed and heaved, they were afraid. But Jesus told them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matt.14:27). Peter, bold and brash as usual, said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus told him to do so, and Peter began walking on water!

Can you imagine the sensation?

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried,

saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt.14:28-31).

Are your eyes on Christ? Or are you still looking to men?

David prayed to God, "Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy TRUTH, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:4-5).

David said, "Mine eyes are EVER TOWARD THE LORD; for he shall pluck up my feet out of the net" (Psa.25:15).

Where are YOUR eyes centered? "But mine eyes are unto thee, O God, the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute" (Psalm 141:8). Isn't it about time we start putting our trust in God, and Jesus Christ, and not in mortal, sinful man?

God inspired Jeremiah to write, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer.17:5).

Jeremiah continued, "For he shall be like the heath in the desert and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer.17:6-8).

In the mid-1970s I was devastated when I learned about the terrible "cover up" perpetrated by Herbert Armstrong over the heinous sins of his son, Garner Ted Armstrong. I was plunged into a morass of despair, and grief, and sorrow -- and discouragement.

Shortly after that time, God used me to begin publishing books through Triumph Publishing Company, which He raised up. He began Triumph with nothing but faith, prayer, and a "little mustard seed" of capital. During the ensuing years, He blessed me greatly with spiritual blessings, and sufficient money to publish 19 full length books.

During the past ten years, God has enabled me to begin publishing a bi-monthly Newsletter called PROPHECY FLASH, now grown into a magazine of some 88 pages. He has also revealed incredible, amazing, sensational new prophetic truths to me -- things not revealed before to any other man, woman or child on this earth, to my knowledge.

Why has God chosen to do this through me, an insignificant person, but one whom He has used and trained -- even at the feet of Herbert Armstrong from 1959 to 1974? Why? Of course, it is not for me, at all -- but for His own glorious purpose. Perhaps He wants to show the world what He can do with a veritable "nobody."

The truth is the truth, and *the truth will prevail!*

During the past 25 years, since I discovered that both Herbert Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong were leaders with "feet of clay," and not the great men of God I had once thought, I have learned not to depend on men at all, but to look to Jesus Christ for His guidance and mercy and deliverance and help. I have learned that He is a very competent Saviour. Even if men prove unworthy, He is always worthy and true. Even when men fail, God remains loyal and steadfast, true and reliable, a faithful Friend.

What about you? What will you do now that you have learned the truth about Mr. Armstrong's sins? Will this destroy your faith in the Word of God? Will you go off, jettison the truth, and throw away all religious faith?

As Thomas Paine wrote some two hundred years ago, "These are the times which try men's souls." To learn unhappy truths about men we have once admired, is a depressing thing, but it need not cause us to lose our faith in God. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "Yea, let God be true but every man a liar" (Rom.3:4).

As David wrote so powerfully, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my Rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah" (Psalm 62:1-8).

David goes on, in this wonderful Psalm, "*Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*"

From the ditch digger to Solomon, from the lowly landscape worker to Herbert Armstrong, they are all vanity and lies, less than nothing before God.

But, David concluded, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that POWER belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: *For thou tenderest to every man according to his work*" (Psa.62:9,11-12).

Whatever we may think of Herbert W. Armstrong, or Garner Ted Armstrong, and the shenanigans men will do, one thing is crystal clear: All will have to answer to God in the final judgment! Every work will be brought into judgment, whether it be good or evil.

Even wise Solomon, who forgot more wisdom than most men will ever know, wrote

in his divinely given wisdom, "Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole man." We often quote that verse, and then stop. But this time let us go on to quote the final verse in all the book of Ecclesiastes: "For God shall bring EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, with EVERY SECRET THING, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl.12:13-14).



## Chapter 5

# BACK TO BABYLON!

Since 1967, the Worldwide Church of God has plunged into sin and returned to spiritual Babylon. The roller coaster ride has gained momentum and increased in velocity. God Almighty commands His true people, "COME OUT OF BABYLON!" From the apotheosis of a man to the descent into apostasy, the signs and evidence tell the most amazing story of corruption, plotting, intrigue, and conspiracy the mind of man can imagine. In this chapter we summarize the evidence, and reveal plainly what God Almighty says YOU should do about it, in order to save yourself and your family! TAKE HEED! This may be the only warning and witness that a loving, merciful God will give to you, before the Great Tribulation claims its victims, with you and your loved ones among its intended victims!

In 1967 Loma D. Armstrong lay dying of an intestinal blockage. She and her husband refused to allow doctors to operate to surgically remove the problem, the concretion of a medication which completely plugged up her bowels. As a result she soon died after intense suffering. It appears that Mrs. Armstrong suffered so much because of taking water, soon after taking the medication, which was not allowed according to the instructions. This apparently caused the blockage. However, it could easily have been removed surgically, if the Armstrongs had been willing at that point to consult a physician or allow a surgeon to operate. Mrs. Armstrong, after her husband had insisted for decades that doctors and their medicines and drugs and surgery were "of the devil," and contrary to "faith in God," refused to allow doctors to treat her condition. One might say, therefore, that she died in faith -- but it was undoubtedly an ignorant faith. Jesus Christ Himself said that it is not the well who need a physician, but those who are sick. Solomon wrote that a medicine does good. Nevertheless, it appears that Mrs. Armstrong was very sincere in her belief, and death was the result.

Many people regarded Loma D. Armstrong as the real spiritual power behind Herbert W. Armstrong, the only one who dared to disagree with him, or say, "No, Herbert, that is not right." It was through Mrs. Armstrong in 1926 that Herbert first was forced to face the truth of the weekly Sabbath day; her refusal to compromise with revealed truth angered and infuriated him, so he began studying the Bible in an attempt to

prove her wrong. But to his chagrin and dismay, he discovered that she was right after all!

After associating with the Church of God Seventh Day for several years, and being ordained a minister by their Oregon Conference in 1931, he began broadcasting in January 1934, and began the PLAIN TRUTH magazine in February 1934. In those early years, he studied the Bible hours a day, and God revealed to him many basic truths unknown by most churches and ministers -- truths about the Sabbath, the annual holy days, the mortality of the soul, the truth about the false idea of an ever-burning hell, and truth about the identity of the United States and British Commonwealth in Biblical prophecy. God revealed to him, as he studied, many wonderful truths. .

However, during those turbulent years, due to problems in his own marriage, it is a fact that Herbert fell a victim to his own lusts of the flesh, and did things which were not right in the sight of God. The problems he encountered, and the sins which plagued his ministry, are documented in our chapter, "How Are The Mighty Fallen!" One of the most serious allegations that surfaced, and has been written about by ex-ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, and even his own son, is the serious statement that during the 1930's he began sexually abusing his own daughter over a period of ten years. This fact has been documented in several published sources.

Nevertheless, in the 1950's, after Herbert Armstrong moved the Church headquarters to Pasadena, California, and established Ambassador College, the Church began to grow and multiply in scope and power. During the '30s and '40s the Church seemed to grow very little, partly due to Herbert's conviction that World War II was the final war leading up to Armageddon and the return of Jesus Christ. He continually made false, erroneous predictions of the outcome of battles and events of World War II, predicting Nazi victory and a final showdown at Jerusalem. Little did he anticipate Field Marshall Montgomery's victory at El Alemain in Egypt, causing the Nazi armies in Africa to retreat westward, away from the Middle East. These prophetic failures of Herbert Armstrong are documented in the chapter, "The Astonishing Prophetic Errors of Herbert W. Armstrong!"

But even after World War II and his prophetic debacles, Herbert still had not learned his lessons, and predicted time after time in sermons, in Co-worker letters, and in the pages of the PLAIN TRUTH that the Church would flee to a place of safety, a barren archaeological ruin called Petra in the Jordanian desert, in spring of 1972 and remain there for three and one half years, or until October 1975, when he predicted Jesus Christ would return in glory and majesty to usher in the Kingdom of God on the earth!

The Church grew rapidly during the 1960's, about 30 per cent a year, but as 1972 drew near and the Church did not flee as predicted, many began thinking twice about Herbert Armstrong's prophecies, and leadership, and growth began to slow. Some began leaving the church. When 1972 passed, and nothing significant happened, and the prophesied flight to safety did not occur, many people were devastated, and many ministers began to have doubts about some of the basic doctrines of the church, including

the "healing" doctrine, tithing, divorce and remarriage, prophecy, and strong centralized church government. Therefore, in 1974 a ministerial Rebellion occurred, as scores of ministers left the Church over allegations of improprieties in the Armstrong leadership, doctrinal hassles over healing, divorce, and tithing, and a major dispute over the correct date to observe Pentecost, one of the annual holy days of God.

One of the major issues leading to the ministerial split and division in the Church was the "Watergate" style cover-up of the rampant sins and adulteries of Garner Ted Armstrong, the son of Herbert Armstrong, and "heir apparent" to take over the Church when his father died. It became known to the ministry in 1974 that the younger Armstrong had been committing adultery with a large number of Ambassador college girls, coeds, baby-sitters, and other women. In fact, although he was married and the father of three sons, in 1974 Garner Ted was so taken with a young stewardess who served on his Falcon jet, that he was ready to divorce his wife Shirley to marry her. In the ensuing investigation, it was discovered that Ted Armstrong had been leading the life of a spiritual lecher and womanizer for many years, a "secret playboy life" of America's leading evangelist. The number women with whom he had slept with or dallied with sexually were said to be over 200 (his own confession) over a period of years.

### *Crisis in the 1970s*

In a letter dated April 25, 1972, Herbert Armstrong said, "Last autumn I was dismayed to learn that my son had been so overcome with personal emotional problems, that it led to conduct inconsistent with the high standard of the Work of the Church of God and the scriptural qualifications for a minister of Jesus Christ." At this time Ted Armstrong was given a leave of absence and encouraged to repent of his sins.

Armstrong then printed a copy of his son's letter to him, admitting, "I have no excuses. I sinned mightily against God, against His Church and His Apostle; against the wife God gave me in my youth; against all my closest friends." In his letter Ted begged for forgiveness. It was subsequently granted. But Ted's problems were not over. Not by a long shot!

Armstrong continues in his letter, admitting that his son was forgiven and accepted back into the Church, with all the responsibilities he had held before. He was not demoted, or penalized, but fully reinstated. But in the following months, Ted's grievous adulterous liaisons continued. So Armstrong was forced to admit in his letter, "But subsequent events, attitude and conduct, to our great dismay, demonstrated to the Board members, ministers, and myself that the process of repentance was not complete." Armstrong admitted they had acted too hastily in reinstating Ted, saying, "But we had come to realize, as did my son also, that he must take a considerable period of time to regain his spiritual strength and stability, before he can even contemplate the resumption of his heavy responsibilities, or duties in preaching and broadcasting."

At that time the Church of God membership itself was not told the serious nature of Ted's so-called "emotion problems." The fact that sexual infidelity was involved on a

massive scale of long continuance was never admitted publicly by Herbert Armstrong, who sought to sweep the whole sorry mess under the carpet and hide it from public view. He was fearful of the damage such a revelation would cause to the Church and the "Work" of God. Others, who discovered the real sins of Garner Ted Armstrong, were not so charitable. In their eyes, the whole "mess" smacked of a religious "cover-up" and ranked right up there with the sordid "Watergate" conspiracy cover-up of President Richard Nixon -- only worse, since the sins of Garner Ted Armstrong were far worse in God's sight than a small-time "burglary" attempt by a few extra-zealous political hacks. It was only with the publication of exposes of Ted's sins in publications outside the Church, that the facts about his flagrant womanizing ever became known to many Church members and ministers in the Church. The "cover up" continued, for years, as Ted consistently refused to admit the truth of the allegations and to face the evidence against him. Many members themselves refused to face the truth, believing fervently that their minister -- their "idol" -- could never have done such things, or insisting that the allegations were exaggerated and overblown. Many wanted to give him a second or even a third chance, and few really ever learned the extent of his philandering and womanizing. In fact, the truth of the matter only became known to those who were willing to open their eyes and look.

Despite these problems, however, Ted was once again brought back into the Church as the second-in-command under Herbert Armstrong, and in the late 1970s Herbert even placed him in charge of the day-to-day running and governance of the Church, although Herbert maintained theoretical over-all control over the Work from his home in Tucson, Arizona.

In his book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, John Tuit, one-time member of the Worldwide Church of God on the east coast wrote: "The whole period of turmoil actually had its start around 1968, after the death of Herbert Armstrong's wife Loma in 1967. It was at this time that Stanley R. Rader began to assume a more prominent position as an advisor to Herbert Armstrong." Tuit points out that Rader had been a non-member and employ of the Church as an accountant and legal counselor. He goes on, "It was during this period, starting in 1968, when the massive building program was embarked upon, including the commitment for the elaborate Ambassador Auditorium. This also marked the beginning of Herbert Armstrong's visits to political leaders around the world. . . ." (p.23).

By 1974, however, many of the problems in the Church came to a frightful head. The cover-up of Ted's promiscuous behavior, challenges on the divorce and remarriage doctrine, healing questions, voting, birthdays, make up -- these and other questions began to be discussed freely among the ministry. When Herbert was slow to change, and refused to own up to the cover-up of his son's sins, ministers throughout the country bolted the Church and began their own "Associated Churches of God," led by Ken Westby. As the years went by, however, those churches became very "disassociated," and the movement fell flat.

Meanwhile, to nip the rebellion in the bud, Herbert Armstrong convoked a

ministerial conference to discuss the hot topics of dispute, and to the amazement of many, certain changes began to be made. The divorce doctrine, which had split up many homes and ruined many marriages, was thrown overboard, with the announcement that marriages "in the world" were not "valid" in God's sight in the first place. Make up was accepted as all right for women in moderation, voting in local elections was allowed, and doctors were no longer regarded as the servants of Satan the devil. To stem the loss of members, and to confront the issues which were being used to lead members out of the Church, the ministerial conference made many discreet changes in those doctrines which appeared to be the most sensitive -- or "dangerous." It appeared the Church was willing to admit it was wrong, and to change! Thus many people who might have been tempted to "jump ship" to the new churches being formed decided to stay with the Worldwide Church of God, which still seemed to be doing the Work of God.

Nevertheless, the liberalizing tendencies which began to dominate the Church, in many areas, seemed to cause the Church to go from one extreme in doctrine to another -- from one ditch alongside the road to the opposite ditch. In many areas, the Church continued watering down the truth of God on many major points. Controversy continued on the healing doctrine, which still remained a bugaboo for thousands, with doctors and medicines seeming to be anathema to true faith in the eyes of many members and ministers. But the divorce doctrine, with the changes fostered by Herman L. Hoeh, became a "can of worms," as soon virtually anything went, and long-time church members began divorce proceedings against their spouses. Even marriages performed "in the Church," by bona-fide Church ministers, ended in divorce, with the separated partners then regarded as free to marry any one else they chose, so long as they were "in the Church."

At this time Herbert Armstrong did not want to be considered a religious leader in the eyes of world leaders. He began to envision how he could present the gospel of the Kingdom of God without calling it the gospel -- to put a religious message in totally secular terms. Instead of speaking about "God's law," he began preaching about the "way of give versus the way of get." Apparently not fully realizing how he was actually "watering down the gospel," and adulterating the plain truth of God, by using such innocuous terms, he began to focus his preaching in meetings and banquets around the world on the topics of "give versus get," and the need for "a strong hand from somewhere" to save mankind from extinction. He ceased to mention the name of Christ at all! Apparently he completely forgot or put out of mind the admonition of Christ Himself who said: "Whosoever therefore shall be ASHAMED OF ME and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ASHAMED, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

Rather than calling himself a servant of the living God, Herbert Armstrong began referring to himself as an "Ambassador for world peace." He founded the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, a secular organization to give him credence in the eyes of the world, so he could appear NON-RELIGIOUS, with a non-religious message. He was afraid the world leaders did not want to hear a message of religion, so he changed it to a secularized version of human philosophy -- his own philosophy of the laws of

success (not mentioning "God" at all), and the "give versus get" philosophy of life.

### *Corruption in Publishing Work*

The Church of God was clearly embarking across uncharted waters, into unknown seas, with this "new thrust" of the Work. The Ambassador International Cultural Foundation (known as AICF), began to publish a secular magazine called QUEST. It brought top-flight entertainers and musicians to the stage of the Ambassador Auditorium, which had been dedicated to "The Great God" when it was built with church members contributions, to perform secular Hollywood style performances. Soon, what occurred was that inside the "House of God" dance troupes danced in risqué and sensuous manners, bringing shame upon God's House.

The "new thrust" in the "Work" also created a new publishing house called Everest House, and hired secular publishers and editors to run it out of New York City. The gospel of Jesus Christ was nowhere to be found in any of these new endeavors, yet they were highly touted as the new direction GOD was leading the Work! Members were encouraged to sell subscriptions to *Quest* magazine, and sales-stands were put in various state and county fairs across the country, as well as in the lobbies of Feast of Tabernacles' sites across the country.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was buried -- no longer out front in the forefront of the Work. Even the PLAIN TRUTH magazine became secularized and worldly in content. Strong religious articles were banned. The Church had begun to compromise with the world; rather than rebuke the world with God's end-time warning message, the Church had been overcome with the influences of the world and Satan's devious deceptions. The first issue of *Quest* magazine in March/April 1977 featured an article on the football coach Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers. The article contained obscenities, blasphemies and outright profanity -- filthy language which would not be becoming for a Christian. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," the apostle Paul commanded (Eph.4:29); now the Worldwide Church of God was responsible for sponsoring that very thing in a slick, full-color magazine!

Another article showed a picture of a man with a serpent entwined around his leg, and in the background the upper portions of a man and woman, with the woman being totally entwined by a serpent. The accompanying fictitious story was about an inventor who invented a stool-less cat which was hailed worldwide. The final article in the first issue was "Build Your Courage in Three Easy Lessons" -- the final lesson being an exercise in "meditation," where the reader was to empty his mind, relax, see himself descending a staircase into a "Place of Courage" where he was to meet "Mother Courage" or "Father Courage" or the "Spirit of Courage." This kind of meditation technique, emptying the mind, is very dangerous spiritually, and is condemned in the Word of God. An empty mind is the devil's playground. People who empty their minds in playing with Eastern medication techniques are exposing their minds to the influence of Satanic demons -- wicked spirits (Eph.6:10-17). Such an article in a publication of the Worldwide Church of God was nothing short of blasphemous! Yet at that time when

Church members complained, ministers told them, "Don't worry about it; its not for us to get upset over. Mr. Armstrong has been called as God's apostle and he certainly knows what is going on."

Members of the Church working in the Ambassador Press who were involved in editing and publishing the magazine were sick at heart, and at least one began to suffer from ulcers, as he faced this diabolical situation.

Was Herbert Armstrong aware? Did he even care any more? During those days, in 1977, the Work of God was descending into apostasy, and Church ministers remained BLIND to what was occurring. Ministers, fearful of losing their cushiony salaries, were fearful of rocking the boat. Gradually an attitude and teaching of BLIND OBEDIENCE became the standard "modus operandi" in the Church, and nobody questioned what was done lest they be disfellowshipped and put out of the Church.

John Tuit in his book quoted previously, declared, "This trend into publishing a secular magazine under the auspices of a secular foundation operated by the Church was an activity totally in conflict with the purposes, beliefs and teachings of the Church. If God would not allow Herbert Armstrong to do anything that would harm the work, as he had always said, then what was going on here? Either God was a hypocrite or Herbert Armstrong was wrong" (p.53).

Even worse than *Quest* magazine, however, were many of the books published by Everest House, the Church's new publishing venture. One of their books told homosexual couples how to live together more cheaply. Another, *Danse Macabre* written by horror-fiction writer Stephen King, contained hundreds of blasphemies, profanities, cursing and swearing, obscenities, and connected the names of God and Jesus Christ with the most foul and depraved human activities. Yet the Word of God clearly says, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, BLASPHEMY, FILTHY COMMUNICATION out of your mouth" (Col.3:8). By being responsible for *Quest* magazine and Everest House publishing, the very Church of God was guilty of BLASPHEMY!

Truly, after the death of his wife Loma, Herbert Armstrong had begun to go astray, and to depart from the foundations of the truth of God. He no longer had his wife to steer him in the right direction. He wouldn't listen to his son, or ministers under his authority. He began preaching a "non-gospel" in his journeys around the world, under the influence of the mysterious Stanley Rader. Rader, baptized finally in mid-1975 in a bathtub in Hong Kong by Herbert Armstrong, began to assert more and more manipulative influence over the aging octogenarian.

What does the apostle Paul, in the inspired Word of God, have to say about those who preach a "different" gospel, such as the gospel of "Give Versus Get"? Paul wrote, by the Spirit of God, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ UNTO ANOTHER GOSPEL: Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would PERVERT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach ANY OTHER GOSPEL unto you than that which we have preached unto you, LET HIM BE ACCURSED. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you that that ye have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED" (Gal.1:6-9).

Paul went on, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet PLEASED MEN, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal.1:10). Herbert Armstrong had begun to attempt to "please men," and no longer thundered the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the nations as a witness. He no longer lifted up his voice like a trumpet to show the nations their sins (Isa.58:1). He had become a muted trumpet, a sweet song, a pleasant harmonica, a soft lullaby on the violin.

### *The Apostasy Grows*

In 1977 at age 85 Herbert Armstrong married a woman less than half his age, Ramona Martin, the erstwhile assistant of Stanley Rader. Armstrong thought he fell in love with this woman, although others have suspected that it was Stanley Rader who provided this temptation for him, and not God. Before marrying Ramona, Armstrong went to the Otopeni Clinic in Bucharest, Romania. According to Ted Armstrong, this was in order to receive treatments for sexual rejuvenation, but it didn't do any good. During this time, Ted was vehemently against the marriage, causing Herbert Armstrong to violently proclaim his anger against his son. Waiting in the wings, to pick up the pieces after any fall out, was Stanley Rader. As it turned out, however, Ted agreed to perform the wedding, to his father's delight, and to Rader's chagrin and silent fury. Ted said that when Rader walked in and found out he was performing the ceremony, "He was furious. My wife saw it, I saw it we felt it, it was just blazing anger" (Tuit, p.58).

Later on, Herbert Armstrong began to spend tens of thousands of dollars for furs and jewelry for Ramona, while Church Sabbath school programs went begging for funds, and powerful, exhortative Co-worker letters went out from headquarters talking about the desperate need for money to complete the Great Commission!

Sadly, that which had begun as a true modern-day remnant of the Church of God was rapidly becoming a religious cult following a strident, volatile aging octogenarian. More and more members began to see that leadership of the Church at the top was corrupt. Herbert Armstrong was paying for large, ornate and lavish banquets in cities around the world, where he would give his mild message of the "give gospel." He would give expensive gifts of Steuben crystal to political figures in order to interview them for a few moments, get his picture taken with them, and publish the pictures on the cover of the PLAIN TRUTH. While Church members were scrimping and saving to send in their last few dollars to the Work, Herbert Armstrong was proudly telling senior Ambassador students invited to his home for dinner that the place settings and dinnerware on his table was worth \$125,000!

How did Herbert Armstrong get in to visit Prime Ministers and leading heads of state



around the world? When the apostle Paul was brought before Governors Felix and Festus, it was as a prisoner in chains, making his defense (Acts 24-25). When he appeared before king Agrippa, it was still as a prisoner (Acts 26). Yet he gave testimony before kings, and was not afraid to mention Christ, and the whole story of his dramatic conversion. He was not ashamed of Christ. But Herbert Armstrong worked his way into the inner sanctums of world leaders through the services of the mysterious Osamu Gotoh.

According to *Ambassador Report*, a publication which "watched" the goings-on at the Worldwide Church of God, and reported on them, Gotoh's own expense account eventually reached \$100,000. While making arrangements for Armstrong to visit with the high and mighty of the world, on June 6, 1975 Gotoh was apprehended at Los Angeles International Airport carrying a large amount of undeclared jewelry. If tried and convicted of a crime, he could have received up to five years in jail and a fine of \$50,000. Soon after this, he was out of the United States and out of reach of Federal agents. He was later engaged by the Church once again, and released in 1977 for obscure reasons.

It was in 1977 that a 92 page issue of *Ambassador Report* came out financed by the savings of former Ambassador students and employees. It laid bare the bizarre truth about many of the profligate activities of Garner Ted Armstrong (the lead article was "In Bed with Garner Ted", an account by an supposedly anonymous former Ambassador college coed of her personal tryst with Ted Armstrong), the failed prophecies of Herbert Armstrong, computer snooping on members' tithing records, and many other articles on the financial improprieties, corruption, and bizarre antics of Worldwide leaders. Although it never brought about the "bombshell" publicity that was expected, it did open a lot of eyes to the truth.

Meanwhile, the political infighting in the Church was reaching new levels of sophistication. In January 1978 it was announced that Worldwide Advertising, a company associated with Stanley Rader, would no longer be the advertising agency for the Church television programs. With this step Ted Armstrong had begun to "dismantle Stanley Rader's financial empire," says John Tuit (*ibid.*, p.85). It wasn't long before Rader's counter-punch came. It was announced by Ted Armstrong that the campus at Pasadena would be closed and the college moved to Big Sandy. Shortly after this Stanley Rader announced that the Big Sandy campus was going to be closed, and all college operations would continue at Pasadena.

### ***The Battle for Control***

Writes John Tuit of this struggle for supremacy, "A battle was in full swing. Garner Ted had begun to chip away at Rader's influence and control, and Rader was retaliating. There was no way after twenty years that Rader was going to let go of the Worldwide Church of God . . . Rader and Garner Ted had locked horns, and Rader was determined that this would be the last time" (p.87-88).

In May 1978 Michael Germano, dean of Ambassador College in Pasadena, at Rader's instructions, announced that Ambassador College at both campuses was to be closed.

Rumors were flying all over the place. When Ted tried to call his father, he couldn't get through to him. The suspicion arose that Rader was blocking off all contact between father and son. Meanwhile, an announcement was made that Ted was being placed on a leave of absence. On May 21, Herbert Armstrong announced in a letter that he himself would soon be back on the air, making new radio and television programs. In a letter dated May 19 to his son Ted, Herbert Armstrong accused his son of not agreeing with the way Christ had led him, and of claiming he would have done things a different way. After pointing out how Ted was changing ways and personnel over to his own way, Herbert concluded, "I have had to step in and take over the reins completely to save the Church of God and His WORK. You, of course, will not agree with any of this, as you have never agreed with your human father."

Why did Herbert Armstrong suddenly begin attacking his son in May, 1978? In a meeting with the attorneys who were about to bring litigation against the Church, Robert Kuhn, a high level official of the Church, declared, "Mr. Armstrong is a total dictator, calling himself God's apostle, and Rader controls the entire business . . . Even Ted had no knowledge of the finances of the Church. He was just used as a front, but actually had no real authority, except for a short period of time when he began to assert himself. Then, Rader apparently threatened Mr. Armstrong, and last May (Kuhn wrote), Ted was thrown out. His own father sacrificed him for Rader."

At this point Robert Kuhn was asked what Rader had on Herbert that he could control him in such a way. Kuhn replied: "I'm not sure, but there are rumors of sexual compromise, in addition to vast expenditures of money. . ." (Tuit, *ibid*, p. 153).

In the same May 21 letter Herbert boasted of being scheduled to co-host a charity event with Queen Elizabeth II, thus showing members his own growing importance. However, the London *Sunday Times* of July 2, 1978, declared, "Buckingham Palace have never heard of the man, 86-year-old Herbert Armstrong, head of the California based Worldwide Church of God. And the Queen will not even be at Thursday's premier in London . . ." The producer of the film being premiered went on to say that although Armstrong and Rader were invited to the event as "just ordinary guests," there was never any question of their "co-hosting" the event.

About this time, Ted Armstrong determined to close Ambassador College in Pasadena, and to transfer the student body to Big Sandy, Texas, and retain the college there. He apparently thought he had his father's approval for this move, but did not discuss it with him personally, choosing to work through others. However, when informed by Ray Wright in the financial office that it would cost millions of dollars to make this move, Herbert Armstrong blew his stack, and stopped the move in its tracks. He was so incensed that he seized control of the operations of the Church back from his son.

When Ted subsequently went before the world's press to explain his own side of the story, his father disfellowshipped him for insubordination and rebellion. Soon after this, Herbert Armstrong proclaimed that the Church of God was in "MORTAL DANGER"

and that he was calling for a day of "FASTING AND PRAYER." On July 26 he wrote to his son Ted informing him that he had disobeyed blatantly his father, contacted the press contrary to his father's authority, and therefore Herbert was forced to

"MARK YOU before the Church and to inform you that you are forthwith disfellowshipped from the Church and terminated from all authority and employment . . ." (Tuit, p.94).

This breach was only to grow wider over the ensuing months, and Ted began building his own Church, the Church of God, International, as a separate Church. It appeared that any reconciliation with his father was impossible under the existing circumstances. From Ted's point of view, Stanley Rader appeared to have won the battle for the control of the mind of Herbert Armstrong.

From this time on, it seemed as if Herbert Armstrong's articles in the Church publications were all focused on disparaging Ted, accusing him of rebellion against authority, and writing about Church Government. Herbert Armstrong claimed he was God's ONLY apostle, and the head of God's ONLY one true Church, and therefore Ted was an apostate, in rebellion against God and in the clutches of Satan.

At this time Herbert Armstrong began writing articles contradicting one particular long-established Church doctrine, that all the apostles were of equal rank, and he began teaching the Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter. All of a sudden, since Ted had begun his own competing Church, Herbert Armstrong began teaching that Peter was, as the Catholic Church claims, the true successor of Jesus Christ, and the chief or head of all the apostles.

He was claiming that God only has ONE servant on the earth at a given time, despite the fact that the prophets Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah were all contemporary, and none was "in charge" of the others. In a later generation, the prophets Malachi, Zechariah and Haggai were also contemporaries, but each was called to serve God independently of the others, and no single one was "in charge," as Herbert liked to say.

Meanwhile, the degeneration and corruption in the Worldwide Church of God continued, and speeded up. Charges were made that millions of dollars were being spent just to entertain world leaders. The charge was made that Osamu Gotoh spent several hundred thousand dollars in one year in a questionable manner. Mark Armstrong claimed that his grandfather, Herbert, spent over \$200,000 of his own money to buy furs and jewels for Ramona, and then reimbursed himself from the Church's first tithe fund, which money is supposed to go for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations (Matt.24:14).

Mark also claimed, speaking to the Tuits, that his grand-father Herbert Armstrong had a severe drinking problem. This same fact was pointed out to me by Benjamin Chapman, son-in-law of Herbert Armstrong. In fact, Dale Hampton, a former minister of the Church, who began an alcohol dependency program among Church members,

patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous, used to explain to those on the program, "Herbert Armstrong is an alcoholic," even as he himself was. This statement got him fired shortly thereafter. But Mark Armstrong went on, "He tells the Church people to drink in moderation, and for years he's been getting himself smashed just about every night."

When asked if Armstrong really gets drunk, Mark replied, "O yeah, I've even helped carry him to his bed when he was just plain wiped out from too much booze" (Tuit, p..98-99).

After Garner Ted Armstrong began the competing Church of God, International, leadership of the Worldwide Church of God became even more paranoid and fearful. Authoritarianism and dictatorial rule became the method of controlling the Church membership. They were forbidden to visit Ted's Church, talk with its members, or receive or read "dissident literature," including non-religious publications which reported negatively on church activities, such as *Ambassador Report*. Anyone violating these bans was subject to immediate disfellowshipment and being cast out of the Church, and even being "marked" publicly as someone who must be avoided by all God's people.

Mindless, blind loyalty was the new mark of most Worldwide members. When you entered the church, you "checked your brain at the door." Independent thinking became increasingly rare in the Worldwide Church of God.

### *Massive Corruption and Misspending of Tithes*

In a document entitled "Executive Expense Analysis" for March 3, 1978, among the itemized expenses listed were:

Henry Cornwall        \$51,094.13  
spent in Japan (most of it to the Imperial Hotel and Japan Airlines).

Stanley Rader        \$51,431.14                                \$22,571.19 to the Hotel  
Athene in Paris, \$1,536 to Wilshire Travel, the rest of it mostly for his own use, apparently, including expenses on his home in Beverly Hills, utilities, landscaping, mortgage, and his Tucson home.

This information was sent anonymously to John Tuit and became a major portion of the basis for a lawsuit which he instigated against the Worldwide Church of God leadership. Tuit says, "I was outraged when I saw these figures." How, he wondered, could personal living expenses be included in payments made by a non-profit corporation or religious institution? Such payments seemed to him highly out of order and probably illegal. But this was to prove to be merely the tip of the iceberg.

During the Feast of Tabernacles in 1978, reports began to circulate that Ray Wright, vice-president for financial affairs for the Church, had embezzled \$219,000 of Church funds, illegally diverting them to Environmental Plastics, Inc., of Dallas, a company he owned with Robert Kuhn. Although this was revealed in the "Pastor's Report," a Church

publication sent to ordained ministers and other church leaders, no disciplinary action was ever taken against Wright. After exposure and humiliation, he reportedly repaid the portion of those funds which had gone to his own company. But he was never reprimanded, fired, or otherwise punished by the Church officials for whom he worked. The whole matter was "covered up." What really happened, and what was the basis for the alleged illegal diversions of church funds?

The true story is as intriguing as it is convoluted. In the lawsuit against the Church instigated by the Tuits and others, Ray Wright appeared before the same attorneys who interviewed Robert Kuhn. As vice-president for the financial affairs division of the Work, he was in a position to possess a great deal of knowledge. Wright began by mentioning that Osamu Gotoh often would take \$25,000 cash out the door in his briefcase, money given to him by the Work, yet Wright never understood what it was for. When he brought it to Rader's attention, he was told the money was for foreign campaign expenses, whatever that meant, and that he was not to ask any more questions.

Wright then went on to show how hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent at various places such as the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem, to send a world court justice to Disneyland, with expenses listed as Gucci, Cartier, Harrod's, Patek, Phillippe, Steuben Glass. All these, Wright explained, were handled on the special executive checking account, which handled Herbert Armstrong and Stan Rader's salaries.

Tuit writes: "Wright continued, talking almost nonstop. He commented that even Alfred Hitchcock couldn't dream up a story as this true one. He told how money had been spent on personal homes; about executives speculating in precious metals on margin for their own account using Church funds; about an account at the Union Bank of Switzerland that was used to cover margin requirements for speculation in foreign currency. Then, there was the home that Rader had purchased from the Church for \$450,000 with little more than \$100,000 down payment, and with the Church holding the mortgage. He then paid the mortgage loan with money received from the Church to remodel the home. He then sold the home for \$1.8 million dollars, with the Church paying his capital gains tax for him" (Tuit, p.158). Quite a profit!

Regarding Wright's own financial imbroglio, he explained that Ted Armstrong had told him to begin a secretive investigation of Rader's connections with the Work and his financial involvement, and that Wright had suggested using his own Texas company as a front, through which they would hire and pay detectives and sleuths to get the facts on Rader. About \$40,000 of the \$219,000 actually went to them, the rest winding up in Wright's company.

Strangely, even though Ted had asked Wright to compile a special report of Rader's spending activities and financial connections with the Church, for some reason Wright, possibly attempting to protect his backside, told Rader at the end of 1977 about his findings. According to Wright, "Rader was shocked. He was absolutely shocked. He went into a rage when he found out what we had done" (p.161).

The attorneys then asked Wright if he thought Ted Armstrong had pure motives in wanting to expose Rader. Wright answered,

"I really don't know. But Garner Ted has been accused many times of excessive spending also. He lived quite well with his several homes and jet planes. There have been many stories widely circulated regarding Ted's gambling activities. One that comes to mind is that the Church had to bail him out of a massive debt in Las Vegas. He likes to play blackjack and has been known to drop a lot of money at the blackjack tables . . ." (p.164).

Wright was also asked why Herbert Armstrong would allow Rader to come out on top of his own son -- if Rader had anything on Armstrong.

Wright responded:

"Well, of course Armstrong has spent more than his share of money, too. Rader is the guy who knows where every penny has gone. He has threatened Mr. Armstrong many times that if he were ever let go he would tell the world everything he knows. . . His knowledge seems to go far beyond money. A lot of the hold he has over Herbert Armstrong seems to center around Armstrong's own weaknesses. He has his drinking problem that just leads to all other types of problems" (p.164-165).

Raymond Wright went on to state that Floyd Lochner, who often accompanied Armstrong on his travels, as his physical therapist, claims to have made several tapes of Armstrong revealing very intimate things to him. Wright went on, "And then I understand that there were many sexual sins, but I don't know the details about it. I would say that the validity of all this is confirmed by the fact that Dr. Lochner is on a salary from the college of about \$25,000 a year. He has absolutely no duties and no responsibilities. Its strictly a no-show job" (*ibid*).

During this time, Stanley Rader appeared to be the new "crown prince" who would inherit the mantle of leadership over the Church in the event of Herbert Armstrong's death. He seemed to be gaining the upper hand. Herbert Armstrong's fear of him was evident in his conversations with Wayne Cole, the evangelist then over Church administration. Herbert Armstrong once told Wayne that Rader was "the most powerful person in the Work now." He told him that he knew he needed to remove him from all executive and administrative responsibility. However, before any of this could transpire, a crisis struck the Church which was totally unexpected.

### ***The Receivership Crisis***

On January 3, 1979, the Attorney General of the state of California raided the Ambassador College campus and Headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena, and put the Church in receivership, demanding access to all Church financial

records. In issuing the order for the receivership, Judge Jerry Pacht called the Worldwide Church of God situation a "bowl of spiders." The Receiver, Judge Weismann, was to take charge of the day-by-day operations of the Church and investigate all allegations of financial impropriety.

However, the state officials and attorneys met with a total lack of cooperation. The Church was shocked at the action of the state of California, and Church members in Pasadena and nearby areas rallied to the defense of the Church. As most viewed it, the Church was under attack. Satan was trying to destroy the Church of God. The purpose of the Receivership appeared to be to remove both Herbert Armstrong and Stanley Rader from effective control of the Church, and to place it in the hands of different leadership - a board of directors.

Herbert Armstrong, the head of the Church, who believed and taught that God Himself chose him to be the head of the Church, the apostle general and leader, when he was informed of the raid by the authorities, and the occupation of offices, reacted with fury and anger, and fought back with a tenacity and fierceness that few expected. To fight the take-over, Armstrong mended his fences with Stan Rader, and called upon the expertise of Rader, his legal counsel for many years, to defend the Church leadership, particularly himself and Rader. The decision was made to fight vigorously the state attack, and not submit to the authorities. The defense of the Church was based on the doctrines of separation of Church and State, and the constitutional amendment guaranteeing freedom of religion. This attack seemed to be a direct strike against freedom of religion, and a violation of the doctrine of the separation of Church and state.

To most members of the Church, the issues seemed clear cut. Perhaps Rader was guilty of misusing funds, and taking advantage of the Church; but Herbert Armstrong accepted him, so that settled the issue, for most members. Even if Herbert himself had misspent funds, most Church members felt that that was between him and God, and was not their responsibility or concern. Most felt that once they sent their tithes in to the Church, their responsibility ended and the Church officials would be held accountable by God for how they used or misused the money.

At this point in time, the Church decided to draw attention to its unprecedented and unique predicament, and fought the state Receivership by every means available. They held Church meetings in the Hall of Administration, to keep out the state officials. The Church directed members to send all tithes and offerings to Herbert Armstrong in Tucson, Arizona, instead of Pasadena, thus hoping to shortly bankrupt the Receivership and make them run out of money, and keep Church funds out of their hands.

Although the Receiver was ordered by the Court not to interfere with Church doctrine, or ecclesiastical matters, one wonders how such an order could possibly be followed since one of the major doctrines of the Church involves Church government coming down from God through the apostle Herbert Armstrong? Herbert, as a total dictator and ruler, had the final say on all matters concerning the Church. Therefore, to circumvent him would be to violate Church doctrine and destroy the Church, as it was

then constituted!

But those behind the attack on the Church, including John Tuit and others, had already agreed that Herbert Armstrong had to go, that he was himself essentially responsible for the sad state of affairs in the Church. According to them, he was responsible for Stan Rader being where he was, and for Rader's nefarious influence and power. To get rid of Rader, who was mistrusted and feared by many, if not despised, they felt they had also to get rid of Herbert Armstrong.

In view of the real aim of the Receivership, it seems absurd to think that anyone would believe that under the circumstances Herbert Armstrong would not fight back with all his might and energy to protect his office and leadership. He may have been old, but he was not senile or weak of will. His own position as apostle was at stake. He had been the one who had built up the Church. He had endured for over fifty years as its leader and ruler. The PLAIN TRUTH magazine was his creation, over fifty years ago. Why, then, should he quietly depart, and agree to ride into the sunset, with no power or authority left?

Herbert Armstrong may have made many mistakes, and have had many weaknesses, both of the flesh and of the spirit, but he was nobody's fool. Nor was he a coward, fearful of a fight! He had always been a fighter. He often said anyone sitting in a position of authority had to be capable of maintaining his authority, and not allow anyone to remove him from power, or else he wasn't worthy of it in the first place. He often referred to Satan's attempt to displace God from His throne over the universe, and reminded his listeners of the fact that God was able to retain His power and defeat Satan. Thus when Satan attacked the Church of God, through the Receivership imposed by the state, Armstrong rallied the Church behind him in this "Church Versus State" battle.

The Receivership crisis became a major television news story, breaking nationwide, as the Church members demonstrated, and picketed the Courthouse in Los Angeles, and occupied the Hall of Administration.

During this time Wayne Cole, David Antion, and Ben Chapman, evangelists, and Robert Kuhn, were disfellowshipped, allegedly for being part of a Satanic conspiracy to destroy the Church. Apparently their sin was in wanting to co-operate with the state of California agencies involved in the Receivership, and to take the consequences. Perhaps they agreed that Stanley Rader needed to be removed, and Herbert Armstrong was no longer capable of exercising good judgment to govern the Church.

At any rate, evangelist Roderick Meredith announced their disfellowshippment to the Church. It is possible that Wayne Cole, David Antion, and Robert Kuhn were in error in their suggestion to Herbert Armstrong that he should go along with the Receivership and state action. If he had, there is little doubt that Armstrong himself would have been removed, and also little doubt that other facts might have come to the surface which he did not want. Stanley Rader might have used such a decision to publicize his alleged "knowledge" of Herbert Armstrong's indiscretions and weaknesses, of which he may



have had first-hand knowledge, including sexual encounters on his many trips to Asia, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and so forth. Stanley Rader had been Herbert Armstrong's confidant and travel companion. If Herbert had cooperated with the Receivership officials, Stanley Rader might have been greatly threatened, and since he had information that Herbert did not desire to have made public, Herbert undoubtedly saw that to "cooperate" would have been like committing "suicide," and he would have been the loser all around.

During the Receivership crisis, Garner Ted Armstrong spoke out in an interview with the *Dallas Morning News*. He declared, "I can't tell you how many around-the-world-tickets were paid from Church funds and slipped to Japanese officials in return for getting Church officials into the inner circle of the country. I'm talking about tens of thousands of dollars in trips alone."

Meanwhile, Church attorneys defended Herbert Armstrong and Stanley Rader, saying in court, ". . . is this the beginning of the State telling the Pope what kinds of robes he can wear? Or that he should not live in such splendor in the Vatican?" Attorney Browne for the Church later said of Armstrong's position as head of the Church, "He sits there as the Pope does."

One of the documents brought out during the trial was the contract of employment between Stanley Rader and the Church. Dated July 30, 1976, the contract stated that Rader was to receive \$200,000 a year for acting as chief advisor to Herbert Armstrong for a period of seven years. If his employment were to be terminated for any reason other than his own death or refusal to work, or Herbert Armstrong's incapacity to receive his advice any longer, then he was to receive \$100,000 a year, plus expenses, until the year 2003. Interestingly, this \$3.5 million dollar contract was drawn up by Rader, signed by Armstrong, with the benefit of Rader's advice and counsel, and no outside legal advice or counsel was ever sought. Was Rader padding his own pockets at the expense of the Church? Why did Herbert Armstrong allow it? Rader was in the unique and enviable position of having nobody review his transactions with the Church except Rader himself.

### *The Battle of Church Versus State*

Meanwhile, the Church continued to fight. Armstrong wrote a letter to members, claiming, "Satan has struck his master blow to destroy God's Church. We must now FIGHT as never before, knowing God will also fight our battles for us."

On January 27, 1979, he proclaimed a day of fasting for the entire Church. January 21 there were all-day sit-in demonstrations in the Ambassador Auditorium and various offices around the campus. The next day over 2,400 Church members and families gathered, the buildings were locked tight, and announcements were posted, "Worldwide Church of God Ecclesiastical Services." By January 24 uniformed deputies arrived at the Administration Building and found the doors locked and barred, with Church members inside singing hymns. I remember driving by the Rose Bowl and seeing two hundred riot-equipped deputies and policemen lounging by their cars, waiting to see if they would

receive orders to break into the buildings and arrest the Church members, in this massive Church-State confrontation.

A compromise was reached, and both sides backed down a little. After this, Rader declared, "We are still in a state of all out war. We've been invaded by an army of the State of California." Hillel Chodos, attorney for the relators, working with the Attorney General, said in court, however, "You cannot perpetrate fraud in the name of religion and then wrap yourself in the flag and call out the name of the First Amendment."

With the Church of God mired in crisis, and Herbert Armstrong being defended on the basis of his authority and position being comparable to the Pope, it is no wonder that thinking members and Christians who followed the on-going suit, began to wonder what was going on -- what had happened to the Church during the 12 years after the death of Loma Armstrong?

John Tuit sagely observed, "It is not difficult to see that a Church which had come so far from false beliefs, which had come into the knowledge of so much truth, which had done as God commanded, had come out of Babylon, was now, through its internal corruption, *GOING RIGHT BACK INTO BABYLON*" (p..247, emphasis mine).

### *Herbert Armstrong's "About Face"*

In 1939 Herbert Armstrong wrote an article entitled "Did Christ Reorganize the Church?" In it he declared that after God divorced ancient Israel, the governments of the world were to continue under Babylonian rule until Christ returns to bring the Kingdom of God. Until that happens, he wrote, there is to be no Church government as a spiritually ordained line of authority. He wrote: "There is not one single HINT in the New Testament of any Church BOARD with authority to rule, to govern, to decide doctrine, or to handle tithes and Church finances (the whole Church)."

He went on, "But there is *NO BIBLE AUTHORITY* for any super-government, or organization with authority over the local congregations!"

Armstrong adds, "How, then, did ORGANIZATION, and the idea of CHURCH GOVERNMENT get into the Church?"

'It came out of *BABYLON!* Spiritual *BABYLON* -- that is, *ROME!* The same as nearly all other false doctrines of Satan."

Centralized Church government began with Pope Leo (440-461 A.D.). Leo I set up an ecclesiastical form of Church government. Said Armstrong, "And thus the very PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT becomes the IMAGE OF THE BEAST!"

Stirred to fiery indignation, he wrote back in 1939, "The whole thing [Church government] is FALSE! It is NOT ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE! It is part of *BABYLON!* Those who are IN, and MEMBERS OF such an organized Church

government, submitting to doctrines declared by unscriptural boards as a fellowship test are IN BABYLON and actually worshippers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST! And God is calling us, HIS people OUT of BABYLON today, before it is too late -- before the PLAGUES fall!

"Brethren," he entreated, "let us have the courage to accept the TRUTH, and to COME OUT."

Strange, isn't it, how Herbert Armstrong, who had so much truth of God in 1939, himself later instituted centralized authority and the very type of government he condemned in 1939, particularly after his son was disfellowshipped in 1978, and during the confrontation of the Church-State crisis in 1979!

### ***BACK TO BABYLON!***

Writes John Tuit, "In 1939, Armstrong was calling people out of spiritual Babylon. Forty years later, Armstrong is leading people RIGHT BACK INTO SPIRITUAL BABYLON. Just as the Church of God at Rome, in the first few centuries after Christ, fell into total paganized Babylonish worship, Herbert Armstrong, instead of remembering his early teachings, has STRAYED FROM HIS WAYS AND LED THIS END-TIME CHURCH OF GOD IN ITS FIRST STEPS ON A RETURN TO BABYLON" (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p.250-251).

#### *"Return to Babylon!"*

The incredible has happened! The unbelievable has occurred! The Worldwide Church of God has gone full circle. Departing from Babylon in the 1930s through the 1960s, in the 1970s and 1980s it has begun a long journey back into the heartland of BABYLON! The process was begun by Herbert Armstrong himself by his own personal weaknesses personal sins and apparent corruption, especially during the latter years of his life, after the benign influence of his wife had ended, when she died in 1967. The movement back into Babylon was augmented by his powerful change in the Church doctrine of government, claiming that he was God's one and only true representative on earth, and all ministers had to answer to him. Dire consequences occur when men claim DIVINE authority, and then misuse it! "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," an old proverb states.

The movement from spiritual cleanliness to spiritual degeneration and degradation was spurred by personal weaknesses and sins. When men sin, they become cut off from God (Isa.59:1-2). False teaching about Church authority leads to many more miseries in the Church. The return of the Church to Babylon was further augmented by the influence of Stanley Rader and others, who, in their pursuit of money and wealth, apparently used the Church resources to fill their own pockets. The backwards journey was aided and abetted by the immorality of Garner Ted Armstrong and others, who themselves compromised with the truth, sinned grievously, and willingly fed themselves off the feeding trough of the Church, living high off the fat of the sheep.

But to further solidify the return to Babylon, Herbert Armstrong did something during the Receivership crisis which virtually guaranteed that the Church would only continue to degenerate spiritually, and thus fulfill Bible prophecy that the final, end-time Church would be the Laodicean Church of God! What did he do?

During the Receivership crisis, on September 217, 1979, Herbert Armstrong ordained the three men who led the fight against the State of California as evangelists -- Stanley Rader, Ellis LaRavia, and Joseph Tkach.

In 1974 Mr. and Mrs. Jim Fox of the San Jose Church of God were in a restaurant of the Hilton Hotel in Madrid, Spain. Mr. Fox saw Osamu Gotoh and Stanley Rader at a nearby table talking with a woman, writing something on a piece of paper and handing it to her, and then heard one of them say to her as she left that they would see her later that evening. Suspicious, Fox wondered if the woman were a house prostitute. The bartender confirmed his suspicion. After discussing the matter with his wife, Fox then approached the woman himself, determined that she was indeed a prostitute, found out her price, and made "tentative" arrangements to see her later that evening as a ruse. Upon returning to the states, Fox discussed the matter with his minister who told him it would be taken care of by proper authorities, and not to mention it to anyone else. However, nothing was ever done about the matter, and the Foxes, greatly disillusioned, and shattered by the experience, dropped out of the Worldwide Church of God.

Herbert Armstrong himself revealed to David Robinson, a former minister in the Church, the fact that he kept a masturbation log, a diary where he recorded each incident when he masturbated and the details of each occurrence. An intimate confidant of Armstrong, Robinson was unnerved by the revelation, but maintained his faith in God. He also had heard of Armstrong's alleged encounters with boys in Europe, and of alleged secretly obtained photographs held by Rader. Armstrong confided to Holly Ruiz the fact that he had loved a young Filipino girl and brought her back to the United States, and set her up in an apartment in Pasadena; but when he discovered she had another boyfriend, he sent her back to the Philippines. Albert J. Portune, a former evangelist in the Church, told me he knew of two young Filipino girls whom Herbert Armstrong had brought to Pasadena, and set up in an apartment, in the early or mid 1970s.

There is no doubt that Floyd Lochner possesses information about Herbert Armstrong that perhaps nobody else has. But he has said that he will not reveal it to anybody unless he determines that Christ wants it revealed. Said Lochner, as quoted by John Tuit: "If He wants it revealed, there are ways He can get it revealed. Even with all the information I have I don't think I can take the prerogative of revelation of all that I know" (Tuit, p.258). Of course, some might consider \$25,000 a year retirement pay to be a substantial inducement in itself to maintain silence.

Says Tuit: "Lochner indicated that he had information of moral misconduct for at least a ten-year period. This would, again, seem to fit in with the statements made by Garner Ted that everything seemed to change drastically in a wrong way *after his mother*

*died*" (p.259, emphasis mine).

What really happened to Herbert Armstrong, that in his latter years he allowed the Church of God to fall into a condition of growing apostasy?

Even as Satan provoked David to number Israel, leading to great calamity and a grievous plague which killed 70,000 men and women (I Chron.21:1-14), standing at his right hand, so it appears that Satan began to "tempt" Herbert Armstrong, in many ways, after his first wife Loma died. Men around him flattered his ego. Nobody stood up to him, or had the nerve to disagree with him. He was surrounded by sycophants and "toadies." And Satan came amongst them, leading him to drink too much, to succumb to pulls of the flesh, so that he became "compromised" and could have been "blackmailed."

Two thousand years ago Satan was able to deceive and delude most of the original Church of God, causing the vast majority to fall away from the truth and to embrace paganism. Should it be any surprise to us, today, that Satan is still able to pull off such a brilliant coup? Is Satan dead? Has he lost his ability to deceive? Not according to the Word of God! God says that even in the "last days" just before Jesus' return to earth, Satan still is the one who "deceiveth the whole world" (Rev.12:9). In the last days, Paul writes, there shall come "a falling away" or great APOSTASY, with "all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the *LOVE OF THE TRUTH*, that they might be saved" (11 Thess.2:3,10).

Wrote John Tuit in 1981, "And now through Stanley Rader and his desire for great wealth and power, Satan could work to prey on Armstrong's weaknesses of ego and vanity, turning him from the very ways of God that he had taught so well to others. Through subtle deceptions, the Worldwide Church of God is also now going **RIGHT BACK TO BABYLON**."

"Through moral corruption and the false apostleship of Herbert Armstrong, the Worldwide Church today is every bit as much **IN BABYLON** in spite of the true doctrines that they still may have, as are the traditional Christian churches" (p.288).

Declares John Tuit: "The full part of the Worldwide Church of God in this satanic conspiracy will probably never be known until after Christ returns. However, there can be no doubt that as the leadership of the Church turned from the ways of God, God removed His blessing and Satan was allowed to use the organization in such a way, perhaps as a **TEST OF THE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS**. Anyone who remains part of the Worldwide Church of God today is **IN BABYLON**, and would **NOT REMAIN THERE** if they adhered to the scriptural teachings that they should know so well" (p.290, emphasis mine).

John Tuit is right on the mark. Are you still standing, with both feet planted in Babylon? Are you solidly behind the Worldwide Church of God, today, as it continues to embrace Babylonian customs and refuses to grow in grace and new knowledge and revelation from Almighty God?

### *Still Going Back to Babylon?*

Since the death of Herbert Armstrong in January, 1986, and the ending of the Receivership on October 14, 1980, and the ouster of Stanley Rader from Church employment several years ago, one might wonder if the Church of God could possibly have begun to get back on the right track, finally, with the installation of Joseph W. Tkach as the new "Apostle of God" and "Apostle-General of the Worldwide Church of God."

Has the form and system of government in the Worldwide Church of God begun to change for the better since Joseph Tkach took over? Has there really been a new openness, and a new beginning of righteousness? Is there a new spirit of unity, and willingness to question entrenched error, and to change when proven wrong?

The answer, sadly, is "No." Instead, the new leadership, after it achieved power, began to wield the rod of iron to rule Church members harder than even Herbert Armstrong did! Like Solomon's son Rehoboam, the new leaders have exchanged mere whips for scorpions! Many are the horror stories I have heard of sincere, upright members being ruthlessly, cruelly beaten spiritually, abused, and thrust out of the Church for merely questioning various sins or errors of the Church or ministers. The oppression is real. The Satanic doctrine of totalitarian, despotic, dictatorial Church government is growing by leaps and bounds, and the Worldwide Church of God is rapidly becoming a modernized copy of the Roman Catholic Church, in governmental harshness and brutality.

Furthermore, since Joseph Tkach has taken over the Church, the doctrinal changes have become more and more astounding. Today, eleven years after the death of Herbert Armstrong, the Church he built by hard work over fifty years has not only gone back into Babylon in government, and politics, it has rejoined the Babylonish churches of this world in doctrine, belief, and practice! Now the Worldwide Church of God has endorsed Christmas worship, Easter worship, eating of unclean meats, abolished Sabbath observance and Holy Day observance as "laws" of God, and has become for all intents and purposes A TOTALLY PROTESTANT-STYLE CHURCH!

Today, the Worldwide Church of God has become the "DAUGHTER OF BABYLON" (Isaiah 47:1-2).

Although the Church has changed, for the worse, in adopting many PAGAN beliefs, such as the Trinity, and "Born Again" doctrines of Protestants, and has deviated from the TRUTH about the Godhead, the purpose of human life, and has lost all knowledge of Biblical prophecy, in some areas they have refused to admit long-held error.

For example, the Worldwide Church of God has also rejected NEW PROVEN TRUTH on Daniel's 2300 days (write for my booklet on this amazing subject). They have also rejected NEW TRUTH concerning the right day to observe Pentecost.

Thirdly, they have also refused to face up to the fact that they observe Passover at the wrong time, and therefore have been observing it "unworthily" for over fifty years!

These are only a few of the areas where the Worldwide Church of God has plunged over the cliff and into error and sheer apostasy.

It is time God's people begin to WAKE UP! The Worldwide Church of God has returned to BABYLON in every way! It is now time to do as God says, and COME OUT of modern spiritual, religious BABYLON!

God Almighty says, "My people hath been lost sheep: Their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace. All that found them devoured them . . ." (Jer.50:6-7).

***"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE"***

The Almighty God thunders to the people in His Church today, "Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die . . . Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because HE IS WARNED; also thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezek.3:20-21).

God Almighty says to His Church, today, and to every minister, and to every member: "REPENT, and TURN YOURSELVES from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. CAST AWAY FROM YOU all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?" (Ezek. 18:31-32).

God says, in earnest love and compassion, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the DEATH of the wicked; but that the wicked TURN from his way and live: TURN YE, TURN YE FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS; for *WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?*" (Ezek.33:11).

God continues His incredible warning to those who have served Him in the past, who have repented of their sins and been righteous in years gone by -- but who have turned away from the right path, and begun to live in SIN -- "Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall NOT DELIVER HIM in the day of his TRANSGRESSION: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he TURNETH *from his wickedness*; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness *IN THE DAY THAT HE SINNETH*.

"When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he TRUST TO HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, and commit INIQUITY, *all his righteousness shall not be remembered*; but for his INIQUITY that he hath committed, *he shall DIE for it*" (Ezek.33:12-13).

Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God today have the unmitigated gall and audacity to tell members, "You don't have the right to question me!" One minister commanded a member to apologize to another minister who had sinned against her, or else she was "out of the Church!" Thus Satan's system of authority has permeated and infiltrated and infected the entire body of the Worldwide Church of God.

Unfortunately, this terrible spiritual affliction now also afflicts just about ALL of the so-called "off-shoots" that have come out of the Worldwide Church of God! Ministers in these new "off-shoot" churches still attempt to "lord it over" the brethren, and deal with them from the approach of being a dictator, a king, a tyrant!

In the Worldwide Church of God, and also in the many off-shoots of the Worldwide Church of God, members are no longer urged to "*Prove all things*" (I Thess.5:21). No longer are they encouraged to study the Bible daily, as the Bereans did, to "SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES DAILY" to prove whether what the ministers say is the truth or not (Acts 17:11).

Yet, the apostle John commands us, under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, "Beloved, BELIEVE NOT EVERY SPIRIT [or every minister!], but TRY [TEST, PROVE, EXAMINE CAREFULLY] THE SPIRITS [or ministers] WHETHER THEY ARE OF GOD: because many FALSE PROPHETS [MINISTERS] are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

It is an incredible thing to witness an entire Church of the true Church of God stop growing, become arrested in spiritual growth, and then to begin retrogressing spiritually, and sink into depravity, corruption and wretchedness. No wonder Jesus Christ says to the Laodicean Church, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art LUKEWARM, and neither cold nor hot, I will SPEW THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and KNOWEST NOT that thou art WRETCHED, and MISERABLE, and POOR, and BLIND, and NAKED [spiritually]; I counsel thee to buy of me gold TRIED IN THE FIRE [of Great Tribulation!], that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: Be ZEALOUS therefore, and REPENT" (Rev.3:14-19).

A more degenerate, corrupt Church Age of the true Church of God has never existed. A more spiritually depraved and morally squalid age, with morals sunk into the cesspool of the world, never before could be found on the face of the earth.

Indeed, the Church of God during this past twenty-two years has RETURNED TO BABYLON! It has gone back into spiritual EGYPT! It has forsaken the fountain of living waters, and gone back to pagan idols, pagan doctrines, and pagan idols! It has embraced the dictatorial ways of the Gentiles, and PAGAN CHURCH GOVERNMENT! It is following in the ways of BAAL, the sun-god, and Semiramis, or Venus, the goddess



of SEX WORSHIP!

What does Almighty God command His people to do, in this situation? Should they stay in the Church, hoping and trusting that God will someday bring the leadership to repentance? Is that what God promises? Should they continue tithing to and supporting a Church which has gone awry, astray, and plunged off the tracks?

What does God say?

God commands, "*CEASE, MY SON, TO HEAR THE INSTRUCTION THAT CAUSETH TO ERR FROM THE WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE*" (Prov. 19:27).

God also declares, "*BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS: for what fellowship hath RIGHTEOUSNESS with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with DARKNESS? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with IDOLS? for ye are the temple of the living God . . .*

"Wherefore *COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*" (II Cor.6:14-18).

If the minister gets his ire up, and disfellowships you, with fire in his eyes, don't worry about it, but rejoice! For JESUS CHRIST said, "Blessed are you, when men shall hate you, and when they shall *SEPARATE YOU FROM THEIR COMPANY, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. REJOICE ye in that day, and LEAP FOR JOY!* for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke 6:22-23).

God's Word makes no bones about it. God doesn't mince words, or quibble, or hem and haw. He is very plain, direct and explicit. God THUNDERS, regarding this modern BABYLONISH system of religious confusion and wickedness, and dictatorial authoritarianism, God shouts, "*COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, that ye be not partaker of her SINS, and that ye receive not of her PLAGUES. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*

"How much she hath *GLORIFIED HERSELF, and lived deliciously [lavishly, luxuriously, at the expense of the poor flock!], so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a Queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall HER PLAGUES come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her*" (Rev. 18:4-8).

How about you? Are you ready to come *OUT OF BABYLON?* Or have you

returned to Babylon, along with thousands of others, not fully realizing what has happened?

Gods warning message is crystal clear. There can be no doubt that the Worldwide Church of God has plunged into corruption, error and grievous apostasy. It has returned to Babylon, and will suffer all the plagues that will fall upon the Great Whore of Revelation. God commands His true people to come OUT of her, to repent, to be zealous, and to CHANGE THEIR WAYS and to RETURN to Him, and His laws, and His righteousness!

Where does YOUR present Church stand? Where are they located, on the "Road to Babylon"?

What are YOU going to do about it?

## Chapter 6

# **The *Incredible* Prophetic Errors of Herbert W. Armstrong!**

Most people in the Worldwide Church of God look upon Herbert Armstrong as a unique man gifted with tremendous understanding of Bible prophecy. But a careful, candid look at this man's actual record on the interpretation of Bible prophecy boggles the mind! Most people over the years became associated with the Church at least to some degree because of its ostensible understanding of prophecy. Here are the unvarnished facts. YOU decide!

In 1956-57, as a teenage boy, I became awestruck by the prophetic booklets written by Herbert W. Armstrong -- especially two called *1975 in Prophecy*, and *United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy*. The first booklet has not been in print for many years, for obvious reasons -- it predicted the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in 1975! When it became increasingly doubtful that Christ would return by that date, the booklet was quietly withdrawn from circulation in the 1960's. But when I first read it in 1957, I assumed it was probably true. Herbert Armstrong seemed to have everything figured out!

When I began attending the local Church in Tacoma, Washington, in 1957-58, and read the co-worker letters and Church literature, Herbert Armstrong was preaching that the original apostolic Church had two "19 year time cycles" to spread the gospel -- from 31 A.D. to 50 A.D., and from 50 A.D. to 69 A.D., the year the Romans attacked Jerusalem. Herbert Armstrong was fond of drawing an amazing parallel: He pointed out that exactly "100 19-year time cycles later," in 1931 A.D., he was ordained to the ministry by the Church of God, Seventh Day. Because of doctrinal differences, he separated from them and began a separate, independent work of God in 1934 A.D. Then, he used to tell us, he preached to the United States for 19 years, but expanded the broadcast to Europe in 1953 -- exactly 19 years later. He theorized that the Church would have one more 19-year time cycle to complete its work -- by 1972 -- and then it

would be carried to the wilderness to a place of protection during the Great Tribulation, from 1972-1975, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ!

All this seemed reasonable to my youthful, impressionable mind, in 1957-58. I entered an intensive study of Church literature, and found Mr. Armstrong to be correct in many basic doctrines taught nowhere else. So I began attending Ambassador College, founded by Herbert Armstrong, in Pasadena, California, in the fall of 1959. Four years later I graduated and began working full-time in the Letter Answering Department, and subsequently began writing articles for the Church publications.

Needless to say, it was a major disappointment for most of us in the Church when 1972 came around, and instead of the Church fleeing to the wilderness as so powerfully predicted by Herbert Armstrong for decades, nothing happened -- except the temporary disfellowshipment of Garner Ted Armstrong for supposed "spiritual problems," but which actually concerned sexual involvement with young women other than his wife.

Obviously, Jesus Christ did not return in 1975, as so confidently predicted for almost 20 years! Herbert Armstrong's prophetic insight was in error -- his prophetic timetable was shot to pieces! From that time onward, he did not attempt to pinpoint the exact year, or even the approximate time, of Jesus' second coming. But he did keep on believing that it would be "very soon," and preached that we were living in the "time of the end."

### *The Space Race*

Also back in the early 1960's, Herbert Armstrong became very interested in the race for space -- especially after the Russians put their first "sputnik" satellite in orbit around the earth in 1957. He wrote articles, gave sermons, and wrote a booklet entitled "Who Will Rule Space?" In those years, Herbert Armstrong was very impressed with the fact that human beings could not survive in outer space without a self-contained "earth environment" -- a "space suit." To him, this indicated that man's proper habitat was the earth -- not outer space!

Herbert Armstrong sincerely believed that man would never 'conquer space.' In fact, he said several times, and even wrote, that if man attempted to "conquer space," that God would destroy him, even as He destroyed the tower of Babel when mankind attempted to build it to "reach heaven" (Gen.11:4). Even so, Herbert confidently predicted that God would thwart and frustrate man's attempt to rocket into space. He said that if man succeeded in going to the moon,, he would not return alive!

As the major proof text to support this theological idea, Herbert Armstrong turned to Psalm 115, where we read: "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the EARTH hath he given to the children of men" (Psa.115:16).

Of course, after the United States first successfully put men on the moon, in 1969, and several times during the 1970's, this prediction and teaching of Herbert W. Armstrong was again quietly shoved aside and dropped -- forgotten, except by those of us who personally heard his teachings in the late 50's and early 60's.

Herbert Armstrong was supposed to be renowned for his knowledge and perception of Bible prophecy. And I believe that he probably did pick up much basic understanding of prophetic portions of the Bible during his studies -- such as the basic understanding of the book of Revelation, the world kingdoms of Daniel 2, and their correlation with the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17. I also believe that he stumbled across a major Biblical discovery when a woman challenged him whether he knew the locations of the "lost ten tribes" of Israel.

### ***1975 In Prophecy!***

In the booklet by the above title, Herbert Armstrong struck fear into readers by proclaiming a German-led European combine would "blast our cities and industrial centers with hydrogen bombs" (p.14), and added, "It's later than you think!" He declared that "these prophecies are as certain as tomorrow's sun," and went on to proclaim confidently, " *MILLIONS* of lukewarm inactive professing Christians will suffer martyrdom -- and that **BEFORE** the anticipated push-button leisure-year of 1975 dawns upon us!" (p.20, emphasis mine).

Herbert Armstrong was so confident of his accuracy that he asserted: "You have been warned! . . . You can take this lightly, let it slip from your mind . . . If you do, you have now read your fate -- and . . . *I SAY TO YOU ON AUTHORITY OF GOD ALMIGHTY THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY SURE!*" (p.31).

Now, that is powerful "authority"! But did Herbert Armstrong REALLY have "authority of God Almighty" to make that prediction? Was he the powerful "prophet" of God that he seemed to THINK he was?

Notice what the Scriptures say about this question. In the book of Deuteronomy, God told Moses: "But if any prophet **DARES** to speak a message *IN MY NAME when I did NOT COMMAND HIM TO DO SO, he must die for it* and so must any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods" (Deut.18:20).

This is serious business, with God! He THUNDERS rebuke against those who "presume" to speak a message "in His name," when He Himself has NOT given them the message! He says the penalty for such a thing is -- DEATH! If nothing else, it would at least appear that Herbert Armstrong got carried away with himself, in his predictions, and was very over-zealous in some of his pronouncements, claiming God's inspiration and authority for his interpretations!

Isn't that plain? but notice further! God Almighty Himself goes on, explaining further:

"You may wonder how you can tell when a prophet's message does NOT come from the Lord. If a prophet speaks **IN THE NAME OF THE LORD** and *what he says does NOT COME TRUE, then it is NOT the Lord's message*. That prophet has spoken on *his*

*OWN authority (NOT GOD'S!), and you are not to fear him" (Deut.18:21-22, Good News Bible).*

If Herbert Armstrong truly feared God, then it seems to me that he would not have been so presumptuous and "positive" in his statements, when he was really only theorizing or speculating! He had no revelation from God, no "Thus saith the Lord," no dreams or visions from the Almighty. His predictions were based entirely on personal Bible Study, as well as his own speculation, based on various appearances. But when he went on to claim "AUTHORITY OF GOD ALMIGHTY" for his erroneous predictions, then he stepped way over the line -- and history has proved him to be in utter error! In being so dogmatic, he misinterpreted God's Word and sinned against God!

Now, it is not a "sin" to speculate, or to make predictions based upon available evidence. We all do that in various aspects of our lives. Stock brokers do it regarding the stock market Farmers take their "best shot" at predicting the weather, so they can know what crops to plant, and when to plant. Weather forecasters make predictions based on latest available evidence also -- and because of the vagaries and temperamental nature of the weather, they are often forced to 'eat their own words. "

The "game of prophecy" is likewise a chancy, scary, dangerous business. Many are the bones of false prophets who have incorrectly surmised when Christ would return -- only to be proven wrong. William Miller foretold the coming of Jesus Christ in 1844 -- and was wrong. The Jehovah Witnesses predicted the Second Coming in 1914. When Jesus failed to appear at the appointed hour, they revised their prophecy. Rather than admit they had been mistaken, they claimed that He did return -- "secretly," and was now ruling the world from His secret Headquarters, which was supposed to be New York City!

### *The Fall of Ancient Tyre*

It seems that whenever Herbert Armstrong launched out on his own, and made predictions, he was invariably shown to be in abysmal error. But sometimes he simply "copied" the errors of other Churches, or organizations, or writers, but simply never gave them credit! That is to say, he "plagiarized" their writings and idea, and never gave them one line of credit, making any reader to think HE was the sole author of the material!

A case in point is one of the booklets which for many years was one of the staple booklets of the Worldwide Church of God. Titled *Proof of the Bible*, in early editions of this booklet Herbert W. Armstrong wrote that one way critics might attempt to "disprove" the Bible would be to REBUILD ANCIENT TYRE! He quoted the Bible prophecies regarding ancient Tyre, claiming that Tyre was prophesied to NEVER BE REBUILT!

In the booklet, Herbert Armstrong boldly challenged skeptics, "Here is how you can DISPROVE the Bible and the very existence of God. If there is no God, and IF the Bible is not inspired! Just go over and build a small city on the site of New Tyre." Herbert said there is nothing to prevent skeptics from building a city on that site, "except that the Bible

they scoff at says they CAN'T" (p.20).

Back in the 1950's I was impressed by these challenging statements, as I read them. But one day, as I was visiting a Church family in Portland, Oregon, in 1958, before I attended Ambassador College, I noticed a small booklet lying on the kitchen table. Curious, I picked it up and began reading it. I was rather shocked! As I read, it sounded like the words of Herbert Armstrong in his booklet on *Proof of the Bible!* Only this particular booklet was written and published by the *Seventh Day Adventist Church!* I was dumfounded! I asked the lady about the booklet and she assured me that she had received it from the Adventist Church. It was word-for-word identical, in most respects, to the booklet Herbert Armstrong published under his own name! Needless to say, Herbert Armstrong had obviously "borrowed" the material, and used it wholesale, without giving any credit to the original author! I thought at the time that this was not good, but I put the matter on the shelf, and decided that this one act did not of itself invalidate any of Mr. Armstrong's other teachings which I had proved from the Bible.

At that point, I didn't know quite what to think. But I assumed the booklet was true, regardless of who really wrote it. I really didn't question it much at the time. It discussed ancient Biblical predictions against Tyre and Babylon, claiming that since neither of these cities had been "rebuilt," as the booklet stated, and the Bible prophesied, that this proved the Bible had to be inspired by God.

In Ezekiel 26 and 27 God did foretell the fate of ancient Tyre. He said the city would be destroyed in an awesome paroxysm: "How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which was strong in the sea" (Ezek.26:17). God said, "thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord" (Ezek.26:21).

As the prophecy said, God did bring Nebuchadnezzar, and later Alexander the Great, against Tyre, and destroyed the city. It did become "a place to spread nets upon" (Ezek.26:14), "like the top of a rock" (same verse). God said ancient Tyre would be "built no more" (v.14).

*The Worldbook Encyclopedia* points out that Alexander the Great conquered Tyre in 332 B.C., and built a road or causeway from the mainland to the island, creating a peninsula upon which the *present town of Tyre now stands*. Tyre became a part of the Roman, and then the Byzantine Empire. Christian crusaders occupied it from 1124 A.D. until Moslems captured it in 1291 A.D.

Says the *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary*, the prophecy that Tyre would become like a rock, and "be built no more" (Ezek.26:14), was "fulfilled as to the *mainland Tyre* under Nebuchadnezzar. The insular Tyre recovered partly after seventy years (Isa.23:17-18), but again suffered under Alexander, then under Antigonus, then under the Saracens, at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Now its harbors are all choked with sand, precluding all hope of future restoration: 'Not one entire house is left, and only a few fishermen take shelter in the vaults' (Maudrell). So accurately has God's

Word come to pass."

Regarding the phrase, "thou shalt be no more," the Commentary points out, "not that presently there was to be no more a Tyre, but she was no more to be *the* Tyre that *once* she was; her glory and name were to be no more. As to Old Tyre the prophecy was literally fulfilled, not a vestige of it being left."

Adam Clarke in his Commentary quotes Maundrell, who visited the place before 1825 A.D., as follows: "It is a Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc., there being not so much as one entire house left! Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly on fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, that it should be the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on."

As to the prophecy "yet shalt thou never be found again," Clarke declares: "This is literally true; there is not the smallest vestige of the ancient Tyre, that which was erected on the main land. Even the ground seems to have been washed away; and the new Tyre is in nearly a similar state."

Clarke adds, "Notwithstanding the former destructions, Tyre was a place of some consequence in the time of St. Paul. There was a Church there (see Acts 20:3-4, etc.), which afterwards became famous. "

Herbert Armstrong would have done his cause much better service, and God greater service, if he had been much less naive and accepting of Adventist literature, copying their ideas and plagiarizing their material on "Tyre," if he had only done his own research, and used the Commentaries referred to above.

Attempting to use the example of Tyre to "challenge the skeptics" was a foolish device. Skeptics would argue that since there was a city called Tyre which still existed in that area in the time of the apostle Paul, and exists today, that this prophecy does not constitute "proof" of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Certainly not the way Herbert Armstrong claimed!

In 1973 Herbert Armstrong visited modern Tyre, and was forced to admit "there were quite a number of new high-rise buildings." Careless and uncritical exegesis in his research on Tyre caused the Worldwide Church of God a great deal of dismay and consternation, forcing them to withdraw the booklet from circulation in 1972.

### ***Early Predictions that "Bombed"***

Herbert Armstrong, like many evangelicals, had a general sense of Bible prophecy. Like them, he saw that the Bible predicts a union of 10 nations which will coalesce in the end time, and fight Christ at His return. This belief, of course, is not original to the Worldwide Church of God. Many evangelical, Sunday-observing Churches also believe



it!

However, in his attempt to fit this fact into his own prophetic framework and timetable, Herbert Armstrong often went astray.

In the June-July 1934 issue of *The Plain Truth*, for example, he wrote:

**". . . the year 1936 will see the end of the Times of the Gentiles . . . we may expect the present worldwide depression, time of trouble and fear of war to continue until the year 1936! . . . quickly after that time, we may expect to see the heavenly signs of the sun and moon becoming dark, the stars falling . . . which shall be followed by the 'Day of the Lord.'"** (page 5).

But 1936 came and went -- and nothing earthshaking happened. Nothing like heavenly signs, stars falling, and the beginning of the "Day of the Lord"!

In the March 1938 *Plain Truth*, page 8, however, Herbert Armstrong was even more bold. He audaciously asserted:

**"Mussolini and the pope will hatch up an idea . . . of setting up a world-headquarters at Jerusalem -- and so Mussolini's armies will enter into Palestine (Daniel 11:41), and eventually will capture just half of the city of Jerusalem! (Zech.14:2)."**

Notice how clearly and forcefully Herbert Armstrong spells out the exact sequence of future prophesied events! Unfortunately for his dogmatic and unequivocal assertiveness, he was totally wrong! Again, his prophecies failed to come to pass.

Mussolini's armies never got near Palestine -- much less to Jerusalem! And suffice it to say, he and the pope never got a chance to capture half of Jerusalem!

Herbert Armstrong continued to make these kinds of predictions. In the January 1939 *Plain Truth*, page 4, he dogmatically prophesied,

**"MUSSOLINI WILL FIGHT CHRIST!"**

Was he right in his prediction? Let history judge. As everyone knows, Mussolini, far from fighting Christ, was killed by partisans, and hanged, toward the end of War II. He was not the prophesied "beast" of Revelation that Herbert Armstrong thought he was!

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the August-September 1939 *Plain Truth*, page 6,

**"Once world war is resumed, it must continue on through the Great Tabulation, the heavenly signs, the plagues of the Day of the Lord, and to the Second Coming of Christ, at the last battle, at Armageddon! . . . But this you may KNOW! THIS WAR WILL BE ENDED BY CHRIST'S RETURN! . . . WE ARE JUST THAT NEAR CHRIST'S COMING!"** (Emphasis mine).

Notice again how dogmatic Herbert Armstrong was! Did GOD ALMIGHTY inspire him to predict those errors? Did God mis-communicate His intentions to His "servant"? Did God get His signals crossed? Or was it Herbert Armstrong who presumed to speak when God had not spoken?

Truly Amos the prophet was inspired of God to write, *"The Sovereign Lord NEVER DOES ANYTHING without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets"* Amos 6:7). Obviously, therefore, Herbert Armstrong did NOT understand the prophetic plan of God, did not have God's plan REVEALED to him -- and therefore was not inspired of God when he made these self-proclaimed, dogmatic prophecies during the 1930s! In retrospect, his prophecies seem utterly foolish and uninspired.

During World War II, Herbert Armstrong *continued* making false prophecies and predictions based on his understanding of Scripture. In the August-September 1940 *Plain Truth* he boldly asseverated,

**"The Italians will capture both Palestine and Egypt."**

Less true words were never misspoken!

In the November-December 1940 issue (which, ironically, was one month before my birth), Herbert Armstrong continued his bold foray into Bible prophecy and its interpretation. He unerringly predicted,

**"God has decreed that Joseph -- Great Britain and the United States -- are to utterly consume and annihilate the Turks from off the earth!" (p.7).**

Although the Turkish Empire was ended by the victory of the Allies during World War I, in 1917, the nation of Turkey continued to exist, and still exists, today! This "blazing prophecy" of the heralded "spokesman for God" also has failed to come to pass. In actual fact, there is NO prophecy of the Bible that predicts the "annihilation" of the Turkish people from : "off the earth," as Armstrong claimed.

At the beginning of World War II, when Britain was suffering its darkest hour, and Nazi invasion seemed imminent, it is interesting to note that Herbert Armstrong quickly got on the bandwagon of the pessimistic, and he joined in the chorus of nay-sayers and doom-predictors. With seemingly unshakable confidence and unflappable insistence, Herbert predicted:

**"It is part of God's prophesied plan that Britain shall be invaded and conquered" (Nov-Dec 1940, *Plain Truth*).**

Herbert certainly did not foresee the glorious "battle of Britain," or the stout-hearted courage and tenacity of the British people, led by Winston Churchill! Rather, he thought the Nazis would overrun England and Scotland, and conquer all the British isles.

When Hitler then launched his blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union, Herbert Armstrong again was not found wanting for words, to interpret the invasion in the light of Bible

prophecy. Seeing Hitler's troops initially cut through the Russians like a knife through hot butter, he proclaimed "God's truth" on the invasion. Apparently he had learned nothing from his dismal record of continuous mistakes. He tried his hand at prophecy once again. He asserted:

**"Bible prophecy does indicate that HITLER MUST BE THE VICTOR IN THE PRESENT RUSSIAN INVASION! . . . Hitler will emerge from the Russian campaign stronger than ever, free to turn the entire might of his forces against Britain -- and America" (Sept-Oct. 1941 *Plain Truth*, p.7).**

As history shows, far from winning his Russian winter campaign, Hitler's armies were defeated by the Russian winter at Stalingrad. Germany lost over a million soldiers in the Russian invasion. The German army was mired in the snow, ice, and mud at Stalingrad, and was forced to retreat in bitter defeat.

Again, Herbert Armstrong was diametrically in error -- 180 degrees from the truth! But at least he was persistent -- and consistently wrong!

As late as 1943, Herbert Armstrong was still whipping a dead horse. He wrote in the March-April 1943 *Plain Truth*, page 6,

**"But Hitler (or his successor if there is one), and the False Prophet shall fight against Christ!"**

Talk about "false prophets," Herbert Armstrong's batting average, during the late 1930's and early 1940's was on a scale of one to ten, *hovering at absolute ZERO!* He was wrong every time! Hitler did not "fight against Christ" His successor? There was none. Hitler died in a Berlin bunker, as the Russians invaded the city, thus ending the "Third Reich" in flaming ruins.

### ***Why Was Herbert Armstrong So Wrong, So Often?***

It seems incredible that any man could have been so wrong about Bible prophecy -- and yet so insistent on proclaiming his own ideas and interpretations. What possessed him to do it? Why was he so smug and overconfident? Why didn't he have more humility, and willingness to admit that he could be wrong?

For some reason, during the 1930s and 1940s, God had blinded the mind of Herbert Armstrong from rightly understanding Bible prophecy. He allowed him to make a "fool" of himself. Although Herbert's booming voice on radio may have sounded like the resonant tones of a Walter Winchell or Gabriel Heater, or a Lowell Thomas, his prophetic words turned to mush. Nothing came to pass that he so officiously and dogmatically foretold.

Why would God leave him so completely in the dark?

I believe that God did use Herbert Armstrong in the very early 1930s on through the 1960s and 1970s to reveal much Biblical truth concerning the Sabbath, Holy Days, Plan

of God, and some aspects of Biblical prophecy. God did use him, in a strong manner, to lay the foundation for the End-time Work of God. But why did God allow Herbert Armstrong during the explosive 30s and 40s, and even into the 50s and 60s, to make such flagrant prophetic blunders?

Notice what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

**"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But YOUR INIQUITIES have separated you from your God; your SINS have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).**

As author David Robinson explains in his book *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*, during the latter part of the 1930's and early 1940's, Herbert Armstrong was carrying on with an illicit incestuous affair with his daughter Dorothy -- over a period of *ten years!* Robinson wrote:

**"Incest is a terrible and unnatural crime, an extreme perversity. That is why I was shocked beyond measure to hear that Herbert Armstrong was, himself, guilty of this vile sin. I learned of this in the summer of 1979 from members of his own family. The story, sordid beyond imagination, was told in awful detail.**

**"One family source was Garner Ted Armstrong. Last summer, as HWA attacked his own son in such savage fury, his son was in the depths of despair. His emotional mix included anger and deep hurt. In such a state he told family secrets that otherwise would have been locked within him forever. He said that he had learned in 1971 of his father's incredible conduct during the '30s and '40s. The story came directly to him in lurid detail, but he kept it sealed in his own consciousness for all those years. But in the spring of 1978 while in his father's house for the last time, his father had threatened to 'destroy him.' Ted, in response, replied, 'Dad, I will destroy you. I know about you and ----- (He was speaking of the younger of his two sisters.**

**"His father had been on a high-handed autocratic binge. But at that comment he sat down quietly and responded, 'Well, Ted, there have been times when I *have* been very far away from God!" (*Tangled Web*, p.266, emphasis his).**

What does this tell us about Herbert Armstrong's relationship to the Almighty, the "revealer of secrets" (Dan.2:2-22), from the mid-1930s to the middle 1940s? God revealed "secrets" to Daniel because he was a righteous man (see Dan. 10: 12) -- but not to Herbert W. Armstrong! Why? The answer is now obvious. God will never reveal the future, or what He plans to do, to the WICKED. Sin cuts men off from God. Herbert Armstrong's prophetic embarrassments during the 1930s and '40s may well be directly due to his being "far off from God" at that time!

The archangel Gabriel told Daniel,

**"Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and SEALED until the TIME OF THE END. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined,**

**but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are WISE will understand" (Dan.12:9-10).**

It was the gross sins of Herbert Armstrong during the '30s and '40s which cut him off from God, and which caused God to give him the spirit of error and misunderstanding of Bible end-time prophecies, at that time. He was so sure he was right -- yet he was dead wrong!

God surely would not reveal His prophetic secrets to a man living in sin, and committing continual, habitual incest, for years, with his own daughter! Even though Herbert Armstrong may have repented of this sin in later years, God severely punished him and allowed him to make a fool of himself prophetically, during the years this relationship continued.

### ***The Track Record of the 1950s***

It was in the late 1950s that I first came in contact with the Worldwide Church of God, then called the Radio Church of God. At that time the whole Church was focused on 1975 in prophecy, and predicting Christ's return that year.

In the October 1955 *Plain Truth* Herman L. Hoeh, a man for whom I directly worked as a member of the *Plain Truth* staff from 1972-1974, wrote that

**"God Almighty has spoken through His servants the prophets that He will punish our people for their sins . . . we will be totally consumed and carried away captive to other nations as slaves WITHIN TWENTY YEARS" (p.16).**

Another prophecy gone awry! Another false prophet begins to prophesy!

Not to be content, Herman L. Hoeh wrote in the April 1956 *Plain Truth*,

**"Plagues are coming -- and, according to this prophetic warning, in about TWO YEARS FROM NOW!" (p.22).**

Herman Hoeh saw the times of America's national troubles and tribulation as extending onward from that point to 1972. Of course, his time scale for this prophesy was based on Herbert Armstrong's prediction that Christ would return in 1975!

Not to be outdone by the likes of Herman Hoeh, , in the December 1957 *Plain Truth*, Garner Ted Armstrong, illustrious son of Herbert Armstrong, tried his hand at the prophecy game. Not to be out-prophesied by someone of inferior position in the Church, he wrote the following blistering prophetic scenario:

**"Two years ago, Mr. Herman Hoeh showed in this magazine how God's word prophesied disease epidemics would strike the United States in two short years! Those epidemics are BEGINNING NOW! And they will grow much worse! GOD PROPHESES THAT FINALLY, WITHIN THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS, FULLY ONE THIRD OF OUR POPULATION**

**WILL DIE of disease and famine!" (p.23).**

Thus another illustrious modern-day "prophet" went out on limb, and had it sawn off behind him! Another false prophet met his "prophetic Armageddon"! Fifteen years from 1957 brings us to 1972. During that time none of Garner Ted Armstrong's plagues or disease epidemics came to pass, as prophesied! One third of our national population did NOT "die"! What remarkable balderdash!

As late as 1962 Herbert Armstrong was still insisting that Bible prophecies foretold

**"a revolution in the weather -- leading to unprecedented famine BY AROUND 1970-72 . . . In its wake is prophesied frightful disease epidemics! A third of the people of the U.S. and British Commonwealth nations will die of this scourge" (February 1962 *Plain Truth*).**

In May 1965, three years later, Roderick C. Meredith, evangelist in the Worldwide Church of God, convinced of the same scenario, still proclaimed that

**"the final attack on the U.S. and Britain by this coming 'Beast' power could easily be launched perhaps as early as the spring of 1972 -- or earlier" (May 1965 *Plain Truth*, p.45).**

In February 1967 Herbert W. Armstrong himself was still loudly and dogmatically making similar predictions. He asserted:

**"The 'Day of the Eternal -- a time foretold in more than thirty prophecies -- is going to start BETWEEN 5 AND 10 YEARS FROM NOW! . . . I am not writing foolishly, but very soberly, ON AUTHORITY OF THE LIVING CHRIST!" (February 1967 *Plain Truth*, p-47).**

Was he writing "foolishly"? Yes he was! Could he himself see it? No, he couldn't. Did he really have "authority of the living Christ" to back up his prediction? No he did not. But his claim to the authority of the living Christ to back up his erroneous pronouncements was, unfortunately, typical of his on-going personal style. His ego could stand for no less "authority." He refused to admit he was really only speculating, or guessing. In his vanity and self-importance, he made matters worse. But more unreasonable his claims became, the more dogmatic and dictatorial style, he was overwhelmingly confident -- but he was DEAD WRONG!

Eventually, in his own mind, he had become the end-time "Elijah," who would restore all things! How he could begin to believe this, in view of his prophetic errors and blunders, over many decades, blows my mind! Yet for years he was the only one teaching obedience to God's Sabbaths AND annual Holy Days. He DID restore much truth. Apparently, God will use a person, in many respects, even though he also ALLOWS them to make egregious errors from time to time!

But let's face it: Would an end-time "Elijah," or one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, have stubbed his toe so consistently and persistently in terms of Bible prophecy?

What do *you think*?

***"Beware of False Prophets"***

Some lessons appear to be hard to learn. For forty years Herbert Armstrong never seemed to learn from his past mistakes. When one prophetic prediction failed, he just offered up another one. An endless stream of prophetic errors thus were paraded before the public. Old errors were quickly forgotten, and swept under the rug. New errors sprung up like dandelions, spreading their pernicious seeds around the world. But to the very end, it would seem, Herbert W. Armstrong still insisted it was "BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LIVING CHRIST" that he made his predictions and prophetic interpretations!

The day is coming, of course, when he will "eat" those words -- he will have to give account for them before the very judgment seat of Christ Himself!

However, Jesus Himself said, "Beware of men" (Matt.10:17). He added that in the end times, "Many false prophets shall rise, AND DECEIVE MANY" (Matt.24:11). He also pointed out "But I say unto you, That *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall *give account thereof in the day of judgment*. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt.12:36-37).

Jesus told us how to recognize false prophets. He said: "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in SHEEP'S CLOTHING, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. YE SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM" (Matt.7:15-20).

I know that many people, today, virtually worship the memory of Herbert W. Armstrong. In one way, I hate to have to disillusion them. But truth is better than error, no matter how much it hurts. Bitter medicine is good, if it cures the patient's disease.

No doubt many of the basic teachings of Herbert Armstrong were scripturally sound and valid. Some of his prophetic insights in a general way were valid. But for some reason he did go to excesses often when it came to Bible prophecy, and sometimes made a "fool" or "laughing stock" of himself -- and became an embarrassment to God and to Christ! And to the Church!

I do not write these things to "expose" the man, or to ridicule him. In many ways, God did use him to restore much truth during the past fifty years. Were it not for his ministry, how many of us would have known about the Sabbath, holy days, what it means to be "born again," the purpose of human life, the truth about heaven and hell, the immortal soul doctrine, and many other truths?

But let's be honest, and not ignore the truth. Herbert Armstrong was *very* human. And he was *very* fallible. He made *many* mistakes. I write these things, therefore, as the apostle Paul said,

***"... that ye might learn . . . not to think of men above that which is written" (I Cor.4:6).***

Let's not put men on a pedestal, and worship them, or think of them more highly than we ought! Don't worship mere men -- worship God!



# Herbert Armstrong's Vain Attempt to Fulfill Bible Prophecy!

Herbert Armstrong wanted to be "Elijah" -- at times in his ministry he even said that he was "Zerubbabel" and the "Elijah" to come. But few know to what lengths he strove to make Bible prophecy come to pass so he himself could fulfill such a role -- and the way God Almighty thwarted his attempt in a completely humiliating manner!

Everybody knows that Herbert Armstrong was a very strong-willed and dogmatic individual. He seemed to have had a very high opinion of himself and his place in God's scheme of things.. Anyone reading his co-worker letters over the years could not help but be impressed with his sense of the dramatic, and of the importance of his "high office." He referred to himself as the "Apostle General" of God's Church. Many times he spoke, dramatically claiming the "*authority of Jesus Christ*," as if he himself invented the expression, and had a copyright on it!

Herbert Armstrong may have believed he was the end-time "Elijah." I do not know his own inner belief. I do believe that he truly thought of himself as God's end-time servant. Did not God reveal many Biblical truths to him? If he was right on these truths, then he understood things *no other man was preaching at the time!*

However, this does not prove he was a "prophet," nor does it prove he was the final "Elijah to come," mentioned in the book of Malachi in the Old Testament!

Nevertheless, because he may well have *believed* it was his duty to be the final "Elijah," and to bear witness to the world, that may explain certain things that he strove to accomplish in the year 1967.

In that year I was transferred from working in the Editorial Department of the Worldwide Church of God, or "The Work" as we called it, to assist Dennis Luker, the field minister in the San Francisco Bay area.

In that fateful year, Herbert Armstrong was laying plans to fulfill Bible prophecy. In the book of Isaiah we read the striking prophecy, where God Almighty says , "O Zion, that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, LIFT UP THY VOICE WITH STRENGTH; lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isa.40:9).

James Moffatt translates this verse, "Up to the high hills, O herald of happiness to Sion! Raise your voice loudly, O herald of happiness to Jerusalem, raise it fearlessly, and

tell the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God! Here is the Eternal coming in power, maintaining mightily his cause! Here he is bringing what he has won, bringing what he has gained! For he feeds his flock like a shepherd, and gathers them in his arms, he is carrying the lambs in his bosom, and leading them ever so gently" (Moffatt Isa.40:9-11).

In the spring of 1967 the stage was set. Suddenly it seemed as if the door had opened for Herbert Armstrong to BE that voice, proclaiming God's message directly to the children of Judah in the Middle East! The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was opening to the Worldwide Church of God the use of a new superpowerful *one million watt radio transmitter* in the city of Jerusalem, then occupied by the Kingdom of Jordan - Radio Jerusalem!

Herbert Armstrong was thrilled -- elated. 1967 was only a few years before 1972, the year the Church was supposed to flee to a "place of safety" in the wilderness, then believed to be Petra in Jordan. (The Philadelphia Church of God, today, led by Gerald Flurry, still believes this doctrine as an article of faith!).

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the April 17, 1967 co-worker letter, sent out to all members and co-workers of the Worldwide Church of God,

**"Right now, just prior by not more than FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS, to the coming terrible day of the Lord, the living Christ has moved swiftly to OPEN THE ALL-IMPORTANT DOOR THAT HAS BEEN CLOSED *since the days of the original apostles!***

**' . . . Almighty God has opened to the World Tomorrow (program), exclusively, the GIGANTIC DOOR OF SUPERPOWER RADIO FROM JERUSALEM!"**  
Armstrong went on, enthusiastically, "We have signed with the Hashemite Government of Jordan, a FIVE-YEAR BINDING CONTRACT" (emphasis mine throughout).

To Herbert Armstrong's mind, this was proof positive that God was calling him and using him as His chief witness in these end times. He went on excitedly in his letter to all co-workers:

**"And when this time came, TO WHOM DID GOD OPEN UP THESE PRECIOUS RADIO FACILITIES? Not to Roman Catholics . . . nor the Protestants! Nor the Coptics. "**

**"No, He has opened it exclusively, by binding CONTRACT with the Government of Jordan, TO HIS WORK."**

Armstrong went on, saying,

**"THIS PROVES WHICH VOICE ON EARTH TODAY IS GOD'S OWN VOICE" -- *If you ever had any doubts whatever about where the real Work of God is, you ought to be sure now!"*** (same letter).

At that time Herbert Armstrong was in England, en route to the Kingdom of

Jordan. He was actually en route to Cyprus when suddenly the Six Day War broke out in the Middle East, forcing him to cancel his flight to Jordan.

What happened?

Apparently Almighty GOD had other ideas than those of Herbert W. Armstrong, who thought he was "Gods own voice on earth"!

### *The Incredible "Six Day War"*

In six days, the incredible happened. The Israelis fought with fury, and destroyed the air forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the ground. They launched a blitzkrieg strike through the Negev and Sinai and routed the Egyptian armies blocking their way. In a mere six days they rewrote the map of the Middle East, recaptured the Golan Heights overlooking the Sea of Galilee in the north, and had troops on the outskirts of Damascus, Syria. The West Bank of the Jordan fell to their forces quickly, and they soundly defeated the armed forces of the Jordanians.

At the same time, Israel captured the Old City of Jerusalem, which had been in Jordanian hands, including the sacred precincts of the Temple Mount -- the first time that particular piece of geography had been in Jewish hands since the time of the Roman Empire, 2000 years ago!

What did this mean?

To understand the amazing Biblical prophetic significance of this tremendous Six Day War, and its outcome, be sure to read my article entitled "Daniel's 2300 Day Prophecy Revealed!"

Insofar as Herbert Armstrong's plans to preach the gospel to the people of Judah, in the towns of Israel, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40, they were completely undone -- dashed to the ground. Apparently it was NOT God's intent for him to fulfill this final "commission," or to be the final "Watchman"! Apparently, he was not to be the true "end-time" Elijah, the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" of Judea!

Herbert Armstrong probably truly believed God was in the process of opening the door of Radio Jerusalem to HIM to fulfill this final WARNING message to the Jews, thereby showing just who was His "voice on earth." But God canceled the arrangement and blew the whole deal! The "firm and binding contract" with the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was *rendered NULL AND VOID!* Who could have foreseen it? God, of course. He knew what He was going to do all along. Why didn't He inform Herbert Armstrong? Apparently, He didn't think Herbert Armstrong needed to know His plans! (Amos 3:7).

Supposedly, Herbert Armstrong was going to broadcast the gospel from Radio Jerusalem, which was to be boosted to over 1,000,000 watts of power -- truly a

superpowerful radio station. But it never happened. The plans of men came to naught.

Why?

God was working in the Middle East all right, but not with Herbert W. Armstrong. God had other plans in mind.

Almighty God was in the process of fulfilling, in a dramatic fashion, the amazing prophecy of Daniel 8 and the 2300 "days" of the desolation of the Temple! He was in the process of bringing the Temple Mount area back under the control of His people, the Jews. He was making ready the fulfillment of the prophecies of the END-TIME! But none of these plans included the work or ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong to preach from Radio Jerusalem!

### *End of an Era*

In total humiliation, Herbert Armstrong had to see his plans go up in smoke, ascending to oblivion. Alas, it was not to be! His co-worker letter turned out to be sadly mistaken, and he never got on radio in the Middle East -- in Israel or Jordan!

Instead of fulfilling Bible prophecy, by his own efforts, he saw them smashed on the rocks and brought to naught. Instead of proclaiming the gospel via Radio Jerusalem to the entire Middle East with one million watts of broadcasting power, he had to eat crow. His silence spoke volumes. Instead of ushering in the coming of Jesus Christ in "not more than five to seven years," he had to experience the death of his wife, who died that very same year, thus closing the history of the "Philadelphia Era" of the Church of God.

Instead of going out to finish the Work of God, Herbert Armstrong began to lose his way, and didn't quite know what to do. He began to lose his bearings, spiritually, and increasing troubles began to pummel and strike the Church. His own son had to be exiled for adultery and rampant sexual misadventures, though it was covered up and called "spiritual problems." Scores of ministers in the Church began to defect and the Church was tom apart with doctrinal strife by 1972-1974.

Instead of Jesus Christ returning by the proffered date set by Herbert Armstrong in repeated articles, sermons, and co-worker letters, He stayed in heaven, and left Herbert Armstrong to fend for himself and to suffer the consequences of his own mistakes.

In the following years, Herbert began making even greater blunders and errors, marrying a woman less than half his age, Ramona Martin, and divorcing her seven years later. Exercising poor judgment of character, he began entrusting the Work to undeserving and unqualified hands. Rather than deal with his son's sins in a manner befitting the office of an apostle, he whitewashed them, and brought his son back into the Church with a minor "slap on the wrist" and restored him to office and high authority, putting him in charge of the day-to-day operations of the Work! Later, before his death,

he made the most serious error of all by appointing one Joseph Tkach, Jr., as his successor over the entire Church and Work! History shows that Tkach, instead of being loyal to Herbert Armstrong's teachings and memory, began dismantling and destroying every major doctrine of the Church -- and even introduced pagan customs and ceremonies into the Church!

From 1967 onward -- the history of the Worldwide Church of God has been one of checkered mistakes, querulous errors, infighting at the top, church politics, adultery, misappropriation of finances, allegations of massive theft, and even the intrusion of the state of California which for a while put the Church and Work into Receivership!

During that time, as further proof that the Church had lost its way, spiritually, millions of dollars were spent to promote and publish a glitzy, glossy SECULAR magazine called *Quest*, and other millions were poured into the creation of a SECULAR publishing house in New York City, called "Everest House." Both of these publishing vehicles produced smut, obscenity, and printed foul, ungodly language in books and magazine articles! Yet during his later years, Herbert Armstrong seemed not to be fazed in the least at this ill-conceived ventures and their abominations!

For the record, the first issue of *Quest* contained articles which were littered with profanity and "cuss words," articles where the name of God and Christ were used in vain, as well as articles containing four-letter filthy words concerning sex and excrement!

Also, for the record, Everest House Publishing Company began to publish hardcover books which told homosexuals how to live together more cheaply, books on the occult, and a book entitled *Danse Macabre* by horror author Stephen King, which itself was filled to overflowing with sexual dirty words, and repeatedly used the names of Almighty God and Jesus Christ in loud, screaming profanity and searing white hot BLASPHEMY!

How the devil must have chortled and snickered, as he contemplated his "victory." He had pulled a "fast one" over the "true Church of God," and God's "chief apostle" and supposed "only voice on earth," Herbert W. Armstrong!

As I look back over the years since 1967, I am aghast and amazed at what happened during those fateful years. I stand appalled at the circuitous direction taken by the Church, which drifted like a ship which had lost its rudder and its compass, going around in circles, heading for the rocks of destruction. And, as I foresaw in the late 1980s, the Worldwide Church of God has indeed gone into perdition!

### ***How God Began to Work More in My Life***

But, while such terrible things were happening to the Church, and to the Armstrong family, for me personally 1967 was a bellwether year. For when I returned to Pasadena, after completing my assignment in the field ministry, I married the former Capitola Callihan, originally from North Carolina. Our wedding was held in the Lower

Gardens, at Ambassador College, on September 24. Her name "Capitola" means "head of the people," and she is an outstanding woman in every respect, and the finest wife a man could ever hope for -- truly God blessed me far above most men, and far more than I remotely deserved or imagined!

So while the "house of Armstrong" in 1967 was in the process of being broken, and destroyed, my own family, my own "house," was just beginning!

While Herbert W. Armstrong was being cursed, with the destruction of his planned fulfillment of prophecy, and his lofty goals were smashed by divine intervention, and the sudden death of his wife of 49 years, I was beginning to be blessed beyond compare, beyond measure.

I have never thought of it this way before, but that is precisely what happened -- *the very same year!*

Exactly seven years later, God set me free from working in a degenerating, compromising, apostatizing environment in the editorial department of the Worldwide Church of God, and led me to begin Triumph Publishing. That was in July of 1974. In the following 12 years, I published books such as *The First Genesis: A New Case for Creation*, *The Keys to Radiant Health*, *Beyond Star Wars*, *Ascent To Greatness*, *The Last Days of Planet Earth: A Survival Guide to the End of the World*, *Overcoming Satan*, *Satan's Fate*, *Escape from Armageddon*. While the Church was slipping into greater error, God was using me to preserve and maintain His truth!

Twelve years later Herbert Armstrong died, in January 1986, the year that Halley's Comet passed through the heavens. That same year Kurt Waldheim. A former Nazi during World War II, was elected President of Austria.

That same year I laid the groundwork for publishing *Prophecy Flash*, published two vitally new booklets on Bible prophecy entitled "Never Before Understood -- Daniel's 2300 Day Prophecy Revealed for the Very First Time!" and "A New Countdown to Armageddon -- the Jubilee Time Cycles Predict the Second Coming of Christ!"

Thus the passing of Halley's Comet marked the passing of the old guard, and the coming of the new. Herbert Armstrong passed the baton of a suffocating, dying Church to Joseph Tkach, and the Laodicean Church began to grow in our midst. And that was the year *Prophecy Flash* magazine was born!

When I published the new prophetic truth and revelation about Daniel's 2300 day prophecy, in December 1986, and sent out an advertising brochure to my mailing list in January 1987, the new powers in the Church rejected the truth, and disfellowshipped me without a hearing or recourse. So God began a NEW WORK, using me as His instrument and servant, in a prophecy-oriented "end-time" ministry. Thus "Triumph Prophetic Ministries" was born!

### *A Lesson from the Life of Herbert Armstrong*

Herbert Armstrong is now dead and buried. His successor, Joseph Tkach, has led the Worldwide Church of God into increasing apostasy and error. But as we reflect back on the life and errors of Herbert Armstrong, what lessons can we learn? What does God Almighty want us to learn from this experience?

The Word of God says to those who disobey His commandments, and do not rule their family according to the ways of God, "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind . . ." (Prov.1:29).

Let us all take a lesson from the example of Herbert Armstrong. He wrote a vital lesson in his life -- a lesson on "How Not To Fulfill Bible Prophecy."

He also showed us the importance of OBEYING GOD, keeping CLOSE to Him, and walking in His commandments -- something, unfortunately, Herbert Armstrong often failed to do. If he had been obeying God, God would not have embarrassed him with the failure of his attempted prophetic fulfillment in 1967. If he had been walking in humility, instead of pride, he would never have "counted his chickens before they hatched." He would have simply let his works speak for themselves.

Jesus said, "By their fruits you know them," not by their words of self-admiration!

Finally, we should learn from the life of Herbert Armstrong how not to become lifted up with pride, egotism, and self-importance. Such attitudes bring trouble in their wake, and lead to sure, certain destruction.

God's Word warns us repeatedly, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov.16:18). The wise man Elihu told the patriarch Job, "Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it" (Job 35:13). Solomon in his wisdom wrote, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov.8:13).

Solomon added, "When pride cometh, *then cometh shame*, but with the lowly is wisdom" (Prov.1 1:2). God warns, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Prov.29:23). Ancient king Nebuchadnezzar also had to learn the lesson that "those who walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan.4:37).

God hates pride. But His joy is with the humble in heart, who don't puff themselves up, who don't act pompous or self-important. Do we so soon forget? God says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa.66:2).

The prophet Micah declared, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to *WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD?*" (Micah 6:8).

David set us an example of true humility. He wrote in Psalm 131, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:1-2). David also wrote, "The sacrifices of God are a BROKEN SPIRIT: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa.51:17).

The apostle James wrote, ". . . *be CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY*: for God *resisteth the proud* and giveth grace unto the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:5-6).

Have we learned these lessons?



## Chapter 7

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." -- Isaiah 58:1.

# **JWT – APOSTLE? Or APOSTATE?**

I have known many of you for many years, as we went through Ambassador College together, worked in Letter Answering, attended Ministerial Conferences, visited the people of God, and did "the Work." But now I am no longer in the "Church" and you are subject to the authority of the man responsible for my ouster over three years ago, after the death of Herbert Armstrong. What kind of man is Joe Tkach, anyway? Where is he leading you? Have you ever carefully examined his "Fruits"? Is the Church of God being led astray? Have you become an unwitting tool of apostasy? What are your chances under his government of entering the Kingdom of God? Here are some provable facts which maybe you ought to seriously consider, lest you and those under you lose out on the very purpose of our calling -- the Kingdom of God!

At the funeral of Herbert W. Armstrong, Joseph W. Tkach, his successor over the Worldwide Church of God, said, "I cannot fill his shoes, but I will follow in his footsteps." In these words Joseph Tkach promised to follow in the direction and pathway set by Herbert W. Armstrong as leader over the 80,000 member Worldwide Church of God.

Did Joseph Tkach really mean what he said?

Or has he led the entire Church of God into gross error and apostasy?

On January 16, 1986, the very day that Herbert Armstrong died in Pasadena, Joseph Tkach wrote in a letter to members and co-workers about Mr. Armstrong,

"Even in the last year of his life, with declining strength, he completed with God's help HIS MOST POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE BOOK, *Mysery of the Ages*."

Tkach went on:

"I hope none of you will miss the January 26 telecast, which will be a special tribute to Mr. Armstrong, and will offer to the viewers a softbound copy of Mr. Armstrong's final and most important book, *Mystery of the Ages*."

In the November/December 1986 *Plain Truth*, Joseph Tkach wrote in his "Personal" column:

"With this issue we complete our serialized publication of *Mystery of the Ages* by Herbert W. Armstrong. Although in declining health, and for all practical purposes blind, Mr. Armstrong persevered during the last year of his life to complete this, his last book. . . .

"Herbert W. Armstrong often likened understanding the Bible to putting together a jigsaw puzzle. At first there is a jumble of unrelated pieces. But as you fit them together a clear picture begins to emerge. Over the years, God gave him more pieces of the puzzle, and he never stopped learning. Shsortly before he died, he said he had understood more in the last 10 years of his long life than in all the previous decades.

"*Mystery of the Ages* is the product of that understanding. Mr. Armstrong did not underestimate the importance of this last work, for it contained vital keys to understanding the plan of God as revealed in the Bible. *Mystery of the Ages* in a very real sense was a last will and testament, to be passed on to those who would value it. As we come to the last installment of this remarkable book, we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to Herbert W. Armstrong, and his dogged search for the truth. He freely shared his understanding with us, and we have been privileged to make it available to you. He loved and respected his readers and, in a figurative sense, he remembered you in his will."

### ***Mystery of the Ages* -- ABOLISHED!**

So said Joseph W. Tkach. But did he really mean it? "By their fruits you will know them," Jesus Christ declared (Matt.7:20). Consider, therefore, the real "fruits"!

When Herbert Armstrong wrote *Mystery of the Ages*, he felt it was "the most important book in my life." He felt it may be the most important book since the Bible.

He felt God directly inspired it through the Holy Spirit. He considered it the most valuable gift he could give to the brethren of God's Church. Three months before his death, at the Feast of Tabernacles, Herbert Armstrong had a videotape played announcing the book as his "most important and significant work" -- the epitome work of his entire ministry and life!

But less than three years after his death, Joseph W. Tkach has withdrawn the book from print -- scrapped it -- abolished it! Although the Church takes in about \$200 million dollars a year in tithes and offerings, Larry Salyer of Ministerial Services explained in the *Pastor General's Report* that the Church simply couldn't afford to print it! Tkach explained that the book was discontinued because some critics found fault with it because of "peripheral or incidental points."

In the May 21, 1990 *Worldwide News* he went even further. Tkach declared

". . . The fact is, Mr. Armstrong himself told me that the book contained errors and that he needed to rewrite it.

"When Mr. Armstrong died, I felt that there was so much valuable truth in the book that we should continue using it anyway. For a while, we did.

"After a while, I realized that the *ERRORS* in the book could make the whole subject seem *UNRELIABLE*, and I had to do what I perhaps should have done to begin with.

". . . I was with Mr. Armstrong while he wrote the book. For the majority of the text, he either used materials from other booklets directly or he slightly rewrote them.

"His purpose was to put the basics of the truth all under one cover, not to come up with startling new revelation. When the book was finished, Mr. Armstrong made some very strong claims regarding the book. He even called it the most important book since the Bible. *This was an overstatement.*

"He was human, and he made mistakes, as he himself admitted. He was excited about the truth the book contained. He was excited for the people who would read the book. And HE SIMPLY GOT CARRIED AWAY IN HIS DESCRIPTION OF IT. Now, will some condemn him for that?"

Do you notice the subtlety of Joseph Tkach's remarks? He accuses Herbert Armstrong of getting "CARRIED AWAY," of being guilty of "an overstatement," of making "some very strong claims" regarding the book.

Compare Joseph Tkach's words with the very words of Herbert Armstrong that we have quoted -- and even the words of Joseph Tkach himself just before and soon after Herbert Armstrong's death! WHICH JOE TKACH WILL YOU BELIEVE? -- the first one, who praised Herbert Armstrong's book? Or the SECOND one, who CONDEMNS Herbert Armstrong's book which summed up his entire life's ministry?

The first Joseph Tkach said he will follow in Herbert Armstrong's footsteps. The second Joe Tkach has debunked and destroyed the epitome of Herbert Armstrong's life's work! He did NOT merely "correct" the few errors in *Mystery of the Ages*. He **DESTROYED** the entire book!

Which Joe Tkach will YOU believe?

### "Fiery Language" Prophets

In this same editorial, Joseph Tkach makes it clear to those who read *Prophecy Flash* that he considers me as a "would-be prophet." He asserts:

"I am sorry to have to say it, but certain ones who were once among us have now set themselves up as special 'prophets,' or 'watchmen' of the Church or the nation, using FIERY LANGUAGE to proclaim that 'This is the end!'

"In this manner, they are able to stir up unsuspecting people, who are not well grounded in the Scriptures, to support them and to look to them as great leaders.

"All this can be especially effective to the unwary if these modern-day 'prophets' are able to convince people God's Church has 'left the faith once delivered,' is 'watering down true doctrine' or is 'becoming or already is Laodicean.'"

Rather than engage in perfidious name-calling, like Mr. Tkach does, let us simply examine the FRUITS, as Jesus said to do! Have YOU noticed a definite trend in the *Plain Truth* and *Good News* toward watering down prophecy, doctrine, and a scarcity of strong-meat articles such as used to appear?

In the short space of three years since the death of Herbert Armstrong, Joseph Tkach had led the Church of God into the following changes --

1. Watering down Bible prophecy of the end time!
2. Claims prophecy can FAIL!
3. Changed the teaching on divine healing 180 degrees -- now anything goes!
4. Claims we do not "qualify" for our salvation!
5. Changed the doctrine on make up and cosmetics -- 180 degrees -- now anything goes!
6. Changed doctrine on birthday observances 180 degrees!
7. Herbert Armstrong declared unequivocally that the college should not be "accredited" by organizations of MEN. Joseph Tkach has unequivocally stated that Ambassador College is seeking ACCREDITATION!
8. Joseph Tkach has withdrawn the sacred calendar from publication. Will the Church under him now "think to change times and laws"?
9. Herbert Armstrong built the Church largely on the basis of the truth of our nation's identity as "modern Israel." Joseph Tkach says this doctrine is UNIMPORTANT -- merely something to "arouse our curiosity"!
10. Herbert Armstrong put his son out of the Church when he attempted to

move Ambassador College to Big Sandy, Texas. Now, three years after Herbert Armstrong's death, Joseph Tkach has done the unbelievable -- the unthinkable -- he has moved the college, lock, stock and barrel -- TO TEXAS! According to Los Angeles realtors, the Church property in Pasadena, including the "House for God," are up for sale!

What are the real "fruits" of this man? If Herbert Armstrong were alive today, do you really think he would endorse the "works" of Joseph Tkach?

### **The Real Attitude Behind the Public Mask**

For many years I worshipped God as a member of the Worldwide Church of God, went to the Festivals, and rejoiced in the truth which God had revealed to His Church -- truth which many of us had proved for ourselves, before becoming part of the Worldwide Church of God. I myself entered Ambassador College in fall of 1959, and graduated in spring of 1963, and began writing for the Church magazines in 1965 on a regular basis. During the next nine years I wrote about one hundred articles, booklets, and Correspondence Course lessons for the Church, besides thousands of personal letters as a member of the Letter Answering staff for a number of years.

But now it is no more. Many changes have occurred during the past thirty years, since I was a student at Ambassador, and thrilled to hear of the "progress" of the Work. Terrible scandals have ripped through the Church, cover ups of enormous sexual sins, and perfidy and betrayal among top ministers, as well as a "Receivership Crisis" when the state of California sought to seize control of the Church, alleging theft, impropriety and mismanagement of the use of Church funds.

When he was in his nineties, Herbert Armstrong was extremely dependent on other men around him to support him and carry on the Work. In his weakened condition, he still knew his limitations, and admitted that one of his chief weaknesses was his inability to judge human character. Before his death, he gave control of the Church of God and all its resources to a man he trusted above all others at that time, yet a man he scarcely knew, and had only known for a very few years to any extent -- after the Receivership Crisis struck. How was it that Herbert Armstrong picked this man, virtually out of nowhere, who had never been more than a local elder, most of his life, and only raised to preaching elder in 1974, but suddenly became personal assistant to Herbert Armstrong in 1979, was raised to evangelist, and placed over Church Administration the same year. Why did he pick him, as death drew near in January, 1986, to take complete charge as an "apostle" to rule the Worldwide Church of God and its 200 million dollar a year income? Doesn't the thought boggle your mind? Just what kind of man is Tkach, anyway? What do YOU really know about him? Is it just remotely possible that Satan the devil pulled off his master stroke when Herbert Armstrong appointed Joseph Tkach as his successor over the Worldwide Church of God?

### **Satan's Master Stroke?**

Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits." His exact warning to us was, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt.7:15-16, NIV). What are the real "fruits" of Joe Tkach?

John Trechak, a former Ambassador College student, law student at Loyola University, and an exceptional investigative reporter, in researching the background of this mysterious figure, put the lie to the claims of Tkach and his Worldwide sychophants who said that he attended the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, studying industrial management, industrial safety and human factors in industry, claimed that he was a supervisor with Hupp Aviation, and one time when he was allegedly "fired" for refusal to work on the weekly Sabbath almost 2,000 people milled around on a wildcat strike because they had heard of his firing. How many of these claims were true?

The reporter found out that Hupp Aviation, now Aircraft Gears Corp., has never had more than a few hundred employees at the very most, that Tkach was never a manager or a supervisor or even a union leader, and that the "wildcat strike" was a complete fabrication with no basis in fact whatsoever. An engineer who worked at the plant during those years recalled that even an incident involving a handful of employees would have been big news at the plant, but nothing of the kind cited by Tkach or his public relations experts ever took place. Rather, while he worked there Tkach was "just one of the guys." He was only an hourly wage employee and did "assembly work."

Says Trechak, "So Tkach was not born in 1926 [as the Church official biography claimed], was never a Jew, did not establish churches during the sixties, was never a Chicago businessman, was never an aviation industry production supervisor, and never had thousands of fellow factory workers demonstrating on his behalf." The reporter also found out that Tkach had never been enrolled at the Illinois Institute of Technology either. There is no record of his ever having attended ITT. Officials were adamant. Emphatically, they declared, Tkach had never taken "industrial management, industrial safety, and human factors in industry" -- in fact, the institute had *never offered such courses!*

In Slavic tongues, the name Tkach means variously "weaver," "tailor," or "spider." Worldwide leaders have often made a big point of Tkach being "the Master Weaver" who will "weave" the Church together during the last days. But "spider's" also weave a web -- and Tkach has certainly lived up to his name in the web of deception he has woven to hide and obscure his background, and to "exalt himself" with a tissue of lies concerning his past "exploits."

### **U.S. Navy Record**

Does it surprise you to learn that Joseph Tkach has lied extensively about his

background and history? But this is only the beginning. Tkach and his supporters have also made a very big deal of his supposed military prowess during World War II. His leadership skills have been compared to General George Patton. In sermons it was claimed that Tkach had been a navy gunner who had gained fame and notoriety for his exploits in downing Japanese kamikazes in the Pacific theater. Tkach was a seaman on the USS Austin. Did the Austin ever encounter Japanese kamikazes?

The U.S. Navy's own records show that the Austin was not present at the battles of Leyte Gulf in 1944 or at Okinawa in 1945, when kamikazes attacked the U.S. Fleet. The nearest the Austin ever got to seeing action was during the landing of troops on Attu in the Aleutians on May 11, 1943, when Tkach would have been only 16 years of age -- too young to be in the Navy. After that, it escorted convoys between San Francisco and Hawaii, escorted ships between Alaskan ports, and finished up the war patrolling in the Carolinas and Marianas. The truth is Joe Tkach *never saw action during World War II*. The Navy's own records show that Tkach was not an anti-aircraft gunner, but only a "fireman second class," indicating training in only elementary mechanical maintenance. Further, Tkach's period of service was from January 17, 1945 to July 22, 1946. During this time he served on the Austin, too late to see any action, and on the U.S.S. Jupiter, a converted cargo ship. The Jupiter saw much action during the war, but only BEFORE Tkach came on board! The Jupiter's last encounter with the Japanese was at Iwo Jima, in March 1945 -- the very time Tkach was just completing basic training in Illinois. Thus Joe Tkach's war stories are nothing but thin air -- pure braggadocio -- concocted out of spun sugar. They have no more substance than cotton candy.

### **Betrayal of an Old Blind Man**

Further insight into Tkach's character can be seen in the case of Garnet H. Hill, who was a 77-year old member of the Church in 1970. His eyesight was failing, and his wife was dying from cancer, but in response to a co-worker letter from Herbert Armstrong, Hill sold his real estate holdings and gave \$20,000 to the Church as a gift. A local minister took the money from him, but never gave him any receipt. Hill never felt right about how the gift was handled, and began asking for a receipt, wanting to know what happened to his money. Because of his badgering insistence, he was disfellowshipped!

By this time Garnett Hill was totally blind, and his wife was dead. He had scarcely a friend left in the world -- and now he was cut off from the Church which he had faithfully supported for years! Joseph Tkach, director of Ministerial Services in Pasadena at the time, backed up the local minister in his handling of the situation. Thus the Church turned its back on a man who had become blind, merely because he wanted to know what happened to the \$20,000 he had given to the Church!

I have corresponded with the man who took care of Mr. Hill the last few years of his life -- a former deacon in the Church. The story of corruption and wickedness beggars description. Surely Mr. Hill will be richly rewarded by God for his own

faithfulness and loyalty, despite trials; but woe to those spiritual cowards and bastards who "disfellowshipped" him for no cause, and tried to "hush him up" and make him keep quiet about the theft of his money, which was obviously stolen by the ministry! And this sordid action was supported and backed up by none other than Joseph Tkach. In a letter written by Joseph Tkach to Mr. Hill dated April 9, 1981, Tkach declared:

"I have reviewed our files and received additional information regarding the background of your situation from other people in our legal department and mail processing center. I feel I understand what happened.

"Also, I have verified with Mr. Kersha the circumstances leading up to your being disfellowshipped. After all this review, my conclusion is that Mr. Kersha has performed this duty as God would have him to.

"It is regrettable that the sale of your property was MISHANDLED [Tkach's words -- according to Mr. Hill, Kersha and other ministers tried to make him cover up what he called the "stolen \$20,000. They told me to keep quiet and not talk about the theft. . ."] like it was. But you must come to realize that the people involved have REPENTED of their wrong doing [Tkach wrote this -- but nobody ever apologized to Mr. Hill, or admitted to him they stole his money, or confessed their sin! So how can Tkach say whether or not anybody "repented of their wrongdoing" or not? His is very presumptuous -- nevertheless, condones the disfellowshipping of this righteous man!]. When God forgives He forgets. You must learn to do the same. Mr. Kersha has given you several warnings about talking against the ministry of the Church. You shouldn't have continued to harbor this ill will" (Tkach letter of April 9, 1981).

Joseph Tkach thus justified the decision to disfellowship a man who had given \$20,000 to the Church -- and all he ever wanted for it was a receipt! If anyone every really "repented" of their wrongdoing, they forgot to tell Mr. Hill about it. Rather, the entire ministry in the Church area involved sought to COVER UP this shameful, disgraceful, despicable act!

After Mr. Hill got Tkach's letter, he wrote another letter to Herbert Armstrong about the problem. His heart-rending letter is dated April 27, 1981. He wrote:

"Dear Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong,

"I appeal direct to you. I wrote you a personal letter in February [to] tell you how I was put out of the Church for telling the truth when people asked me about the local minister stealing \$20,000 donation I gave to the Church. I wrote personal on your envelope but it was answered by Mr. Tkach.

"Mr. Tkach got your mail and answered telling me to repent and that Mr. Kersha was doing God's work right. I will be welcomed back to the Church when I will cover up for the thieves that stole the Church money. I have not harmed anyone. I am treated like a thief and told to repent. I worked for the money many years. Mr. Tkach



said the thieves had repented. I heard Mr. Curtis left the Church. How did he repent? The local men that helped him have never admitted doing wrong to me.

"The new ministers have ordered me to cover up and don't talk about it. . . Isaiah 58:1 will not let me cover up. I am 88 years old and have been mistreated for almost ten years over this. I am treated like a thief. Mr. Armstrong, will you expose the thieves?"

Joseph Tkach would not dig into the real issues, and get the facts. He would not expose the true thieves, and exonerate the righteous old man. He would not defend the innocent and aged! Rather, he joined in the wicked plot to overthrow a righteous old man and condone the wickedness of the guilty!

What does the Word of God say we should do in cases like this? Should we quietly "cover up" the sin? Notice what the apostle Paul says about this flaming issue.

"Those who sin are to be REBUKED PUBLICLY, so that the others may take warning" (I Tim.5:20, NIV).

"Those who are GUILTY of sin you should EXPOSE IN PUBLIC, to overawe the others" (Moffatt translation).

"If he has really sinned, then he should be REBUKED IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CHURCH so that no one else will follow his example" (Living Bible).

"As for those who are guilty and persist in sin, REBUKE AND ADMONISH them in the presence of all, so that the rest may be warned and stand in wholesome awe and fear" (Amplified Bible).

"If sin is actually proved, then the OFFENDERS should be PUBLICLY REBUKED as a salutary warning to others" (Phillips translation).

Of course, it goes without saying that Joseph Tkach, who represented Herbert Armstrong in this matter, did NOT follow Paul's advice. On the contrary, he endorsed the cover up, and the expulsion from fellowship of an innocent, angry, righteous old man who had been defrauded and defamed and hurt by the actions of ministers in the Church -- including the coup de grace -- his rejection by Joseph W. Tkach, acting for Herbert W. Armstrong!

Need I say more about this matter? If you would like to know the entire sordid story, and read the actual correspondence, then you should write to Neville C. Gilbert, 7087 Washington Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33462.

### **Judas Iscariot -- the Thief**

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Christ, was also the disciple who carried the "bag" -- that is, he was the "treasurer" among the small band of disciples who

followed Christ. Judas "had charge of the money" (John 13:29). John's gospel records, "he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it" (John 12:6). A thief cannot be trusted.

Was Joe Tkach also a "thief"? Consider the evidence.

Jack Kessler, former Worldwide Church of God attorney and accountant, in a letter written to the Church's board of trustees during the Receivership Crisis, remarked:

"According to Mr. Robin Webber, Mr. Joseph Tkach apparently felt justified in *giving himself from a trust fund and he controlled a little advance of \$5000.00* as a 'needy Church member' to take advantage of a special investment in unregistered securities then illegally being peddled (against advice of counsel) by the Dean brothers."

Shades of Judas Iscariot!

John Trechak, who investigated the background and history of Joseph Tkach at great length, reported further concerning this mysterious and little known figure:

"Beginning during the early sixties, when he was still in Chicago, Tkach's superiors often gave him responsibility over the 'poor fund' or 'third tithe' accounts of local congregations. Earl Timmons, for a decade a confidant of Tkach, told me that Tkach would often siphon off funds by making *loans* to needy Church members, then labeling the loans on the books as gifts paid out, and finally pocketing the loans when they were repaid. I personally recall how during the early seventies, a number of my WCG friends, unemployed at the time, went to Tkach for assistance. In each case they were granted a few hundred dollars. They were startled, however, when Tkach informed them that the amount they received was only a loan and that the loan had to be repaid to Tkach personally in cash.

"I asked one former church secretary, who had known Tkach quite well during the seventies, if she believed Tkach had siphoned off funds meant for the poor during those years. She told me, 'Oh sure he did. But so what? In those days a lot of the ministers were doing the same thing.'

Of course, just because others were also stealing from the "third tithe" account would have been NO JUSTIFICATION WHATSOEVER for Joseph Tkach to emulate their sordid, greedy example! Just because others may have been "dipping into the till" did not make it right! It is interesting to me that Joseph Tkach personally has made reference to the "mess" he found in the "third tithe" department when he was given that responsibility, and that he has boasted that he really improved the lot of widows and other poor, needy brethren when he was put in charge!

Perhaps in his own mind Tkach was doing a "good job." Perhaps he thought to himself, "Who is more needy than me?" But God Almighty condemns theft and embezzlement! "YOU SHALL NOT STEAL," God commands plainly (Exo.20:15). To make "loans," and then list them as "gifts" on the books and pocket the money when they are repaid, also breaks the commandment against lying and bearing false witness (to cover up the theft). What does Almighty God think about one of "His servants" doing such a thing?

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Gal.6:8). The apostle Paul wrote, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and GREED, which is IDOLATRY. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming" (Col.3:5-6). "He who has been stealing must steal no longer," God commands (Eph.5:26), "but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (verse 28).

In God's sight, it is an abomination for one of His alleged servants to "steal from the poor." The apostle John recorded in Revelation, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magical arts, the IDOLATERS and ALL LIARS -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:8).

Stealing from the "poor fund" is one thing. But the story does not stop there.

Stanley Rader, in a telex to Herbert Armstrong, February 1, 1981, accused Joe Tkach of engaging in "illegal fencing activities." Another Church member of the time, by the name of Earl Timmons, whom I have spoken with in his home years ago, also told John Trechak that Tkach knowingly bought and sold stolen merchandise. Says Trechak in *Ambassador Report*:

"Whether the item was a refrigerator for a church member or gold rings for his daughter Tanya's wedding, Tkach apparently had no qualms about buying or selling goods that his friends warned him were stolen. According to Timmon's wife Shirley, Tkach would rationalize such dealings by saying, 'If you don't know where it comes from it's not wrong.'"

According to Timmons, who was one of the instigators of the lawsuit against the Worldwide Church of God which led to the California Attorney General's office putting the Church into receivership in 1979, Joe Tkach was a close friend of George Pappageorge and his associate Kenny Moran, two Pasadena "businessmen" who also knew Timmons. Pappageorge and his associates, says Timmons, were involved in a very wide range of criminal activity. In fact, court records show that George Pappageorge and two accomplices were convicted in 1974 on multiple accounts of kidnapping at gunpoint, robbery, burglary, and conspiracy. Timmons knows

Pappagoerge and Tkach became good friends, because, he says, he is the one who introduced them to each other. According to Timmons, "Joe just liked them. He'd go out to restaurants with them and he liked their company."

But what kind of person would associate with convicted felons -- known crooks? The Scriptures tell us: "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm" (Prov.13:20). An old saying has it, "Birds of a feather flock together." And another says, "A man is known by the company he keeps." Further, the apostle Paul put it bluntly: "Do not be misled: *Bad company corrupts good character*" (I Cor.15:33).

One investigator who looked into the matter, points out that the extent of Tkach's dealings with the Pappageorge-Moran gang is speculative, but Stanley Rader's statement that Tkach once engaged in "illegal fencing activities" raises the possibility that Tkach could have even acted as a "fence" for some of the stolen merchandise of the gang! Tkach was at one time over the Worldwide Church of God Commissary in Pasadena, which sometimes had items on sale at very low prices in huge lots. The Commissary was abruptly shut down in mid-1974 with rumors flying that "hot stuff" was being sold there.

Interestingly, Earl Timmons claimed that a deputy attorney general of the state of California told him Tkach had used his influence to assist in the release of Kenneth Moran from Folsom Prison and George Pappageorge from San Quentin. Fearing for his own life, if they were released, Timmons sold his Pasadena home and moved out of the area, going into hiding. Timmons, who was himself close to Tkach for years, and knows much about his past, could lift the veil that covers his background even more. But since he has vanished, the truth still remains largely unknown.

### **Tales of Seduction and "Wife-Sharing"**

One thing is known, however. Joseph Tkach's wife Elaine suffered a mental breakdown in the mid 1960s, losing contact with reality. Some in the Church believe his wife is demon possessed. On occasion she went on very destructive rampages, sometimes seemed to be in a trance, and acted like a "zombie." Her condition seemed to improve somewhat after Herbert Armstrong's death, although the improvement may be due to use of the drug Haldol. At any rate, there has been much speculation as to what drove her over the edge.

While serving the Church with her husband, in the Chicago area, Elaine used to go visiting at times with the evangelist in charge of the area, Dean Blackwell. Many old-timers in the Church think that Elaine's condition may well have been triggered by the overweening hypocrisy she encountered in the Church, and her own relationship with Dean Blackwell, evangelist. Many are convinced there was a sexual relationship between Blackwell, her husband's superior in Chicago, and Elaine Tkach, during the early 1960s. Although Tkach later downplayed this as mere verbal overtures by Blackwell, old timers say it is their understanding that out-and-out adultery was

involved if not much more.

Writes John Trechak in the pages of *Ambassador Report*:

"With only one exception, however, alsl the WCG oldtimers I talked to said their understanding was that the Blackwell affair was out and out adultery -- at the very least. And, significantly, that widespread perception in WCG circles arose as a result of statements made to numerous individuals by Joe Tkach, himself. When I suggested to former WCG pastor Al Carozzo that Blackwell's romantic relationship with Elaine Tkach was now being portrayed as only verbal, he replied, 'That's not the way Joe talked about it years ago. He believed Dean Blackwell had gone to bed with his wife.'"

One WCG evangelist has described the Blackwell-Tkach affair as nothing less than "*wife-swapping*." This allegation was further corroborated by the testimony of an Indiana businessman who had been a WCG member in the midwest during the early '60s. He had been very close to both Tkach and Blackwell at that time, and assisted on the Church visiting program. This individual was Robert Scaggs. John Trechak, who spoke with him, reports in the same issue of *Ambassador Report*, entitled "Joseph W. Tkach -- God's New Rep on Planet Earth":

"Skaggs claims that when he knew him, Tkach was not genuinely interested in religious truth, but was possessed by a lust for power. Skaggs told me that in his quest for power Tkach stooped so low as to allow evangelist Blackwell, then his superior, to sleep with Elaine, his wife. In return for this favor, says Skaggs, Blackwell had Tkach ordained into the WCG ministry.

"When I was told this I pointedly asked Mr. Skaggs, 'Are you saying that Joe Tkach was ordained in return for participating in some kind of wife-sharing arrangement?' His answer: 'Absolutely!' Skaggs went on to state that Blackwell had at least one other man ordained for the same reason."

Does this seem shocking? Outrageous? It should! But as incredible as these allegations from a former Church member on the scene are, they are completely in agreement with the reputation Dean Blackwell had among many former colleagues and associates. One former minister, Gary Arvidson, whom I attended Ambassador College with in the early '60s, quipped, "Without going into details, let's just say he was known as someone who really knew how to bring relief to the widows." Another minister recalled to Trechak how Blackwell repeatedly had to be brought in to headquarters "for periods of moral rehabilitation." Trechak continues:

"Another former WCG minister who commented to me about Blackwell's reputation is David Robinson. He recalled how, in the fall of 1971, WCG minister Don Wineinger confessed how he had obtained a quick promotion to the rank of preaching elder. Wineinger said he became aware of Blackwell's double lifestyle and threatened Blackwell with exposure if he wasn't raised up a

notch in rank. Within days, Blackwell had Wineinger ordained a preaching elder."

Trechak would have liked to have verified this information with Wineinger, but unfortunately he committed suicide in 1978, after murdering his wife in a divorce lawyer's office in Spokane, Washington. Blackwell, Trechak says, never answered his letters asking for an interview.

### **Joe Tkach and the "Love Demon"**

Joe Tkach was brought to Pasadena by the Church in 1966. Because of his wife's deteriorating mental condition, however, he became "stranded" in Pasadena, and was not sent back out into the field as a full minister, as planned. Needless to say, because of his wife's condition, he was deprived of a normal sex life. However, even the first year he was in Pasadena, one enflamed young woman followed him from Chicago to enroll at Ambassador College just to be close to him. (One wonders how "close" she was to him in Chicago, that would have inspired such a move?)

This young woman's passions were so aroused by him that Herbert Armstrong thought she was demon possessed. His attempts to cast out the "love demon," however, failed miserably, so she was expelled from the college and sent back to Chicago. But did Tkach remain celibate due to his wife's condition? One former church employee didn't think so. He wrote to John Trechak, describing the following situation which he encountered one day while working at Ambassador College:

"One morning I came to work an hour early and discovered Mr. Tkach had left a gigantic bottle of champagne on [Miss X's] desk. Being a naive individual, I couldn't put it together. Fred Coulter [a minister in the Church] later remarked to me: 'Didn't you know Mr. Tkach is having an affair with Mr. Cole's secretary?' Then it all made sense. Mr. Tkach had an invalid wife and was very friendly with women, too friendly. I hope he has repented of his problem."

John Trechak tried to reach "Miss X" for her comments about the situation, but she never responded to his messages and requests for an interview. A friend of hers, however, said she admitted having tried to get Tkach to go to bed with her but that he was "too self-righteous." However, Earl Timmons related to John that Tkach's affair with "Miss X" was, in his words, "hot and heavy." Timmons told him, "I used to let them use my house in the afternoons so they could be alone together."

One of the women in Joe Tkach's life is Ellen Escat, a divorcee, who has been regularly quoted and shown accompanying him in Church publications, such as the *Worldwide News*. She is his top female assistant. Writes John Trechak:

"But she first came to the attention of many headquarters church employees in early 1979 when, according to eye-witnesses, she and Joe Tkach were seen on numerous occasions holding hands in public and appearing romantic

toward one another."

Trechak continues:

"Regarding Mrs. Escat, the question naturally arises: Where is Mr. Escat? A story told among top headquarters personnel is that in 1980, when Mr. Escat discovered the relationship his wife was having with Tkach, he angrily confronted Tkach and other top WCG leaders about the matter. In return for his pledge of silence, so the story goes, he was granted some type of beneficial arrangement."

John Trechak explains he discovered that Mr. Escat lived alone in Pasadena's wealthy southwest side. He went to visit him and discuss the matter with him. Mr. Escat became visibly nervous when he learned that John was with *Ambassador Report*, he frowned deeply, his hands trembling when John mentioned the name of Joe Tkach. He blurted out, "I've met Tkach. He's *weak! Very weak!* I can't believe he is in charge over there." He finally said, "I better not say any more," retreated quickly into his home and locked the door.

In looking over the divorce court records, of the Escat divorce, Trechak then made a most interesting discovery. Even though the couple were married for 12 years, and California has "no fault divorce," nevertheless, in the divorce settlement Ellen got little more than her personal belongings. Eugene Escat, on the other hand, got full title to their expensive home, which he subsequently sold for \$425,000! He was not required to pay even one cent of alimony. Interesting, isn't it?

Ellen Escat, as Joe Tkach's chief female assistant, receives a generous salary. She also was moved into a luxury condo across the street from his own home in 1987, the year after Herbert Armstrong's death, ostensibly, as Tkach explained to one volunteer mover, "to be closer to her work."

### **Wolves in Sheep's Clothing**

These items of interest, are, of course, only the tip of the iceberg. Jesus Christ warned us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. He warned us to watch out -- to be careful. The apostle Paul warned, "I know that after I leave SAVAGE WOLVES will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own numbers men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Paul wrote to Timothy, warning,

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive . . . without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers

of God -- having a FORM of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

"They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins, and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth -- men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone" (II Tim.3:1-9).

The apostle Peter also talked about such men when he wrote: "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will SECRETLY INTRODUCE DESTRUCTIVE HERESIES, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -- bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping" (II Pet.2:1-3).

Peter goes on: "Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings . . . But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

"They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to *carouse in broad daylight*. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With EYES FULL OF ADULTERY, they never stop sinning; they *seduce the unstable*; they are experts in greed -- an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness."

Peter continues, "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity -- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

"It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud'" (II Pet.2:10-22).



### **Joe Tkach's Tangled Web**

What are the real fruits of Joe Tkach? What is his real nature? A man who lies about his past, covers up his misdeeds, sells his wife for political power and advantage, commits adultery and seduces young women -- all the while pretending to be a godly, holy, friendly, loving servant of God! What must God Almighty think of this man?

I have not even begun to discuss the changes in Church doctrine which he has watered down, the errors and heresies he has introduced, and his refusal to stand corrected and to admit and accept New Truth on prophecy, Passover, Pentecost, and many other subjects!

What about it -- you ministers of God? Are you still servants of the living God? Or have you sold out for a paycheck? Have you quit serving God so you can have a "nice life" now, in the ministry of the Church, looked up to, admired, even while you compromise with the truth and pervert justice and destroy judgment? Are you one of those who disfellowships the godly for political gain? Are you a spiritual tyrant?

Whatever happened to some of you? You once were so faithful to God, so loving of your congregation, so protective of the sheep in your care. What has happened to your mind, your attitude, your desire to serve God? Do you still hunger and thirst after righteousness?

When did you begin to sell out? When did you begin to compromise with the truth, integrity, and intellectual honesty?

There is not much time left before the end of this age. Soon, very soon now, Jesus Christ is going to return, and bring the Kingdom of God. Will YOU be among the saints, who will meet Him at His return, and rule forever with Him over the entire Universe?

Or are you one of those who will burn up in the lake of fire, because you sold out, you gave up, you decided the pleasure of sin for a season outweighed the value of the Kingdom of God?

Unless Joe Tkach repents, his fate is sealed, certain. As Paul wrote, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:26-31).

Paul went on, "It is impossible for those have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

"Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned" (Heb.6:4-8).

My dear friends, and long-time acquaintances, where do you fit in the present scheme of things? Are you following Joe Tkach blindly, committing spiritual suicide? Or do you have the spiritual guts and fortitude to stand up to his error, to "prove all things," and to put the Word and Law of God first in YOUR life?

### **"Count the Cost"**

Many of you know that the Church has compromised with the truth. Many of you are well aware that truth has been replaced by error, and that the present government of the Church is run like a Gestapo terror squad. You don't dare to question the authority over you unless you want to lose your job. You don't dare to oppose error in the leadership of the Church, when you see it, lest you become fired, one of the casualties of the Church!

But would you rather be "fired" by Christ Jesus when He returns?

I know, many of you think in your heart and mind, "It is God's problem. God will straighten it all out in His time." Therefore, you absolve yourself of all responsibility, and you yourself refuse to stand up for the truth! You weakly, supinely submit to being led astray, and you follow headquarters, even when you know or believe they are WRONG!

Tell me, you who do this -- can Joseph Tkach give you salvation? Can he give you eternal life? Surely, he may give you a \$10,000 bonus once in awhile -- but is that worth more to you than he KINGDOM OF GOD?

You all know, from personal experience, that the Church of God has had many problems during the years -- especially after the death of Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong in 1967. You know that Herbert Armstrong himself covered up sins, condoned sins, and he himself had problems with sex with his daughter, and became very tyrannical in his later years. You know he was misled by those around him, and influenced by self-seeking, self-serving sycophants and "aides" who sought to excel each other in slavish "loyalty" and flattery.

You know that what I speak is the truth. The question is, where do you stand?

How important is TRUTH in your life?

I have written extensively over the past few years, pinpointing errors in Church doctrine -- things you can prove to yourself, if you desire to take the time and make the effort. It is up to you. Are you willing to be challenged -- to check up and PROVE whether you are still in the faith? The apostle Paul wrote, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (I Cor.10:12). He also wrote, "EXAMINE YOURSELVES to see whether you are in the faith; TEST YOURSELVES" (II Cor.13:5).

Take the CHALLENGE!

How important is the TRUTH to you? Are you willing to DIE for it? Are you willing to sacrifice all for it -- like the pearl of great price? If Joe Tkach is no longer following the commandments of God, will you STEP OUT ON FAITH to obey God, even if it costs your job, livelihood, friends you have had for years? Have YOU who told others seeking baptism to "count the cost" -- have YOU "counted the cost"?

The apostle Paul wrote: "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. *They perish because they REFUSED TO LOVE THE TRUTH* and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (II Thess.2:9-12).

Are you in a comfortable rut? Are you too drowsy to step out of the rut? Are you satisfied with things just the way they are? Do you excuse your own decision to just "go along" with the attitude that God will take care of the problem Himself in His own time? Do you, therefore, lend your support to an evil man who is rapidly leading the Church of God into error, heresy, and apostasy?

I know these are hard questions. They deserve much deep consideration, and the answers to them should not be taken lightly. They could affect your entire future life and income! But even more than that, they could affect your eternal future and very salvation!

I received a letter from a man recently who was writing about one of you. I think you should know what he had to say. Therefore, I will quote his words to you:

"The History of the leaders of the Church nearly blows my mind. You know -- incest, adultery, thieving, liars, maybe even murder, I don't know. I remember the first man I heard preach in person, Carn Catherwood back in '63 and I ask myself: How does this man go along with this? Is it money?

"What happened to the command Jesus gave us --

follow me, don't sell out, love my sheep?

"I tell you I have never dreamed his ministers would treat us this way. These thoughts just scratch the surface. We the scattered flock need help. Where do we go?"

I receive many poignant letters from members and former members, who have been severely mistreated by cruel shepherds ruling over the flock of God with an iron fist, like a Hitlerian dictator, instead of the love of God. I read with deep emotion accounts of children being molested by ministers and leaders in the Church of God, and then the parents being disfellowshipped when they complained about it! Many of the ministers of the Church of God have indeed "sold out." They have exchanged their crown for a pot of pottage, a bowl of soul. But that bowl of soup will turn out to be a bowl full of spiders! What about you, personally? Have you, too, "sold out"?

### **A Lonely Figure on a Hill**

Almost 2,900 years ago a lonely figure of a man trudged to the top of Mount Carmel. The whole world seemed to be against him. Nobody stood up to defend him, or to join him -- at least nobody that he knew of at the time. He was accused of making trouble for Israel -- a trouble maker. He was accused of being a heretic, a false prophet. Some were seeking to put him to death!

This austere figure of a man sent a message to the king of Israel saying he would meet with him. When the king arrived at the designated spot, he immediately accused, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"

He replied, "I have not made trouble for Israel. But you and your father's family have. You have ABANDONED THE LORD'S COMMANDS and have followed the BAALS." He then told the king to summon the people to meet with him on top of a mountain, along with all the false prophets of Baal, the pagan "lord," and Asherah, or "Easter."

When the people arrived, and thousands were present, the stranger appeared, clothed in a garment of hair, with a leather belt around his waist -- he did not wear a suit and tie, or dress up in fashionable garb which some might think more appropriate for a "public" appearance or function.

When all the people were assembled, along with the ministers of the churches of the land, he issued them a formal challenge. He thundered to all the people:

**"HOW LONG WILL YOU WAVER BETWEEN  
TWO OPINIONS? IF THE LORD IS GOD,  
FOLLOW HIM; BUT IF BAAL IS GOD,  
FOLLOW HIM."**

The people answered him not a word. Silence reigned. You could hear a pin drop. Then the stranger said: "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets." He challenged the prophets of Baal to a spiritual "duel." He challenged them to make a sacrifice, and then he would make a sacrifice. And he said, "the God who answers by fire -- he is God."

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice, clothed in ceremonial robes, and made a spectacular show. They danced, and wailed, and shouted, and pleaded for their god to hear them. They gashed themselves with knives, till the blood flowed. But there was no answer. Their "god" had no power to intervene and answer them.

Finally, at the time of the evening sacrifice, the man of God simply repaired the altar of God which was in ruins. He then took twelve stones for each of the tribes of Israel, and with them rebuilt the altar. He then dug a trench around it. He arranged the wood, and cut a bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. He then commanded the people to drench the whole with four large jars of water three times, till the water ran down around the altar, and filled the trench. At the time of the evening sacrifice he stepped forward and prayed:

*"O LORD [Yahveh], God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD [Yahveh] answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD [Yahveh], are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."*

You know the rest of the story. The fire of the Lord God fell from heaven like lightning and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stone, and the soil, and licked up the water in the trench. And all the people assembled fell prostrate, and cried out with a shout, "The LORD [Yahveh] -- he is God! The LORD [Yahveh] -- he is God!"

### **The Voice of Elijah**

This lonely figure, this "stranger," who did these things, was Elijah. God promised He would send another, in the spirit and power of Elijah, during these last days to also "turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal.4:6). God is seeking now to turn the hearts of His people back to Him, and the hearts of His ministers back to Him. He is seeking to turn the hearts of His sheep to their ministers, and the hearts of the ministers back to the sheep.

The apostle Peter exhorts you ministers with a solemn command. He wrote:

*"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God*

wants you to be; *not greedy for money*, but eager to serve; *not lording it over those entrusted to you*, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (I Pet.5:1-4).

I don't know how much longer I will be able to continue writing to you about these things. God is very patient, not willing that any should perish. He is giving all of you, my friends, both lay members and ministers alike, ample time to repent, and get your life right with Him. But His patience will not last forever. A time of reckoning is coming -- a day of judgment!

*"For it is time for judgment to BEGIN with the family of God" (I Pet.4:17).*

Look around you. World troubles are intensifying. Germany is on the threshold of reunification. Eastern Europe has broken the bonds of Communism. Cruel war threatens to break out between Pakistan and India over Kashmir. Plagues are beginning to descend upon the nations of modern "Israel." Weather upset and drought are prophesied next. As well as economic chaos and hard times, leading up to the Great Tribulation.

### **While America Sleeps**

An editorial in *U.S. News & World Report*, February 26, 1990, by Mortimer Zuckerman was entitled "Why America Slept." The article declared:

"America is happy to have won the cold war. But while we cheer, we are busy losing the hot war for America's economic future. Behind the false glitter of the prosperity of the 1980s, America is suffering grievous economic damage."

Mortimer Zuckerman goes on:

"What has gone wrong? Germany and Japan save and invest two to three times as much as we do per employee. Japan has out-invested America per employee for 20 years. Why? Because real interest rates in the United States in 1989 were three times higher than in Japan. The reason is all too clear: Federal budget deficits that exceed \$200 billion, excluding the raids on Social Security and other trust funds. These deficits use up 75 percent of our savings, push up interest rates and squeeze our capital investment . . . "Perhaps the most troubling result of the 1980s is the loss of American financial supremacy just when world financial markets have become more important than ever. Today, the top 13 Japanese banks alone have a value that approximates five times the value of our 50 largest financial institutions. Germany and Japan have taken over the longstanding U.S. role as the low-cost, low-interest producer of capital. No

wonder money has become Japan's leading export to the U.S., money that Japan earned the old-fashioned way: Working hard, saving hard and trading hard. Japan's trade-surplus billions are now being used to buy bonds and make direct investments. The result? Goodbye Rockefeller Center. Goodbye Columbia Pictures. But not goodbye America [yet!]. We have not lost control of our economy [yet], but every sale arouses the fear of a future of Japanese [and German] ascendancy and American decline."

### "Dr. Feelgood" at the Helm

Zuckerman pinpoints the problem squarely on the target. He declares, "The wickedness lies in our *profligacy*, which has made us depend on foreign money. *The American Esau has sold his birthright for a mess of consumption, debt and political soft soap.* Dr. Feelgood, presently residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, tells us in his state-of-the-union message and economic report that everything is fine. Herein lies the failure, for we need a positive American program to reduce the deficit, to increase savings and investment and to lower interest rates."

This sage commentator warns,

"President Kennedy wrote a book, *Why England Slept*, about the failure of Britain to respond to the emergence of Hitler, when Prime Minister Chamberlain tried appeasement and promised the British people 'peace for our time.' President Bush is promising America 'prosperity in our time' without trying to make politically acceptable the sacrifice necessary to produce it. In Britain, Winston Churchill did that, rallied the nation and earned his place in history, while Chamberlain is consigned to history's dustbin. Mr. Bush might reflect on how he would figure in a book entitled *Why America Slept*. It is being written every day he delays."

Like President Bush, or "Dr. Feelgood," Joseph Tkach is the "Dr. Feelgood" of the Worldwide Church of God. He is the "Grand Panjandrum" of Pasadena. While he refuses to tell the people the truth, and rejects hard-to-swallow unpleasant new truth, the Church languishes in a spirit of Laodiceanism. A spirit of slumber and ease has overtaken the entire Church. The words of the prophecy of Jesus Christ warn that the Church is presently in dire straits. The people of God are in grave danger of being spewed out of the mouth of Christ! He declared, speaking in solemn warning to the last generation of His Church during this End Time:

"To the angel [or leader] of the church in Laodicea write . . .  
'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are LUKEWARM -- neither cold nor hot -- I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I REBUKE and discipline. So be earnest, and *REPENT*" (Rev.3:14-20).

*"REPENT!"* Jesus says! Examine yourselves, the apostle Paul commands (II Cor.13:5).

*"Prove all things,"* the Word of God commands you plainly (I Thess.5:21). "Despise not prophesyings," Paul commanded (verse 20). "Do not treat prophecies with contempt" (New International Version).

What about you? Are you going to follow "Dr. Feelgood," and dismiss the importance and vital relevancy of Bible prophecy for OUR TIME, today?

As long as "Dr. Feelgood" rejects bitter truth, and new revelation concerning the commandments of God, the right day and manner to observe Passover, and Pentecost, and the many other truths God is revealing during this final age before the coming of the Messiah, the Church will continue its downward turn and plunge into wickedness, sensuality, disobedience, and ultimate death!

### **The Party Is Almost Over**

The judgments of God are about to descend on His nations of modern Israel, and especially on His Church and its leaders. Make no mistake! God is not mocked. You *will* reap what you sow!

Already the plagues of God have begun. AIDs is spreading like wildfire through the population, and other plagues are waiting on the horizon to strike.

Make no mistake! GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE FAST COMING! Now is definitely NOT the time to be lulled into a deep slumber, by the calming, sonorous tones of a Joseph Tkach!

Meanwhile, increased gang violence, shootings, crime, and drug abuse, threaten our nations from within. Pornography explodes on the video and television screen, and the family is in decline around the world. Wickedness is increasing everywhere. Evil is rampant. As Jesus warned, "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt.24:12). "But he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (v.13).

The party is almost over. The time to pay the piper has come.

Are you awake to what is really going on? Are you alert, vigilant, to what is really happening? Or has the swan song of Joseph W. Tkach put *you* to sleep -- with blinders on?



### In the Last Days -- SCOFFERS

Even while world troubles increase, and while "disarmament" proceeds at a rapid clip among the superpowers, and "peace" seems to be in the air, you know very well that the apostle Paul, and the prophets of God, warned: "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' DESTRUCTION will come on them *SUDDENLY*, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will NOT ESCAPE" (I Thess.5:3).

In the meantime, Joseph Tkach has fallen fast asleep. He teaches that these may not be the real end times, and concludes that Bible prophecies can "fail." He asserts that Jesus' warning to "watch" refers to our own "spiritual temperature," and not rapidly unfolding world events. He has put almost the entire Church of God fast asleep with his sweet lullaby. Are you, also, fooled?

All around us, prophecy is being fulfilled at an accelerated rate, with increased velocity and violence. Prophecies are literally leaping to life right before our very eyes! Judgment is right around the corner, for our modern nations, and for the Church of God! Now is not the time to fall asleep, or to be mesmerized by the hypnotic chanting of a spiritual false leader! Peter warned:

"First of all, you must understand that IN THE LAST DAYS *SCOFFERS* will come, scoffing and *following their evil desires*. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But they *deliberately forget* that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the *day of judgment and destruction* of ungodly men" (II Pet.3:3-7).

What about you? Have you, too, fallen asleep? Have the smiles of the cobra bewitched you? Danger lurks all around you. Your very salvation is in great peril and danger. Are you really aware of the danger you are in, spiritually? May God help many of you to WAKE UP!

There is not much time left. I know these truths are not pleasant to contemplate. Truth is often a bitter pill to swallow, but we must be willing to take our medicine, if we wish to save our lives, and receive eternal life and salvation.

God commands, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; CORRECT, BEBUKE AND ENCOURAGE -- which great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come [and has arrived] when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and TURN ASIDE TO MYTHS" (II Tim.4:2-4).

Are you willing to take God's correction? Are you willing to be rebuked by Jesus Christ, and His Word? Or are you one of those who will follow "Dr. Feelgood," and the Pied Pipe from Hell, who is leading the Church of God astray?

Again I say to you, my friends -- lay members and ministers alike -- with whom I enjoyed fellowship for many years, in college, classes, work, and at the feasts of God -- consider the reality of these things. Don't be afraid to investigate the truth and to "*prove all things*" (I Thess.5:21). Don't take anything for granted. Don't just "assume" you are right. *Prove ALL things!*

In conclusion, my friends, God warned that in the "last days" there would come a great FALLING AWAY from the truth of God! A great apostasy would occur -- a great REBELLION against the truth of God (II Thess.2:3). Jesus foretold that MANY would be deceived. Even the very elect would be tempted (Matt.24:22-24). Paul declared that ONLY THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH would be spared from the strong delusion to come!

"They perish because they REFUSED to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a POWERFUL DELUSION so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (II Thess.2:11-12).

More than ever we need to follow and heed the admonition of the apostle Jude, who wrote:

"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 which was ONCE DELIVERED unto the saints. For there are *certain men crept in unawares*, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and DENYING the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4, KJV).

God calls the one who sits in the Church or "Temple" of God, who leads the whole Church astray, the "son of perdition" (II Thess.2:3). He is a man of inordinate pride and false humility, arrogance and lawlessness. He changes doctrine, abolishes "times and laws," refuses to repent, rejects new truth about the correct day to observe Passover and Pentecost, rejects new truth on Bible prophecy. He is at work within the Church, stealthily and secretly changing truth into error. As Paul foretold:

"For the *mystery of iniquity* doth ALREADY work . . ." (II Thess.2:7).

He is a true Anti-Christ! For as the apostle John wrote:

"Dear children, this IS the LAST HOUR; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, EVEN NOW MANY

ANTICHRISTS have come. This is how we KNOW it is the *last hour*" (I John 2:18, NIV).

The "Beast" is shortly to rise up in Europe and bathe the whole world in flames and blood. But even now there is a "little beast" in Pasadena, who imitates the coming Beast and false prophet in many ways. He is a spiritual "type" of the Beast of Revelation. He leads men astray and perverts the ways of God. Are you alert to his insidious and clever machinations? Are you "tuned in" to his schemes and plots?

May the merciful Almighty help YOU to *WAKE UP*, before it is too late!

## Chapter 8

# *An End-Time* **“SON OF PERDITION”**

Just who is the "son of perdition" and "man of lawlessness" prophesied to arise in the Church of God during the Last Days? Does the Word of God foretell a final End-Time APOSTASY and Rebellion against the Truth of God, a final Falling Away from the Truth, within the very CHURCH OF GOD? What is the real MEANING BEHIND the many doctrinal CHANGES in the Worldwide Church of God in recent years? May God help YOU to WAKE UP and to realize what supreme, awesome DANGER you are in!

For years I have wondered who was the head of the End-time Laodicean Church. Beginning in 1967 I began seeing signs that the Worldwide Church of God was beginning to compromise with God's Truth, "liberal" elements were changing doctrines right and left, often (though not always) for the worse! Then I saw the agent of most of these changes, Ted Armstrong, ejected from the Church in 1978 -- and he began his OWN Church, which had all the signs of "Laodicea"!

But years later, in January 1986, Herbert Armstrong died, and Joe Tkach took over the reigns of the Worldwide Church of God as the new "apostle general." And almost immediately, he began implementing most of the changes Ted had sought -- and then began hurtling PAST Ted Armstrong in changes, plunging back into virtual mainstream Protestantism in basic theology!

Even before Herbert's death, Tkach wrote an article telling Church members they did not have to -- indeed, could not -- "qualify" for salvation! With this play on the word "qualify," he virtually dismantled Herbert Armstrong's basic teaching that we MUST obey God and keep His commandments in order to be "saved." Joe Tkach equated "qualify" with "earning" salvation, and then proceeded to claim since we cannot "earn" salvation, therefore we cannot "qualify" either!

This was just the beginning. Then he began to change the healing doctrine, Passover, the nature of Christ, the doctrine of being born into the FAMILY of God, "born again," began teaching we are "saved by grace alone," destroyed or withdrew all of Herbert Armstrong's old articles, and books, repudiated his life's opus *Mystery of the Ages*, withdrew and dismantled the U.S. and British Commonwealth being the tribe of Joseph of the lost ten tribes doctrine, began teaching a new version of the "Trinity" doctrine, and then began a flanking attack on the Ten Commandments!

*Laodicea -- or Supreme Apostasy?*

Who is this man, Joseph Tkach? Could a man who leads an entire Church into perdition and loss of salvation, really be the head of God's end-time, degenerate "Laodicean Church"?

Although there may well be many "Laodiceans" in the Worldwide Church of God, members who are lukewarm, lacking real spiritual zeal and energy for good works, who are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor [spiritually], and blind and naked" (Rev.3:17), partly due to the devastating spiritual influence of the apostasizing church leadership, nevertheless, it has come forcibly to my mind that Joseph Tkach himself is NOT the "messenger of the Church of Laodicea" (Rev.3:14, Living Bible), to whom the letter to the Laodicean Church is written in Revelation 3:14!

No, that dubious "honor" must still go to the one who BEGAN the movement in these last days into lukewarm compromise and indifferent apathy toward the TRUTH of God -- none other than Garner Ted Armstrong! He is the one who BEGAN the trend, liberalizing doctrines -- but he has never DEPARTED from the truth, as Joseph Tkach has. He has never attacked his father, although he disagreed on some doctrines. He still preaches Biblical prophecy, the warning message to "Israel," the correct identity of the lost ten tribes, and keeping God's commandments. However, the fact that he made many liberalizing changes, and began his OWN "church" after leaving Worldwide, indicates that at that time he literally founded and began the true, main branch of the LAODICEAN Church!

The Worldwide Church of God is also "Laodicean," in that it also is lukewarm, "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" spiritually. Both churches have the attitude of thinking they are "rich, and increased with goods [spiritually], and in need of nothing." Both are impervious to correction, resistant to rebuke, and hostile to new truth.

But, my friends, there is indeed a world of difference between being Laodicean, and being an agent of APOSTASY and WHOLESAL DEPARTURE from the truth of GOD!

*"Traitors" Foretold!*

Joseph W. Tkach, with his numerous doctrine changes, and rejection of the HEART AND CORE of the teachings of Herbert Armstrong (except tithing three tithes and church "government!"), has not just proven himself to be Laodicean, but an unregenerate, unconverted, spiritual WHORE! He is not merely an erring minister who has made a few "mistakes" -- he is a total FALSE PROPHET!

Believe it or not, the rise to the top of God's Church in the END TIMES of a great false teacher and false apostle and RENEGADE Traitor from the Truth, was prophesied, in the pages of your Bible! Notice these amazing Biblical prophecies!

The apostle Paul warned that "traitors" would arise in the "last days," men who were "heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a FORM of godliness, but denying the POWER thereof [including God's power to HEAL!]." Paul commands God's people: "FROM SUCH TURN AWAY"! (see II Tim.3:1-5). He says these men are "ever learning" [that is, pseudo-intellectual], and NEVER ABLE to come to the knowledge of the TRUTH" (verse 7), and warns that these men "resist the TRUTH: men of CORRUPT minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (verse 8).

Doesn't this describe the abominable changes in doctrine that have been authorized and foisted upon the Church by Joe Tkach during recent years, up to the very present time?

Consider! Paul warned further, "For the time will come when they [many church members] will not endure SOUND DOCTRINE [it is too hard, they desire an "easy path" to salvation!]; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the TRUTH, and shall be *turned unto FABLES*" (II Tim.4:3-4).

Peter also prophesied of END TIME APOSTASY, of church leaders DEPARTING FROM God's Truth. These prophecies cannot be about churches which NEVER HAD the Truth, but rather about a Church prominent in the last days which FORSAKES the Truth it once held precious and in high regard!

Peter wrote: "There shall be FALSE TEACHERS AMONG YOU, who privily [secretly] SHALL bring in [FUTURE TENSE] DAMNABLE HERESIES, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And MANY shall follow their PERNICIOUS ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 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" (II Pet.2:1-3).

The word "pernicious," which Peter uses here to describe their ways and teachings, comes from the Latin root meaning "destruction," "violent death," and

means, literally, "highly injurious or destructive; deadly." The original Greek word Peter used here is *apoleia*, which means, "damnable, destruction, die, perdition, pernicious, waste." It means literally the WAY OF PERDITION!

The same word is used several times in the New Testament, and is often translated "perdition." It is used in reference to Judas Iscariot, the "son of perdition" -- the same word. Judas, of course, is the wicked apostle who betrayed Christ and delivered Him up to the Sadducees and Pharisees to be crucified! But amazingly enough, the Bible foretells an END-TIME "SON OF PERDITION," like Judas himself, who would rise up IN THE CHURCH of God, rebel against the Truth of God, and become a TRAITOR to God and Christ! He also is called a "son of perdition"!

*"Earnestly Contend for the Faith"*

Before revealing this end-time "son of perdition," as the Bible calls him, notice how the apostle Jude also foretold widespread apostasy and departure from the Truth during the last days. He wrote: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the GRACE of our God into lasciviousness [license to do EVIL!], and DENYING the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Because of these end-time evil leaders in the Church, Jude exhorted TRUE Christians, saying, "It was NEEDFUL for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should EARNESTLY CONTEND [FIGHT, STRUGGLE] FOR THE FAITH [DOCTRINES, BODY OF BELIEFS] which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Isn't it interesting how Joseph Tkach's new "focus" of teaching emphasizes you don't have to "qualify" for salvation, and "GRACE"? He had even begun to RIDICULE the Ten Commandments, saying they don't teach us how to "love" our neighbor! He says we don't have to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12), but claims we are ALREADY "BORN AGAIN" and already "IN THE KINGDOM"!

Think about it! All these diabolical new doctrinal changes all tie in together!

They spell one thing -- **D-O-O-M** -- to every end-time Christian who swallows them, like a viciously lethal insecticide poison!

*The End-Time "Son of Perdition"*

To the Church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul warned the brethren not to worry about those who said the day of Christ's coming was "at hand" in that day (II Thess.2:1-2). He went on to prophesy: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a FALLING AWAY [Greek *apostasia*, meaning "defection from the truth, forsaking, apostasy"!]  
FIRST, and that man of sin be

revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God [God's Church is called a "temple" -- see Eph.2:20-22], shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess.2:3-4).

Notice! Paul predicted under divine inspiration that a great APOSTASY would occur during the End Time! Many would defect from the truth. In order to do this, these apostasy-prone people must have first HAD the Truth! To lose it, and forsake it, they first had to *possess* it!

The individual who LEADS them in this apostasy is called "that man of SIN," a man who is a notorious liar, sinner, and wicked individual (who, of course, hides his evil and covers his tracks). He is called "the son of perdition," just like Judas Iscariot, putting him on a level with the arch-traitor and most treacherous individual of ALL TIME!

Judas, remember, was a very disciple of Christ -- an "apostle"! Therefore, it seems likely that this END-TIME JUDAS must also have been a "disciple" in God's End-Time Work, and also an END-TIME "APOSTLE"! Judas was never really converted -- never received the Holy Spirit as a begettal. Therefore, this End-Time traitor also was probably never REALLY converted -- never received the Holy Spirit! His fruits would attest to the fact that he was always an inveterate, congenital LIAR, and a self-seeking, pleasure-seeking, cruel and AMBITIOUS individual who would obviously, by hook or crook, RISE TO THE TOP!

This end-time Traitor would RULE in the House or Temple of God -- the Church! People would adulate him, virtually worship him, APPLAUD AND EXTOL him, and he would EXALT himself! By denying the Word of Christ, and the Truth of God, he would in a sense put himself therefore BEFORE GOD -- making himself an "idol" -- acting "as God" himself by changing doctrines without God's approval and changing "times and laws" (Dan.7:25).

This architect of evil would enter the Church craftily, and begin changing doctrines subtly. Like the beast of Revelation, who is his anti-type in the world, "through his policy also he shall cause CRAFT to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by PEACE [Hebrew, "PROSPERITY"!] shall DESTROY MANY [cause many of God's people to lose their salvation!] . . ." (Dan.8:25).

This spiritual "bastard" of the foulest rank and stripe is depicted in Scripture as a "vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and OBTAIN THE KINGDOM [control over the Church of God!] BY FLATTERIES" -- flattering up his predecessor, boot-licking and fawning before Herbert W. Armstrong, and deceiving him as to his "true loyalty" (see Dan.11:21).

This insidious plot of Satan the devil to instill HIS OWN unregenerate "apostle"



over the final End-Time Church of God WAS FORETOLD IN SCRIPTURAL PROPHECY! Why should we be surprised or startled? God allowed it to happen. This is a means God has chosen to TEST His true people -- to force them to CHOOSE -- to compel them to STAND UP FOR TRUTH -- OR COMPROMISE WITH EVIL, AND BECOME DESTROYED!

*Restrained Until "His Time"*

Paul went on, in this amazing prophecy, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed IN HIS TIME" (II Thess.2:5-6). Joseph W. Tkach was revealed to the world AFTER the death of Herbert W. Armstrong (January 1986). Before that time, he watched his "p's" and "q's" very carefully, and trod the line, expressing total fawning loyalty to his master, Herbert W. Armstrong. But once Herbert was out of the way, the End-Time leader of God's Church was dead, THEN Joseph began to work his wicked work, and gradually DESTROY the truth of God, and replace it with subtle, ingenious, clever "CRAFT" -- SATANIC ERROR!

Paul goes on, "For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrains, in the Greek] will let [restrain, or hold back], until he be taken out of the way" (verse 7). The one who restrained the advent of evil and wholesale apostasy, was Herbert W. Armstrong. His final days and years were spent trying to get the Church "BACK ON THE TRACK." He only partially succeeded. But when he was "taken out of the way" -- that is, when he died, the ROAD LAY OPEN before Joe Tkach, now invested with all the dictatorial powers and authority of Herbert Armstrong, to do AS HE WILLED with the Church.

Nobody dared oppose him. Nobody dared stand up to him. Those who did were summarily exiled, fired, deposed, stripped of all authority, rank, and prestige -- relegated to the "dust bin" of former evangelists and pastors. Those who remained in his "hire," serving his every whim of doctrine, became or revealed what they really were all along -- spiritual "HIRELINGS" or "hired hands" who taught and preached for their paycheck (John 10:11-13). They don't love the sheep of the flock. They don't care for the sheep, the members. They serve only for hire -- money is their true "god" (Matt.6:24).

Paul continues: "And THEN shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power [in the church] and signs and lying wonders [they are "wonderful liars," aren't they? Very clever!], and with ALL DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness [disobedience to God's laws] in them that PERISH [church members who go along with the apostasy movement, regardless of their "excuse"!]; because they received not the LOVE OF THE TRUTH, that they might be saved.

"And for this cause [because these church members don't LOVE God's Truth and

consider it PRECIOUS, and therefore don't CLING and CLEAVE to it] God shall send them STRONG DELUSION, that they should believe a LIE: That they all might be damned who believed not the TRUTH, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess.2:8-11).

Are you by chance following this End-Time deceiver? Are you caught up in the web of deceit spun by this man whose very name means "WEAVER"?

God has identified him for you. Will you listen to this WARNING MESSAGE from GOD?

The Moffatt translation calls this final apostasy "the Rebellion" (II Thess.2:3) and calls the architect who orchestrates it "the Lawless One" (same verse). Thus, Joseph Tkach is leading the modern REBELLION AGAINST GOD, JUST AS NIMROD DID soon after the Flood! Is that why his cohorts now ridicule the book by Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, and no longer use it? Joseph Tkach is nothing less than a modern spiritual NIMROD, a "mighty hunter AGAINST the Lord" (compare Gen.10:9). He is "hunting" for YOUR salvation -- he is hunting for YOUR "soul." He seeks to devour and destroy YOUR spiritual LIFE!

When will many of you people WAKE UP? Those of you who remain in the Worldwide Church of God are in GRAVE DANGER -- ominous PERIL -- and don't even know it! Those who follow Joseph W. Tkach are NOT merely in danger of going into the Great Tribulation, as is prophesied for the Laodicean Church. Rather, they are in danger of LOSING THEIR SALVATION -- of PERDITION and DESTRUCTION in the very flames of the final Lake of Fire, the Gehenna Holocaust!

May God help you to **WAKE UP!**

## **“JOE TKACH – “THE WARRIOR”?”**

In the Worldwide Church of God, much has been made of Joseph Tkach's supposed brilliant military career. Ministers in the Church have claimed that Joe's exploits during World War II were superlative, even comparing his exploits with General George S. Patton. Tkach was ostensibly a navy gunner who gained fame relentlessly downing Japanese kamikazes. What is the truth about "gunner Joe's" claimed naval exploits?

According to the *Worldwide News*, Tkach was a crewman aboard the destroyer *USS Austin* during World War II. Naval records, however, tell us the ship was not a destroyer, but a destroyer escort, classified as DE-15. Attached to the Pacific Fleet, it operated with Task Force 51 in the vicinity of Alaska and during the recapture of Attu, May 11, 1943. It then escorted convoys between San Francisco and Hawaii until September 14, 1943. The following year she escorted vessels between Alaskan ports, patrolled and acted as a weather ship. From April 1945 till the end of the war, the

Austin did escort and patrol duty in the Carolines and Marianas. This information can be found in the authoritative *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, volume 1 (19590), published by the Navy Department, Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division, Washington, D.C.

Notice! The Austin was NOT involved in the battles where the Japanese introduced the infamous kamikaze suicide fighters -- the battles of Leyte Gulf and Okinawa! The closest the Austin got to actual combat was during the landing of troops on Attu in the Aleutian chain on May 11, 1943. If Tkach had been on the Austin then, he would have been only 16 years of age -- and all enlisted men had to be 18 or over. The Japanese on Attu did not use kamikaze piloted planes!

Nevertheless, the legendary heroics of Joe Tkach, famed World War II warrior, seemed to grow taller each time evangelist Gerald Waterhouse told them. Waterhouse even told an account where Tkach led another sailor to jump ship and go AWOL, swimming to an island where they were incarcerated with a bunch of Marines, whom Joe fought daily. They were then placed on a different ship -- and their previous ship was sunk by the Japanese! It was "God's hand in history," according to Gerald Waterhouse -- but really just another Paul Bunyanesque TALL TALE!

## Tkach's Early Life

We read in the *Worldwide News*, January 27, 1986, in "The Passing of the Baton" by Jeff Zhorne and the illustrious Michael Snyder:

"Before coming into God's Church, Mr. Tkach served in the U.S. Navy, receiving a certificate in basic engineering in 1945. He then attended the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, studying industrial management, industrial safety and human factors in industry. In 1950 Mr. Tkach was hired by Hupp Aviation, where he worked in the apprentice program. Before resigning in 1963 to serve in the ministry, he advanced to supervisor and obtained journeyman credentials. He was once fired by Hupp Aviation for keeping the Sabbath, an incident he described to the combined Pasadena churches Jan. 18. 'I was threatened if I didn't come in on that Sabbath for a special meeting that I would be fired,' Mr. Tkach recalled. 'Upon coming home from Church services there was a telegram waiting for me stating that I was fired. Monday morning I received a telephone call from the personnel manager saying, "Management would like you to come in immediately, as fast as you can get here." I didn't know what to expect,' the pastor general continued. 'But after arriving at the plant, out in the parking lot there were almost 2,000 people milling around on a wildcat strike because they heard I was fired. You see, we serve a God who fights our battles for us. My job was given back to me.'"

How much "TRUTH" is there in this story -- or is it *another* "TALL TALE"? When telephoned long distance and asked about this story, Hupp Aviation contradicted it on several points. Hupp Aviation explained, first of all, that their company NEVER had more than a couple of hundred employees -- nowhere near the 2,000 that Tkach claims. An older engineer who had been at the company since the early fifties remembered Tkach and his wife Elaine, who had worked in the company's office. This man said Tkach had NEVER been a supervisor -- he was "just one of the guys -- just one of the guys who worked in the plant," he told John Trechak of *Ambassador Report*

(March 1989 issue). The engineer did not recall any such incident as the wildcat strike, pointed out the company was never large enough for such a demonstration, and said that even a small strike or demonstration would hardly have escaped his notice.

Hupp Aviation's own files showed that actually Tkach started working there in 1947, not 1950, as the Worldwide News article stated. The office verified that Tkach was never a supervisor, just an hourly wage employee. For 16 years all Tkach did was "assembly work." Company records do not show he was ever fired; only that he quit in 1963. Illinois Institute of Technology, furthermore, did a lengthy search of their records, and found that no one by the name of Joseph Tkach ever attended there, or took classes there.

Furthermore, the classes Tkach claimed to have taken were never even offered by IIT! Records at Gage Park High School and Tilden High School in Chicago reveal that Joe Tkach *never even graduated from high school.*

He was a high school drop-out, long before that became commonplace.

## **Chancellor Tkach -- How a High School Drop-Out Rose to the Top of an Educational Institution!**

A funny story is told that when Herbert Armstrong appointed Joseph Tkach to the powerful post over Church Administration, Roderick C. Meredith -- long-time evangelist, at one time the "third" most powerful minister in the Church, and a previous head of the Church Administration Department -- was so upset that he contacted a fellow elder and exploded. Meredith -- absolutely staggered and dumbfounded that Tkach would be chosen for such a high position -- explained how back in the 1960's he had personally reviewed all the entrance applications and I.Q. scores of field ministers brought to Ambassador College for further training. Said Meredith, Tkach's I.Q. score was among the very lowest of those ever admitted to Ambassador, and was in fact "even lower than the Blacks!"

While this anecdote may say more about Meredith's racial attitude than Tkach's intelligence, there is a perception among high level WCG executives that Joseph Tkach just isn't all that bright. John Trechak writes in *Ambassador Report*:

"Of course, we should not fault someone for what nature has not provided. Most of us do not have a precision of mind, command of language, and store of memory of which we may be proud. But regarding Tkach, there is the perception among many that he has never made a real effort to gain any type of education or to achieve excellence in anything other than WCG rank (if indeed 'excellence' and 'WCG rank' may properly be used in the same breath). . . . Claims about Tkach having attended the Illinois Institute of Technology notwithstanding, I have seen no evidence that Tkach ever took even one class at an accredited college. At unaccredited Ambassador College, where he is now the WCG administrator Al Carrozo who was Tkach's superior during the period in question, Tkach really had only one full year at Ambassador and his academic performance was

mediocre, at best. Afterward he may have sat in on a few lectures, but he was never matriculated toward a degree, and he definitely never graduated.

". . .Strangely, of the scores of people I have interviewed for this article and who have personally known Tkach, not one could recall Tkach ever reading, collecting, quoting, or even talking about *any* book, with the exception of the Bible. And some who worked with him in the past say he didn't seem all that interested in studying the Bible, either. I wonder if similar observations were made by Plain Truth editor Herman L. Hoeh and church founder Herbert Armstrong. For in the past, Hoeh is said to have derisively

"All of the above leads to two rather obvious questions: How is Tkach able to run the mammoth WCG organization? And how in the world did Tkach ever get put in charge?"

-- Ambassador Report, September 1989.

## The "Pancake Apostle"

"This flipflop from the 'flapjak' or 'PANCAKE APOSTLE' -- Joseph Tkach used to be famous in Pasadena Church area for his part in cooking pancakes at Church socials -- will no doubt make their message acceptable in the eyes of Protestantism and Catholicism. . . .

"The WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD now says that 'EVERY DOCTRINE' is now 'ON THE TABLE.'" -- April 1991 *Prophecy Flash*.

Michael Snyder, spokesman for the Worldwide Church of God, was asked on a Christian radio broadcast:

"Michael, *salvation by grace through faith alone is a standard Reformation doctrine*. Is that the way you would formulate your doctrine of salvation -- salvation by grace through faith alone?"

Snyder's answer:

"Yes. . . . salvation cannot be worked out or obtained by any physical works whatsoever. . . . the credit for salvation solely must go to Christ's sacrifice and His atoning for our sins."

The words of Jesus Christ he deftly ignored (Matt.5:17-19; 19:17-18).

What about the Sabbath? Sabbath observance is one of the cardinal teachings of the Worldwide Church of God. Snyder was asked: "Is Sabbath keeping a prerequisite to salvation?"

Snyder answered: "Well, no, because salvation is by grace."

Asked if Sunday observance was "the mark of the Beast," as the Church taught for over fifty years, Snyder replied: "I don't think that is the way we would characterize it, today."

When asked about the Trinity, Snyder hemmed and hawed and glibly replied: "We affirm that the Holy Spirit is divine. . . We don't hold to the belief that the Trinity is a divinely revealed concept . . . but we do not deny the oneness of God and we do not deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit."

Asked if the Worldwide Church of God would describe God as one God in three persons, Snyder answered: ". . . it is not even really an appropriate label to call God a person."

Asked about the belief that the United States and British Commonwealth constitute the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, Snyder responded: "The Church has never believed in what is commonly called Anglo-Israelism or British-Israelism. . . We have never embraced that."

These are just a FEW of the shocking, astonishing FLIPFLOPS of the new Pancake Apostle, Joseph W. (for "Wicked") Tkach!!!

### ***The CHANCELLOR'S NEW CLOTHES***

A woman wrote me a letter, greatly concerned about the amazing changes going on in the Worldwide Church of God. She said that the deceit and the doubletalk are just too much. She pointed out how Joseph Tkach has changed the doctrine of being "born again" and now applies this religious term to the experience of conversion, just like all the Protestant Churches do. She laments:

"Now, Mr. Dankenbring, they have just changed a MAJOR DOCTRINE OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH. But they 'said' they didn't. Our poor brain dead brethren back in WW will believe what Father Tkach tells them . . . .

"Yes, that is why I write to you, Mr. Dankenbring . . . I respect you a great deal for giving us the muzzled and grief stricken a voice to cry out against the doubletalk at Headquarters, and a place to expose the evil works of darkness. Now, if they would have just TOLD THE BRETHERN THAT THEY WERE CHANGING THE DOCTRINE AND CALLED AN ACE AN ACE AND A SPADE A SPADE, I probably wouldn't have written at all. I find it maddening to read an article that says it doesn't say what it says.

"I also recognize the methods of our author. I saw them in the book *The Psychopathic God* about Adolf Hitler. If you preach against something, it confuses the masses. If you say you did not say something, but did, it confuses the masses. I take the stand of the little boy and the emperor . . . I SEE that the emperor has on no clothes . . . and I say it. Worldwide just changed another doctrine."

The incredible pace of change of major doctrines in the Worldwide Church of God reminds me of the old song by Frank Sinatra about the ant that had "high hopes," and finally, after great effort, was able to knock over rubber tree plants, and even a billion-kilowatt dam! "Whoops, there goes another rubber tree plant!" "Whoops, there goes another billion kilowatt dam!"

The churches of the world virtually NEVER change their doctrines. Historically, it is only when the TRUE CHURCH GOES ASTRAY that such an onslaught of doctrinal changes occurs!

"Brother, have you been born again?" "Brother, have you been saved?"

Think of it! Maybe now all Worldwide Church of God members will begin going around and asking their neighbors, "Have you been born again?" Evangelist David Albert of the Church now recommends this, and says members "had better get used to it!"

Joseph W. ("Wicked") Tkach is now the "BORN AGAIN APOSTLE"! *Unbelievable!*

## The ‘MAFIA APOSTLE’

"Burning rubber for half a block, the black Plymouth Fury catapulted into the night leaving Jack standing there on the sidewalk with an incredulous look on his face. Shouldering his unloaded shotgun, Jack turned and made his way back to his friend's apartment, shaking his head in disbelief. 'This can't be for real,' he thought to himself, 'it just can't be.'

"Does this sound like a scene from a grade 'C' movie -- a typical 'Al Capone' gangland style scenario? Well, guess again! This was 'for real' and actually occurred -- it was a REAL LIFE incident involving none other than the so-called 'apostle of Christ' -- Joseph W. Tkach -- as one of the lead actors!" -- (quoted from "The Mafia Apostle," by John D. Keyser, published by Triumph Prophetic Ministries).

What was behind this remarkable scene? John Trechak tells us in the March 1989 *Ambassador Report*, under the caption "The Big Black Car," an incredible story about two Ambassador College graduates of the class of 1970, who were going through hard times after graduation. They obtained subsistence-level jobs from 1970-73, alternating with periods of unemployment. Jack (not his real name) was just getting by as a night-time clerk in a liquor store, had no car, and poor clothes, and lost his apartment. Rick (also not his real name) let Jack move in with him; he had gotten a job with the Ambassador College Press not long before.

Turmoil was striking the Church in those days, and many ministers left in 1974 over doctrinal differences and leadership doubts. Jack, a diligent Bible student, became convinced the Church was in error on many key doctrines and stopped attending services. Church spies caught Jack attending a few meetings with former minister Al Carrozzo. As a result, Trechak reports:

"On a Monday evening in early 1974, Jack answered a knock on the door only to find himself nose to nose with Tkach and, standing behind him, an associate named Elmer. '

We've come to talk with you, Jack. It'll only take a few minutes,' said Tkach. Jack wasn't feeling very sociable. For the last few weeks he had been hearing stories of how Herbert Armstrong had *known* for many years that his marriage-destroying doctrines were in error, but for ego reasons had refused to change them. Jack had also learned that for years Herbert's evangelist son, Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA), had seduced dozens of Ambassador coeds and ministers'

wives yet was still allowed to continue as church spokesman on radio and television. But besides having all that on his mind, Jack could see in Tkach's bloodshot eyes that Tkach really wasn't interested in his concerns about the church or in his personal problems. Tkach only needed 'a few minutes' because he had come to subject Jack to the 'knuckle under or be disfellowshipped' ritual. Jack thought, 'If anyone needs to be thrown out of the church, it's HWA, GTA, and goons like Tkach.' Jack didn't move out of the doorway but looked Tkach in the eye and said, 'I'm busy and you didn't make an appointment.' startled, Tkach could only stammer, 'But Jack, it'll only take a few minutes.' 'Good night!' said Jack, as he shut the door in Tkach's face.

"Rick, who had overheard the brief conversation from the next room, said, 'You know, if you leave here tonight, Tkach will be waiting outside for you. He's not used to being talked to that way.' When Jack responded that he thought the suggestion was silly, Rick pointed to the guncase in the corner of the room --- a case that held a double-barreled, twelve-gauge shotgun. 'Look,' said Rick, 'don't load the gun, but take it with you. When they stop you, they'll see it, and it'll give them a good scare.'

"Jack thought Rick was letting his imagination run amuk, 'but what the heck,' he thought. 'Maybe Rick knows something I don't; it might give us a laugh.' He waited ten minutes, then hung the guncase containing the shotgun over his right shoulder. He exited the building, turned left, walked twenty yards and, not seeing anyone, went back to Rick's apartment feeling very foolish for listening to Rick. But Rick was adamant. 'No! No! I'm sure they're out there!' he yelled. 'You should have turned to the right. They're out there waiting for you. I just know it!'

"Okay, okay,' said Jack, rolling his eyes. 'Just to show you what a nut you are, I'll go back out there.' Jack walked out the door, again with the sheathed gun hanging from his right shoulder. This time he turned to the right. Halfway down the darkened street, he heard a car engine start up somewhere behind him. Then over his left shoulder he noticed a black Plymouth Fury slowly following him. He walked a little faster. The car sped up. Suddenly, as he approached a driveway, the black sedan surged forward and pulled to the right, partly blocking his path. Before even coming to a complete stop the car's back door was swung open by a push from a shadowy figure in the front passenger seat.

"It was Tkach. In an angry and authoritative voice, he commanded, 'Get in Jack! Right now!' The thought flashed through Jack's mind that maybe he had made a mistake in not loading the shotgun. Jack glowered at Tkach and told him firmly, 'No one's forcing me into any car. No one!' Jack instinctively reached up for the strap on the guncase. But then as the shotgun slid down into better view, Tkach screamed out in a panic to his driver, 'It's a gun, Elmer! Get out of here!' Elmer's foot hit the gas peddle like it was made out of solid lead. Burning rubber for half a block, the black Fury sped away into the night.

"Back at the apartment Jack and Rick had a good laugh. The next day Tkach never called for an appointment, but he had Elmer phone. And Elmer told Rick that if he didn't



immediately order Jack out of the apartment, he'd be fired from his job. That evening, Jack, penniless, found himself literally on the street.

"Not many churches are headed by apostles who enjoy making zealous Bible students homeless, or who will sneak up to Christians on darkened streets to hustle them off in big, black cars. Such overbearing behavior has undoubtedly contributed to some of the sinister rumors surrounding Tkach. But it's important to notice that Tkach does not relish conversations with angry people toting shotguns. Perhaps that shows he isn't really the tough guy he often pretends -- or maybe it shows he has a bit of sense after all."

Does that sound like an apostle of Jesus Christ? Or more like a "MAFIA don"? Interestingly, Tkach used to drive around Pasadena with a bumper sticker on his car that read: "MAFIA STAFF CAR." Tkach married Elaine Apostolos. Her brother spent time in Pontiac Prison, Michigan, for armed robbery, and told John Trechak, in a telephone conversation: "My father was Mafia. He knew Alfons [Al Capone]. My father and Alfons were good friends." Apostolos told Trechak that Joe Tkach used to always visit him in prison.

Earl Timmons, a Worldwide Church of God member from the early sixties, who left the Church prior to the Receivership Crisis, is totally convinced Tkach has gangland friends. He was a close friend and confidant of Tkach from 1969 through 1978.

Timmons was also good friends with a Pasadena businessman George Pappageorge, who, he claimed was a central figure in a major crime ring. Timmons claimed Pappageorge and his associates were involved in burglary, robbery, interstate trafficking in stolen cars and other merchandise. Pappageorge and two associates, Kenneth Moran and Sidney Bartolotta, were convicted in 1974 of multiple counts of kidnapping (at gunpoint), robbery, burglary, and conspiracy and sent to prison.

#### *Tkach's Gangland Connections*

John Trechak wrote in *Ambassador Report*:

"From reading the court records it becomes obvious that Pappageorge and his many associates were involved in a very wide range of criminal activity. Yet, according to Timmons, George Pappageorge and his associate Kenny Morgan were very close friends of Joe Tkach. Timmons is sure of this, he says, because he was the one who introduced Tkach to Pappageorge" (December 1989 issue).

Timmons told Trechak that he was informed by a deputy attorney general during the Receivership Crisis of the Church that Tkach tried to use his influence to gain the release of Kenneth Moran from Folsom Prison and George Pappageorge from San Quentin. Evangelist Gerald Waterhouse related in sermons around the world that during the Receivership Crisis of the Church in 1979 that Joe Tkach was in contact with two prison inmates (possibly the same two) who "offered him the services of hit men" (December 1989, *Ambassador Report* ).

## Chapter 9

# Joseph W. Tkach -- Religious MONSTER?

Four years in a row, while I was yet a member of the Worldwide Church of God, in good standing, I was called on the carpet ostensibly for crossing over the line insofar as promotion of my books, published by Triumph Publishing Company, my own company, was concerned. In 1982 I was reprimanded by Tkach and Ellis LaRavia (no longer apparently part of the Worldwide Ministry, I believe he is now on a "sabbatical") who played the "good cop, bad cop" routine on me for my sending out a letter to my own mailing list, asking people to pray for the success of my new book of that time, *Beyond Star Wars*, which was printed in a mass market paperback edition by Tyndale House Publishers. This, apparently, to them was a "no-no," but their demagogic tactics disturbed me no end. When they saw I wouldn't give in to them, they let the matter drop, admitting I had a right to publish my books.

### *A Shocking Accusation*

A year later in the April 1983 *Pastor General's Report*, a publication sent to WCG ministers, somebody wrote an article blasting my books and publishing company, with scathing disapproval and denunciation. The article was either written or approved by Tkach. The index of Worldwide Church of God publications listed it and credited it to Tkach. However, Tkach sent an emissary to inform me that he did not write it; he claimed that Herbert Armstrong wrote it, and therefore Tkach was compelled to approve it. Regardless of who wrote it, however, it was libelous and blasphemous. The article declared:

"Question: Several ministers have asked about Mr. William Dankenbring's advertisement for his books which have been distributed to members through mailings, at Feast sites, etc. Are the books endorsed by the Church? Does the Church approve of them or recommend them? Is Mr. Dankenbring still a member of the Church?"

"Answer: Mr. Dankenbring is classified as a member of God's Church. But that does not imply that his privately-sold writings have the approval or

endorsement of the Church.

"Human nature seems to want to use God, or God's Church, for personal gain or profit. The moneychangers used God's temple as a place of business to sell at a profit to God's people. In blazing anger, Jesus drove them out. Jesus said, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise' (John 2:16). We, the members, are God's house, builded into a HOLY TEMPLE (Eph.2:20-21).

"In II Peter 2:3 God warns, 'And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.' Yes, SELLING FOR PROFIT their words in writing to the members of God's Church.

"Perhaps the selling of doves and things for sacrifice was not in itself wrong, but exploiting God's HOUSE as a place or means of selling to God's people was.

"The membership of God's Church has been exploited for private gain a number of times by those no longer members.

"God has commissioned HIS CHURCH -- not private members on their own -- to feed the flock. The Church publishes much literature -- magazines, booklets, books, reprint articles besides the personal ministry, to feed the flock -- AND WE DO NOT CHARGE A PRICE OR MAKE MERCHANDISE OF OUR MEMBERS IN SO FREELY GIVING GOD'S TRUTH! [Editor: Is that right? I seem to recall books by Herbert Armstrong and Stanley Rader having price tags, as well as Ambassador College Envoys which were very exorbitant in cost!]

"Although Mr. Dankenbring is a graduate of Ambassador College and has studied under Mr. Armstrong and our ministers, he has stated in writing, 'I appreciate him (Mr. Armstrong) very much, although I have disagreed with him from time to time on some relatively "small" or "little" things.' [Editor: Notice how the writer here uses Mr. Armstrong's name; it is for this reason that I doubt Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote this piece at all, but rather Joseph Tkach or more likely Mike Feazell or one of his other flunky "ghost writers"!] But what the writer might consider 'small' or 'little' disagreements might in God's eyes be vitally important disagreements.

"God's Church therefore does not endorse nor give approval to Mr. Dankenbring's books, nor those of others than the Church's own publications or those definitely approved."

Joe Tkach claims he did not write that article but that Herbert Armstrong did. However, the fact that the article refers to "Mr. Armstrong" in the second person puts the lie to that statement. Also, the phraseology of the article has always struck me as "second rate" imitation Armstrong. He wouldn't write that way. Thirdly, he saw my full page book advertisements at the Feast in Big Sandy, and never criticized or condemned them, and when Don Ward announced from the pulpit that they were not officially sanctioned by the Church, Herbert Armstrong even questioned why he made such an announcement. Later when I talked to Bob Fahey, then HWA's chief assistant, about my books and such, he discussed it with HWA, and there was no negative reaction. Fahey told him I was like a "sheep bleating in the wilderness," and sought to bring us together. Therefore, the above quoted article is totally inconsistent and out-of-character to have been written by Herbert Armstrong! If it had his authority, it surely

would have carried his by-line, but was anonymous!

Somebody obviously did not like what I was writing, and used this means to pummel me in the stomach and turn Church people everywhere against my books! It seemed strange at that time that prior to this article suddenly appearing, NOBODY in the Church had talked to me negatively about my books or their contents, and I had been praised by several ministers for them, and some ministers even used them for the basis of sermons and Bible studies! The fact is, evangelist Raymond F. McNair even published his book *Ascent To Greatness* through my company!

Also, strangely, two or three months before this article appeared, I had just sent a couple of my books to the attention of Stanley Rader, and his office had written me a short but nice letter appreciating them.

At the same time, I had sent several copies of my books to the attention of Herbert Armstrong, with a short supportive cover-letter, in which I tried to tell Mr. Armstrong I was loyally back of him 100% in his efforts to get the Church "back on the track." I did write the little sentence admitting to not agreeing with him in every little thing, but I went on to say -- in the rest of the sentence, for some reason not quoted honestly in the PGR article -- that we were all growing together in grace and knowledge, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man" (Eph.4:13).

I was merely being honest and straight-forward, for there were a few items I would have liked to talk to Mr. Armstrong about -- since he had flip-flopped on the subject of whether physical life of any kind existed on earth prior to Adam and Eve's creation, as evidenced in his books *The Incredible Human Potential* and *Mystery of the Ages*. However, I never got a chance to talk with him about these things -- I was literally "blown out of the water" by this nasty, scurrilous diatribe printed in the *Pastor General's Report*, with no "by-line" to show who the insidious author really was.

Whether or not he wrote it, I immediately telephoned Joe Tkach and sought to make an appointment to talk to him and Ellis LaRavia about the matter. He did not return my first phone call. The second call I got him personally, and he agreed to have a meeting to discuss the matter -- but he seemed reluctant somehow. He never called me back to set up the meeting, and I decided to commit the problem into God's hands and leave it there.

### *The "Annual Visits"*

A year later I was called to task once again for publishing and promoting books. This time, though, Joe actually seemed to approve of the book I had published, *The Incredible History of God's True Church*. After we finished our discussion, he and Ellis both seemed to be impressed by my "good attitude," and Joe even asked me to begin writing articles for *The Plain Truth* again, which he promised to show to Herbert Armstrong so they could be published. In the following months, despite having turned

in 5-6 articles, I heard nothing in response, however, and it appeared that Joe Tkach had merely been leading me on -- he was not interested in my articles after all.

The following year, when I wrote to book stores and gift shops in Festival areas to have them display my books, including Ivor Fletcher's book on Church History, my own books on *Overcoming Satan*, *Last Days of Planet Earth*, and Paul Syltie's book *Millennial Agriculture: The New Eden*, I quickly got a phone call from Tkach's office asking me to come and see him. This time he and Selmer Hegvold were in the office, and Tkach immediately got down to business and read me a memo he was threatening to send to ALL festival sites, accusing me of preaching things contrary to Church doctrine!

The kid gloves were off! He obviously meant business! However, the whole idea I felt was totally absurd. This was patently ridiculous, and I thought he was being ridiculous, but I went along with the game, humoring him. I pointed out that he knew very well where I stood on the subject of Satan's Fate I had even written a book about it several years before, with the very title *Satan's Fate* -- and the Church had known it for years, and nobody had ever said anything to me about it. It seemed ridiculous to bring that up as some "point of controversy," in order to blast me publicly and to blacken my reputation. I then pointed out to him that since the Church had told the various gift shops that they did not want them selling my books, in most Feast sites my books would not be present at all, and my books would only be represented in a few places, at a few sites. It seemed ludicrous -- like shooting a yellow canary with a huge cannon -- for them to send such a memo to all festival sites! Joe apparently thought better of his plan, and the memo never went out.

### *The Final Meeting*

A year later, we had another one of our "annual meetings," and I asked Joe what he thought of the research paper I had sent to him on Daniel's 2300 day prophecy, which differed from Herman Hoeh's old interpretation. I had sent copies of the paper to about twenty different headquarters ministers, and only one had even responded, Leroy Neff, and he said he found it "very interesting," but sadly said he had no time to study into it further. When I asked Tkach about it, he merely said he discussed it with Dr. Hoeh over the phone.

I had already presented Hoeh with a copy, as well as had him over for dinner at our home, where I had presented the "newly discovered truth" to him. At that time, he seemed to be impressed with it, and did not deny it at all. When I pointed out that Adam Clarke's Commentary even had it right, except it was one year off, he exclaimed, while he picked his teeth with a toothpick, "I read that." I asked him whether he meant he had read it back in the 50's, and he nodded but said nothing else. So I offered, "Well, back then it had no significance and we didn't know then that the 2300 years would be up in 1967, the year of the Six Day War."

After all these meetings with Joseph Tkach, I came away with the impression that

this man was cagey, street-wise, smart in a political sense, and very cunning and crafty. No wonder he had wormed his way in to the very top, impressing Stanley Rader, with whom he was ordained as an evangelist during the Church's Receivership Crisis. However, I came away with the distinct notion that this was not a man who could be trusted -- not at all. He was a consummate liar, shifty, covered up his tracks well, and was a master of flattery. When he took over the Church after the death of Herbert Armstrong in January 1986, I had grave misgivings and doubts about the future of the Church -- but I decided to give him a chance, to see how he would operate. I was not long in finding out.

*Disfellowshipped without a Hearing!*

A year after Herbert Armstrong's death, Tkach sent two ministers to my home to inform me I had been "suspended" from Church for having written a new Triumph Publishing catalog, advertising a new booklet "Daniel's 2300 Day Prophecy Revealed for the Very First Time!" and for having written a Church member in Australia a letter informing him I thought the Church was then composed of a mixture of Laodiceans and Philadelphians, and that I had grave doubts about where the Church was headed, but that time would tell.

The next week the ministers returned to my home to inform me that I had not only been suspended, but "disfellowshipped" as well. The third week, Jim Reier, the lead minister, called me on the telephone, informing me that I was going to be "marked" that very weekend and that it would be better if my wife stayed home that day so that she would not be too embarrassed.

After much prayer and fasting, I decided that the time had come to follow the example of Herbert Armstrong, when he left the Church of God Seventh Day back in the early 1930's. The time had come to put my trust completely in the hands of God, and to serve Him totally, independently, and to trust HIM with the outcome in pure, shining, unadulterated FAITH!

In the five years since that time God has blessed my efforts, and my wife's, and those associated with us in Triumph Prophetic Ministries. In the intervening years, Joseph Tkach has proven his true colors -- and they are black with a very wide white stripe! The Church of God, since he took over the helm, has plunged over the cliff of out-and-out apostasy, with a speed and violence that is breath-taking. Doctrines are being shifted and changed right and left, so that most members don't know what the Church teaches any more, and are afraid to ask their local minister lest they be looked upon as some sort of "dissident"!

I have categorized the massive sea-changes in doctrine that have overwhelmed the Worldwide Church of God in other articles. Suffice it to say that Joseph Tkach has virtually undermined and disorged every vital doctrine taught by Herbert W. Armstrong, especially those in his most important book he ever wrote, *The Mystery of*

*the Ages.* Tkach has destroyed the doctrine of the God Family, the doctrine of Christ's humanity, the doctrine of when we are Born Again, altered significantly the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, claiming now that the Church is the Kingdom, and abolished all real understanding of Biblical prophecy, claiming "prophecies fail" and cannot be trusted. He has really messed with the minds of God's people, leaving them in grave spiritual jeopardy and peril. The major doctrine upon which Jesus Christ built the Church through Herbert Armstrong, the identity of the United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy, has been jettisoned and thrown overboard, with only the final "taps" waiting to be sounded for its interment.

A man who is so changeable when it comes to Church doctrines, what is he like in his personal life and habits? Is he the saint that so many seem to think? How does his winsome smile play in Peoria? What kind of character does he have?

### *The Robert Skaggs Testimony*

I recently had the pleasure of talking with a Robert Skaggs, longtime member of the Church of God in the Chicago, Illinois area. He has been out of the Church for several years, but was a member back in the early Chicago days, the early 1960s, when Dean Blackwell was district superintendent and when Joseph Tkach was first ordained as a local elder. Tkach and another member, Martin Fillipello, were summoned to Chicago one Sabbath and both ordained the same day.

According to Mr. Skaggs, who was also a leading member, Dean Blackwell was a very sensuous minister, and participated in sexual relations with a number of women in the Church, with or without their husband's knowledge. He had a special office in his basement, where trysts were held.

Blackwell also saw to it that leading Church women would clean his home 2-3 times per week, and cook special meals when out-of-town guests would arrive. Several women wound up in his arms or bed, as the situation dictated, including the wives of Mr. Fillipello and Mr. Tkach, according to Skaggs. Said Mr. Skaggs, the way to quick ordination in Chicago was to give your wife to Mr. Blackwell! Skaggs himself refused to let his wife go over to the Blackwell residence, and told her, "Let Mrs. Blackwell do her own cleaning!"

Mr. Skaggs related to me how one time he saw Mr. Blackwell put his hand on Mrs. Elaine Tkach's buttocks and give her a fondling pat. He has no doubt that Mrs. Tkach was one of Dean Blackwell's lovers.

### *The Fillipello Affair*

However, according to Mr. Skaggs, when Martin Fillipello found out what his wife had been doing with Blackwell, he went crazy. A leading Church woman one day took some food over to the Blackwells, hearing that Dean Blackwell was sick in bed. So she tip-toed into the bedroom, and to her chagrin and shocked surprise, she saw Mrs.

Fillipello in BED with Dean Blackwell, both of them naked as jaybirds. She hurriedly retreated. A few days later, after Sabbath services, she was invited for dinner with the Skaggs. While there, she told Mr. Skaggs what she had seen -- it was too much for her to keep to herself. Skaggs, smelling the scent of scandal and corruption in the Church, immediately telephoned Pasadena and spoke with evangelist Roderick C. Meredith. Meredith acted surprised on the phone, but promised to get to the bottom of the problem.

The next thing Skaggs knew, he had been summarily suspended from Church, disfellowshipped, and was informed that HE needed to repent! In fact, in order to get back in the Church, a year or so later, he had to submit to the embarrassment of being *re-baptized*, although he had done nothing wrong!

Meanwhile, what about Fillipello? As I said, he virtually lost his mind over the sexual debauchery involving his very own wife. He took his new lease car, supplied by the Church, and his new credit card given to him as a minister, and took off -- no one knew where. All the Church could do was follow the receipts of the credit card which Fillipello used prodigiously as he snaked his way to Las Vegas. Finally they caught up with him, but pressed no charges. In fact, Fillipello was reinstated in the ministry with a minimum of fuss. Apparently by this time he had overcome his sense of loss and shock, and was willing to keep quiet about the "Blackwell affair."

### *Immorality Unlimited*

Did Joseph Tkach "buy" his way into the ministry by "selling" his wife's sexual services to evangelist Dean Blackwell? John Trechack of *Ambassador Report* fame, interviewed Robert Skaggs, and wrote up the story as follows:

"However, almost all the WCG oldtimers I talked to were convinced that there was a connection between Elaine's condition and a sexual relationship she allegedly had with evangelist Dean Blackwell, her husband's superior in Chicago during the early '60s.

"The Tkach administration now wants the Blackwell affair downplayed as having been merely verbal overtures by Blackwell. With only one exception, however, all the WCG oldtimers I talked to said their understanding was that the Blackwell affair was out and out adultery -- *at the very least*. . . . When I suggested to former WCG pastor Al Carrozzo that Blackwell's romantic relationship with Elaine Tkach was now being portrayed as only verbal, he replied, "That's not the way Joe talked about it years ago. He believed Dean Blackwell had gone to bed with his wife."

Al Carrozzo is the minister who blew the whistle on the sexual scandal of Garner Ted Armstrong, in the early '70s, who was sleeping with innumerable co-eds, baby sitters, stewardesses, and young Ambassador College girls mesmerized by his allure, glamour, and boyish good looks and the trappings of power and spiritual "authority." Says John Trechak:



"Carrozzo is known for his frankness. He is a man that does not mince words. His understanding of the Blackwell affair with Elaine Tkach, however, is very mild compared to what some others have said. For instance, at least one WCG evangelist has described the Blackwell-Elaine trysts as 'wife swapping.' When I first became aware of this accusation I assumed the evangelist was confusing Dean Blackwell with Blackwell's brother Lowell, who was put out of the WCG ministry years ago because of alleged wife swapping. That sordid business was actually detailed in a turgid open letter written to the entire WCG ministry by church administrator Roderick C. Meredith in the early '70s. But a similar accusation against Tkach has now come from other sources, as well.

One of these sources is the very same Robert Skaggs with whom I talked a few weeks ago. Trechak continues:

"In March, I was contacted by Indiana businessman Robert Skaggs, who had been a WCG member in the Midwest during the early '60s. He had then been involved with the WCG's visiting program and had been very close to both Tkach and Blackwell. Skaggs claimed that when he knew him, Tkach was not genuinely interested in religious truth, but was possessed by a lust for power. Skaggs told me that in his quest for power Tkach stooped so low as to allow evangelist Blackwell, then his superior, to sleep with Elaine, his wife. In return for this favor, says Skaggs, Blackwell had Tkach ordained into the WCG ministry.

"When I was told this, I pointedly asked Mr. Skaggs, 'Are you saying that Joe Tkach was ordained in return for participating in some kind of wife-sharing arrangement?' His answer: 'Absolutely!' Skaggs went on to state that Blackwell had at least one other man ordained for the same reason."

Trechak goes on in his amazing and candid report, saying that evangelist Dean Blackwell had a "reputation" among the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God as a sort of "ladies' man." He seemed to especially have a way of consoling "widows" in the Church. Because of his moral transgressions, he was at times brought into Pasadena for "R and R" -- repentance and recovery.

Writes John Trechak:

"As shocking as they are, Mr. Skagg's accusations regarding Blackwell are in step with Blackwell's reputation among many former colleagues. Former church administrator Gary Arvidson told me, 'Yes, Dean Blackwell had something of a reputation. Without going into details, let's just say that he was known as someone who really know how to bring relief to the widows.' Another former WCG minister recalled how Blackwell repeatedly had to be brought into headquarters for periods of moral rehabilitation. Some such periods culminated in pulpit pronouncements by Blackwell (somewhat akin to those of Jimmy Swaggart) that he had finally repented and learned his lesson" (*Ambassador Report*, 'Joseph. W. Tkach -- God's New Rep on Planet Earth,' III, December 1989).

Former WCG minister David Robinson, who wrote *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled*

*Web*, a fascinating expose of the Armstrong empire and failings, sexual "warts" and entanglements, including the shocking account of decade-long incest, told John Trechak that in the fall of 1971 WCG minister Don Wineinger confessed to him how he had obtained a quick raise in ministerial rank to that of preaching elder by threatening to expose Blackwell's transgressions and his double lifestyle. Faced with this threat, Blackwell quickly raised him up a notch in rank -- within mere days. Years later, Don Wineinger and his wife were having severe marital problems. One day in 1978, while consulting a divorce attorney, Wineinger committed suicide in after murdering his wife.

In my own recent conversation with Mr. Skaggs, he told me how one evening when he lived in Kentucky, and the Blackwell group was staying overnight in his home, he got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. In so doing he had to pass through the living room, where he saw Dean Blackwell at midnight standing and hugging the girl who was Jack Pyle's fiance! Jack Pyle was later to become a minister in the Church. Sleeping, supposedly, not twenty feet away on the sofa, was Mrs. Blackwell, either impervious or not caring about the whole thing!

I asked Mr. Skaggs about whether Joe Tkach was guilty of the same kind of sexual sins and excesses as Dean Blackwell appeared to be. He said that he was sure the answer was yes. He was positive. According to Skaggs, Blackwell chose men around him to help him who were "birds of a feather," who were just like him. "Birds of a feather flock together," he said.

*"Servicing the Widows"*

As if to corroborate this intriguing story and candid revelation of serious sexual hanky panky among the leaders of the Chicago Church in the early '60s, I recently received a letter from a woman in Chicago, a long-time Church member, who wrote to me just a few weeks ago. She declared:

"Dear Mr. Dankenbring:

"I feel that I must come forward and speak to you frankly. I have been reading letters from others who suffered at the hands of the ministers in the Worldwide Church of God. Now I tell you what happened with me.

"I have been a widow for many years. A long time ago, after my man died, Joe Tkach came to visit me. He wasn't nobody important then.

"I'm ashamed to tell that he took advantage of me and I'm ashamed of myself ever since. He offered me comfort but then was aggressive with me and forced himself.

"I blame myself mostly, but also him because he should have known better too than to take advantage of me in my weakest time after my man died. People need to know the truth, that Joe Tkach is not the saintly man he wants you to think he is.

"I have repented and try to live the best I can now. I think God has forgiven me. I pray for Joe too, but still feel bad about the whole thing."

### *Tkach's Incredible LIES about His Background*

Tkach's claim to have attended Illinois Institute of Technology was utterly bogus. That institution of higher learning has absolutely no record of him as a student of any kind, and the courses he claims to have taken -- "industrial management, industrial safety and human factors in industry" -- were never even offered at ITT! Officials there adamantly and emphatically insist there never was anybody named Joseph Tkach at that institute! The fact of the matter is, Joseph Tkach never even graduated from high school!

Tkach completely lied about his background, including the famous story about a wildcat strike by 2,000 people when he was supposedly once fired by Hupp Aviation for refusing to work on the Sabbath. Now officially called Aircraft Gears Corporation, that company never had more than a few hundred employees in its history and official records as well as old-time employees attest to the fact there never was any such strike at all!

What about Tkach's vaunted military service record? Didn't he single-handedly shoot down Japanese kamikaze airplanes in World War II, jump ship and escape to a beach by floating, going AWOL, just before the ship was blown up by the Japanese and sunk? Didn't he then turn himself into the local marine commandant, get tossed into the brig, and while there beat up on several Marines in the brig? Absolutely, utterly, completely UNTRUE -- every one of these claims is complete HOGWASH! The truth is, Joseph Tkach never saw any real fighting action in World War II. The ship he was supposedly stationed on, the U.S.S. Austin, was a destroyer escort, and according to official naval records never saw action at the places where the Japanese used kamikaze fighters! It wasn't in any famous World War II naval battles at all. It never saw a single kamikaze. Nor was it ever blown out of the water by the Japanese.

The whole tissue of stories about Joe Tkach's World War II exploits were manufactured out of whole cloth, merely in an attempt to bolster his self image and his public persona and profile among the Church brethren, to lend credence to his becoming "pastor general" of the Worldwide Church of God!

### *Was Tkach a Crook?*

Judas Iscariot was a "thief," and was the treasurer for Jesus' small group of disciples. He held the bag, and was outraged when a woman anointed Jesus' feet with a pound of expensive ointment, asking why the ointment was not sold for the money it would bring. Wrote the apostle John, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:3-7).

Beginning in the early '60s, Tkach's superiors often put him in charge over the "poor fund" or "third tithe" accounts. Wrote John Trechak in Ambassador Report about

Tkach's money managing activities:

"Earls Timmons, for a decade a confidant of Tkach, told me that Tkach would often siphon off funds by making *loans* to needy church members, then labeling the loans on the books as gifts paid out, and finally pocketing the loans when they were repaid. I personally recall how during the early seventies, a number of my WCG friends, unemployed at the time, went to Tkach for assistance. In each case they were granted a few hundred dollars. They were startled, however, when Tkach informed them that the amount they received was only a loan and that the loan had to be repaid to Tkach personally in cash.

"I asked one former church secretary, who had known Tkach quite well during the seventies, if she believed Tkach had siphoned off funds meant for the poor during those years. She told me, 'Oh sure he did. But so what? In those days a lot of the ministers were doing the very same thing.'" (*Ambassador Report*, "Joseph W. Tkach -- God's New Rep on Planet Earth, III, December 1989).

Stanley Rader, former attorney and adviser to Herbert W. Armstrong, whose name is very familiar to those in Worldwide Church of God circles, in a February 1, 1981 telex to Herbert Armstrong commented on Joe Tkach's "illegal fencing activities" which surfaced when the Church was preparing its civil rights case. Former WCG attorney and accountant Jack Kessler, in a letter he wrote to the WCG board of trustees, recounted many ethics violations among top executives of the Church. He made the following statement regarding Joe Tkach's helping himself to money from the "poor fund" or "third tithe" fund. Said Kessler:

"According to Mr. Robin Webber, Mr. Joseph Tkach apparently felt justified in giving himself from a trust fund he controlled a little advance of \$5000.00 as a 'needy Church member' to take advantage of a special investment in unregistered securities then illegally being peddled (against advice of counsel) by the Dean brothers" (*ibid.*).

According to Worldwide Church of God teaching, members are to contribute a special "third tithe" to the Church every third and sixth year out of a seven year cycle. This money was to go to help the poor widows, orphans, and strangers -- the poor and homeless in real need. After those needs were met, the balance could go for ministerial needs. Unfortunately, the third tithe fund often became a sort of "slush fund" for the use of ministers in the Church to "pad" their own incomes, for their own "needs."

In the December 1991 *Ambassador Report*, John Trechak reports that the Worldwide Church of God adopted a new policy of dumping needy members living in dire poverty on government agencies, relatives, and others, before even considering assisting them with "third tithe" or "poor funds." The Church absolved itself of all responsibility for its own poor, as much as possible. This policy, according to former WCG deacon Herbert Zacharios of Wisconsin, began with Joseph Tkach. He wrote to Trechak:

"We attended the Feast of Tabernacles for our last time at Biloxi, Mississippi in 1979. During a service one of the speakers reported how two men had been raised in rank to evangelist -- Stanley Rader and Joseph Tkach. . . . The speaker told how Tkach had taken it upon himself to go through the rolls of those receiving third tithe and remove everyone who was eligible for social security and/or welfare and/or anyone who had a living relative -- in or out of the church -- who could be responsible for their care" (*Ambassador Report*, December 1991, 'Joseph W. Tkach -- God's New Rep on Planet Earth,' part VI).

Cruel insensitivity seems to mark Joseph W. Tkach. Beneath his shining exterior is a grave tomb full of dead man's bones. Herbert W. Armstrong distrusted men who were too carefully groomed and immaculately suited. He sensed "fraud" might exist beneath the exterior of such men. Joseph Tkach is one of the most smartly groomed and perfectly coiffured men I have ever met. Invariably he dresses with a panache and flair that seems incredible. But what is on the "inside"?

God said to Samuel His prophet when He sent him to anoint David as the new king, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature . . . for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the OUTWARD APPEARANCE, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7).

Jesus said of the religious Pharisees, church leaders of that time, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make CLEAN the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of EXTORTION AND EXCESS. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. WOE unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto WHITED SEPULCHRES, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of DEAD MEN'S BONES, and of all UNCLEANNESS.

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto me, but within ye are full of HYPOCRISY and INIQUITY" (Matt.23:25-28).

Many serious allegations have come to the fore indicting Joseph Tkach and revealing what a scoundrel and wastrel and scalawag he really is. From incredible lying about his past, amazing falsification about his employment record and naval record, to fantastic exaggeration about his previous educational background, Joseph Tkach reveals himself to be an inveterate liar, braggart, and guilty of oleaginous duplicity. He is cruel, callous, vicious, vindictive, venomous and viscerally volatile, with a temper like Mount Vesuvius.

### *A Spiritual Dracula*

Despite his smiling facade, and carefully manicured exterior, this "would-be apostle" is nothing more than a spiritual vampire, preying on his innocent victims and devouring their spiritual souls.

The truth is, this diabolical monster in sheep's clothing, this modern spiritual Dracula, this heinous "beast," wormed his way into the Church of God and took advantage of every opportunity to further his own career. The name "Tkach" itself apparently means "weaver" in Slavonic tongues, as well as "tailor" and "spider."

*"Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits"*

Jesus Christ told His disciples, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall KNOW them BY THEIR FRUITS" (Matt.7:15-16). What are the "fruits" of the life and ministry of Joseph Tkach?

Let's face it. The Joseph Tkach story is just beginning to unfold. Or should I say that his carefully orchestrated "cover up" is just beginning to unravel. A number of allegations have been made that he is a crook, a liar, scoundrel, mountebank, shyster, and thoroughly depraved character, not only immoral but worse -- amoral. But more recently serious charges have been made that he is also bi-sexual, having sexual intercourse with both males and females. Is there any truth to these allegations?

One Tkach supporter excuses Tkach's supposed sexual activity, what ever it may be, with the comment that he hasn't has sex with his wife Elaine Tkach for over 22 years. He remarks, "Let's face it -- you either use it or lose it. We shouldn't criticize Mr. Tkach because he has needs." Will Christ excuse sexual immorality just because some man thinks he has "needs"? Whether Joseph Tkach is "gay," is currently the subject of a raging debate. Some suggest that there is incriminating circumstantial evidence. Unlike Herbert W. Armstrong, Joe Tkach seems often to be surrounded by single young men, or effeminate men. His propensity for "touching" other men, and his enjoyment of seeing semi-naked males wrestle on television, fuels the speculation.

An anonymous letter, ostensibly from a high level executive of the Church in Pasadena, has been written and widely distributed accusing Tkach of being the leader of a vast homosexual ring at Ambassador College and the headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God. The letter describes a night in London, England, when a young Ambassador student, who was with the Tkach party on the Church jet, walked by Tkach's hotel room late at night and heard mysterious moans and groans from inside. Worried, he knocked on the door, asking if everything was all right. There was sudden silence. He walked away, but looked back down the hall and saw a male member of the group scampering across the hall to his own room! The next morning at breakfast, the male member of the entourage told those present that Tkach often had "war injuries" which caused him to moan and be in pain at night. This episode so preyed on the mind of the young man, that according to the letter, he later sought ministerial counsel in Pasadena.

The fact is, we live in an increasingly homoerotic society, with some reports suggesting that one American and British male out of four is presently homosexual.

Advertisements are being run in newspaper "personals," in various cities, by homosexuals promoting gay parties, orgies, sexual contests, and utter depravation. Some ads are being run by Mormon "gays," by Seventh Day Adventist "gays," by Jehovah Witness "gay" groups. Who can deny -- who can be so naive as not to realize the strong likelihood -- that Ambassador College and the Worldwide Church of God are a microcosm of the world's society around them and have the VERY SAME PROBLEMS!

I do not know personally if Joseph Tkach is "gay" or not, but I do know that we live in a sick, sick, SICK WORLD! It is not my purpose to "prove" one way or the other whether Joe Tkach is bi-sexual, in this article. Certainly there is cause for suspicion. Regardless of that question, however, there is mountainous evidence that he is a spiritual renegade and reject, reprobate to the faith and truth of God, and a serious MISLEADER of the End-Time Churches of God -- a spiritual shipwreck! Those who refuse to look at all the evidence, and the alarming and dramatic changes in Church doctrine, are playing with "spiritual fire"!

Suffice it to say that when the time comes, no doubt God Almighty will thoroughly expose the wickedness of His supposed modern end-time "ministry" on this earth -- those who claim to serve Him but pervert His word, His truth, His doctrines, and twist and distort and reject His commandments! The apostle Paul wrote, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor male prostitutes nor HOMOSEXUAL OFFENDERS nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor.6:9-10).

Rather, God says, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the *vile*, the murderers, the *sexually immoral*, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and ALL LIARS -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:8).

God's Word thunders like a massive thunder-clap, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness . . . For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became FOOLS . . . . Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the DEGRADING of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a LIE . . ." (see Romans 1:18-27, NIV).

In due time, no doubt, God will expose the very most SECRET SINS of the highest echelons of His End-Time Churches! He will certainly neither spare nor pity. He will deal with each individual's secret and covered-up, unrepented of sins. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid" (I Tim.5:24-25).

*"The Acorn Falls Close to the Tree"*

What about Joseph Tkach, Jr.? What about his fruits, lifestyle, and attitudes? Is he a true bona fide servant of the Living God?

Or is he a "chip off the old block," as they say? Is he "like father, like son"?

According to many reports, the actual "brains" behind the Worldwide Church of God, today, is Joseph Tkach Jr. Although not as prominent as his father, he appears to be the one actually running the show from behind the scenes, to an increasingly large extent. One Worldwide insider told John Trechak, "Basically, right now, Joe Tkach Jr. and Michael Feazell are running the church. Mr. Tkach Sr. trusts no one else!"

Joe Junior is Director of Church Administration U.S.A. Those who remember his high school and Ambassador college days don't seem to recall that he was a brilliant student by any means. Some thought of him as a "goof ball."

Joe Junior was ordained a local elder in 1976, then cut from the Worldwide Church payroll, an event which must have "smarted." Between 1976 and 1986 he took extension classes in psychology at Arizona State University, worked as a social service employee, got an MBA from a small university in Phoenix, and worked for the Intel Corp for a few years. After being hired back in the Worldwide Church of God by his father, he was quickly raised in rank to Evangelist!

Joe Junior is a divorced and remarried man. His first wife, the former Jill Hockwald, was a fine, sweet, attractive young woman, the daughter of Art and Virginia Hockwald, long-time Church members in the Pasadena area, whom I knew quite well over the years. It seems strange to me that a member of the Church -- a minister, no less -- could marry a woman in the Church, and then divorce and REMARRY, as Joe Junior did, divorcing Jill in 1978. Jesus Christ calls this plain and simple ADULTERY! (Matt.5:31-32).

However, friends of Jill say that Joe Junior was a wife beater, and Jill has told friends that even Joseph Tkach Sr. struck her on two occasions. The following letter from a member of his Church in Arizona, to John Trechak, quoted at length in *Ambassador Report*, December 1991 issue, provides a telling insight into the real character of Joseph Tkach, Jr. It is so graphic and descriptive of the "fruits" of the Tkach family, particularly Joe Jr., that some might be offended by the implied language quoted, although the bad language is not reproduced. Nevertheless, here is graphic testimony of the kind of person Joe Jr. really is, according to a one-time friend and eye-witness of his conduct. The writer declares:

"On one occasion Mr. T. invited my wife and I to ride along on their trip to Prescott, Arizona where he was to give a Sabbath sermon. Jill was driving while Mr. T. Jr. was in the back seat preparing his sermon. Jill missed the turn-off to Prescott . . . She had driven about 10 miles past the turn-off when we realized that she had gone by the Prescott exit. Mr. T. Jr. blew his top, to say the least! He cussed



and swore at Jill from that point . . . all the way to Prescott, about 60 miles from the freeway . . . He called her every vulgar name in the book: 'an S.O.B.,' 'a stupid imbecile,' 'a F---ing bitch,;' and he said, 'God D--- you!' -- except he said whole words, not just the starting letters. He just kept screaming the epithets at her. While he continued to scream out those deplorable rantings and ravings, I wondered if I should tell him to shut up. But I knew that if I did I would be disfellowshipped on the spot. . . I bit my tongue and felt embarrassed that a fellow human being would react so disgustingly to such a trivial mistake.

"It's interesting that the moment we pulled into the church parking lot, Mr. T. Jr.'s personality did a 180 degree somersault. He smiled and greeted the deacons in the parking lot, apologized for being late, gave his sermon, and acted as though none of the turmoil in the car had ever happened. Mind you, he had carried on in the car ranting and raving for one hour straight! Jill was left in tears by his tongue-lashing. I remember thinking at the time -- if he would mistreat his wife so horribly in our presence, how far would he go in brutalizing her in private?

"Sometime previous to the above incident, we were visiting his home when my wife asked him a question about [erotic] fantasies. He told her that fantasizing was perfectly normal, that he himself did this, and that he even encouraged his wife to fantasize about other men!

"I recall he said that he hated his Dad and that his father was a 'little dictator' who had never shown him any love. The picture he painted of his father was nothing like the picture painted of Mr. T. Sr. in the *Worldwide News* where he is supposedly a family man who loves children. However, the picture given by Mr. T. Sr. in the 7/17/89 WN of people in the WCG jockeying for position does fit perfectly my recollection of Mr. T. Jr. When Mr. T. Sr. became transformed from being a 'little dictator' -- as his son had described him -- into being a 'big dictator,' he dangled a one-quarter to one-half million carrot in front of his son's nose. That is what caused Mr. T. Jr. to want to gravitate to Pasadena in 1986. At his going away party he told my wife that he had really changed. Well, I have to wonder. Someone who has, doesn't have to boast about it" (*Ambassador Report*, December 1991).

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard change his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer.13:23). The Hebrew word for "accustomed," here, is *limmud* and means "instructed, taught, learned," and comes from the root word *lamad*, "to goad, to teach." Those who are taught, goaded, instructed to do evil and learn their lessons well, becoming skilful at evil, how can they really change or repent, and turn over a new leaf?

### *End-Time Deceivers Foretold*

The apostle Peter warned about End-Time deceivers, "Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their GREED these teachers will EXPLOIT you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. . . Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings . . . But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

"They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. . . .

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Pet.2:19-22).

God's Word will expose all sins. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb.4:12-13).

#### *EXPOSE and REPROVE!*

As His true servants, God commands us to EXPOSE the wicked and their wicked ways and deeds. The apostle Paul wrote, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather REPROVE them. For it is a shame to even speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd [discovered] are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph.5:11-13). The New International Version has this passage, "Have nothing to do with the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but rather EXPOSE them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible" (Eph.5:11-13).

Jeremiah also wrote, "Concerning the prophets: all my bones tremble . . . The land is full of adulterers . . . The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly. . . . Among the prophets of Samaria [modern Israel, the capital of the northern ten tribes, now representing Ephraim-America] I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by BAAL and led my people ASTRAY. And among the prophets of Jerusalem [the Church] I have seen something horrible: They commit ADULTERY and LIVE A LIE. They strengthen the hand of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness. They are ALL LIKE SODOM to me . . ." (Jeremiah 23:9-14).

The apostle Peter thunders against many modern church leaders, "With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they *seduce the unstable*; they are *experts in greed* -- an ACCURSED BROOD! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam, son of Beor, who LOVED THE WAGES of wickedness" (II

Pet.2:14-15). Jude writes, "WOE to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for PROFIT into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's REBELLION" (Jude 11).

I do not condone the sins of modern day Church leaders. I do not makes excuses for them. Those who willfully and deliberately engage in habitual, repeated, and lust-driven sin, who are addicted to the "spiritual cocaine" of sexual debauchery, are ganging up on the edge of the precipice of the lake of fire and brimstone -- the fiery holocaust of Gehenna! Unless they totally and bitterly REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES, the wrath and fury of God will be poured out on them in the presence of all the holy angels and in the sight of the righteous (Matt.25:31-46; Mal.4:1-2).

God will not be mocked. They will receive the proper recompense for their wicked and evil perversions. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Gal.6:7-8).

When all the facts are added up carefully, it becomes clear as crystal that Joseph W. Tkach, the so-called "apostle general" of the Worldwide Church of God, is definitely not a "saint," as he may appear to the gullible and naive who judge by the outside appearance. The evidence is in; the facts are perfectly clear: Joseph Tkach is an end-time tyrant, a spiritual MONSTER who will like the evil fire-god Molech DEVOUR all those who put their trust and faith in him!

Should we follow such a man into out-and-out spiritual apostasy? God thunders in His Word, "COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven . . ." (Rev.18:4-5). God commands: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? . . . 'Therefore COME OUT FROM THEM, and be SEPARATE, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'" (II Cor.6:14-18).

## Chapter 10

*"Test Your Leaders"*

-- Gerald Flurry

# A New Look at Flurry's "Philadelphia Church of God"

In January 1990 Gerald Flurry and John Amos broke away from the Worldwide Church of God and began a new church called "The Philadelphia Church of God." They have pointed out many of the drastic changes Worldwide is going through, and claims to want to return to the faith of Herbert Armstrong, whom they look upon as "Elijah." They banish all cosmetics, rule the flock with rigor, and emphasize "Church government" as Worldwide also does. They claim the 144,000 of Revelation are the "Laodicean" Church and will all be martyred. They further claim Joseph Tkach is the "Joshua" of Zechariah 3. They began with a flourish -- but where did they go wrong?

I received the following letter from an ex-member of the Worldwide Church of God in Ohio who later joined the Philadelphia Church of God, headed by Gerald Flurry in Edmond, Oklahoma. His letter was extremely interesting and revealing. I thought I should share it with the readers of *Prophecy Flash*, with the hope of protecting and guiding people who might be tempted to get involved with another Church patterned after many of the basic errors of the Worldwide Church of God. The writer states:

"Thank you for your excellent literature! My enthusiasm has never been higher. I've been *starving* for such *inspiring* exhortations. Although my living was not at stake, such as in your case, the treatment I've received from church 'leaders' is about the same.

"After being too vocal in my questioning of the WCG's direction, I was 'disfellowshipped' in February of 1990. It was actually a relief since it was becoming more

and more difficult to even motivate myself to attend. The last three years were *rough*."

The correspondent continues his personal, in-depth report based on his own findings:

"I then came to Fellowship with the 'Philadelphia Church of God' headed by Gerald Flurry in Edmond, OK. He sounded pretty good at first but his ideas won't stand up to his instructions to 'TEST YOUR LEADERS.' He claims remnant Philadelphia Christians should back the PCG. 'Unfortunately' again, I have just been 'suspended' by John Amos for asking about PASSOVER and the '144,000' doctrine. Mr. Amos also claimed I was disrespectful to his *office*. He claimed that myself and others here in Canton, Ohio, have been 'hounding' them about these doctrines. (We haven't even gotten around to *PENTECOST* yet!)."

The letter writer continues:

"Mr. Amos was supposed to visit me to counsel me about my 'hang up' about Passover but changed his mind and called me to cancel our 'golf date-counselling session' and to tell me I have been suspended for not being in 'agreement' and for being 'disrespectful' to a minister. All conveniently by telephone -- just for asking questions. The old AT & T 'Reach out and disfellowship someone' plan.

"I probably *do* sound disrespectful in this letter. But I'd prefer to characterize it as you would and say I and the others there were being *bold* to get to the TRUTH. So far there are three -- possibly Four -- here in Canton who recognize the truth that has been revealed to you by God. Yes, and now we're being called all sorts of things in return."

What happened? Why was this sincere seeker for the truth of God abruptly thrown "out" of the new "Philadelphia Church of God," which claims to be the true "remnant" of the "Philadelphia Church" era founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1934? What went wrong? The letter writer continues his sad and pathetic story:

"Once the PCG organized itself and began teaching 'strong government' everything died. The PCG seems like a new Sardis -- accepting the truths that Mr. Armstrong taught (along with some errors), but freezing everything at that point and refusing new Truth.

"We were just 'made examples of' to the Columbus, Ohio congregation -- the largest actual congregation in this part of the country -- (around 40-50 people). All of this without talking first with any of us to our faces. Mr. Amos has forsaken the strays to 'save' the ninety-nine. It's BACKWARDS!

"Anyway, needless to say, your literature has sown to me that to continue to prove all things and to follow Christ -- not men with their own personal agendas -- thru getting back to serious Bible study and prayer IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR US ALL. It appears that Laodicean ministers can't magically change into Faithful shepherds, just by calling the organization 'Philadelphian.' A worthless shepherd is a worthless shepherd. I've only heard by the 'grapevine' that my status is now officially 'disfellowshipped.' No one has told me to my face. It's shameful!

"I can't tell you how encouraged I am by your reprints. I've just written this letter after having read your article 'Escape From Laodicea.' I hope to introduce others to

your study aids and other publications. It won't be easy though. Already I'm considered 'lost' by my own sister who still attends the PCG. She 'lovingly' refers to your literature as 'POISON.' Hopefully she'll come around -- before it's too late.

"By the way, I'm no stranger to your articles. I'd received the 'Plain Truth' and 'Tomorrow's World' magazines in the early seventies. I'd attended the WCG since 1973. I have many issues from the sixties also. Please keep the 'presses' rolling and thanks to you and all who are helping you to teach the truth so all who will be willing to prove and accept it can do so. Thanks so much. Our prayers are with you."

The writers then add the following postscript, a candid appraisal of the Flurry organization:

"P.S.S. Also if I can be of any help in regards to the 'PCG' please do not hesitate to ask. Mr. Flurry's errors are very dangerous, I feel. Thanks."

### *End-Time Deceptions Abound*

Just because a Church group comes out of the Worldwide Church of God, and possess quite a bit of truth, does not necessarily mean that they are "God's end-time Church," and the ONLY true Church of God on earth, today, as the Flurry organization claims for itself!

What about you reading this article? Do you know how to really IDENTIFY God's True Church -- His True Work on this earth, today?

Jesus Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:20). A Church's "fruits" involves both its TEACHINGS and DOCTRINES as well as its POLICIES and PRACTICES! Isaiah the prophet wrote, "To the law and to the testimony [the BIBLE]: if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is NO LIGHT IN THEM" (Isa.8:20).

Now, I have nothing "personal" against Gerald Flurry and his new organization. However, I have heard some things about them which cause me to grieve. They appear to have retreated into a form of "isolationism" and are not carefully "proving all things," as Paul commanded us to do (I Thess.5:21). They have retreated into the past, a time warp, where Herbert W. Armstrong -- despite his many faults, blemishes and errors -- is virtually "worshiped," put up on a pedestal, and glorified as the "Elijah" to come. Yet Herbert Armstrong himself admitted he was not a "prophet," and made many, many mistakes throughout his life. The prophecies concerning the coming "Elijah" say that he will restore the truth of God. Herbert Armstrong did restore some of God's truth -- but far from all of it -- and he was in error on some very important points.

Furthermore, the Elijah to come is prophesied to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers" (Mal.4:6) -- and the dropout rate of young people from the Worldwide Church of God was enormous when Herbert Armstrong was alive. They have failed to truly reconcile fathers and children. Family

break-ups were at record levels. Husbands were divorcing wives and wives were leaving husbands. The situation in the Worldwide Church of God, during Herbert Armstrong's later years, was chaotic, with divorce and remarriage at all-time highs. Certainly these would not be the "fruits" of the ministry of the "Elijah" to come!

Gerald Flurry is right to compare the present-day leader of the Worldwide Church of God to "Judas Iscariot." The modern leadership of the Church is indeed betraying Jesus Christ and His truth!

*The Great Errors of Gerald Flurry and  
the "Philadelphia Church of God"*

However, Flurry is totally wrong to use the prophecy in Zechariah concerning "Joshua the high priest" and to claim it refers to Joseph Tkach. According to Flurry in his book "Malachi's Message,"

"Joshua was Zerubbabel's chief assistant. They are both end-time types of two men who work together just before Christ's return. Joshua rebelled and 'despised the day of small things.' He turned away from the way Zerubbabel built. That is how Satan got to him (Zech.3:1).

"The 'man of sin' rules in God's Temple (or Church) and rejects the past instructions of 'he' who was 'taken out of the way' (II Thes.2). There is to be a Judas-like betrayal today, just as there was with Joshua.

"And end-time Joshua and the 'man of sin' reign in God's Church just before Christ's return (Zech.3:8; II Thes.2:1-3). Are the one and the same? Both turn away from past instructions. Both have filthy garments. Failing to submit to Christ's government is the major problem of both men" (p.61).

Sadly, this exegesis is all mixed up, spiritually. The "man of sin" of II Thessalonians refers most directly to the future "BEAST" or ruler of the end-time Babylonian Empire (Rev.17:10) who will literally sit in the Temple of God, soon to be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Rev.11:-1-2). He will literally sit in the Temple and proclaim that he is God. Paul writes of him, "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thess.2:4). Joseph Tkach does not literally claim that he is "God." This prophecy can only refer to him as a secondary type, since he does "exalt himself" and sits in the "Church" and acts with brazen impunity as he changes doctrines. But the primary meaning of this Scripture is obviously as a reference to the end-time Dictator who, like Antiochus Epiphanes, will desolate God's Temple and install the abomination of desolation (see Dan.11:31-32; Matt.24:15-21) and who will persecute God's people (Rev.12:14-16).

*Who is "Joshua" the High Priest?*

Flurry also completely misunderstands the significance of "Joshua the high priest" in Zechariah 3, also. Let's notice this passage carefully. "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right

hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" (Zech.3:1-2).

Notice! This man is snatched FROM the "fire," a type of the Great Tribulation. That means he is SAVED! He is a chosen vessel of Almighty God! He is most definitely NOT an "apostate" who starts out well but ends up going astray! Rather, the exact OPPOSITE is true! Let's continue the passage:

"Now Joshua was dressed in FILTHY CLOTHES as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN, and I will put rich garments on you.' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by" (Zech.3:3-8).

This scene shows a man who was filthy with sins, but who REPENTED -- and who was then used mightily by God! This describes the very opposite of a man plunging into APOSTASY -- it shows a man FORSAKING apostasy and REPENTING of a grievous, filthy, spiritual past!

In ancient times, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor of Judah worked together, as a team, to rebuild the temple of God, which was accomplished from 520 to 516 B.C. They were a powerful team -- Joshua did not forsake the Work of God, as Gerald Flurry seems to claim, and plunge into apostasy -- not at all.

### *The TWO WITNESSES*

Rather, he and Zerubbabel were TYPES of the end-time TWO WITNESSES of the Book of Revelation! Notice it! God shows Zechariah a vision of a gold lampstand with seven lights, and two olive trees beside it (Zech.4:1-3). God then says, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT,' says the LORD Almighty. What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'" Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation; his hands will also COMPLETE IT. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you" (Zech.4:4-9).

Notice! This cannot refer to Herbert Armstrong, not even in type. Even if one suggests that God used him to begin His end-time work in 1934, he is now DEAD. He most certainly will NOT "complete" or "finish" the Work of the Church! Therefore, he was NOT an end-time "type" or fulfillment of "Zerubbabel"! That should be perfectly plain.

The Scripture goes on, however, "Who despises the day of small things? Men will REJOICE when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. . .' Then I



asked the angel, 'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?' He replied, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord' I said. So he said, 'These are the TWO WHO ARE ANOINTED TO SERVE THE LORD of all the earth'" (Zech.4:10-14).

What is this talking about? These two "anointed ones" were Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest! They were a type of the TWO WITNESSES of the End Time! They worked TOGETHER to finish and complete the WORK OF GOD on earth, prior to the return of Jesus Christ!

Therefore, in no way could this prophecy refer to Herbert Armstrong -- who is now DEAD -- and Joseph Tkach -- who has now turned ASIDE from the true paths of God!

Rather, as John writes in the book of Revelation, Almighty God says:

"And I will give POWER TO MY TWO WITNESSES, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. *These ARE the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.* If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how any one who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want" (Rev.12:3-6).

How clear! Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel were two powerful servants of God who were types of the end-time Two Witnesses prophesied in the book of Revelation. In no way, therefore, is "Joshua" a type of that miserable dog and cur Joseph W. Tkach who has sold his soul to the devil and has departed from the faith and followed in the diabolical footsteps of Judas Iscariot, the supreme traitor of all time!

#### *Flurry and the "Temple"*

Flurry is also dead wrong when he claims,

"Even if a temple is built in Jerusalem, it will not be the temple of God [his emphasis]. The Jews have not been commissioned to build God's temple -- as Zerubbabel was. If they build a temple, it would be the Jew's temple" ( "Malachi's Message," p.47).

This is utter nonsense. The prophet Daniel foretold of a Temple of God in Jerusalem during the last days (see Dan.8:9-14, 23-25) where sacrifices will be performed (Dan.9:26-27) and where the abomination of desolation will be literally placed (Dan.11:31-32). Jesus Christ also foretold of this same Temple or "holy place" (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14). And John in Revelation connects this future Temple with the two witnesses, and was told specifically to "measure" it, but not to measure the

"outer court" because "it has been given to the Gentiles" who will trample it down for three and one half months, during the Great Tribulation! (Rev.12:1-2).

Furthermore, to claim that this Temple would not be God's Temple shows an astonishing lack of understanding. God plainly COMMANDS His people, the Jews, to rebuild His Temple. The prophecies of Haggai are all about this phenomenal End-Time coming event. God declares, "'Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and BUILD THE HOUSE, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,' says the LORD" (Haggai 1:8).

Talking about this end-time Temple, God says, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more SHAKE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, the sea and the dry land. I will SHAKE ALL NATIONS, and the desired of all nations [Christ the Messiah!] will COME, and I will fill this house [the End-Time Temple!] with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. . . The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty' (Hag.2:6-9).

Gerald Flurry says any Temple the Jews build will not be God's Temple? That is exceedingly strange. Malachi the prophet declares: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will COME TO HIS TEMPLE; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will COME,' says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:1). Christ will return TO HIS TEMPLE in Jerusalem! One of the final things remaining that must be accomplished before the return of the Messiah is the *rebuilding of His Temple!* Read my articles on "Coming Soon -- A Temple In Jerusalem!", "Prepare the Way of the Lord!" and "Will a Temple Soon Be Built?"

For a man who claims to be God's sole remaining representative on the earth, leading the sole remnant of the "one true Church," Gerald Flurry shows an astonishing amount of ignorance and an equally astonishing degree of pride and vanity and cocksure pompous arrogance. A little more "humility" would be much more becoming. God says, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and TREMBLES AT MY WORD" (Isaiah 66:2).

Enough said?

*The Mystery of the 144,000 Garbled Again!*

Flurry is also wrong in claiming that the Laodicean Church is the 144,000 and will all perish in the Great Tribulation, suffering martyrdom. He completely twists the Scriptures in Revelation 3 to suit his purpose, claiming that the promise in Revelation 3:21 is not given to the repentant Laodicean Christians at all but is part of the promise of the Philadelphia Church (whose own reward is actually mentioned in Rev.3:11-13). For Flurry to apply the promise Christ makes to repentant Laodiceans to the Philadelphia Church's reward is pure, unadulterated hogwash!

Flurry states that the 144,000 of Revelation are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord (Rev.6:9-16; 7:1-4). This of course is true. But then Flurry goes off the track, and claims that only the 144,000 are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation because, according to him:

"The Laodiceans will DIE and be sealed during the 2 1/2 year Tribulation. Therefore, we can see that the 144,000 of God's people receive their salvation through the Tribulation experience -- and death" (p.29).

This is utterly false! He adds,

"Again, the Bible indicates that *all the Laodiceans who enter God's Kingdom must DIE for God* (Rev.6:9-11; 12:11-12). You should read every word. . . . The Laodiceans have to *prove themselves by dying for God*" (p.30, his emphasis).

These Scriptures simply do not say what Gerald Flurry says they say. Rather, Rev.6:9-11 speaks of MANY true Christians dying during the Great Tribulation. But it does not say ALL will perish in martyrdom! Similarly, Revelation 12:11-12 merely states that the devil will come down to the earth with great wrath and fury. Verses 14-16 show that some of God's people will be protected from Satan; but others will be persecuted. There is NO MENTION OF MARTYRDOM, although it will certainly happen to SOME! Persecution is NOT "martyrdom"! Many will be persecuted, thrown in prison, and treated horribly. Some will definitely be martyred -- but nowhere does God say all the Laodiceans will be martyred -- only that they will suffer the "fire" of the Great Tribulation (Rev.3:18). In the process, many of them will finally REPENT, and learn their lesson.

Who then are the real 144,000 of Revelation? Let's understand! The apostle John sees them after the Great Tribulation (Rev.6:11-17), during a pause before the Day of the Lord begins, when God Himself sends plagues upon the earth (Rev.7:1-2). John says quite clearly that they are 12,000 from EACH of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev.7:3-8) who are also "servants of our God" (v.3). Being servants of God, these people already have God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, these must be SURVIVING CHRISTIANS from all the remnant Churches of God who have come THROUGH the Great Tribulation, and are *still alive!* At this time they will be "sealed" in their foreheads (v.3).

What is this "sealing"? It cannot be receiving of God's Spirit -- they already have that, being "servants of God." To claim that it is "death," as Flurry does, makes no sense whatsoever. These people are SURVIVORS, still alive at the end of the Great Tribulation! What, then, is it? Notice!

### *The Mystery of the "Mark"*

"Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, 'Bring the guards of the city here, each with a WEAPON in his hand.' And I saw six men coming from the direction of the

upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. . . . Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, 'Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and PUT A MARK on the FOREHEADS of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.'"

Ezekiel continues: "As I listened, he said to the others [other angels], 'Follow him through the city and KILL, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but DO NOT TOUCH ANYONE WHO HAS THE MARK" (Ezekiel 9:1-6).

This "mark" is the same thing as the "seal" in Revelation 7:3 -- it is the "seal" or "mark" of divine PROTECTION and setting apart! In other words, the PLAGUES OF GOD which will fall upon the earth during the Day of the Lord, will not harm or touch the "sealed" and protected servants of God who are still alive at that time! They will be supernaturally SPARED and SAVED from the judgment that will fall upon the heads of all the wicked!

*"The Government of God"?*

Unfortunately, Gerald Flurry's so-called "Philadelphia Church of God" is no more the true "Philadelphia Church" than is the Worldwide Church of God or the Church of God, International! It is just one more off shoot of Worldwide -- one more "sect" that has arisen during these last days to lead people astray into error! Satan the devil seems to have a slot for virtually everybody, and many subtle ways in which to deceive people.

Flurry believes that the "government of God" is only in his "church" group today. He thunders at everybody else:

*"When we reach 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord,' all rebellion from the Church against the Elijah Work [which he claims is his work] is removed. At that point, all Firstfruits support what Christ has restored through HWA or they are dead spiritually! Even though HWA died before 'the great and dreadful Day of the Lord,' there are many who still don't support what Christ restored through him. When that Day arrives, ALL CHURCH MEMBERS WHO STILL REBEL AGAINST GOD'S GOVERNMENT WILL BE CUT OFF FOREVER!" (p.29, whew!).*

Flurry's "church government" is no more God's Government on earth than Worldwide Church of God, International Church of God, , or any other sect or cult today! He says of those he calls "Laodiceans," "They have a serious GOVERNMENT PROBLEM. They are in the Tribulation for that very reason!" (*ibid.*). But Flurry's group has shown it has that identical problem!

*Will they wind up then in the very same place?*

Flurry threatens all who don't follow HIM and his group with DEATH in the Great Tribulation, unless they repent NOW. He claims their "sealing" means being MARTYRED during the Great Tribulation. What a total perversion and twisting of the plain and simple Scriptures of Revelation 6, 7 and 12! Knowing that we serve a righteous and a just God, I suspect that God will reserve for Gerald Flurry and his group the very punishment that he so quickly threatens so many others with! I would sincerely not want to be "caught" among them.

On the last page of his book, page 83, Flurry asks the question:

"WHO HAS A GOVERNMENT PROBLEM?"

He asserts:

"We are going to be accused of rebelling against God and His authority. WE ARE DOING JUST THE OPPOSITE! . . . Who has a government problem? The whole battle we face is struggling to cling to Christ's government. . . . WE ARE NOT REBELLING -- WE ARE TAKING A STAND AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE!"

Of course, Joseph Tkach and the Worldwide Church of God do accuse Flurry and his group of rebelling against "Church authority" and the "government of God." But now Flurry and his group are accusing others of the very same thing when they disagree with him! So what we see here are "two wolves," all right -- the Worldwide "wolf" gnashing its teeth at a rebellious young "whelp" of a "wolf" which has led off a group of people to follow him to his own rendezvous with destiny, and the Great Tribulation - - unless he, himself, bitterly repents of his own serious, fatal errors!

If Flurry were taking a stand against those who are rebelling against God, and if he were standing up for the TRUTH of God, and not just for old ERRORS and doctrinal mistakes of the past, then I would have nothing against him -- I would cheer him and root for his team. But alas, I cannot do that. The "fruits" have proven that his group is just another "miniature Worldwide" with all of its governmental errors and doctrinal faults -- including the abuse of authority and stubborn refusal to admit and confess their mistakes, and to repent and receive proven and provable new Truth!

*"BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!"*

Finally, Flurry ends his book:

"Brethren, please study and digest this message, and pray fervently for God to guide you. BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN! Your eternal life hangs in the balance" (p.83, "Malachi's Message").

On this one thing Gerald Flurry is certainly right.

You should definitely "BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!" (p.83). And that includes *Gerald Flurry!*

Flurry also tells people who read his book, "

"*GOD COMMANDS -- TEST YOUR LEADERS*" (page 5).

This also is very good advice. And it applies just as much to Gerald Flurry as it does to Joseph W. Tkach, or any other man on the earth, today!

He is also right, when he says, on page 4, that the apostle John had a "run in" with a certain church leader of his time, one Diotrephes, who would not let the brethren receive emissaries from John, but forbade them from doing so and even "puts them out of the church," John wrote (III John 9-10). Flurry says these cast out ones were the faithful brethren, the one's who had God's Holy Spirit. These cast out ones became the new faithful Church of God, while the visible organization under Diotrephes went into apostasy.

Flurry declares:

"The point is, THOSE CLOSE TO GOD FOLLOWED JESUS CHRIST -- not some of the deceived leaders in God's Church."

Flurry continues:

"We often ask the question, 'Is he out of the Church?' But that isn't the most important question. That isn't the question the Apostle John was most concerned about. His followers were 'cast out' of the Ephesus Church [era -- II John 9,10] -- but it was because they were actually FOLLOWING CHRIST! Following Christ has gotten many people kicked out of God's Churches -- when those Churches were going astray. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST -- not a man or a church organization" (p.4, "Malachi's Message").

Isn't that amazing? Gerald Flurry knows this truth. He even writes about it. Indeed, a TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST! But then Flurry does the very same thing DIOTREPHESES DID whom the apostle John had his confrontation with -- he casts true Christians out of the Church! Flurry does the very same thing to others that Joseph Tkach and his minions in Pasadena did to him!

Is that the right "Christian example" to be set?

Is Flurry, therefore, really "FOLLOWING CHRIST?"

The experience of the man who was in the "Philadelphia Church of God" for a while speaks volumes concerning the true state of affairs of the "Philadelphia Church of

God."

His letter is very revealing and definitely shows a wrong attitude on the part of the ministry -- a self-righteous, holier-than-thou attitude that is blind to error and their own mistakes and shortcomings. Christ Himself will deal with such reprehensible, devious ministers who refuse to repent when confronted with the plain and simple Word of God.

*"WOE To the Shepherds"!*

The Word of God thunders, "To the shepherds: Thus said the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel, who have been tending yourselves! Is it not the flock that the shepherds ought to tend? You partake of the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, and YOU SLAUGHTER the fatlings; but you do not tend the flock. You have not sustained the weak, healed the sick, or bandaged the injured; you have NOT BROUGHT BACK THE STRAYED, or looked for the LOST; but you have DRIVEN THEM WITH HARSH RIGOR, and they have been scattered for want of anyone to tend them" (Ezek.34:2-5, Tanakh).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "'WOE to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!' declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: 'Because you have SCATTERED my flock and DRIVEN THEM AWAY [through "disfellowshipment" as well as other means, including "boring them to death" in some cases] and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow PUNISHMENT on you for the EVIL you have done,' declares the LORD'" (Jer.23:1-2).

John Amos, one of the two top ministers of the "Philadelphia Church of God" -- I have to put that name in quotation marks, because by their fruits they certainly are NOT the "Church of Brotherly Love," which the name "Philadelphia" would imply -- accused a man of having a "hang-up" about Passover and the 144,000. But I have noticed it is the one who does the accusing who usually has the real spiritual "hang-ups."

The leaders of the "Philadelphia Church of God" appear to be stuck in "neutral" spiritually and are going nowhere fast. As the letter writer said, they have all the major "truth" virtually "frozen solid" -- as of the time of Herbert Armstrong -- except what Gerald Flurry decides to change, for his own benefit.

Concerning the Passover controversy, Flurry and Amos both should read my many articles on this subject which prove beyond any question that Passover must be observed at the END of Nisan 14, on Nisan 15, the same time as the Jews have always observed it. The wine and unleavened bread are to be taken with the Passover meal or seder, in a family setting, the only difference being they represent the blood and body of Christ our Saviour who rescued us from sin. (See the articles "Wonderful New Truth about the Passover!," "Passover -- The Final Solution," "When Should We Observe the

Passover?" and "Myths about the Passover!")

Likewise, they should study into the subject of the right day to observe Pentecost. This holy day has been grievously misunderstood. The Jews have always celebrated both Passover and Pentecost on the right days -- they never lost this fundamental truth of God, anymore than they ever lost the true knowledge of the weekly Sabbath! (See my articles "How Should We Count Pentecost?", "Pentecost -- the Final Story," "The Pentecost Enigma!", "The Incredible Truth about Pentecost," and "The Plain Truth about Pentecost!")

I sincerely hope that Gerald Flurry and John Amos will both come to full repentance before they go so far adrift from the truth which they once held that they earn for themselves the full, undiluted and undiminished WRATH and fury of God, which He will pour out on the wicked shepherds, the evil ministers, and all those who MISLEAD God's people!

As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "The WRATH OF GOD is being revealed from heaven against ALL the godlessness and wickedness of MEN WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. . . . so that [these] men are without excuse" (Rom.1:18-20).

This is no small matter, but something all should take with the utmost seriousness and urgency.

Presently, the "Philadelphia Church of God" possesses fatal and dangerous errors. They came out of Worldwide, but not "all the way out" of Babylon! They still have the Babylonian, authoritarian, despotic form of "church government" which does not come from Scripture but from Babylon and the tyranny of Roman Catholicism, masquerading as the truth of God. God's true ministers are not autocrats or dictators -- they are loving and gentle shepherds who love the flock with tenderness and rule with meekness and gentleness (I Pet.5:1-4; Matt.23:8-12).

The "Philadelphia Church of God," as it seems to *boastfully* call itself -- not illustrative of what I would call an attitude of humility -- needs to repent, and develop an attitude of true humility. Certainly, people need to be warned against every vestige of false teaching that remains in the Worldwide Church of God. But we need also to repent and change every vestige or particle of error that formerly was taught by the Worldwide Church of God. Just "following Herbert W. Armstrong" as he used to teach is not good enough. He was still just a man -- mortal, fallible, weak, and sinful. Following him blindly would be no safer than following any man blindly!

The Scriptures state unequivocally: "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing" (Psalms 146:3-4). This certainly happened in the case of Herbert Armstrong. He left the Work of God in the hands of a spiritual *FOOL!*



The Word of God says, "It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes" -- or ministers or any human leaders (Psalms 118:8-9).

I hope and pray that the leaders of the Philadelphia Church of God will come to a much fuller and deeper repentance and submission to the will of God. It is right that they should help expose the errors of Worldwide -- but they should not blind themselves to REAL new truth, and bring people into servitude and cruel "bondage" to themselves -- *replacing one dictatorship with another!* They themselves must also open their eyes to the fact that Herbert Armstrong did not have all the truth, and that we must continue to GROW in grace and the knowledge of God's Word and HIS LAWS (II Pet.3:18). If they follow the example of Worldwide, and put people out for asking questions, or bringing up serious new truth, then they are no better than the apostates they are fleeing from -- they are just "the pot calling the kettle black" -- modern hypocrites! We should not reject the extremism of Worldwide only to retreat into a rigid reactionary neo-conservative cultism.

*Two Very Interesting Letters*

Informing me of the unkind comments and ridicule of Gerald Flurry, a gentleman sent me a copy of a sermon which Flurry gave. The man wrote in a letter accompanying the tape:

"Thank you very much for all the great inspiring articles that you have been sending to the Canton faithful. God has given you a gift that I am thankful I can now rely upon whenever I need someone or some literature to add depth and life to my personal study. I have enclosed a copy of the Gerald Flurry tape that I mentioned to you on the phone. I have put the 2 excerpts which mention you on the front of the tape with the full sermon following. The first comment on the tape is a letter from someone who is just learning about the Flurry

experience and they think he is the only one who sees the problems in the Laodicean Church.

"Flurry's followers are under the mistaken notion that he is the first one to see the problems of Worldwide, while the truth is you have been writing about all the problems in Worldwide for over four years.

When Flurry tries to tie you in with John 4:22 it makes me wonder if he has any Biblical understanding since he again has the story backwards, just like his interpretations of Malachi, Joshua, and Habakkuk."

Hard on the heels of this letter, I received another letter with another tape! This writer declared of Mr. Flurry:

"Enclosed is one of Mr. Flurry's tapes. I thought you would appreciate the 'clever' way he tries to minimize the importance of what you are teaching. He also *blatantly twists* and *distorts*

the way you speak of HWA. You may want to respond.

"It appears that you are now officially 'at war' with the PCG. It is getting very 'intense' here in Ohio. John Amos has just been transferred full-time to Columbus, OH. -- this is probably due, in part, to some of the 'waves' we've created around here concerning Passover, Pentecost, 144,000, etc.

"Anyway -- keep up the *GREAT WORK* and we are all backing your effort to publish the *TRUTH*. Take care.

"P.S. Great job on the P.C.G. article (Boy was I surprised!! -- and also now . . . in 'trouble' . . . "

### *Doctrinal Errors of Gerald Flurry*

Gerald Flurry, judging by the comments he made in his sermon, has no interest in studying into the subjects of Passover, Pentecost, the 144,000 of Revelation, or any other area where he is in error and teaching false doctrine. He seems to have the attitude typical of most false ministers, who exclaim, "My mind is already made up -- don't confuse me with the facts!"

What about you? Have you already "pre-judged" the issue, before you study into it? Do you, like Flurry, first condemn the man and then ignore the message? Wise king Solomon wrote of those who judge matters before they get the facts, or who make snap judgments without bothering to get all the evidence. He wrote:

"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is *folly and shame* unto him" (Prov.18:13).

Solomon also wrote about the researching and investigative process:

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to SEARCH OUT a matter" (Prov.25:2).

### *A Flurry Theological Oxymoron*

Gerald Flurry says that I am like the Samaritan woman of whom Jesus Christ said, "Ye know not what ye worship." He claims that I am totally deceived and actually worship Satan the devil. At one point in his sermon, he refers to me as "Billy," a name I haven't heard used for me since I was ten years old! Apparently, I have really gotten under his skin, because he just couldn't seem to let well enough alone. He ridiculed, joked, and poked fun, and accused and condemned -- but never once did he bother to address a single substantive ISSUE! But mere "name-calling" will solve nothing. Only the TRUTH matters! Even unpalatable truth is better than NO truth!

What IS the true day when we should observe Passover? Do the Jews observe it at the right time after all? Why do the Worldwide Church of God, Church of God International, and Flurry's Philadelphia Church of God, all observe Pentecost on a

DIFFERENT DAY than the JEWS, to whom God gave His Word and "oracles" to preserve (Rom.3:1-2)? These questions are not merely "idle curiosity" items of no importance! They involve the very meaning and significance and TIMES of God's annual Holy Days! If we worship God incorrectly, or on the wrong day, will He bless us?

Isn't it time we examine -- and answer -- these questions? Should we be afraid to face them?

In John 4:22 Jesus Christ says to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well: "*Ye worship ye know not what: We know what we worship, for SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS.*" Gerald Flurry says that I worship I know not what, like the Samaritans. That is very strange, because it is HE who follows the SAMARITAN DATE for PENTECOST! I follow the date the Jews, and Jesus Christ Himself, followed! Bizarre as it may appear, it is he and his followers who today follow in the footsteps and traditions and beliefs of the Samaritans! The Samaritans taught that Pentecost should be counted from the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, contrary to the teaching of the Jews, the Pharisees, and the rabbis! Any good Bible Dictionary, as well as the book *Antiquities of the Jews* by the first century Jewish historian Josephus, or modern Jewish religious history of the holy days, will attest to this fact.

Christ said we should follow the teaching of the Pharisees in matters concerning the laws of God (see Matt.23:2-3). He plainly said, "The scribes and Pharisees" -- not the Samaritans or Sadducees -- "sit in MOSES' SEAT. All therefore whatsoever THEY bid you observe, THAT observe and DO" (Matt.23:1-3). The Pharisees, history proves, observed Pentecost by counting fifty days from the first High Holy Day of Unleavened Bread! The apostle Paul acknowledged that as a Pharisee since he was a child, he had observed God's Laws -- which would include Passover and Pentecost -- in a manner that was "BLAMELESS"! (Phil.3:5-6).

Jesus condemned the apostate ideas of the pagan Samaritans, who received many of their religious notions from ancient king Jeroboam the Apostate (see II Kings 17:24-41; I Kings 12:25-33). Since Flurry follows the teachings of the Samaritans, then it must truly be HIMSELF who falls into the same category as the woman from Samaria, of whom Jesus said, "Ye worship ye know not what."

Actually, the Samaritans were worshiping demons and Satan the devil in their cleverly devised and compromised, blended and amalgamated syncretic religion combining paganism and perverted use of Scripture.

Gerald Flurry points his finger at me, accusing me of "worshipping I know not what." Herbert Armstrong, whom Flurry seems to virtually worship, used to point out repeatedly, in sermon after sermon, that a person who points the finger at another has four fingers pointed back at himself!

If you would like to PROVE the truth about when Passover and Pentecost should be observed, then write for my articles, "How to Count Pentecost," "Pentecost -- the Final Answer!", "When Should the Passover Be Observed?", and "Passover -- the Final Solution!"

*Beware the "Flurried" Work!*

How important is the "work" that Flurry has begun? Is Gerald Flurry teaching the truth of God, and getting the Church back on the right track? A careful study of his literature, especially his book *Malachi's Message*, shows that his theological understanding leaves a lot to be desired. He is right in rejecting the apostasy of the Worldwide Church of God, and Joseph Tkach, but that is where semblance to truth ends. His doctrine that the 144,000 all perish in the Great Tribulation is totally unBiblical (see Rev.7:1-8), for they are obviously still alive and to be protected during the "Day of the Lord"!

His claim that the promise God gives to the Laodiceans who overcome (Rev.3:19-21) really is a promise to the Philadelphian Church boggles the mind (Rev.3:7-12).

Flurry makes a great point, also, of claiming that the "Joshua the high priest" of Zechariah's prophecy is a prophetic reference to Joseph W. Tkach, the arch-apostate of the Worldwide Church of God. This interpretation is utterly ridiculous and does great violence to the Scriptures themselves! Zechariah tells us that this "Joshua the high priest" is a chosen vessel of God, "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech.4:2) -- not an apostate who is going to be cast INTO the fire! This prophetic "Joshua" wears "filthy garments" in the beginning (verse 3), but these garments of unrighteousness are TAKEN FROM HIM, and his iniquities are FORGIVEN (verse 4), and he is given new, clean garments symbolizing righteousness (verse 5). This story, this prophecy, therefore, describes the DIAMETRIC OPPOSITE of what Gerald Flurry claims it says! It does not describe a man of God rushing off into sheer apostasy, such as Joseph Tkach. Rather, it describes a sinful religious leader who REPENTS of his sins, and turns to GOD!

Can you really believe a man who twists and distorts Scripture like Flurry does? Can you really have faith in such a man's Biblical understanding and exegesis? Flurry is upset because people are asking him questions about Passover and Pentecost, and these other matters. He says in his sermon that he wants Church brethren to follow him and his ministry "like little children," and to have "faith" in their ministry! He said to them, in his sermon, "We will not mislead you." But that is exactly what he is doing!

*Gerald Flurry in Bible Prophecy*

Gerald Flurry claims that he KNOWS Herbert Armstrong was a mighty man of God and the Elijah to come, and therefore dismisses everything I write as of no consequence. By assuming Herbert was right in all things, he ASSUMES I must be wrong!

Do you know what the word "ASSUME" is when broken down into its components? It is an "ASS" leading "U" and "ME"! Now, as for me, I refuse steadfastly to follow an "ass" or any other long-eared "donkey" or related quadruped!

Should we "assume," therefore, anything that Gerald Flurry says is "true"? The apostle Paul exhorts every true Christian, "*PROVE ALL THINGS*; hold fast that which is TRUE" (I Thess.5:21). We should not take anything for granted. We should not assume ANYTHING! The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, BELIEVE NOT every spirit, but try [test, prove] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Isaiah the prophet wrote, "To the LAW and to the TESTIMONY: if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is NO LIGHT in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Jesus Christ warned that in these last days, in particular, that, "Many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall DECEIVE MANY" (Matt.24:5). He warned, also, "And MANY false prophets shall rise, and shall DECEIVE MANY" (verse 11).

The apostle Paul warned the people of God: "For I know this, that after my departing shall GRIEVOUS WOLVES enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking PERVERSE THINGS, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

Although Gerald Flurry is right to reject the apostasy and error of the modern Worldwide Church of God, and its leadership, he himself has gone off on a novel path of error, and teaches many "PERVERSE things," including a dictatorial form of Church government, claiming to be the only true representative of God on the earth, and expelling women from the Church just for using a little make up. One of his ministers led the people to use "pita bread" during the Feast of Unleavened Bread" in 1991, and when suspicious members later found out it was leavened and told him so, the minister exploded at them, railed on them, accused them of meddling and demanded, "By what authority did you check up on this?" He was not happy to have been corrected; he almost suspended them from Church for "insubordination"!

Jesus Christ said, "BEWARE of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the FIRE. Wherefore *BY THEIR FRUITS ye shall know them*" (Matt.7:15-20).

How important is the work of Gerald Flurry in God's sight? We must judge by the fruits. The Philadelphia Church of God falls far short of the mark when it comes to preaching the TRUTH of God! Nor are their minds open to receiving more new truth, judging by their own closed-minded prattle. Therefore, Jesus Christ says of them: "Every plant, which my heaven Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them

alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt.15:13-14).

Gerald Flurry is an example of a blind man leading the blind. He himself does not understand, yet he leads many others who also do not understand. Many of them are gullible, trusting, naive sheep. They may not know any better, and simply need to be informed as to the truth. But Flurry is another case altogether. He ought to know better. In teaching bizarre error and following Herbert Armstrong, "right or wrong," he commits the sin of idolatry, a heinous sin in the sight of God.

### *What's In a Name?*

God often names people what they are. Names often have great significance and spiritual importance. "Adam" means "man" (Gen.2:15). Abraham means "father of a great multitude" (Gen.17:5). Sarah means "princess" (verse 15). Jacob means "supplanter," which shows his character in supplanting Esau to get the birthright. But God changed his name to "Israel," which means "Prince of power with God" (Gen.32:28). The name "Jesus" means "Saviour," and He is our Saviour (Matt.1:21). What about the name "Flurry"? Gerald Flurry's name should tell us something about him, too -- something about his character. What does "FLURRY" mean?

According to *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, "flurry" means: "a gust of wind"; "a brief light snowfall"; "nervous commotion, bustle"; "a brief advance or decline in prices"; "a SHORT-LIVED OUTBURST of trading activity." Does this describe the work, activity and commotion being caused by Gerald Flurry and his Philadelphia Church of God? Is it just a brief "gust of wind," signifying nothing? Is it to be just a "short-lived outburst" of activity, before it disappears from the scene? Will it last but a short while, and then disappear into the Great Tribulation, because of its failure to accept new truth and to reject old error?

The word "flurry," as a transitive verb, means "TO CAUSE TO BECOME AGITATED AND CONFUSED," as in, "*to become flurried.*" Is Gerald Flurry confused, himself? He certainly is causing many people to become agitated and confused and "flurried." Sad and tragic as it is, people can only blame themselves if they swallow hook, line and sinker the new "Gospel according to Gerald Flurry." Those who blindly, unwittingly and carelessly follow him will suffer the same fate he will suffer -- unless he repents bitterly and whole-heartedly! The truth is, it is Flurry himself who does not understand the true meaning of real, sincere, heart-felt repentance and conversion.

I think that about says it all.

## Chapter 12

# Flurry's "Little Book"

In an issue of *The Philadelphia Trumpet*, published by Gerald Flurry and the Philadelphia Church of God, Gerald Flurry states in the lead article that his book *Malachi's Message* IS the prophesied fulfillment of the Scripture in Revelation 10, where we read:

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a LITTLE BOOK open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, SEVEN THUNDERS uttered their voices. And when the SEVEN THUNDERS had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. . . . And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the LITTLE BOOK. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the LITTLE BOOK out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev.10:1-11).

In this recent article, Gerald Flurry asserted dogmatically and without shame that HIS book, *Malachi's Message*, IS this "little book" mentioned in Revelation 10, which was sweet as honey to the taste, but bitter as bile to the stomach! He claimed without pause or proof that things uttered by the "seven thunders" were seven messages contained in his book!

I have read *Malachi's Message* -- and I assure you -- I tell you most plainly and pointedly -- that it is no prize winner. It is a product of Gerald Flurry's own imagination, riddled with doctrinal errors and huge gaping flaws -- EASILY disproved by ANYONE who has an open mind, who is willing to question, test, and examine the statements, and LOOK UP EVERY quoted SCRIPTURE! Gerald Flurry's book is NOT the "little book" John was told to eat, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the "seven thunders"! It is an IMPOSTOR, JUST LIKE GERALD FLURRY IS AN

## IMPOSTOR!

Let's take a good look at some of the GLARING ERRORS contained in *Malachi's Message* -- before YOU become hooked on spiritual poison and become a spiritual fatality!

*Gerald Flurry Versus the Real Malachi*

Now, I have nothing "personal" against Gerald Flurry and his new organization. However, I have heard some things about them which cause me to grieve. They appear to have retreated into a form of "isolationism" and are not carefully "proving all things," as Paul commanded us to do (I Thess.5:21). They have retreated into the past, a time warp, where Herbert W. Armstrong -- despite his many faults, blemishes and errors -- is virtually "worshiped," put up on a pedestal, and glorified as the "Elijah" to come. Yet Herbert Armstrong himself admitted he was not a "prophet," and made many, many mistakes throughout his life. The prophecies concerning the coming "Elijah" say that he will restore the truth of God. Herbert Armstrong did restore some of God's truth -- but far from all of it -- and he was in error on some very important points.

Furthermore, the Elijah to come is prophesied to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers" (Mal.4:6) -- and the dropout rate of young people from the Worldwide Church of God was enormous when Herbert Armstrong was alive. They have failed to truly reconcile fathers and children. Family break-ups were at high levels. Husbands were divorcing wives and wives were leaving husbands. The situation in the Worldwide Church of God, during Herbert Armstrong's later years, was chaotic, with divorce and remarriage at all-time highs. Certainly these would not be the "fruits" of the ministry of the "Elijah" to come!

Gerald Flurry is right to compare the present-day leader of the Worldwide Church of God to "Judas Iscariot." The modern leadership of the Church is indeed betraying Jesus Christ and His truth! The Worldwide Church of God has truly slipped into a state of precarious apostasy!

*The Great Errors of Gerald Flurry*

However, Flurry himself is also grievously wrong in many of his doctrines, espoused in *Malachi's Message*. He is totally wrong to use the prophecy in Zechariah concerning "Joshua the high priest" and to claim it refers to Joseph Tkach. Notice! According to Flurry:

"Joshua was Zerubbabel's chief assistant. They are both end-time types of two men who work together just before Christ's return. Joshua rebelled and 'despised the day of small things.' He turned away from the way Zerubbabel built. That is how Satan got to him (Zech.3:1).

"The 'man of sin' rules in God's Temple (or Church) and rejects the past



instructions of 'he' who was 'taken out of the way' (II Thes.2). There is to be a Judas-like betrayal today, just as there was with Joshua.

"And end-time Joshua and the 'man of sin' reign in God's Church just before Christ's return (Zech.3:8; II Thes.2:1-3). Are the one and the same? Both turn away from past instructions. Both have filthy garments. Failing to submit to Christ's government is the major problem of both men" (*MM*, p.61).

Sadly, this exegesis is all mixed up, spiritually. The "man of sin" of II Thessalonians refers most directly to the future "BEAST" or ruler of the end-time Babylonian Empire (Rev.17:10) who will literally sit in the Temple of God, soon to be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Rev.11:-1-2). He will literally sit in the Temple and proclaim that he is God. Paul writes of him, "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thess.2:4). Joseph Tkach does not literally claim that he is "God." This prophecy can only refer to him as a secondary type, since he does "exalt himself" and sits in the "Church" and acts with brazen impunity as he changes doctrines. But the primary meaning of this Scripture is obviously as a reference to the end-time Dictator who, like Antiochus Epiphanes, will desolate God's Temple and install the abomination of desolation (see Dan.11:31-32; Matt.24:15-21) and who will persecute God's people (Rev.12:14-16).

#### *Who is "Joshua" the High Priest?*

Flurry also completely misunderstands the significance of "Joshua the high priest" in Zechariah 3, also. Let's notice this passage carefully. "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?'" (Zech.3:1-2).

Notice! This man is snatched FROM the "fire," a type of the Great Tribulation. That means he is **SAVED!** He is a chosen vessel of Almighty God! He is most definitely NOT an "apostate" who starts out well but ends up going astray! Rather, the exact **OPPOSITE** is true! Let's continue the passage:

"Now Joshua was dressed in **FILTHY CLOTHES** as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have **TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN**, and I will put rich garments on you.' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by" (Zech.3:3-8).

This scene shows a man who was filthy with sins, but who **REPENTED** -- and who was then used mightily by God! This describes the very opposite of a man plunging into **APOSTASY** -- it shows a man **FORSAKING** apostasy and **REPENTING** of a grievous, filthy, spiritual past!

In ancient times, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor of Judah worked together, as a team, to rebuild the temple of God, which was accomplished from 520 to 516 B.C. They were a powerful team -- Joshua did not forsake the Work of God, as Gerald Flurry seems to claim, and plunge into apostasy -- not at all. Rather, he and Zerubbabel were TYPES of the end-time TWO WITNESSES of the Book of Revelation! Notice it! God shows Zechariah a vision of a gold lampstand with seven lights, and two olive trees beside it (Zech.4:1-3). God then says, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT,' says the LORD Almighty. What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'" Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation; his hands will also COMPLETE IT. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you' (Zech.4:4-9).

Notice! This cannot refer to Herbert Armstrong, not even in type. Even if one suggests that God used him to begin His end-time work in 1934, he is now DEAD. He most certainly will NOT "complete" or "finish" the Work of the Church! Therefore, he was NOT an end-time "type" or fulfillment of "Zerubbabel"! That should be perfectly plain.

The Scripture goes on, however, "Who despises the day of small things? Men will REJOICE when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. . .' Then I asked the angel, 'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?' He replied, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord' I said. So he said, 'These are the TWO WHO ARE ANOINTED TO SERVE THE LORD of all the earth'" (Zech.4:10-14).

What is this talking about? These two "anointed ones" were Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest! They were a type of the TWO WITNESSES of the End Time! They worked TOGETHER to finish and complete the WORK OF GOD on earth, prior to the return of Jesus Christ!

Therefore, in no way could this prophecy refer to Herbert Armstrong -- who is now DEAD -- and Joseph Tkach -- who has now turned ASIDE from the true paths of God!

Rather, as John writes in the book of Revelation, Almighty God says:

"And I will give POWER TO MY TWO WITNESSES, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. *These ARE the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.* If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how any one who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth

with every kind of plague as often as they want" (Rev.12:3-6).

How clear! Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel were two powerful servants of God who were types of the end-time Two Witnesses prophesied in the book of Revelation. In no way, therefore, is "Joshua" a type of that miserable dog and cur Joseph W. Tkach who has sold his soul to the devil and has departed from the faith and followed in the diabolical footsteps of Judas Iscariot, the supreme traitor of all time!

### *Flurry and the "Temple"*

Flurry is also dead wrong when he claims, "Even if a temple is built in Jerusalem, it will not be the temple of God [his emphasis]. The Jews have not been commissioned to build God's temple -- as Zerubbabel was. If they build a temple, it would be the Jew's temple" (*MM*, p.47).

This is utter nonsense. The prophet Daniel foretold of a Temple of God in Jerusalem during the last days (see Dan.8:9-14, 23-25) where sacrifices will be performed (Dan.9:26-27) and where the abomination of desolation will be literally placed (Dan.11:31-32). Jesus Christ also foretold of this same Temple or "holy place" (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14). And John in Revelation connects this future Temple with the two witnesses, and was told specifically to "measure" it, but not to measure the "outer court" because "it has been given to the Gentiles" who will trample it down for three and one half months, during the "Great Tribulation" (Rev.12:1-2).

Furthermore, to claim that this Temple would not be God's Temple shows an astonishing lack of understanding. God plainly COMMANDS His people, the Jews, to rebuild His Temple. The prophecies of Haggai are all about this phenomenal End-Time coming event. God declares, "'Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and BUILD THE HOUSE, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,' says the LORD" (Haggai 1:8).

Talking about this end-time Temple, God says, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more SHAKE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, the sea and the dry land. I will SHAKE ALL NATIONS, and the desired of all nations [Christ the Messiah!] will COME, and I will fill this house [the End-Time Temple!] with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. . . 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty' (Hag.2:6-9).

Gerald Flurry says any Temple the Jews build will not be God's Temple? That is exceedingly strange. Malachi the TRUE prophet of God declares: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will COME TO HIS TEMPLE; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will COME,' says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:1). Christ will return TO HIS TEMPLE in Jerusalem! One of the final things remaining that must be accomplished before the return of the Messiah is the *rebuilding of His Temple!*

Hence, here we see that Gerald Flurry's "Message" is the *EXACT OPPOSITE OF MALACHI'S MESSAGE!* Only Satan the devil could inspire him to call his horrible error "Malach's Message"! Whom will you believe?

*The Mystery of the 144,000*

Flurry claims that the Laodicean Church is the 144,000 and will all perish in the Great Tribulation, suffering martyrdom. Flurry states that the 144,000 of Revelation are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord (Rev.6:9-16; 7:1-4). This of course is true. But then Flurry goes off the track, and claims that only the 144,000 are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation because, according to him:

"The Laodiceans will DIE and be sealed during the 2 1/2 year Tribulation. Therefore, we can see that the 144,000 of God's people receive their salvation through the Tribulation experience -- and death" (p.29).

He adds,

"Again, the Bible indicates that *all the Laodiceans who enter God's Kingdom must DIE for God* (Rev.6:9-11; 12:11-12). You should read every word. . . . The Laodiceans have to *prove themselves by dying for God*" (MM, p.30, his emphasis).

These Scriptures simply do not say what Gerald Flurry says they say. Rather, Rev.6:9-11 speaks of MANY true Christians dying during the Great Tribulation. But it does not say ALL will perish in martyrdom! Similarly, Revelation 12:11-12 merely states that the devil will come down to the earth with great wrath and fury. Verses 14-16 show that some of God's people will be protected from Satan; but others will be persecuted. There is NO MENTION OF MARTYRDOM, although it will certainly happen to SOME! Persecution is NOT "martyrdom"! Many will be persecuted, thrown in prison, and treated horribly. Some will definitely be martyred -- but nowhere does God say all the Laodiceans will be martyred -- only that they will suffer the "fire" of the Great Tribulation (Rev.3:18). In the process, many of them will finally REPENT, and learn their lesson.

Who then are the real 144,000 of Revelation? Let's understand! The apostle John sees them after the Great Tribulation (Rev.6:11-17), during a pause before the Day of the Lord begins, when God Himself sends plagues upon the earth (Rev.7:1-2). John says quite clearly that they are 12,000 from EACH of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev.7:3-8) who are also "servants of our God" (v.3). Being servants of God, these people already have God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, these must be SURVIVING CHRISTIANS from all the remnant Churches of God who have come THROUGH the Great Tribulation, and are *still alive!* At this time they will be "sealed" in their foreheads (v.3).

What is this "sealing"? It cannot be receiving of God's Spirit -- they already have that, being "servants of God." To claim that it is "death," as Flurry does, makes no sense whatsoever. These people are SURVIVORS, still alive at the end of the Great

Tribulation! What, then, is it? Notice! "Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, 'Bring the guards of the city here, each with a WEAPON in his hand.' And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. . . . Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, 'Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and PUT A MARK on the FOREHEADS of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.'"

Ezekiel continues: "As I listened, he said to the others [other angels], 'Follow him through the city and KILL, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but DO NOT TOUCH ANYONE WHO HAS THE MARK" (Ezekiel 9:1-6).

This "mark" is the same thing as the "seal" in Revelation 7:3 -- it is the "seal" or "mark" of divine PROTECTION and setting apart! In other words, the PLAGUES OF GOD which will fall upon the earth during the Day of the Lord, will not harm or touch the "sealed" and protected servants of God who are still alive at that time! They will be supernaturally SPARED and SAVED from the judgment that will fall upon the heads of all the wicked!

*"The Government of God"?*

Flurry believes that the "government of God" is only in his "church" group today.

Flurry's "church government" is just another totalitarian, dictatorial, heavy-handed, tyrannical form of HUMAN government. Although professing to be God's Church, and therefore claiming God is in charge of ONLY that Church, Flurry has proved by his errors and his attitude that God is not in that Church! It is just another of Satan's End-time Deceptions!

Speaking about Church government in the TRUE Church, Jesus Christ said very plainly:

"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles EXERCISE DOMINION over them, and they that are great exercise AUTHORITY upon them. *BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU:* but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [servant]; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be YOUR SERVANT: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt.20:24-28).

Flurry threatens all who don't follow HIM and his group with DEATH in the Great Tribulation, unless they repent NOW. He claims their "sealing" means being MARTYRED during the Great Tribulation. Knowing that we serve a righteous and a just God, I suspect that God will reserve for Gerald Flurry the very punishment that he so quickly threatens so many others with!

On the last page of his book, page 83, Flurry says:

"We are going to be accused of rebelling against God and His authority. WE ARE DOING JUST THE OPPOSITE! . . . Who has a government problem? The whole battle we face is struggling to cling to Christ's government. . . . WE ARE NOT REBELLING -- WE ARE TAKING A STAND AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE!"

Of course, Joseph Tkach and the Worldwide Church of God did accuse Flurry and his group of rebelling against "Church authority" and the "government of God." But now Flurry and his group are accusing others of the very same thing when they disagree with him! So what we see here is a strange theological phenomenon. Flurry is guilty of doing the very same thing he accuses Tkach and the Worldwide Church of doing!

If Flurry were taking a stand against those who are rebelling against God, and if he were standing up for the TRUTH of God, and not just for old ERRORS and doctrinal mistakes of the past, then I would have nothing against him -- I would cheer him and root for his team. But alas, I cannot do that. The "fruits" have proven that his group is just another "miniature Worldwide" with all of its governmental errors and doctrinal faults -- including the abuse of authority and stubborn refusal to admit and confess their mistakes, and to repent and receive proven and provable new Truth! Flurry and his Church have shown no interest whatsoever in the revealed new truth God has given us of the correct dates to observe the Passover and Pentecost! In fact, he ridicules the truth, and insists that anciently the Jews kept the Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, and later lost that knowledge -- despite all the evidence of the Jewish history, Talmud, Mishnah, and the Bible itself, to the contrary!

I sincerely wish that Gerald Flurry and his "Philadelphia Church of God" were truly seeking to serve God and seeking His Truth. But the "fruits" prove otherwise. Yet many former Worldwide Church of God members are being sucked right into the vortex of his spiritual whirlpool, where they will drown, spiritually, unless they free themselves from his error and authoritarian management!

#### *Whom Will You BELIEVE?*

Finally, in the conclusion of his book, *Malachi's Message*, Gerald Flurry declares, with seeming sincerity and authority:

"Brethren, please study and digest this message, and pray fervently for God to guide you. BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!  
Your eternal life hangs in the balance" (*MM*, p.83,

On this one thing Gerald Flurry is certainly right. You should definitely "BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!" (p.83). And that includes *Gerald Flurry!*

Flurry also tells people who read his book, "

*"GOD COMMANDS -- TEST YOUR LEADERS"* (p. 5).

This also is very good advice. And it applies just as much to *Gerald Flurry* as it does to Joseph W. Tkach, or any other man on the earth, today! Flurry declares:

"The point is, THOSE CLOSE TO GOD FOLLOWED JESUS CHRIST -- not some of the deceived leaders in God's Church."

Flurry continues:

"We often ask the question, 'Is he out of the Church?' But that isn't the most important question. That isn't the question the Apostle John was most concerned about. His followers were 'cast out' of the Ephesus Church [era -- II John 9,10] -- but it was because they were actually FOLLOWING CHRIST! Following Christ has gotten many people kicked out of God's Churches -- when those Churches were going astray. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST -- not a man or a church organization" (*MM*, p.4).

Isn't that amazing? Gerald Flurry *knows* this truth. He even writes about it. Indeed, a TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST! But why, then, doesn't Gerald Flurry do as he says, and *FOLLOW CHRIST*? Christ kept the Passover with the Jews of His day, throughout His life (Luke 2:41-49). He kept Pentecost on the same day as the Jews, in their synagogues (Luke 4:16-21). He acknowledged that the Pharisees and scribes "sit in Moses' seat" and that we should "observe and do" -- what? "ALL therefore WHATSOEVER they bid you observe" (Matt.23:2-3)!

Why doesn't Gerald Flurry take the hint -- and OBEY GOD?

Is Flurry, therefore, *really* "FOLLOWING CHRIST?"

*"WOE To the Shepherds"!*

The Word of God has some strong words for modern ministers, like Gerald Flurry, who claim to be His official representatives. God Himself thunders, "To the shepherds: Thus said the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel, who have been tending yourselves! Is it not the flock that the shepherds ought to tend? You partake of the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, and YOU SLAUGHTER the fatlings; but you do not tend the flock. You have not sustained the weak, healed the sick, or bandaged the injured; you have NOT BROUGHT BACK THE STRAYED, or looked for the LOST; but you have DRIVEN THEM WITH HARSH RIGOR, and they have been scattered for want of anyone to tend them" (Ezek.34:2-5, Tanakh).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "'WOE to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!' declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: 'Because you have SCATTERED my flock and DRIVEN THEM AWAY [through "dis-

fellowshipment" as well as other means, including "boring them to death" in some cases] and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow PUNISHMENT on you for the EVIL you have done,' declares the LORD" (Jer.23:1-2).

I sincerely hope that Gerald Flurry and those ministers with him will both come to full repentance before they go so far adrift from the truth which they once held that they earn for themselves the full, undiluted and undiminished WRATH and fury of God, which He will pour out on the wicked shepherds, the evil ministers, and all those who MISLEAD God's people! As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "The WRATH OF GOD is being revealed from heaven against ALL the godlessness and wickedness of MEN WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. . . . so that [these] men are without excuse" (Rom.1:18-20).

This is no small matter, but something ALL should take with the utmost seriousness and urgency. Presently, the "Philadelphia Church of God" possesses fatal and dangerous errors. They came out of Worldwide, but not "all the way out" of Babylon!

They still have the Babylonian, authoritarian, despotic form of "church government" which does not come from Scripture but from Babylon and the tyranny of Roman Catholicism, masquerading as the truth of God.

God's true ministers are not autocrats or dictators -- they are loving and gentle shepherds who love the flock with tenderness and rule with meekness and gentleness (I Pet.5:1-4; Matt.23:8-12).

I hope and pray that the leaders of the Philadelphia Church of God will come to a much fuller and deeper repentance and submission to the will of God. It is right that they should help expose the errors of Worldwide -- but they should not blind themselves to REAL new truth, and ancient rediscovered truth, and bring people into servitude and cruel "bondage" to themselves -- *replacing one dictatorship with another!*

They themselves must also open their eyes to the fact that Herbert Armstrong did not have all the truth, and that we must continue to GROW in grace and the knowledge of God's Word and HIS LAWS (II Pet.3:18).

If they follow the example of Worldwide, and put people out for asking questions, or bringing up serious new truth, or old truth rediscovered -- then they are no better than the apostates they are fleeing from -- they are just "the pot calling the kettle black" -- modern hypocrites!



## Chapter 12

# Roderick C. Meredith and the “Living” Church of God

Another church which has sprung out of the demise and remains of the Worldwide Church of God, and bringing many former members into their flock and church organization, is the Living Church of God, set up by Roderick C. Meredith. Meredith, who finds himself leading another "branch" of the End-time Church of God.

Interestingly, Joseph Tkach, Sr., of the Worldwide Church of God, claims that Herbert Armstrong warned him to watch out for Roderick Meredith -- that he was an "ambitious" man. Meredith has always reminded me of "yon Cassius," in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. "Yon Cassius hath a lean and hungry look -- such men are dangerous!" Caesar was told. Cassius told Brutus, "It is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are *underlings*." Meredith's lean frame, and hatchet-faced intensity, gave new meaning to the term spiritual "Nazi." Like one of Hitler's own storm-troopers, Meredith was famous in his Worldwide days for the quickness of his disfellowshipping "errant ministers," on the spot, and cutting people down to "size" with his "authority."

Tkach says Herbert Armstrong told him Meredith could not be trusted:

"In late 1985 Mr. Armstrong told me that Dr. Meredith deeply desired to be pastor general, and warned me that just as Dr. Meredith had been a continuous thorn in Mr. Armstrong's side, so he would be a continual problem to me. Mr. Armstrong had himself suspended Dr. Meredith from attending services for about eight months in 1979-80" (*The Worldwide News*, January 26, 1993).

Meredith has since been joined by Raymond McNair, also former evangelist of the Worldwide Church of God, and his brother-in-law (Meredith's first wife was Raymond's sister).

In June of 1975, Raymond McNair filed for divorce against his wife of twenty

years, something no Worldwide Church of God evangelist had ever done. He had the backing of the two Armstrongs, because in their eyes his wife Leona had departed from the Church and was attending lectures of Ernest Martin, a minister who had left the Church to form his own group in Pasadena, the Foundation for Biblical Research. The divorce became final in 1976, and not long thereafter Raymond married a new wife. Whether or not this "new marriage" was really an adulterous relationship in God's sight, didn't seem to matter to those responsible for the action. Yet Jesus Christ said plainly in the Scriptures:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, *saving for the cause of fornication* [Greek *porneia* meaning "adultery, sexual immorality, harlotry, incest" --- see Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, #4202, and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* ], causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt.5:32).

Mrs. Leona McNair had never been accused of adultery, or incest, or harlotry, or any of the sins which would fall into the category of *porneia*. Nor had she departed from her husband, or left him, or refused to be a wife to him. They undoubtedly had their problems, like all married couples do, but their marriage had produced several fine children and had endured 20 years. Why the sudden rush to judgment and divorce? The real cause appears to have been solely religious motives -- Leona despised the corruption she saw within the Worldwide Church of God, and Raymond tolerated it and remained steadfastly loyal to Herbert Armstrong, despite the evidence of intrigue, politics, sexual sins, authoritarianism, egotism, tyranny, and the like.

The McNair divorce might have been forgotten and swept under the rug, except that Roderick C. Meredith subsequently spent five minutes lambasting Mrs. McNair in front of one thousand Worldwide ministers in an early 1979 ministerial meeting in Tucson, Arizona. He said that Leona McNair had cursed her husband, and deserted him. Then, in the June 1979 *Pastor's Report* Meredith went even further, describing her as a horrible example of a wife. He wrote:

"A classic example of this [marital desertion] would be Mr. Raymond McNair's situation. His wife *refused* to be a wife to him for over two years -- to sleep with him, cook for him, or even civilly communicate with him in a decent manner. Rather, she had *left* God's Church and was even FIGHTING God's Church and *Mr. McNair*, turning his children against him and literally *cursing* him to his face. Finally, upon advice of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Ted Armstrong, he was forced to make legal the already existing FACT that she had *deserted him* and was no longer his wife in *any way whatsoever* " (italics and emphasis his).

When Mrs. Leona McNair heard of this, she filed a libel and slander lawsuit against the Worldwide Church of God and Roderick Meredith in 1979. She said that contrary to these allegations, Raymond had cut off her financial support, himself moved into separate sleeping quarters, and on a number of occasions took her to the door and yelled at her to get out of the house. Leona's daughter corroborated this information in court. In 1984 a jury *unanimously* awarded Leona McNair \$1.26 million in

compensative and punitive damages. The presiding judge told the jury that their verdict renewed his faith in the jury system.

Says Richard Nickels of this case:

"The jury had decided that Meredith's statements (which obviously were based on what Raymond McNair told him) were lies, and that his conduct was extreme, outrageous and intentional, causing Leona McNair severe emotional distress. The jury found out that Leona McNair had not deserted her husband, it was the other way around, she had been forced out. Meredith and the Worldwide Church of God were convicted of libel and slander" (*Giving & Sharing Newsletter*, August 1993, no.23, page 3).

Money talks in the legal system, and the Church appealed the decision. The verdict was overturned on technical grounds, and a new trial was ultimately approved. The Church, perhaps seeing a repetition of fate, and even a greater cost, decided this time to settle out of court, and in December of 1992 the Church settled for \$750,000. Meredith, at this point, no longer needed the legal umbrella of the Worldwide Church of God to fight this case. Is this one major reason why he waited until December 1992 to leave Worldwide and to begin his own "Global Church of God"?

I, like Richard Nickels, would find it very difficult to trust a minister or ministers who have been convicted and found guilty of lies, distortion, libel, slander, and causing immense emotional grief and stress to another human being. One wonders if such a man himself is any longer truly "human" or some sort of Nazi monster.

Of such men, who have wielded power and authority over others, and who abused and tyrannized those under their care and tutelage, the famed Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevky (1821-1881) wrote:

"Whoever has experienced the power, the unrestrained ability to humiliate another human being automatically loses power over his own sensation. Tyranny is a habit -- it has its own organic life -- it develops finally into a disease -- a habit that can kill or coarsen the very best man to the level of a beast. Blood and power intoxicate -- the man and the citizen die with the tyrant forever. Return to human dignity through repentance and regeneration becomes almost impossible."

Roderick C. Meredith and his "Global Church of God," which some refer to as the "Global Church of *Rod*," has also rejected the truth about Passover being on Nisan 15, as the Jews have faithfully observed it for the past 3,500 years, or ever since the time of Moses. He also rejects the truth about Pentecost or Shavuot being on Sivan 6, and ridicules this truth, with the discredited argument, "If it were on a fixed date, then why *count*?" He and his ministers simply ignore the fact that the date for Pentecost had to be counted in order for it to always fall 50 days after the Passover high holy day, because Nisan and Iyar, the first two months of the sacred calendar, sometimes had 29 or 30 days each, depending on the year. Therefore, in ancient times Pentecost or Shavuot could fall on Sivan 5, 6, or 7. The only reason it always falls on Sivan 6,

today, is due to the fact that the calendar today does not allow for this variation, as it is a "calendar of the dispersion," a permanent mathematical calendar, used today to keep the Jews around the world in unity, so they observe the same day everywhere.

Only the truly "ignorant" would claim Pentecost is not Sivan 6, today, because that would obviate the need to "count"! Although this question has been answered repeatedly, and even CGI admits it is a bogus question, Meredith remains stultified in his ignorance. It appears that his real motive in starting up "Global Church of God" is simply to "compete" with his old nemesis, Ted Armstrong, and the "new boy on the block," Gerald Flurry, to carve out for himself a "market share" of the erstwhile Worldwide Church of God followers.

Although Meredith claims to teach the "FULL gospel," it is obvious that this is just a ploy -- a sham. In his writings he seems to stress the "Ten Commandments," and says people should obey "even the least" of them -- yet were not the "Ten" all written by the finger of God? How could any of them be looked upon as "the least"? Meredith, in repeatedly saying society needs to repent and get back to observing the Ten Commandments, *ignores completely* all the other laws, judgments, and statutes of God! Scholars have elucidated and found 613 commandments in the Word of God, the "Old Testament"! Meredith ignores blithely 603 of them. How is that for getting "back to the faith"?

Meredith's true distaste for the things of God, and His Law, is revealed in the fact that on the Day of Atonement he blasted the Jews, and shouted that anyone who goes to a Jewish synagogue is committing idolatry just as bad as attending a Catholic Church! Furthermore, his elders have let it be known that the words "Torah," "Mishnah," and "Talmud," and similar words, are *not to be used* around the Global Church of God -- as "some members are offended." Rather than rebuke those who use these words, shouldn't the elders rather rebuke those who take offence?

It clearly appears that Rod Meredith is NOT interested in getting back to the "faith once delivered to the saints" of the first century (Jude 3-4). Rather, he is only interested in getting back to the teachings of Herbert Armstrong, right or wrong, as they were circa 1950-60! Unless he repents, "Hot Rod" Meredith will soon be remembered as "Shot Rod" Meredith!

### *Be Careful Whom You Follow*

Some people think I speak out too harshly and strongly in denunciation and condemnation of the errors of others -- whether they be Joseph Tkach, Gerald Flurry, Garner Ted Armstrong, Roderick C. Meredith, or anyone else. However, I do not believe that to be the truth. Those same people who condemn me would probably condemn John the Baptist who spoke out against King Herod for marrying his brother's wife, and for his vehement remarks made in public against the religious leaders of the Church of God of his day -- the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were the leaders of the "Church of God" of that day and era. John said to them in scalding terms and wrathful anger --

"O generation of VIPERS, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE" (Matt.3:7-8).

There are sincere and well-meaning people don't think I should speak out so negatively, but just concentrate on "preaching the gospel." I suppose they would also, therefore, condemn Christ Himself, who said of false ministers and apostates of His time --

"WOE unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt.23:27, 33).

I urge God's people, everywhere, to beware of those who would lead you into another religious "cult." Beware of those who would become your "new" dictators, and rule over you, claiming the "authority of Jesus Christ." Beware of those who would DEMAND that you submit to them and their "church government," who claim they are "God's ONLY true Church," and claim your tithes and offerings must go to THEM as God's "chosen representatives."

BEWARE of those who seeks to maintain MIND CONTROL over the flock of God. Beware of those who teach a FEAR RELIGION, who terrorize you with threats of hell fire and damnation, if you "question" their authority or presumed "power" over you.

Beware of "spiritual policemen" who may talk a good fight, and speak lovingly of compassion and mercy, but who conduct a totalitarian regime based on power and fear, and who do not follow the example of Christ, our loving Shepherd, or the apostles, who refused to be "lords over God's heritage" (I Pet.5:1-3).

Beware of spiritual NAZIS who thrust you out of the Church for merely bringing up questions -- sincere questions -- about Passover, Pentecost, and the correct times and dates that these holy days should be observed!

BEWARE of all those who claim the MANTLE of "Herbert W. Armstrong," as if they are his spiritual "heirs," and true successors. Beware of those who worship him and who call him "Elijah" when there is no basis at all for doing so!

Beware of those who "manipulate" the flock, who secretly disfellowship people and who don't tell the congregation the TRUTH -- who HIDE their evil deeds under a cloak of self-righteousness and self-serving "authority" -- those who refuse to answer for their decisions, and sins, and make public apology and confession.

Beware of spiritual rascals, wily religious coyotes, devious snakes in the grass,

fraudulent scoundrels and deceiving scalawags -- spiritual skunks, scumbags, and other screwed up ungodly monsters!

*BEWARE!* When I see such wolves in sheep's clothing, such ravening beasts of the field, such spiritual VULTURES circling in the skies, hovering over the remains and dying bodies of the members of the Worldwide Church of God, seeking to devour, and to feast on the flesh of God's people, I cannot remain silent. I cannot keep these things to myself. I cannot be still!

It is not right to cover up evil, or to ignore doctrinal error. It is SIN to do so! God's Word thunders, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise REBUKE THY NEIGHBOUR, and not suffer SIN upon him" (Leviticus 19:17). The apostle Paul put it plainly: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but RATHER REPROVE [EXPOSE] THEM. . . . But all things that are REPROVED [DISCOVERED, EXPOSED] are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is LIGHT" (Ephesians 5:11-13).

Will you come to the light?

## Chapter 15

# Apostasy Through the Centuries

Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt.16:18). The Greek word for “church” in this verse is *ekklesia* and means, literally, “a calling out.” It means a popular “meeting,” or especially a religious “congregation,” or “assembly.”

Today, in the world, there are over 800 different churches, denominations, or sects which profess to be “Christian.” Yet they are for the most part strikingly different from each other and have major differences in doctrine, belief, and faith. How can you really tell which one or ones truly represent Christ, today, and which are imitations, counterfeits, false Churches?

Jesus Christ Himself warned, that in these “last days” before His second coming, there would be many false churches, false prophets. He declared, “Take heed that NO MAN DECEIVE YOU. For many shall come IN MY NAME” – that is, professing to be His servants, carrying *His* name, calling themselves “Christian” – “saying, I am Christ; and shall DECEIVE MANY” (MatL24:4-5).

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Church in his day, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the SIMPLICITY that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, ye might well bear with him” (II Cor.11:3-4).

Paul continued, “For such are FALSE APOSTLES, deceitful workers, transforming THEMSELVES into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Cor.11:13-15).

With all these dangers of being deceived, and misled by human beings, how can we KNOW when we have found a modern day representative of the true Church of God?

It is not easy. It requires much prayer, Bible study, and diligent search of the Scriptures, to compare present day Churches and their doctrines and beliefs with the holy Word of God.

Jesus foretold that His true followers would never constitute a major church or large congregation. He told His disciples, in type, "Fear not, little flock" (Luke 12:32).

The apostle Paul warned that many ministers would be using subtility, subverting the very word of God in their clever arguments and reasonings, leading many astray from the true path. He wrote, "For we are not as MANY WHICH CORRUPT THE WORD OF GOD: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (II Cor.2:17).

In the early days of the church, members met in each others' homes and held Bible studies and Sabbath services. As the churches grew, they would meet in larger halls and rented auditoriums. However, persecution soon set in, and the church members in Jerusalem "were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

Although several thousands were converted by this time, they never constituted a great proportion of the population. Persecution kept the numbers of true Christians relatively small, although many cleaved to them with flattery, who respected their devout, godly lives and behavior, but who were fearful of becoming one of them.

Gradually, as the early apostles died, false leaders rose up and led entire congregations of the Church astray, into error. The apostle Paul warned this would happen. He said to the elders of the Ephesus Church, when he left them, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

In fact, things in the Church became so bad that at the end of Paul's ministry, shortly before his death, he wrote to Timothy and said, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when I was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me" (II Tim.1:15-17).

Paul knew his life was about over. He said to Timothy, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim.4:6-8).



Paul said to Timothy, “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For *Demas hath forsaken me*, having LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me” (II Tim.4:9-11).

This was approximately 65 A.D., just a few years before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Already the visible Church of God was becoming weak, and false prophets were creeping in to subvert the faith of the brethren. Already even ministers who had helped Paul in his ministry had begun forsaking him, and falling away from the truth of God, being seduced by the attractions in the world and their own human nature.

Twenty five years later, or in 90 A.D., things were so bad in the Church that even the apostle John, an old man by now, was being refused admission by certain ministers to visit their flocks. John wrote in his third epistle, “I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (II John 9).

Can you imagine that? Even the apostle John, who leaned on Christ's bosom, the disciple for whom Jesus had a special love (John 21:7, 20, 24), was being banned from visiting certain churches by the church leaders! John himself who was probably considered by these younger ministers to be an “old fogey,” no longer with it, out of touch with reality, was treated with contempt in the very Church of God – in some areas!

John wrote of this diabolical Diotrephes, “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” (III John 10). This evil minister not only preached sermons directed against John, the last living apostle of Christ, but was malicious in his words. He was not a sincere follower of Christ; he had his own secret agenda, and was a grievous wolf who had entered the flock, and was devouring it greedily. He felt threatened by John, so he forbade anybody in his church to receive him or his helpers. Any who acted as if they would receive John he summarily disfellowshipped and cast out of the Church as “heretics”! Can you believe it? Yet it happened – in 90 A.D., *just sixty years after the death of Jesus Christ Himself!*

The true Church of God was becoming increasingly more difficult to recognize. Many were becoming deceived by false teachers and heretics. The true way of God was becoming regarded as “heresy” even within standing congregations of the Church of God, begun by the apostles themselves!

### *“The Age of Shadows”*

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut in *The Story of the Christian Church*, asserts, “We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., ‘The Age of Shadows,’ partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all

periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least” (p.41).

Hurlbut adds, “We have no longer the clear light of the book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history” (*ibid*).

Says Hurlbut, “For fifty years after St. Paul's life a CURTAIN HANGS OVER THE CHURCH, through which we strive vainly to look – and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects VERY DIFFERENT from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul.”

After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Church no longer had a visible headquarters. Many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem fled to a small town at Pella, in the Jordan valley. A small number of Jewish Christians endured at Pella for two centuries, in ever-decreasing numbers. They were known as Ebionites, a people by themselves, scarcely recognized by the general church and despised as apostates by their own race” (p.43).

Although the apostolic Church practiced baptism by immersion, by 120 A.D. baptism by pouring water over the head was already a custom in some churches. Although the early Christians observed the Sabbath day, by this time many began observing "the Lord's day," as they called it, or Sunday, instead (p.45).

Fierce persecution struck the Church in the first century, first under Nero (A.D. 66-68), and then Domitian (A.D. 90-95). From 110 to 313 A.D. there were systematic and empire-wide attempts to crush the faith.

Simeon, the successor of James as the head of the church at Jerusalem, a brother of Jesus Christ, is said to have attained an age of 120 years. He was crucified by order of the Roman governor of Palestine in 107 A.D. during the reign of Trajan.

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, was thrown to wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre in 108 or 110 A.D. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, died in 155 A.D. When he was brought before the governor and commanded to curse the name of Christ, he answered, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me nothing but good; and how could I curse him, my Lord and Saviour!” Polycarp was burned to death.

The worst persecution of all occurred in the reign of Diocletian and his successors, from 303 to 310 A.D. In a series of edicts it was ordered that every copy of the Bible should be burned, and that all churches should be tom down, and that all men who would not renounce the Christian religion should lose their citizenship and be without the protection of the law.

During this time, the true Christians fled to safety, many of them moving to central and western Europe, to get beyond the reach of the tyrannical Roman emperors.

The Churches that remained in the confines of the Roman empire became more and more pagan in their faith and doctrines, embracing the pagan holidays of Saturnia, but calling it "Christmas," and the day of "Ishtar" or "Astarte" (pronounced "Easter"!), in the spring, calling it the day of Christ's resurrection (though Christ was not resurrected at sunrise on Easter Sunday at all, but before daybreak, while it was yet dark.

Gradually the great visible Church made its peace with the empire and the world, becoming one with paganism in doctrine and practice in many respects. Many old pagan gods were dusted off and became adored as Christian "saints." Many old pagan temples were transformed into Christian 'churches.'

Writes Hurlbut, "The ceasing of persecution was a blessing but the establishment of Christianity as the state religion became a curse. Everybody sought membership in the church, and nearly everybody was received. Both good and bad, sincere seekers after God and hypocritical seekers after gain, rushed into the communion. Ambitious, worldly, unscrupulous men sought office in the church for social and political influence."

Hurlbut adds, "The services of worship increased in splendor, but were less spiritual and hearty than those of former times. The forms and ceremonies of PAGANISM gradually crept into the worship. Some of the old HEATHEN FEASTS BECAME CHURCH FESTIVALS with change of name and worship" (p.79). Hurlbut continues: "About 405 A.D. images of saints and martyrs began to appear in the churches, at first as memorials, then in succession revered, adored, and worshipped. The adoration of the Virgin Mary was substituted for the worship of Venus and Diana; the Lord's Supper became a sacrifice in place of a memorial; and the elder evolved from a preacher into a priest" (p.79).

The visible Church had been totally overcome by the world! Says Hurlbut, "The humility and saintliness of an earlier age was succeeded by ambition, pride, and arrogance, among churchmen." The church historian adds, "But *the church and the state become one* when Christianity was adopted as the religion of the empire, and out of the unnatural union arose two evils, one in the eastern, the other in the western provinces. In the east the state dominated the church until it lost all energy and uplifting life. In the west . . . the church gradually usurped power over the state, and the result was not Christianity but a more or less corrupt HIERARCHY controlling the nations of Europe, making the church mainly A *POLITICAL MACHINE*" (p.80).

But with these things happening to the great visible Church, in the Roman Empire, what happened to the true followers of Christ? Where did the true Christians go?

In the book of Revelation we are told the answer. John records a prophecy in chapter 12, where we read, "And the woman (the Church of God – see Eph.5:23-27) fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Rev.12:6).

This prophecy describes the Church of God fleeing from Roman persecution and dwelling in the “wilderness” for 1,260 years (a “day” for a “year” in fulfillment – see Num.14:40 and Ezek.4:6).

The “wilderness” meant beyond the reach of the imperial Roman Empire. History shows most of the true Christians moved into southern and eastern Europe during this period.

Thus, in essence, the true Church of God went underground

### *The Way They Call Heresy*

The apostle Paul confessed to Felix, the governor, before whom he was brought as a prisoner, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call HERESY, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).

Down through the ages, the true servants of God have often been referred to by established churches and religious institutions as “heretics.” It has always been the case. Jesus Himself said, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, that ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of man be come” (Matt.10:22-23).

This Scripture has yet to be fulfilled! Even in our day, we will not have gone over the cities of modern Israel, in personal evangelism, before the return of Jesus Christ!

But Jesus went on, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” (verses 24-25).

True Christians then will have one special sign which will always follow them wherever they go: They will be persecuted, even as Christ our Lord was persecuted, by the religious establishment – all the major churches, denominations, cults, sects, and various groups who have forsaken the right path and gone astray. They will be denounced, hounded, accused of “heresy,” and “disfellowshipped” or “excommunicated” from the erring, straying churches and religious groups!

In order to understand how to recognize a true servant of God, or the true Church of God, let us take a careful look at the servants of God in history, and see how we recognize them. Then let us apply that spiritual principle to our day, today!

Remember, just taking some man's word for being a true servant of God is extremely dangerous, and fraught with spiritual peril!

### The Church in the Middle Ages

In the book *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250*, by Walter L. Wakefield (University of California Press, 1974), we find a scholarly, authoritative discussion of those servants of God in the Middle Ages who were called “heretics” by the Roman Catholic Church, and how they were bitterly persecuted, maligned, and made victims of the inquisition, many of them dying in flames on the stake! Some of those men and women were true followers of Christ. Their only crime was in striving to get back to the faith and purity of the original apostles (see Jude 3-4).

These men saw the corruption which had become widespread in the Catholic Church as it exercised power, collected mandatory tithes, and became extremely wealthy. They saw the falseness of various Catholic teachings, and the wretched example being set by Catholic priests (some of whom had concubines, though forbidden to marry!), and they determined that they would denounce such corruption and devote their lives to following Christ and the example of the apostles.

Writes Wakefield, “Repeatedly in Christian experience over centuries sensitive individuals who observed a contrast between the church of their own day and that described in the New Testament have sought to restore religious institutions to the earlier model” (p.19).

He continues: “When the response of the hierarchy and clergy was an attempt to *silence their critics* or when proposals for renovation of the church encountered *apathy or resistance*, *resolute* advocates of a new spirit in religious life might go from reform to rejection.”

This very thing occurred to me in January, 1987, when the Worldwide Church of God attempted to silence me when I brought them new truth, and sought to restore the truth of God in the Church which was being lost. I encountered the strong arm of abusive Church “government” which tried to silence me, and the new truth from God which I presented was received with apathy and resistance.

Wakefield goes on: “Refusing to admit limitations on what could be accomplished or to be constrained by obedience, they took their case to the people, inspiring sects which were DECLARED TO BE HERETICAL” (p.20).

“As they preached the message that the perfect Christian life, the apostolic way to salvation through repentance, chastity, poverty, and evangelism, was open to all men, they awakened aspirations that could not be readily satisfied within the church as it was then constituted and that sometimes led into heresy” (*ibid*).

It is amazing to me how in every generation, or every other generation, *history seems to repeat itself!*

Wakefield writes: “The urge to preach was a natural product of the *zeal* of the

reformers and of the fact that, in a largely illiterate society, preaching was the necessary method of instruction. Traditionally, this was the bishop's function and could be undertaken by others only with his consent . . . Enthusiasts refused to be forbidden. When challenged with Paul's question, 'How can men preach unless they are sent?', they quoted the command of Christ to teach all nations. **WITH OR WITHOUT PERMISSION, THEY PREACHED, AND DISCIPLES GATHERED AROUND THEM TO DO THE SAME**" (p.21).

These earnest, devout men were merely following the example of the apostles, who when faced with the denunciations and proscriptions of the religious leaders of their days, the Pharisees, answered them: **"WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN"** (Acts 5:29).

Wakefield was describing such men as Peter Waldo, Peter of Bruys, and Henry of Le Mans, in southern France, during the twelfth century. They were considered a 'threat' to the established Church, regardless of their sincerity and purity of life.

### *The Dark Ages*

These servants of God during the Middle Ages were a thousand years removed from the time of Christ and the early apostles. They did not have any direct line tracing back to Christ and the apostles. But men who turned to God, whom God raised up, began preaching the gospel, looking to the Scriptures for their authority and doctrine. They looked to the example of Christ and the apostles, and knew that a true Christian must follow them, in example and purity of faith and conduct, and not the wretched, depraved, iniquitous examples of the priests, prelates, bishops and overseers of the Church of Rome.

In truth, they may not have had a tremendous amount of technical knowledge of the Scriptures. They did not understand much about archaeology, science, or the preservation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, they understood that the Bible was the Word of God, and that a true Christian strove to live by its every word and precept.

They did not fully understand the ramifications of the plan of God, in detail, or the Sabbath day, the annual holy days, or the details of prophetic fulfillment. But they understood enough to qualify them as servants of God and followers of Jesus Christ!

In fact, they understood more of the spirit of the law of God than most religious groups professing to be Christian, today – including many of those who observe the Sabbaths and even the annual holy days!

These people may not have been intellectual giants, or admired and looked up to by the world for their great knowledge and abilities. But as a rule, they were admired by many of their neighbors and the general public, because of the purity and saintliness expressed in their personal lives and conduct. As Peter admonished in I Peter 4, they set an example of *righteous conduct by their humility, kindness, gentleness, and goodness*, and the general population respected and loved them for it (I Pet.4:1-4). Although the

clerics and Catholic prelates abused them, and persecuted them, and accused them of heresy, slandering their conduct before the people, their righteous example silenced many of their most outspoken critics, or put them to shame.

But to the established Church, they were a distinct “threat,” and not to be ignored.

Like Jesus, Paul, and the early apostles, they kept running afoul of the religious establishment orthodoxy. Even as John the Baptist, Jesus, and the early apostles, were persecuted by the Pharisees, in their time, and even martyred, so these stalwart men of faith were bitterly assailed, slandered, criticized, and reproached by the religious leaders of their own society and time. They were regarded as “heretics”!

### *Peter of Bruys and Henry*

Wakefield continues: “More dangerous still was the dissemination of the idea that holy authority rested less on ordination than on the personal purity that was demonstrated by voluntary poverty, asceticism, and evangelism. the contrast between the wandering preachers and many of the clergy could all too often lead to repudiation of the latter as demonstrably unworthy and incapable of spiritual leadership” (p.22).

“In the region near the mouth of the Rhone, some time between 1112 and 1220, Peter of Bruys, a priest, began to preach an individualistic faith based on the Gospel but diff@ in important points from orthodox teaching. . . Peter denied the need of church buildings for worship, repudiated infant baptism as worthless, the Eucharist as unnecessary, and prayers for the dead as futile.... After two decades of preaching, first in the region along the Rhone, then further west toward Toulouse, Peter of Bruys went too far in his scorn of conformity and was murdered by a crowd, horrified when he made a bonfire of crosses to show his repugnance for what he called an instrument of torture rather than a sacred symbol' (p.23).

Peter of Bruys died serving Christ and renouncing the pagan relics of Catholicism. Because he scorned the pagan symbol of the cross, he was murdered by a superstitious crowd of unbelievers, dying as a martyr for Christ, even as Stephen, the first New Testament martyr did!

Wakefield continues in his authoritative history:

“Peter of Bruys’ successor was Henry, who, in an earlier appearance in the northern city of Le Mans in 1116, had set the people fiercely at odds with their clergy. Already the young preacher had -won a great reputation for piety, which was borne out by his appearance. Bearded, long-haired, barefoot, Henry seemed to be the very *personification of a prophet*” (*ibid*).

“When challenged to show his authority to preach Henry declared that God desired him to deliver a message of love. ‘*I obey God rather than man,*’ he said. ‘He who sent me said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”’ **THE TRUE CHURCH**

WAS A SPIRITUAL ONE,' he insisted, *a congregation of the pure*, and thus *sinful priests* [or MINISTERS, TODAY!] of the Roman organization [OR ANY OTHER MODERN DAY 'CHURCH!'] had no power to consecrate the Eucharist or to impose penance [OR OTHER "CHURCH AUTHORITY"!]. The hierarchy should *give up its wealth and honors*. Men need only confess their sins to *one another*. *Only faith* made the sacrament of baptism valid. Adam's sin was not visited upon his descendants, and surely a merciful God would not condemn children for it. Marriage was a human relationship" (p.24).

Notice how Henry answered his accusers, who questioned his right to preach. He received his authority from the very Word of God. He recognized that his questioners, themselves, had no such authority from God, for they were rejecting the very Word of God and not living according to Scripture.

Henry recognized that the TRUE CHURCH OF GOD is not a political organization, or a physical Church, at all, but rather a SPIRITUAL CHURCH, composed of all those who truly serve Christ and live according to His commandments and the Word of God!

Wakefield continues the story of these amazing men:

"By 1145, the influence of Henry and other dissidents, who profited by the unrest he was creating, had produced *a Situation most distressing* to the churchmen in Toulouse and the surrounding area. Churches were without congregations, congregations without priests, priests without respect. . ." (p.24).

Sounds like the reaction I have been receiving, today, from the hierarchy of the Worldwide Church of God, and others! They are most distressed by my bold preaching, writing, and thundering indictments of their error, sins, and wickedness! Many Church members are losing respect for godless, hypocritical ministers!

### *The Waldensians*

Shortly after this time, God called Peter Waldes to His work. Notice how this man received his divine calling from God.

Writes Wakefield: "In the city of Lyon some time between 1173 and 1176 a prosperous merchant named Waldes underwent a religious experience . . . Waldes went to a teacher of theology to ask how he could be saved, who quoted to him the words of Christ – 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me'" (p.43).

Waldes took the words of Christ literally. Making a property settlement on his wife and providing for his daughters in a nunnery, he distributed his wealth to the poor and began to preach a message of repentance in the streets. Some people, of course, thought him mad; others, as was also almost inevitable in that day, joined him to follow



his example; for their instruction Waldes procured translations of the Scriptures . . . *When reproached by the archbishop of Lyon for his UNAUTHORLZED EVANGELISM*, he is said to have made the same answer that the heretic Henry had uttered forty years before: ‘. . . *IT IS BETTER TO OBEY GOD THAN MAN*’” (p.43).

At first Waldes and his followers sought to remain within the Church, but the antagonism of the local clergy of Lyon induced him to seek papal approval of their lives of poverty and preaching. At the Third Lateran Council of 1179 some of the clergy laughed at their simplicity due to their ignorance of theology. Although the pope applauded their devotion to poverty, he denied them the right to preach unless they first obtained the permission of their local bishop.

Wakefield adds: “Even if Waldes observed the papal restriction for a time after his return to Lyon, suspicion of him persisted among the clergy” (p.44). In 1180 or 1181 he was called to testify before cardinal Henry, a papal legate, as to his orthodoxy. Waldes appended to the basic Christian credo, ‘Whatever we had, we have given to the poor as the Lord advised, and we have resolved to be poor in such fashion that we shall take no thought for the morrow, nor shall we accept gold or silver or anything of that sort from anyone, beyond food and clothing sufficient for the day. Our resolve is to follow the precepts of the Gospel as commanded” (p.44).

Says Wakefield: “Undeniably, at that moment Waldes was entirely orthodox in belief, *the fault* which soon incurred the *CENSURE OF THE CHURCH was DISOBEDIENCE* for he and his companions could no more resist the compulsion to preach than the clergy, under a new archbishop, could *tolerate* that trespass of their function or *ENDURE CRITICISM of their way of life [compared to] that of these evangelists*. Waldes and his followers were *EXCOMMUNICATED AND EXPELLED* from Lyon about 1182. . . . Now calling themselves the Poor in Spirit and known to others also as the Poor of Lyon, they were excommunicated with other sects in the general condemnation of heresy issued by Pope Lucius XI in 1184” (p.44).

How incredibly similar to what is happening to GOD’S TRUE SERVANTS, *TODAY!* We are being cast out of Churches, branded as “heretics” by apostate ministers and ecclesiastical leaders, and harassed and bitterly attacked in articles and publications, and from the pulpit! History certainly does repeat itself. Human nature has not changed one iota since the time of Christ and the apostles, and the Middle Ages!

Peter Waldes, like myself and others, today, *ran afoul of abusive Church government!* He ran afoul of religious leaders who could not or would not endure criticism of their errors, their lifestyle, and their spiritual corruption! Those wicked priests and prelates, like their counterparts today, would not tolerate this relative “unknown,” this “upstart” who felt compelled by the Spirit of God to preach the truth of God!

Wakefield continues: “The errors which had earned papal condemnation in 1184 were of practice, not doctrine; the danger to the church arose from disobedience and from

the contrast of the Waldensian way of life with that of the orthodox clergy. ‘they go about two by two, barefoot, clad in woolen garments, owning nothing, holding all things in common like the apostles, naked following a naked Christ,’ wrote Walter Map, who saw them in Rome in 1179, and his conclusion was that ‘if we admit them, we shall be driven out.’ After their excommunication, not surprisingly, the Poor of Lyon DEVELOPED FURTHER DISAGREEMENTS with the Roman church; there is reason to believe that some of these were stimulated by the absorption of the legacy of discontent left by Peter of Bruys and Henry in Languedoc, yet the Waldensian preachers insisted that they were in the *direct tradition from early Christianity*. In a book written a few years after 1190 by a companion of Waldes, an enemy was made to ask derisively: ‘Where was the church between the advent of the Saviour and your coming?’ The Waldensian reply was: ‘THE CHURCH OF GOD IS EVER THERE WHERE A CONGREGATION OF THE FAITHFUL EXISTS, holding right faith and fulfilling it by works’” (p.45).

Notice! How did the Waldensians deal with the question of apostolic succession, or where their Church was before they came on the scene? They could not “trace” their history all the way back to the original New Testament Church and the early apostles. There was no such thing as “apostolic succession.” However, they recognized the fact that God’s Church has always existed, just as Jesus foretold, because as long as true believers existed, and met together, *THEY WERE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD!*

The idea that you had to have an unbroken chain of antecedents going all the way back to the original Church was simply not true. Jesus nowhere said such a thing was necessary. He nowhere predicted it. He simply said that His Church would always exist. Why? Because from that day forward there have always been some who have truly repented of their sins, believed on Him as Saviour, believed His Word, and obeyed His commandments as much as they understood then. These people understood about baptism, received the Holy Spirit, and therefore constituted the Church of God – no matter how few of them there were!

Remember, Jesus Himself declared, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt.18:20). You do not have to have a large, impressive building, or a large congregation, in order to be the true “Church of God”! Not at all! All you really need is the HOLY SPIRIT of God -- for it is the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit which makes you a PART of the true Church which Jesus founded!

### ***The KEY To Recognizing God’s True Church***

The only real key to recognizing the true Church of God is not to look at outward appearance. Even having a correct understanding of many doctrines, or Biblical truths, is not enough. For even the Pharisees had all the outward appearance of being the true Church of God – they understood about the weekly Sabbath, they observed the annual holy days, they tithed upon even mint and cummin. They appeared very righteous on the outside! But Jesus said of them, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

for ye SHUT UP THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matt.23:13).

Therefore, just having much Biblical understanding is not sufficient to be a part of the true Church of God!

As the apostle Paul himself wrote, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and *understand all mysteries, and ALL KNOWLEDGE*; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity (love), *I am nothing*” – *not even a true Christian believer!* (I Cor.13:2).

In another place Paul squelched those who were proud of their superior Biblical “knowledge.” He wrote, “Now as touching things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. *Knowledge puffeth up*, but charity (love) edifieth” (I Cor.8:1).

In other words, being part of the true Church of God involves much more than just impressive Biblical knowledge and understanding. *It involves the WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES!*

Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in SHEEP'S CLOTHING (they look on the outside like true servants of God!), but inwardly are ravening wolves (seeking to take your money, lands, possessions, and to DEVOUR you!). Ye shall know them BY THEIR FRUITS. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.. Wherefore, BY THEIR FRUITS ye shall know them” (Matt.7:15-20).

Notice, again, the Church of God as it existed in the Middle Ages.

### ***THE PROOF OF GOD'S CHURCH***

Wakefield writes, further: “Waldensian preachers who appeared at Narbonne in 1190 were challenged to a *debate* by Catholic clergy before an elected judge, and at its conclusion were DECLARED TO BE HERETICS. The errors CENSORED then were *REJECTION OF THE AUTHORITY OF POPE, PRELATES, AND PRIESTS*, and the instance on preaching, in which women joined. A few years later the learned Alan of Lille heatedly denounced the Poor of Lyon, not only for *UNAUTHORIZED PREACHING* but also for teaching that confession to God alone sufficed, that indulgences were worthless, and that preachers must not labor in any other way. He found them in error, also, for absolutely banning oaths and condemning the penalty of death for crime” (pp.45-46).

One influential member of the Waldenses, Durand of Huesca, was ardent in controversy with the *Catharists*, a dualistic sect which believed Satan was an evil God, that souls of rebellious angels went into men, in reincarnation. They held that the world was created by the devil, and marriage and sex are evil, and nothing should be eaten that is the product of sex, including animal flesh. Durand of Huesca wrote *A Book Against*

*Heresy.* In it he warmly defended fundamental Christian tenets: belief in the unity of God, acceptance of both Testaments, faith in Christ, validity of the sacraments, and belief in resurrection. From the orthodox point of view his words were chiefly suspect in the declaration against manual labor by preachers, certain remarks about predestination, and the assertion that the faith of Waldes was derived by grace of God directly solely from the Gospels” (p.46). Although Durand of Huesca subsequently returned to the Catholic Church, his comments regarding the basic, underlying tenets of the faith of the Waldensians are very important. He shows that their faith came direct from the Word of God!

This is crucial. This principle is the KEY to finding and recognizing the true Church of God, wherever it may be found, today. It will be a Church, or congregation, no matter how small, which looks completely to the Word of God for guidance and direction. You can recognize it by comparing its "fruits" with the Word of God. But how can this be done?

### ***How To Identify God's Church***

The basic key to identifying a true Church of God, one which truly follows Christ, is the same key we must use to identify a true “Christian.” They are one and the same.

The apostle Paul made it quite clear in Romans. He wrote, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh (they are really primarily concerned about this fleshly existence); but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is ENMITY against God: for it is not subject to the LAW of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Paul goes on, explaining this mystery, “But ye are NOT in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL IN YOU. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Rom.8:5-9).

What is it that SEPARATES the true Christian from a false Christian, or an unbeliever? The Spirit of God!

What is it that SEPARATES a true body of believers and Christians, who comprise a true “Church of God,” from a FALSE Church, one which merely “professes” Christ, and looks righteous on the outside only?

#### *The Spirit of God!*

Any Church where the Spirit of God is not in evidence, where it is missing, cannot be a true Church of God! On the other hand, any Church where the true Spirit of God is manifest, and in evidence, must be a true Church of God!

How, then, can we recognize the Spirit of God?

God's Spirit accomplishes two things in our lives. First, as Jesus said, }And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). God's Spirit is the Spirit of TRUTH. It is violently opposed to any and all error, and will not embrace error! When a person who has God's Spirit comes across error, he will flee from it; he will repent of it and abhor it like a filthy, detestable, abominable thing!

Jesus declared, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of TRUTH, is come, he will GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will *shew you things to come*" (John 16:13).

God's Spirit will guide us into truth and out of error. It will open our eyes to understand NEW TRUTH from God. It will reveal to us the hidden, wonderful mysteries locked in the Word of God. And it will reveal to us "things to come" -- that is, the FUTURE, as we have need to know it!

It will unlock the meaning of hidden Bible prophecies to us – prophecies in the book of Daniel, Revelation, and the other prophets!

It will reveal to us TRUTH!

An individual or group which is continually growing in truth, and grace and knowledge of Christ, therefore, the evidence shows, has the Spirit of God. Any organization which resists new revealed truth, or denies it or shrugs it off with a spirit of apathy and neglect, shows it either does not have the Spirit of God, or else that Spirit is fast disappearing from their ranks, being grieved by their carnal, selfish, rebellious attitude!

Paul wrote, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath REVEALED them unto us BY HIS SPIRIT: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor.2:9-10).

Paul explains, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (v.12).

How, then, can we recognize the Spirit of God? What are its fruits?

Knowledge alone is not the answer. Impressive buildings are not the answer. Beautiful buildings, landscaping, lush campuses, and mass circulation magazines are not the answer. If you look to those things, you will be deceived.

The apostle Paul wrote, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is

no law” (Gal.5:22-23).

The Key to recognizing any group or individual who is truly Christian is to do what Jesus said. – LOOK AT THE FRUITS! The fruits of God’s Spirit are listed above. Study them carefully and then compare the real acts, actions, and BEHAVIOR of any group, Church or individual with these Biblical criteria. Only then can you be sure of finding a true Church of God with which to fellowship!

So many have gone astray, today, and get their minds off of this fundamental truth. They would try to convince you that the proof of 'God's Church" is merely Biblical understanding and knowledge. But even the Pharisees had that! And Jesus said to them, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt.23:33).

Those who try to convince you that the way to discover “the true Church of God” usually have an ulterior motive; they want you to think they and they alone constitute the true end-time representatives of the Church of God! Why do they want to do this? They seek your money, your tithes and offerings; they seek to DEVOUR you!

Paul wrote of those kinds of ministers, when he said, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the TRUTH, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain” (Gal.3:1-4).

### ***Modern Day Pharisees and Their Yoke of Bondage***

Pharisaical ministers today act very much like the Pharisees in Paul’s day, with whom he had several serious encounters. They had infiltrated the Church of God, and had brought in a doctrine of legalism (Acts 15). They had skipped right over the principle of faith, and had proceeded into a religion of legalistic Judaism, including circumcision of the flesh.

Paul wrote that he and Barnabus had to go up to Jerusalem to resolve the controversy, “And that because of FALSE BRETHREN UNAWARES BROUGHT IN, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into BONDAGE: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue in you” (Gal.2:4-5).

Why is it that so many religious leaders, and institutions, want to bring people into BONDAGE – slavery – to their own organization, or system? Why do they seek to ENSLAVE naive young Christians?

Jesus Christ warned it would happen!

Beware of any Church or group which seeks to "rule' over you, and bring you into bondage to. all their teachings, which may appear worthy on the surface, but which are really carnal ordinances, and physical statutes, to bring you under their heel – under their control, and government, claiming to be the “government” of GOD!

When this controversy over legalism and works of the law erupted, in the days of Paul and Barnabus, the whole apostolic Church had to convene together to resolve the matter.

Their conclusion is given in the book of Acts, chapter 15. Notice! The whole issue was whether Christians needed to be circumcised, and the keep the entire law of Moses (Acts 15:5). After there had been much disputing (verses 6-7), the apostle Peter rose up, and pointed out how God had given His Spirit to Gentiles, “purifying their hearts by faith,” even though they were not circumcised, did not have all the laws and rituals of Moses.

Peter went on, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a YOKE UPON THE NECK of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we BELIEVE that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:10-11).

James, summing up the decision of the headquarters Church of the apostolic era, said, “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20).

James added, “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day” (v.21).

What does this verse mean? Why did James add this thought? The clear sense of the matter is that although it was necessary to write this letter of instructions to the Gentile converts, to clear up the confusion which had arisen, the Jewish converts in those areas did not need a similar letter, because they were already familiar with these laws of God, hearing them taught in the synagogues every Sabbath. The Gentile converts also were hearing these things taught in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Obviously, they were observing the weekly seventh day Sabbath in order to be hearing this instruction from the Torah, the laws of God. It was not the Torah which Paul and James and Peter found fault with – but with Pharisaical dogmatic “traditions,” legalism, and teachings added which were contrary to the spirit and intent of the Torah!

After this epochal conference in Jerusalem, in which legalism was rejected and banned, the apostles wrote letters to the new Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, informing them of this decision, and pointing out circumcision and keeping the law of Moses were not necessary for salvation (Acts 15:23-29).

But today, 1900 years later, the Church of God has been beset by similar controversy arguments over the application of the Old Testament laws of Moses to the Church of God! Modern Pharisees have subverted many brethren, convincing them that they must endure the yoke of bondage of their own enactments, laws, and rules and interpretations which force the members to pay a first tithe to God, a second tithe to keep the feasts of God, and a third tithe every third year, for the ministers, widows, and poor! (See our articles on “The Truth about Tithing,” and “How Many Tithes?”).

Truly Jesus described the attitude of Pharisees, both ancient and modern, when He declared, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (MatL23:4).

Lets face it. We will not recognize the true Church of God by all its self-righteous commandment keeping. The Pharisees did that, but they had still gone far astray from God because they made the law of God a system of bondage and a yoke of slavery, and they denied Christ when He came to bring the TRUTH!

Although the Church of God and people of God will keep the commandments of God, as expressed in the commandments to love God and to love our neighbor, and will obey the Ten Commandments (MatL19:17-21), which fulfill God’s law of love (Rom.13:8-10; I John 5:3), it will not be a self-righteous, Pharisaical Church seeking to dominate and exercise dominion over the lives of members.

Jesus made this perfectly clear when He said, “Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (MatL11:28-30).

Just because a Church observes the weekly Sabbath does not of itself prove it is of God, or God’s Church! On the other hand, just because a particular Church observes Sunday, and meets on Sunday, does not of itself prove it is a Church of the devil!

The truth is, the Waldensians and others of the Middle Ages came out of Catholic superstition and error -- but they still did not understand about the weekly Sabbath! History shows that they generally met on Sundays for services. But this fact does not mean they were not of God. It simply illustrates the principle that we do not come out of error all at once! At that time it was not needful for them to know and understand about the weekly Sabbath, or annual holy days. God put no more upon them than they could do. He is a merciful God, not a God of rigorous bondage and burdens.

God is not a Pharisee!



## Chapter 14

# The Seven Churches of Revelation

Jesus Christ said, “I will build my Church” (Matt.16:18). Was that Church foretold to always be UNITED, and of “one accord”? Was it to always be pristine and pure? What is the real meaning of the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation? Do they describe different types of people in the Church? Do they picture the Church down through the ages, in a historical sense? What is their message for our age and generation, today?

Jesus Christ told Peter and the apostles, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt.16:18). That church was to never die, or disappear, or vanish from sight. It would always exist, and continue to be, in one form or another, till the end of the age, when Christ would return!

But would the Church always be united -- singular -- in perfect oneness? Jesus, in His final prayer for the church before His death, prayed that the Father would “keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be ONE, as we are” (John 17:11). He added, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they ALL MAY BE ONE . . . that they may be one, even as we are one” (verses 20-22).

Does this mean that the church would never be “divided”? That it would never be “split” into various branches, or divisions, or various groups independent of each other, each answering solely to Christ?

Yet in the first century of the Church, the apostle Paul had to excoriate the Corinthian Church for its pride and divisive conduct. He rebuked them saying, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for *you are still carnal*. For where there are envy, strife, and DIVISIONS among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not

carnal?" (I Cor.3:1-4, NKJV).

These disputes and divisions did not disappear from the church after Paul's rebuke. Over the course of the first century, eventually entire churches split off and became independent. Paul warned the churches in Galatia, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a *different gospel*, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7).

The entire New Testament is filled with warnings to God's people about apostasy, divisions, false teachers causing division in the flock, and the need to be steadfast, steady, and hang on to the truth and Word of God. Paul warned the church at Ephesus, when he was about to leave them, saying, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure *savage wolves* will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *from among yourselves* men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:27-31).

By the time the apostle John wrote his third epistle, about 90 A.D., he warned a church in Asia Minor, "I wrote to the church but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us . . . prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, *putting them out of the church*" (III John 9-10).

Clearly, the church ran into serious spiritual headwinds, and opposing forces tore at the church, from its very inception. Some of the ministers in the church began to have divisions among themselves, and others broke away entirely with their flocks, with many of them becoming "independent" in authority and government, and the very teachings of the original church began to be watered down, changed here and there, and doctrinal differences and disputes arose over time. The history of the church has not been a pretty picture. It has been a scene of carnage, persecution, apathy, compromise, division, and apostasy. Many fell away from the truth entirely. Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith, saying, "This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me" (II Tim.1:15). He warned, "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim.3:13).

### ***What Do You Mean, "One TRUE Church"?***

In the last few years, I have seen and experienced "wolves in sheep's clothing," trying to "join" with me in this Work of God, who since proved to be virulent predators who led a few people off into the netherworld of religious apostasy. Unfortunately, those few who followed such were ripe for the picking or plucking -- their own attitudes were wrong, in some crucial way, and so God allowed them to be led off into the religious

“boondocks” and “wilderness.”

God allows such things to happen. We know that these things must happen -- why? “For there must be also heresies among you, *that they which are approved* may be made manifest among you” (I Cor.11:19). These “tests” which come upon God’s people separate the “sheep from the goats,” as it were. They prove to be a sort of “litmus test” of the reality of the faith and obedience of those who profess to follow Christ!

When we look at church history, it becomes very apparent that fractures, divisions, and schisms, often occurred to the Church of God. Most of the resultant groups went into varying forms of religious apostasy, and departed from the truth, and could no longer be called correctly, “the church of God.” They had been infiltrated, conned, and taken over by Satan the seductive devil and his devious minions.

However, history and Biblical prophecy also prove that there have been and can be “divisions” of various degrees WITHIN the spiritual “body of Christ,” as well! There is no doubt that “divisions” and “differences” have occurred in the true church of God, throughout its history, due to human nature, human imperfection, and weakness -- as well as human sins, and “goats” among the sheep! Jesus Himself said that the “wheat and tares” would dwell IN the church, side by side, TILL THE HARVEST (second coming), which itself leads to a certain amount of division and contention within the visible “church” (see Matt.13:36-43). Jesus warned FIRST for us to beware of false prophets and teachers because they would be the church’s MAJOR DANGER -- further evidence of strife, division, and “splits” occurring within the true church (Matt.24:11).

### *“Divisions” in Paul’s Day*

Paul beseeched the Corinthians not to allow “divisions” to crop up among them (I Cor.1:10). It was reported to Paul that there were “contentions among you,” as he wrote to them, admonishing them to watch out for such things (v.11). These were serious contentions, so Paul asked them, “Is Christ divided?” (v.13). No -- of course not! Christ is ONE. But apostasy set in within the first century church, and communication was not easy from church to church, so local congregations began to become more and more independent. DIVISION set in! Those with the Spirit of God guiding them, remained loyal to the truth, but more and more “differences of opinion” crept in, after the departure of the original apostles.

Some of these churches were still God’s Church, even though various “differences” had crept in. They had not yet made major changes in doctrine which militated against their being considered “Christian” in God’s sight. They had various “problems” -- but they were not yet sick “unto death” -- spiritual death!

This was the CHURCH OF GOD, with all of its “spots and wrinkles.” Clearly, it had carnal-minded ministers and leaders, in some cases, and there were arguments, debates, and strife. One of the major issues of that day was whether a Gentile needed to be “circumcised” and become a Jew in order to be saved. This controversy led to a major

doctrinal meeting in Jerusalem over the issue (Acts 15).

So even the New Testament Church, as we see, was NOT “united.” There were “DIVISIONS” in the church. Yet Christ is NOT divided. But experience proves that human beings, even those who STRIVE to follow Him, can be divided, and have differences of opinions about many things -- policies, judgments, prophecies, even some doctrines. Of course, the BASIC truths they should all adhere to. Paul and Barnabas had a major disagreement at one point, which caused them to go their separate ways, and to conduct separate ministries -- although they still regarded each other as “brothers” (Acts 15:36-39).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers [WHY?]: For the perfecting of the saints [i.e., they are not yet perfect!], for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [BUILDING, strengthening] of the body of Christ [the church]: TILL WE ALL COME IN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH”!

Did you catch that? “TILL we all come in [or, INTO] the UNITY of the faith.” In other words, WE DO NOT YET HAVE TRUE OR PERFECT UNITY in faith, beliefs, doctrines, etc.!

### *The Seven Churches of Revelation*

Jesus Christ gave a fascinating prophecy of the condition of God’s Church which would exist – and even prevail – down through the centuries. It is found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is a book containing many prophecies of the future, down through the ages, from the first century, and especially of the “end times,” shortly before the coming of Christ (Rev.1:1). These things were to “shortly take place” (v.1), and continue until the coming of the Messiah in glory (Rev.19:11-16).

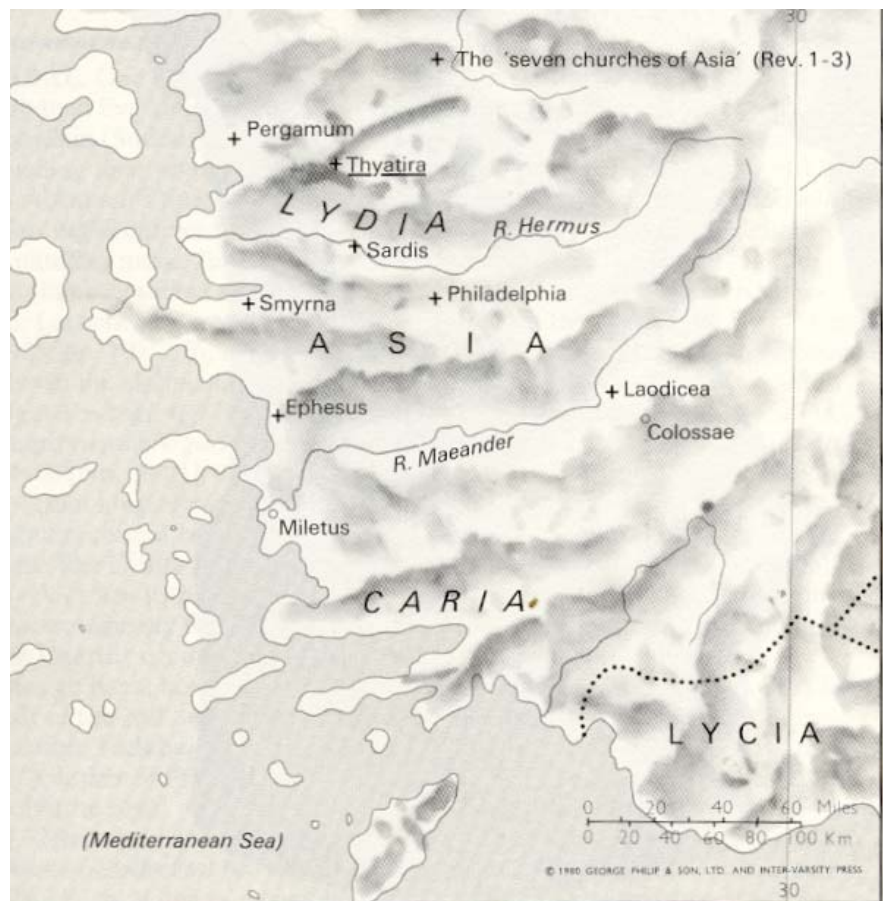
The book begins with a scene showing Christ in His glory, standing amidst “seven golden lampstands” (v.12-13), holding in His right hand “seven stars” (v.16). The apostle John is told: “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches” (Rev.1:20).

These seven churches are listed in chapters 2-3 as Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These seven cities were connected by a great triangular highway and are named in their geographical order. They began with Ephesus, on the coast, then went inland about a hundred miles to Pergamum, passing through Smyrna; from Pergamum the route went east to Thyatira, then south to Sardis, southeast to Philadelphia, and finished up in Laodicea, further southeastward, about 100 miles east of Ephesus. The chief city was Ephesus, but the political capital was Pergamum.

The fact that there were seven churches, and seven letters, is significant. Seven is the Biblical number of “completion,” “perfection.” A full week consists of seven days. Jericho fell after seven days; there were seven days of creation; seven notes in music; seven colors in the rainbow. Seven stands for completeness, a unit, fullness, totality.

People have argued over the meaning and purpose of these seven letters. Some claim they represent seven distinct “attitudes” among God’s people. Others claim they represent seven distinct churches with different types of government and independent organizations, yet all belonging to Christ. Others point out how these seven church descriptions seem to have a historical fulfillment, as the seven cities were all located on a mail route in Asia Minor, which began with Ephesus and finished up in Laodicea. That is, they represent seven distinct ages or eras of church history from earliest times, the first century, down to the present “end of the age” generation.

This truth would appear to be confirmed by the fact that mail was delivered successively beginning in Ephesus and ending in Laodicean, last. The mail route began at Ephesus, on the sea coast, and wound its way finally to Laodicea -- in the exact order of churches given in Revelation. This first city -- Ephesus -- would represent the first stop of the “mail man.” Laodicea would represent the “last stop.”



Each letter sent to the seven churches consisted of all the letters and the whole book of Revelation, for their study and edification. Each city could therefore read the Lord's words concerning all the seven churches in the seven cities, and take warning from all the letters and the entire book of Revelation. Nevertheless, the sequential order of the letters appears to tell us that not only are we to learn from all the letters, but that certain church ages would reflect the characteristics of the "church" representative of that age.

In general, we find that two of the seven churches were very good – Smyrna and Philadelphia; two were very bad – Sardis and Laodicea; and three were in-between, a mixture of good and bad – Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira.

How can we benefit from these messages to the seven churches, today?

Jesus plainly said that we should ALL listen to the messages given to ALL seven of the churches, indicating that we can profit spiritually from the warnings given to each church congregation! He declared, "Let everyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev.2:7, 11, 17, 29; 2:6, 13, 22).

Let's study each one of the seven cities and seven churches, and survey the Church of God down through history. The seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3 are a "type" of God's Church down through the ages.

### *Ephesus*

The first church age was Ephesus, a type of the apostolic age. Jesus declared: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that *you have left your first love*" (Rev.2:2-4).

Ephesus was one of the three greatest cities of Asia during its time. It was very rich, with Roman government but the language was Greek. The church there was founded by the apostle Paul and its first bishop was Timothy (I Tim.1:1-3).

The very name "Ephesus" has a strange, compound meaning. It means "Aimed at" and "Relaxed." The high aspirations of this church age began with the fullness of God's Spirit poured out, but this began to give way to a less watchful attitude. A less ardent, zealous following of the truth of God. It became more relaxed, and began to drift. It began to backslide.

This age ended with many people "losing their first love." What was their "first love"? No doubt it was the LAW -- THE TORAH -- of God! The first age of the church was ZEALOUS of the law of God! As James told the apostle Paul, "You see, brother, how many myriads [Greek, ten thousands upon thousands] of Jews there are who have

believed, and THEY ARE ALL ZEALOUS FOR THE LAW . . .” (Acts 21:20). But as the age wound down, the people began to lose this love and ardor for God’s Law, Sabbath, and Holy Days, and began to weaken in their zeal for obedience. This process no doubt accelerated after the destruction of the Temple itself in 70 A.D. The seeds of error and false doctrine began to take root and grow.

This city housed the magnificent temple of Diana. The image of Diana in this city was almost shapeless and lusterless, seemingly depicting the spirit of antichrist let loose toward the end of this church age – no solid shape as to alarm people, but covert, hidden, yet worshipped by many. As the church age worn on, ceremony and form, ritual and physical works, began to replace the manifestation of the Spirit of God, creeds replaced the Word of God, dogmas replaced Biblical truth, and human leadership began to enslave the laity, as the leaders luxuriated themselves at the expense of the members, becoming the masters as the poor church people became the slaves.

Jesus rebuked this age, saying, “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent” (Rev.2:5).

This age lasted about 100 years. The fervent desire to please God, the passion to know Christ and His Word, gave pace to formal, cool worship, and religious dogma. The spiritual ardor began to fade away, and a church once on fire for God became a compromising church conforming to the world around them. The church began drifting, and the goats came in and took over, replacing light with darkness, zeal with fine church buildings, freedom of the Spirit with formality and form. It was all so subtle, undercover, but gradually the influence of Satan took over the professing church and it disappeared back into the new “paganized Christianity.”

Says *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, “The voluptuous allurements of Diana worship had a tremendous appeal to human nature; and it was no easy thing for those who had been used to it to give it up. Naturally there were *all sorts of attempts to harmonize these heathen practices with the Christian religion*. Many professing Christian teachers were advocating the right to free participation in heathen immoralities” (p.694).

Over time, the church at Ephesus was corrupted by such teachings and influence. They forgot their first love. They had grown lax. The only way back into God’s grace was via the route of deep, sincere, earnest repentance!

Does this situation describe your life? The message to the seven churches is a message for ALL of God’s people everywhere THROUGHOUT all time!

Christ did give this church some credit. He said, “I know that you cannot tolerate evil-doers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen;

repent, and do the works you did at first” (Rev.2:2-5, NRSV).

### *The Nicolaitans*

One thing in their favor, they hated the teachings of the Nicolaitans – the followers of Nicholas. Yeshua said, “Yet this is to your credit: You hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (v.6). The Greek word Nikao means “to conquer,” and “laos” means “the laity” or the “people.” The original “Nicholas” was Nimrod, son of Cush, who was “the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. He was a mighty hunter before [or “against”] the LORD” (Gen.10:8-9, NRSV). He was a “hunter of men” and sought to turn them all against God.

The church of the Nicolaitans taught AUTHORITY, and stressed ministerial authority, ruling over the flock like despots and tyrants, threatening members with disfellowship and abused the flock with terror and cruelty, whenever they felt they were not properly honored and glorified and meekly submitted to by a groveling flock. In other words, they organized the church by *human government*, calling it the “government of God.” At least the Ephesian church saw through this kind of religious charade and rejected such authority-wielding pompous strutting martinets!

Human government forms entered the church, brought in by self-seeking, self-aggrandizing men. They made it sound “good.” They called it “democracy,” or “government from the top on down,” or “unity,” or appointed a “board,” or had “one man rule.” The problem with each and every form of government was that it was of *human origin*. God’s true government is always based on *His written Word, the Scriptures, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit*. Every other form is a counterfeit – a shadow, an image, a mere likeness – but false, because it is not truly derived from God or His Word. Thus the “image of the Beast” came into the Church – and congregations were organized according to the Roman Empire hierarchy, and patterned after the Roman model. The Roman Catholic Church became the “image of the Beast” – Rome itself (Rev.13:15).

Worldly churches adopted Nicolaitanism as a doctrine – the assertion that they had the true form of “church government,” and ruled the church like an army with various ranks in the ministry, patterned after the military, in many cases. The clergy set themselves in ranks over each other, one over another. In some cases the structure evolved into a new “priesthood.” Ministers began to be called “father,” “your holiness,” “reverend,” “most reverend,” or even “Mr.” in some churches. Far be it from mere members to address a minister by his “given” name! So rank consciousness entered the church, with much bowing and scraping and genuflecting. In God’s eyes, it was an abomination (see I Pet.5:1-4; Matt.23:8-12; 20:25-27).

Human government, even in the church, is politics, plain and simple. Titles lead to egalitarianism. Once the ministers acquire the “authority,” they seemingly can lead the flock wherever they want to, and the flock dutifully follows, meekly and without argument. They are taught to “follow God’s church,” right or wrong, or “follow Mr. So-and-so, right or wrong!” It is assumed by them he cannot be wrong – for he is “chosen”



by God – because he is “an apostle” or “a prophet” chosen by God. Thus the Nicolaitan doctrine corrupted the church and led it astray while men sought political power among themselves, competing with each other in different church organizations. The key was subjection of the people and access to their tithes. This teaching eventually spawned the Roman Catholic Church, and many others today with similar church government structures.

What about you? Are you able to discern “false apostles”? Can you detect spiritual “Nicolaitans”? Can you spot abuses in churches and recognize the wrong kind of church government and Hitlerian-type ministers? Is your church governed by *fear*?

### *Smyrna*

The city of Smyrna was situated 40 miles north of Ephesus. It was famous for its science, medicine, and the beauty of its buildings. Its main bishop, Polycarp, was a disciple of the apostle John, and suffered martyrdom in 169 A.D. The city suffered much from earthquakes, causing the people to be constantly vigilant and on their toes. In A.D. 178 or 180 it was destroyed by one, and the new city was rebuilt as one of the most beautiful in Asia. The streets were laid out at right angles, it had a large public library, and a museum. It continued to exist down to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Christ had nothing bad to say about this church. It was poor in wealth, but rich spiritually. It held on to the truth, and remained educated, and faithful to the Word of God.

Yeshua said to this church: “I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of *those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue [church] of Satan*. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for *ten days* you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev.2:9-10, NRSV).

The second church age, typified by Smyrna, had no material wealth, and was relatively small. It had been eclipsed by the great number of professing “Christian” churches which had forsaken Jewish and Biblical practices and laws, such as Passover observance, and Sabbath keeping, and which had adopted pagan practices. By this time the apostasy had spread far and wide, and there were those who composed the “synagogue” or “church” of SATAN the devil – false brethren, who looked down upon the Smyrna Christians! Satan had co-opted the visible church of God, and created his own IMITATION and counterfeit Church!

Smyrna would be the time of the Jewish Nazarene churches, in the region of Galilee and northern Judea, and along the coast of Palestine, which endured for the first four or five centuries, in a persecuted and small state. During its primary period of existence, the second and third centuries, the Christian religion was outlawed, persecuted, forbidden, and its adherents were violently attacked, imprisoned, and martyred.

The reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan was from A.D. 98 to 117. He considered Christianity as an illegal religion because Christians refused to take part in emperor worship. The church was looked upon as a “secret society,” and wherever Christians were found they were accused and they were punished. Among those who perished under his reign was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, the brother of Jesus, who was crucified by the order of the Roman governor in Palestine in 107 A.D. During Trajan’s reign, also, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, was taken to Rome and thrown to wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater in 108 or 110 A.D. Even worse persecutions soon followed.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was burned to death in 155 A.D. When brought before the Roman governor and commanded to curse the name of Christ, he replied: “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me nothing but good; and how could I curse him, my Lord and Saviour?”

Justin Martyr was one of the ablest men of his time, and became a foremost defender of the faith. During his time, doctrinal divisions had already begun to split the church, with a growing chasm between the Gentile churches and the remaining Jewish churches, called “Nazarenes.” Justin Martyr was a Gentile, but he looked upon the Jewish Nazarenes as true brethren in Christ, although he felt the Biblical holy days and Sabbath were not incumbent upon Christians. Yet he was sincere and a zealous, devout follower of Christ. His martyrdom took place in Rome in 166 A.D.

In 202 A.D. Septimius Severus launched a fierce persecution which lasted till his death in 211 A.D. Could this have been the fulfillment of the “ten days” of affliction – a day for a year being fulfilled? (Num.14:34; Ezek.4:6). He was morbid and melancholy in nature and sought to restore the decaying pagan religions in the realm. Everywhere persecution raged throughout his kingdom, especially severe in Egypt and North Africa.

Says Hurlbut, “In Alexandria, Leonidas, the father of the great theologian Origen was beheaded. A noble lady in Carthage, Perpetua, with her faithful slave Felicitas, was torn in pieces by wild beasts 203 A.D. So bitter was the spirit of the emperor, Septimius Severus, that he was regarded by many Christian writers as the Antichrist” (*Story of the Christian Church*, p.55). Under the following emperor, Carcalla (211-217 A.D.), citizenship was confirmed on all people who were not slaves in the Empire. This included Christians, so they could no longer be crucified or thrown to wild beasts (unless they were slaves). For forty years the church had a respite from severe persecution and was left unnoticed.

What is the lesson we should gain from the letter to Smyrna? It should serve to remind us that there is a price to pay for being a true, faithful Christian. It may require you to stand up for the truth of God, even at the cost of your life!

Are you willing to be “faithful unto death,” if it is required of you?

### *Pergamum*

Pergamum was noted for its vast library second only to that in Alexandria, Egypt. This was also a very sumptuous, wealthy city. It was a center for emperor worship. Pergamum became the site of the first temple to the Caesar cult. The worship of Askleios and Zeus were endemic. On a crag above the city was a throne-like altar to Zeus. It was decorated with a representation of the conflict of the gods and giants, Zeus being referred to as “Zeus, the Saviour.” Pergamum was obsessed with the serpent-image. In this city politics and paganism were closely allied.

Yeshua said to this church, “I know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is. . . . But I have a few things against you; you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumblingblock before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols [idolatrous festivals] and practice fornication. So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (Rev.2:12-15).

This church was holding fast, even in the midst of persecution, but it has some serious flaws. It was a seat of emperor worship, where incense was offered before a statue of the emperor as to God. It also held a temple to Jupiter, and a temple of Esculapius, a serpent-like god of healing, worshiped as a Serpent – one of the names of Satan. It was also a stronghold of Balaamic teaching and Nicolaitanism. Balaam, of course, was the false prophet who attempted to defeat the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt by encouraging the Midianites to seduce them through sex and festivals of immorality, causing God to turn His back on them (Num.22-24). Surrounded by this kind of culture, the church suffered from constant temptation and a spirit of compromise – live and let live. These perversions invaded the church, which let down its vigilance and immorality became accepted. Rigorous, tyrannical church leaders also gained sway and ruled the flock with an iron hand – with abuse and cruel leadership, in the manner of the Nicolaitans.

In Pergamum, heathen practices infiltrated the church, including the adoption of pagan festivals – Christmas, the celebration of Christ’s supposed birthday on December 25, the time of the winter solstice. But this was the birthday of the sun god Mithras, worshipped throughout the Roman Empire! Another pagan festival adopted and “baptized” by some in the church was that of “Easter” – a pagan goddess of fertility and springtime also known as Venus, Aphrodite, and Semiramis.

The third church age, that of Pergamum, saw further infiltration and paganization, of the remaining Church of God. It would have begun about the time of the Nicean council, in 325 A.D., and lasted for several centuries, till about 1,000 A.D.

Have you been seduced by Balaam-like teachers to compromise the truth of God, to engage in pagan-like festivals which have been falsely baptized and called “Christian”?

Have you been a member of a tyrannical-led church group organized rigidly like

the Nicolaitans? Examine yourself – and your church fellowship! WAKE UP, and READ and APPLY the messages to all seven of the churches of Revelation to YOURSELF!

### *Thyatira*

Thyatira was an ancient city in Lydia on the road from Pergamos to Sardis, with a thriving dyeing industry. It was a garrison town over long centuries. It had no illustrious history and was a center of commerce. It is first mentioned in the Bible in connection with Lydia, “a seller of purple,” a very costly dye used by royalty and the very wealthy. The dye was also used in the “fringes” or *tzitzit* which were worn on the corners of the garments of Jewish men (see Numbers 15:30-34). Thyatira was an ancient cosmopolitan “mixing pot” for the races – a great amalgamation of races occurred there. Many religions were brought there, and syncretism and blending of doctrines occurred continually. It almost seemed ‘natural.’

Yeshua said of this church: “I know your works – your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. But I have this against you: you tolerate *that woman Jezebel*, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to IDOLS. . . . Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call ‘the deep things of Satan,’ to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden; only hold fast to what you have until I come. To everyone who conquers, and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations; to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered” (Rev.2:19-27).

“Fornication” means idol worship – which is rampant among churches today. Some have their crosses, crucifixes, icons, images of various “saints”; others worship movie stars, actresses, rock and roll musicians, sports figures, great athletes, etc. It is all a form of idolatry. And among some of the end-time churches, many virtually worship a “man” – his memory, his personality, his charisma – and will follow him “right or wrong.” God even foretold that He would raise up an “idol” shepherd. He declared, “Take once more the implements of a worthless [“idol”] shepherd. For I am now raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for the perishing, or seek the wandering, or heal the maimed, or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hooves. Oh, my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be completely withered, his right eye utterly blinded!” (Zech.11:15-17, NRSV).

The word “Thyatira” means, “Dominating Female.” This is one of the greatest curses in the world. It has special application to this church of God. Paul said plainly, “Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to

have authority over a man; she is to keep silent” (I Tim.2:11-12, NRSV). He also wrote, “As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches” (I Cor.14:34). But some women will not yield to that commandment of the law of God. One such was renowned in Thyatira.

### *Jezebel*

Thyatira was famous for its magnificent temple to Artemis, another name for Diana. Jezebel, it is believed by some, was a prominent devotee of Diana (also another name for Astarte, Isis, Ishtar, Venus, Aphrodite, Easter, etc.). The name, however, no doubt refers back to the original Jezebel, wife of king Ahab and her religious influence (the worship of Baal and Astarte). She introduced the worship of Astarte into Israel. This pagan worship goes all the way back to Nimrod and Semiramis, soon after the Flood.

Jezebel was a daughter of Ethbaal, who was the king-priest of Astarte, king of Tyre, a Sidonian priestess adept at the pagan arts and practices of Baalism. She married Ahab, killed the priests of the LORD, erected temples to worship Astarte-Venus and Baal-Zeus, the sun-god. “Jezebel” was the wife of king Ahab, the princess of Tyre, who worshipped Baal and was a priestess of Astarte (“Easter”), who persecuted true saints of God and even sought the death of Elijah. She was an ardent foster of compromise and syncretism, merging religions into one universal worship.

The people, under her oppression, began to compromise their values and beliefs. Ritual and ceremony were given a greater role in church services. The whole system was a militant and diabolical power which controlled the masses through propaganda, subtle teaching, and seduction.

This church was the church most noted for serious compromise of values. As a commercial center, with guild membership necessary to trade, the temptation to compromise was strengthened. They were noted for their “love and service and faith and patience,” but like Pergamum, they were tolerant of false teachers in their midst! The church at Thyatira sanctioned such a “Jezebel” type religious approach in their midst!

Not all were guilty of compromising, in this church, but many were cleaving to these false teachings. Those who did not learn “the deep things of Satan,” were warned to hold fast to the truth, and they would be given authority over the nations (Rev.2:26-27).

In church history, this church would best describe the period of the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation – the time from Peter Waldo to Martin Luther.

The church of the Middle Ages was represented by the church of Thyatira. It consisted largely of the Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo, who broke off from the Catholic Church about 1200 A.D., and preached the gospel throughout France and Europe. He gave his fortune to charity, and began preaching in 1173, and his work grew

greatly. The pope at Rome forbade Waldo and his followers to preach, since they were not “priests,” and persecuted them and eventually issued Crusades against them! Waldo’s work laid the foundation for the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1513, with Martin Luther’s proclamation of his 93 disagreements with the Papacy. The Waldensian church began around 1200 A.D., and there are still around 50,000 members of the Waldensians scattered around the world, with their headquarters at Rome.

The “Jezebel” referred to would be a prophecy of the Roman Catholic Church. Her “children” mentioned here would be all the Protestant churches which were born from her bosom, coming out of her in “protest,” but still clinging to many of her false doctrines and dogmas. The Protestant reformation would synchronize with this church age.

The people in this church congregation were warned that unless they repented, they would be cast into the fiery flames of “great distress” – great tribulation! This occurred in the vicious “Inquisition,” terrible religious warfare that raged on the continent of Europe, as the newly formed Protestant Churches battled the Roman Catholic Church for religious freedom. Millions perished in the holocaust! Spiritual compromise never pays good dividends. Compromise and immorality always lead to suffering and death.

How do you stack up against Yeshua’s warning to the Thyatira church? Are you compromising in belief and practice? – or faithful and steadfast, filled with love, faith, service, and patient endurance? Are your last works greater than your first works? Are you growing – or declining – in zeal and spiritual prowess? Are women teaching and setting doctrines in your church? Is the Jezebel influence permeating the church?

### *Sardis*

Sardis was the capital of Lydia, 50 miles northeast of Smyrna. The region was extremely fertile and a commercial center of importance. A massive temple of Cybele stood there, bearing witness to the wealth of the city. Sardis was famous for arts and crafts and was the first center to mint gold and silver coinage. So wealthy were the Lydian kings that Croesus became legendary for his immense wealth. He also was famous for his pride and presumptuous arrogance, when his attack on Persia led to his conquest by Cyrus the Great and the fall of his kingdom and loss of all his wealth. An earthquake in 17 A.D. ruined the city physically and financially, and it never fully recovered.

Yeshua warned the Sardis church, “I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but *you are dead*. WAKE UP, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. . . . If you do not *wake up*, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. Yet you have still a *few* persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy” (see Rev.3:1-6).

Historically, the Sardis church represents the church of God as it existed from the eighteenth century up to the present. Many Sabbatarian groups, Evangelistic churches, the Plymouth Brethren, and various Pilgrim and Puritan churches, came into existence during this period of reform. They formed in Germany, England, Holland, and the United States in the 1700s. They were in the beginning and on the whole striving to get back to the faith once delivered to the saints. They abhorred the huge church monoliths which had become pagan, and tyrannical, and sought religious freedom to serve God according to His Word. Many of them came to the United States, founding the Plymouth colony.

In 1844 many people expected the coming of Christ, due to the prophecies of William Miller. They were known as “Millerites.” When the prophecy failed, many of his followers searched the Scriptures, and discovered the need for Sabbath observance. Out of this group emerged the Church of God (Seventh Day), and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Both are still very active today, with Seventh-Day Adventists numbering in the millions. Nevertheless, because of their doctrinal problems, and blindness, and compromise, Jesus Christ says of Sardis, “you have a NAME that you are alive, but you are DEAD. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.”

In our time today, another church seems to fit this description as well. It came out of the Worldwide Church of God, formed into the “Global” church of God, but was taken over by a dissent-driven board of directors, and those who left it reformed under the rubric “Living Church of God.” But alas, it is mostly “dead,” dead in the water, just as the Messiah described, unwilling to admit error or to repent and change. Nevertheless, some few in that church appear to be sincere, righteous, and worthy of walking in white with the Messiah.

Jesus says of them, “You have a *few names, even in Sardis*, who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” (Rev.3:4).

But again, each one of us is warned, “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev.3:6). Where do you stand, spiritually? Do you have a “name” that you are “living”?

But are you really “dead”? Examine yourself!

Yeshua says to be “WATCHFUL, and STRENGTHEN the things that remain,” that are about to perish. Strengthen yourself, spiritually! Exercise yourself spiritually in prayer and constant, daily Bible Study! “Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. . . . How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb.2:1-3).

### ***The Philadelphia Church Age***

Following Sardis, we come to Philadelphia. The name of this city means

“brotherly love.” It was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus (159-138 B.C.), so named because of his devotion to his brother Eumenes. This city had the longest duration of any of the seven churches receiving the seven letters. In fact, it still exists today under the Turkish name, “Alasehir,” or “City of God”!

The city lies 28 miles southeast of Sardis, 650 feet above sea level. The region is disastrously prone to earthquakes. The Roman geographer Strabo describes the city as constantly subject to earthquakes, which rendered the town walls unsafe. It was destroyed completely in the disastrous earthquake of 17 A.D. – the same one that demolished Sardis! Placed right above a fault-line, seismic activity was a constant with 20 years of reoccurring quakes after the major temblor of 17 A.D. The district was renown for grape vine growing and its delicious wines.

The historian Edward Gibbon bears witness to the character of the people of this city. He wrote, “At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the (Greek) emperor, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, a column in a scene of ruins.” There are still 21,000 inhabitants of the city.

This is one of the two churches which is not corrected or reproved. It is rather encouraged, for it is a “small flock” with little human power. Yeshua says to it: “I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have *but little power*, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying – I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (Rev.3:8-9).

As we have covered five of the seven churches already, this brings us down to the END of the age, or nearly so, before the return of the Messiah. The Sardis Church, historically, represents the Church after the Middle Ages – from the time of the Discovery of the New World, and its settlement, through the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Philadelphia “era” of the Church of God, then, would be raised up after the Sardis Church – most probably in the twentieth century – to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ!

This would be a humble but faithful church. It would exemplify the love of Christ in the midst of a corrupt and pagan society. It would not compromise. It would not be huge, or lofty, or self-satisfied, or smug in its self-righteousness. It would be faithful to the Word of God, keep ALL the commandments faithfully, and would not turn its back on any new truth or proven revelation from God. It “kept” God’s Word. It used His name appropriately – and did not deny use of the Hebrew names of God, but did not compel people to only use Hebrew either, in a English-speaking world. It broke the yoke of “hierarchy” and “ranks” and the usual church organization profiles and business



managerial methods, which seek to maximize dollars and income and carefully control all outgoing expenses, running the church like a corporate business machine intent on increasing income and wealth for the “stockholders” or corporate officers. It rejects the human “business model” completely, and follows instead the pastoral model set by Yeshua and His apostles – the method of prayer, and dependency on God in faith.

Could this church refer to an end-time church of God composed of people who are very zealous, on the alert, watchful, and faithful to God? A church characterized by brotherly love and affection?

### *The Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Some think that the Radio Church of God, begun by Herbert W. Armstrong, in 1934 A.D., at one time was such a church. There are flaws with this analysis, however. It characterized itself as being the “Philadelphia Era” of God’s church. But you would not expect a humble church to boast of being the greatest church!

The evidence is that in the beginning God used Mr. and Mrs. Herbert W. Armstrong to bring much new truth to the end-time Churches of God which virtually all of them rejected. Herbert had been ordained a minister in the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the early 1930s. He was appointed as one of the “seventy.” He works for years side by side with various ministers of that Church. But conflict and disagreement arose, over the holy days of God, and soon he severed his connection with them, and in faith struck out on his own, beginning a radio broadcast called “The World Tomorrow,” and a magazine called “The Plain Truth,” in 1934.

From this inauspicious beginning, after many trials and tests, God began to bless the Work tremendously in the 1950s and 1960s, with exponential growth. By the 1970s and 1980s the church numbered over 150,000 members, including children, and was receiving over \$200 million annually, used to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God!

Herbert Armstrong learned the truth about the Sabbath day, and brought the truth of the annual holy days, espoused the identity of the “lost” tribes of Israel, and built a marvelous worldwide religious organization, which for a time was filled with zeal, enterprise, and dedication. However, things were never “perfect,” and along with growth came controversy, doctrinal disputes, and errors. One of the major errors of the church involved an extreme view toward divine healing. The church in the 50’s and 60’s rejected all medicine, drugs, and medical treatments, saying they were Satanic and “idolatry.” The church also taught a very rigid doctrine forbidding all divorce and remarriage regardless of cause – with the sole exception of “fraud” – that is, fornication before marriage by one of the partners. (Write for our booklets on “Does God Heal Today?” and “God Speaks Out on Divorce and Remarriage.”)

At that time the church also made many false predictions based upon its interpretation of Biblical prophecy. Herbert Armstrong was convinced World War II

would end in Armageddon. When that didn't occur, he began teaching Christ would come in 1975. When that also didn't happen, he stopped trying to predict the date of the second coming altogether.

Over time, the church modified the teachings on healing, divorce, and prophecy, and other subjects, but the issues remained a 'thorn in the flesh' and unresolved for decades, and much was still in limbo when Herbert Armstrong died in 1986.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, it *seemed* like a halcyon age -- like a spiritual "Camelot." People were thrilled, enthused, many were being converted, the church appeared to be growing in grace and knowledge. Very much was being accomplished with very little. The "open door" was truly open, for radio and television broadcasting, and for the printing press. The "Plain Truth" circulation reached in the neighborhood of 10 million at its peak. But there was a lot of pride, vanity, at the top, and totalitarian church government replaced a more open government structure in the late 1950s, when the church began issuing new dictates regarding wearing of make-up and cosmetics. The only "authority" for doing so was admitted as being "church government." In those days, church ministers were accused of "spying" on the people and making "Gestapo-like" visits of members in their own homes. It seems "authority" went to ministers' heads, big time.

So, all was not what it seemed to be on the surface. In 1967 Mrs. Loma Armstrong died. And the church seemed to lose its focus, and its sense of direction. Growth stalled. Compromises began to set in. In the 1960s, fornication -- adultery -- became known among higher ranked ministers, notably Garner Ted Armstrong. In the 1970s, these heinous sins were exposed to the world, and Garner Ted was written up in *Playboy* magazine as "America's Playboy Preacher."

After Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong died in 1967, Herbert Armstrong came under the baleful influence of Stanley Rader and others. The church engaged in publishing non-religious material, creating a secular publishing House called "Everest House," and published an expensive, full-color irreligious magazine called "Quest." Very unchristian books, articles using profanity, and profane books were published under the auspices of the church. Things were so notorious that all type-setting work was removed from the church printing facilities to outsiders because church employees were complaining vociferously.

Splits and divisions struck the church with a vengeance in the 1970s. "Camelot" disappeared. Hundreds of ministers left the church. Garner Ted Armstrong himself broke away and began a new church. The state of California brought the church into receivership for a period of time, resulting in a protracted lawsuit. The church seemed to hunker down and go into a "survival" mode, growth slowed, and even stopped. Herbert Armstrong died in January, 1986.

The reins of leadership then were passed to Joseph Tkach, a cunning politician who had risen rapidly in the ranks. Once he gained control, rather quickly the works of

Herbert Armstrong were all replaced – his books and writings were struck from the church inventory, and a “new era” set in. Basic doctrines were jettisoned, and a return to mainstream churchianity progressed rapidly, with a return to Sunday worship, Christmas and Easter celebrations. It was indeed like the “passing of a baton” -- as if the baton had passed from the “Philadelphia” church era to the new “LAODICEAN ERA”! Or, had the church completely apostatized?

### *The True Philadelphia Church*

Somewhere, no doubt, the remnants of the true Philadelphia era of the Church of God exist on the earth, today. You will know them by their fruits (Matt.7:20). Their main fruit will be faithfulness to truth, the Word of God, using God’s name correctly, being small, and being characterized by “brotherly love” – true love, according to the Scriptures.

There is one church today which names itself “The Philadelphia Church of God,” but naming oneself isn’t what counts, but whom GOD in heaven names a church is what counts! Self-adulation and self-advertising is a sure mark of self approval and not God’s approval. That church is another fanatical brand of totalitarian Nicolaitanism with rampant ministerial abuse and militant hierarchical government of mere men. It loves money, and that is not a good sign.

Yeshua says to the true Philadelphia church: “Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name” (Rev.3:10-13, NRSV).

This church is promised protection in the hour of trial and testing coming upon the whole world. It is promised that it will be PILLARS in the temple of God. A pillar is a solid support structure on the foundation holding up the roof and superstructure – the whole building.

Do you know a church like that today? This church is humble, yet faithful. It is greatly beloved of the Lord. There is not a word of reproof, but rather encouragement. God had warned the churches of Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis against compromising and their influential standing. Here Yeshua cautions the church not to be depressed because they are so small, or discouraged because they appear like a “nobody,” and are routinely sneered at, ignored, ridiculed, and savagely attacked by the “synagogue of Satan” – branches of the church which have given themselves over to Satanic influence, teachings, and a spirit of competition. God encourages them to realize His approval is all that counts – not worldly prestige, money, “growth,” or “numbers.”

This church, in the end times, will restore much Biblical truth and understanding,

and knowledge of the laws and commandments of God. It will refute the heretics and compromisers who claim to teach the “full counsel of God” but refuse to do so. It will restore the true Biblical calendar and correct festival dates. It will teach the truth about the Godhead, the true relationship between the Father and the Son of God. It will perform a role of restoration and revival of the truth of God.

God says, “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, my great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied” (Joel 2:25-26, NKJV). The locust here is dual. It can refer to literal physical locusts, but it can also be a prophecy of devouring men and ministers, compared to locusts, who eat, creep, crawl, and consume the truth from among the people.

The Philadelphia church would RESTORE much of the lost, neglected, forgotten, and ignored TRUTH of God and His commandments, including recognition of His true name. It would be an obedient church. It would denounce false doctrine, and the antichrist spirit manifest among other organizations, denominations, and their erroneous teachings and dogmas. But the vast majority of end-time church members would not recognize it. They will continue on, “the blind following the blind,” to their sorrow and destruction (Matt.15:14).

Do you know a church that really, honestly fits that description today? This church is not haughty, or lifted up with pride; it is not hasty, or comparing itself with others. It is patient, enduring trials and tests, and trusting in God. It knows God will deliver each one when His time comes, and He will use His servants according to His inviolate and perfect will, in His Work, in His own time. This church has learned to pray with patience, and endurance, waiting patiently for God’s expected answer to prayers. It seeks only to serve God and feed His flock and proclaim His wonderful true gospel message of salvation and hope and the kingdom of God.

“Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (v.13).

### ***The Laodicean Age -- the FINAL Church***

The last age of God’s church is both the age of restoration and the age of apostasy! It finishes the seven-part cycle of the history of the church of God. The final church is the church of apostasy – complete black-out of the truth. It is the age of the rise of the Antichrist. It is symbolized by the church of Laodicea.

Laodicea was a metropolis – a major banking center, proud of its wealth. It was beautified with resplendent temples and theaters. Laodicea means “pertaining to Laodice,” named after the wife of a Seleucid monarch. This city had great trade, lay on a great road, and seemingly had great wealth and pride. It was noted for the manufacture of rich garments of black, glossy wool. It also featured a thriving medical school that made powder for the treatment of eye problems. It was later destroyed utterly by Muslim

invaders and became a scene of total desolation. Frequent earthquakes caused its complete abandonment.

This church met with thorough divine disapproval.

Yeshua said to Laodicea: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God’ (Rev.3:14, NKJV). He tells this church point-blank that He is “the beginning of the creation of God” – that is the “first-born of every creature” (Col.1:15). He was the Logos, the Companion of the Father, created by Him “in the beginning,” and who with Him created all things in the present Creation (John 1:1-4). The Laodicean church has difficulty accepting this iron-clad truth! (Write for our articles “Who or What Was Jesus Christ Before His Human Birth/”, “Was Christ Created?”, “The Pre-Existence of Christ.”)

The Messiah tells this end-time generation church: “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see” (Rev.3:15-18, NRSV).

The Laodicean church age is the seventh and FINAL church age before the coming of the Messiah! This last church age is amazingly lukewarm. It has all the problems of the previous church ages, only compounded and magnified. This lukewarmness demands a penalty. They are no longer fervent in spirit, but tepid, insipid – worthy of being spewed out like dirty bath water!

This is the only church of the seven that “speaks” back to God. It has a voice. It protests, “I am rich.” It boasts. Yet Yeshua says to it, “You say” – they claim to be God’s church, His mouthpiece. But they have become arrogant and proud, lacking in humility and the fear of God. They have a “form” of religion, and a vast “building program,” but neglect the weightier matters of the law – justice, mercy and faith. They are rich, but they neglect the poor, the widows, and the orphans among them. They have a large bankroll – but they are spiritually bankrupt.

This church says, “I have need of nothing.” It believes it has all the truth. It is unteachable and uncorrectable. It is “full,” complacent, and has that “satisfied” feeling. So it isn’t striving to seek God, to seek more of His Holy Spirit, more of His divine power, a closer walk with God and Christ. It has little spiritual power and no true love. It is in love with itself!

This church age is naked, and doesn’t even know it. Can you imagine? It is like the Emperor who had no clothes. He thought he was attired in the finest weaved material

in existence; but in reality, it was a scam – he was completely naked. It took a little boy to see his nakedness and shout out to everyone, “Look! The emperor is naked!”

This church is “wretched.” In the Greek this word is *talaiporos* and literally means “enduring trial.” It is a constant never-ending trial to God and Christ. It is also translated as “miserable.” Webster’s Dictionary defines “wretched” as meaning “grievous, deeply afflicted, woeful, hatefully contemptible, despicable, very poor in quality.”

Storms of God’s wrath will sweep over this church with fury and ferocity. It needs real cleaning, inside and out. It is blind to its own condition – and yet arrogant and haughty and will hear nothing, listen to no rebuke or reproof. It is indeed pitiable, a depressing, sad church.

Sadly, the majority of end-time Christians, however, are compared to ancient Laodicea, which had to retrieve its water from distant springs, and by the time the water reached the city it was always “lukewarm.” These church members are “neither cold nor hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will VOMIT you out of My mouth” (Rev.3:14-16). These people say in their hearts, that they are spiritually rich, wealthy, and need nothing – everything is going very well for them – or so they think. But Yeshua says of them, “You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (verse 17) – yet they don’t even realize it! Why? Because they are BLIND to their own condition!

So Yeshua says to those in this category -- many of His people alive, today, I am afraid: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten [“discipline”]. Therefore BE *ZEALOUS* [eager] and REPENT” (Rev.3:19). They are in deep need of spiritual repentance and change. Yeshua reproves and disciplines those whom He loves. He loves these people. He urges them to be zealous and to repent. What kind of “zeal” is meant here? It is not zeal for one’s own works, creeds, dogmas, ideas, organizations – but ZEAL FOR GOD’S WORD – the zeal to cry out, “I AM WRONG,” “I have been terribly WRONG!” and to admit it and to eagerly, earnestly CHANGE!

Yeshua declared to them, “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev.3:20-21).

What a strange picture! Here is a church of God, but God is standing on the *outside looking in!* *Christ has left the church!* This kind of church is buried deeply in real blackness and apostasy! It is in almost total eclipse. Christ is knocking on the door, hoping someone will let Him back *in* the church, and listen to Him, and repent, and change their ways!

Most churches – even those which are true remnants of the church of God – which exist today are *in this deplorable spiritual condition!* They often rant and rave,

accusing one another, but remain in DENIAL of Biblical truth! Their main objectives today seemingly is to try to “outdo each other” in copying Herbert W. Armstrong, along with all his mistakes and errors!

After Herbert Armstrong died, Joseph W. Tkach took the Worldwide Church of God in a direction its members never suspected. He began to change doctrines, one after another, surreptitiously, clandestinely, quietly, claiming that Mr. Armstrong had given him permission to do so. The Sabbath was jettisoned, the Holy Days were rejected, the food laws were thrown in the trash heap, Sunday worship was encouraged, and Christmas and Easter made their way back into the church. The doctrine on what it meant to be born again was changed, the doctrine of the kingdom of God was altered, the Trinitarian doctrine was brought in, and prophecy was cast aside, along with the identification of the “lost tribes of Israel” – the opus magnum on which Herbert Armstrong had built the original church and work! It was a sad time in Mudville.

The church began to ignore all prophecy, repudiated the identity of the lost tribes of Israel -- a major teaching of Herbert Armstrong. It repudiated as well the idea that God is working out a 6,000 year plan. It began to ridicule all prophecy, and then -- as the crown of its achievements -- it repudiated the LAWS of God, including the Sabbath commandment, the Holy Days, and the laws of clean and unclean meats!

How hard and how far so many fell so quickly!

Since that time, of course, we have entered the LAODICEAN AGE! Many people have since exited the Worldwide Church of God. In a noteworthy article in the *Los Angeles Weekly*, Joseph Tkach, Jr., was parodied, in an article titled, “Honey, I Shrunk the Church!” The Worldwidars have gone back into mainstream Protestant “Babylon.” They have rejected more truth and revelation than any other church in history in so short a time!

As a result of the apostasy of the Worldwide Church, many people began to leave in droves, by the thousands. Many ministers were caught in a vice – should they remain, or go with the people? From the shipwreck of Worldwide have sprung up some 150 or more churches, religious works, groups, and fellowships. The various churches and groups that have come out from Worldwide are now struggling with their own identity, problems, and fighting among themselves for a following. Each claims to be the original church, best following Herbert Armstrong’s tradition and leadership. But each has its own version of the truth, and its own range of problems and troubles.

The Worldwide Church of God has now sunk so far, it would be difficult to even refer to them as “Laodicean” any more -- they have gone completely back into the Protestant mainframe of religion – modern Babylon (Rev.17). However, God is their judge. Maybe some of the members still fit into the category of Laodicea, and are in danger even right now of being vomited out of Christ’s mouth!

### *Scattered Offshoots*

What about all the various scattered churches and groups that rose up when apostasy struck in the Worldwide Church of God? Where do they fit into the picture? Since Worldwide plunged into apostasy, they cannot really be the “Laodicean” church! Could the Laodicean churches be most of the remnant churches that came out of Worldwide’s apostasy, but still dripping with the sordid influence of having been part of the apostasy for years?

Are they the real LAODICEAN churches? We need to examine the EVIDENCE!

Jesus said, in all his letters to the seven churches, words to this effect: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Rev.2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

These churches include such organizations as the “Living Church of God,” “The Philadelphia Church of God,” “The United Church of God,” “The Biblical Church of God,” and a number of others.

How many of them are growing in grace and true knowledge? How many of them acknowledge the true Passover? The true date for Pentecost? The true meaning of the annual Holy days? How many are clinging to tired-worn error despite correction and reproof? How many of them seem to have the attitude, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing!”?

Yet God says of them, “You are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked!” Yet there is hope for them. Yeshua tells them even in this condition they can be saved by being purged in fire – like gold and silver. “Gold refined by fire” means fiery tribulation and testing (Rev.3:18). Peter wrote that we have to suffer “various trials,” so that the genuineness of our faith – “being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (I Peter 1:6-7).

### *A Warning to ALL*

The message to Laodicea is the last message to the last church era. It has profound implications for today. It is the last warning to the last church. There will be no more. This is the “Final Warning.” The red light is flashing, urgently – the whistle is blowing loudly. “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev.3:22).

The letters to the seven churches of Revelation constitute a WARNING to all of us, today. The last church era mentioned is the Laodicean era – so it would predominate in the END times! But the messages to all the other churches are still pertinent and vital for our hearing, and spiritual growth and maturity. Today, there are remnants of ALL SEVEN church ages – there are people in EVERY ONE of the spiritual conditions



described in the letters to the seven churches. *Each remnant church is probably a MIXTURE of all seven spiritual conditions listed in Revelation, with ONE characteristic predominating in that church. So there might be some Philadelphians even in the Laodicean branch, some Ephesian types in the Sardis branch, some Sardis types in Philadelphia, and some Smyrna and Pergamos in Sardis and Philadelphia!*

Therefore, each of us must sort out where we are in God's plan -- what our problems are and what we need to overcome -- and what God expects of us! The wise thing, I believe, is to apply ALL the warnings to ALL the churches, to ourselves, personally! And PRAY! And study the Scriptures! And take action, and WATCH! And strive to become OVERCOMERS!

### ***The Seven Churches Exist Today***

Notice that to the first church, Ephesus, Christ says, "Remember therefore from whence thou art FALLEN, and do the first works; or else *I will come unto thee quickly*, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou REPENT" (Rev.2:5). Here is a church, in the end time, just before the "Day of the Lord" (Rev.1:10), which needs to REPENT!

The third church, Pergamum, was located in the city of Pergamos, which history tells us was the center of Baal worship, the seat of the Babylonian Mysteries, during its day. This church also will exist just before the second coming of Christ -- it will be in existence "when he comes" because He says that He will fight against them -- those who partake of the pagan customs -- when He returns, "with the sword of My mouth"! (v.13). The fourth church, Thyatira, is told, "But that which ye have already *hold fast TILL I COME*" (Rev.2:25). It also is obviously *in existence when Christ returns*, as it is commanded to "hold fast" TILL He returns! The fifth church, Sardis, is also warned: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, *I will come on thee as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour *I will come upon thee*" (Rev.3:3). Again, those final words indicate clearly that this church also exists *at the end-time*, when Christ returns!

Similarly, the sixth church, Philadelphia also exists at the time of the end. It is told: "Behold, *I come quickly*: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev.3:11).

Finally, the seventh church, the church of Laodicea, is in the worst spiritual condition of all the seven churches. It is told: "I counsel thee to buy of me *gold tried in the fire*, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (Rev.3:18). *Here is reference to the end-time Great Tribulation* which will occur in the years just ahead of us, when once again vehement religious persecution will break out against the true worshippers of God. Clearly, this church also exists in the "End of Days"!

### *“Seven Divisions”*

These seven “churches” of Revelation, then, stand for and represent SEVEN MAJOR DIVISIONS OR INDEPENDENT GROUPS which worship God and “keep His commandments,” and believe in Christ as the Messiah. God still considers them HIS Church! But five of them obviously have many, many major problems, which earn most of them the wrath and anger of God, if they don’t “repent”!

This indicates that during these last days, the “true church of God” has over the centuries divided up into SEVEN major or minor “branches” -- each different, yet each enough alike to be part of the SAME TREE.

Will these separate branches of the “one true church” be reunited before the coming of Christ, to do a “great work”?

I wouldn’t place any money on such a bet!

Many, in this final age, will have to go through, and then come out of, “great tribulation,” in which they “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb” (Rev.7:14). Their robes are obviously dirty -- but the Great Tribulation will give them the means to “wash” their robes, that they may become white – righteous -- in God’s sight.

Daniel speaks of this same purification process, which will BRING US TOGETHER, and get rid of the dross, impurities, flimflam, dishonesty, and foolishness, which we see in the church and many members, today. Daniel was told, “And some of them of understanding shall FALL, to TRY them, and to PURGE, and to MAKE THEM WHITE, even to the *time of the end*” (Dan.11:35).

Although the church is “divided” into segments, and has many problems, today, these problems will in most cases be eliminated by the FIRES OF TRIBULATION and final testing. Christ is going to present the church to himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph.5:27). In the coming months and years, Christ is going to CLEAN THE CHURCH UP! He is going to purge and purify every “element,” every group, every true segment, and get rid of all the dirt, grime, grease and filth, until it is squeaky clean, spotless and shining!

Therefore, WHEN Christ returns, we read, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his WIFE *hath made herself ready*” (Rev.19:7). She is not ready, today. She is not yet purified, purged, and made white.

But she will be in time for the wedding! “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev.19:8).

### ***WHY the Church Is DIVIDED, Today!***

Thus, the Church of God, today, is “divided” -- as a result of Satan’s wiles, human nature, human greed and slackness and lethargy, and human error. The fault is not Christ’s or God’s. The blame rests with erring and sinning human leaders, who in far too many cases are simply not close enough to God and His Word, and don’t tremble before His Word (Isaiah 66:2).

The Church today is divided -- SIN has wormed its way in. Much purging and purifying must be done. ERROR has contaminated the Church, and even grown and spread. That is why certain ones MUST go into the Great Tribulation to be purged and cleansed, as their final “testing.” They will pay the ultimate price -- their lives. They will suffer martyrdom, imprisonment, even torture in some cases, and death. It will not be pretty. But thank God He gives us a chance to repent now, and to respond to His Truth, and to come out of sin and error. The hard-headed ones and “blinded” ones who refuse to admit the truth now will simply have to suffer the consequences, but they are not “lost.” They can still redeem their lives by repenting and turning to God, in heart and spirit, during the time of great tribulation.

When we look at the “Christian” world today, we see many false, counterfeit churches which masquerade as churches of God (II Cor.11:13-15). But we also see a few very sincere evangelical churches (at least some of the ministers, and members are sincere and devout). There are Messianic Jewish synagogues, Seventh Day Churches of God, Seventh Day Baptists, and similar groups, which seek to restore the original faith. Many of them show evidence of true love and real “works” and spiritual devotion in their lives, which in God’s sight is far more important than mere “head knowledge” and factual understanding. The apostle Paul declared, “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth” (I Cor.8:1).

As Paul also said, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and *all knowledge*; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [*love*], I am nothing” (I Cor.13:2).

Today, the professing “Christian world” is a shambles of confusion and chaos. Most of the sects, cults, denominations are now merely “store-front religion” – “market share ministries” – which are really empty spiritual facades created and controlled by Satan the devil. But there are a *few* -- perhaps literally “seven” main divisions -- who do represent the true Church of God, in all its faults, foibles, and blemishes, as they exist, today! Some of these remnant groups of the true Church of God could include segments of the Seventh Day Adventist Church; others could include various evangelical groups. Others would be churches that came out of Worldwide Church of God -- each with much truth, but each with serious error.

Many of these people are SINCERE. I would not hesitate to call them “Christian.” But they are in serious jeopardy – under judgment – because of their sins, false teachings, and doctrinal errors! Ultimately, however, all those who become part of

the BRIDE of Christ will have to “pass the test” – God’s test – for faithfulness and obedience. Or they simply won’t be in the first resurrection.

Of course, God knows and sees all, and He knows the hearts and minds of men, and He is testing each one of us. He knows those who are His. As Paul wrote, “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness’” (II Tim.2:19, NRSV)

### *Underground Christians*

There are “underground” Christians today, suffering persecution around the world. Many suffer incredible persecution in North Korea, Vietnam, China -- many have been imprisoned, others have been tortured, and some have been martyred. Many of these are our brethren, even if they don’t see all the truth some of us have been privileged to know and understand!

Jesus will judge each one fairly, as we read so plainly in the Scriptures: “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that *knew not*, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of them they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). Each will be judged fairly, according to what they have done with what God gave to them, including the amount of knowledge and understanding they received (see Matt.25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

Jesus plainly told His disciples, “And *other sheep* I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there SHALL [ultimately] be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Therefore, it really is not our need or concern to try to sort out who belongs to Christ, and who doesn’t. Many will be there, and we might be surprised who they are! On the other hand, we might be surprised to see who is NOT there! Some of the self-righteous, who are careless, and think they will be there, may not make it at all. Jesus said the poor publican, who would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13) will be justified – rather than the smug, self-righteous Pharisee who had confidence in his own righteousness (Luke 18:11-14).

Jesus put it plainly on another occasion. He declared: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others” (Matt.23:23).

The “bottom line” is that God knows who belongs to Him. He will judge each individual. That includes those men of old who died in flames for having translated the

Bible into the common tongue, such as Wycliff, and Tyndale. That includes such men of faith and humility as George Mueller, of the Plymouth Brethren, of the nineteenth century, who served God in an amazing way, building up many orphanages merely by faith and trust in God, through fervent, intercessory prayer.

Personally, I believe no one can read George Mueller's Autobiography, or biographical accounts about this man's dealings with the Lord, and his life of faith and obedience, and come away without being mightily impressed with the depth of his conversion, love of God, and faithfulness under extreme trial and duress! He was, in my opinion, a very faithful and humble man of God of his century -- a man who looked upon himself as a "poor, unworthy servant of the Lord." He was a Sunday observer.

### *Persecution Growing Around World*

A Christian publication called *Voice of the Martyrs* has spread the knowledge of many modern-day saints and true believers in Christ who have suffered greatly for their faith and conviction. In Cuba, a Christian from the Dominican Republic was caught by police, who burned his legs with cigarettes and put electrical shocks to his teeth. A group of forty Christians who brought Bibles to Cuba from Jamaica were all arrested at their hotel, many were robbed by the police, and escorted back to the plane.

In the Philippines, a man who gave up a good job to preach the gospel of Christ, was warned three times by the New People's Army, a militant wing of the Communists, to desist. Two men who belonged to his church were killed by the Communists only two weeks after becoming Christians.

A Pakistani believer in Christ was shot and killed by his Muslim accusers, after having been released from prison in Lahore, Pakistan. This man read his Bible every day.

In China a Christian was sentenced to five years for preaching the gospel, when he would not abandon his faith, which authorities called "the poison of imperialism." He was beaten, but while they beat him a supernatural joy filled him. He felt the Holy Spirit surround him, and the Reds could obtain no retraction. While in prison, he was given another ten years for preaching in the slave labor camp! One winter a severe disease epidemic broke out, and of 1300 prisoners, 1035 died. He himself was considered dead, and taken to the morgue. When he prayed, he saw an angel dressed in white whose face shone with God's glory and who blew upon him. Immediately he felt better and the sickness left him, he knelt, gave thanks to God, and *left the morgue!* The prison doctor, seeing him, thought he was a ghost! He told the physician, "Don't be afraid. . . God restored me to health. He sent me to show you the way of God." The doctor knelt, and said, "Your God is a reality."

After he left the prison, after serving 15 years, he told the authorities, "Suffering did not diminish my faith but only intensified my relationship with Jesus." This man, Mizhong Miao, worked another 18 years in the underground church, secretly, until he

finished his course.

Are such men truly men of God? Of course they are. Who could honestly dispute that fact? How self-righteous can some men be? One minister in the “United” Church of God has said that no one can be a true Christian unless he observes the seventh day Sabbath. Well, I ask, who made him both judge and jury?

I shout from the top of my lungs, “YES! Yes, indeed! These men prove by their works and giving of their lives out of love for Christ that they are true Christians!” *They are my brothers in Christ! GOD BLESS THEM, and their witness for the Truth which they have been given to understand!*

### ***We Must Not Condemn Others***

Too many of God’s people in this age, especially ministers and elders I have known, tend to be very judgmental, and look down their noses at others who do not belong to the same group as they do. Too many are proud, lifted up, and act like the Pharisee who thanked God that he was “not like other men.” Too many are prone to “judge their brother” because of doctrinal errors on minor points (or what some might call “major points”), when they themselves have major problems with attitude, hidden sins, and a wrong spirit.

Jesus Christ said, to those who are prone to sit in judgment of others: “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? . . . You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye” (Matt.7:1-5).

Paul also warned us about the SIN of judging one another, over issues that shouldn’t really matter. He wrote: “Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. . . Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand” (Rom.14:1-4, NRSV).

Does this mean that I would knowingly endorse, or accept error? Of course not! But I will accept as a “brother” in Christ one who does not have the same understanding as I do, even on points of God’s Law, or understanding the nature of the “Godhead,” although I will not compromise with him in either obedience to God, myself, or in understanding! I will simply accept such as they are – weaker brothers in Christ who have not been given the same amount of knowledge and understanding that God has given to us.

Of course, any “brother” who is dishonest, immoral, breaks the commandments, steals sheep, lies and bears false witness, and falsely accuses others, I would not consider a true “brother” at all, but an imposter, an infidel -- a Satanic implant, a “tare” amongst

the wheat – masquerading as a true Christian! Jesus said of such, plainly, “You shall know them *by their fruits*” (Matt.7:16, 20).

### ***The Real Bottom Line***

In the months and years ahead, severe persecution such as we have never seen, is going to break out against all minority groups and tiny religious churches, which will be termed “cults” and “bizarre sects” by the mass media, under the control of government propagandists. True Christians will be persecuted with a vengeance – even *before* the final “Great Tribulation” ever arrives – and in some places already have been!

Jesus gave a sequence of prophetic events which must occur before He returns. In verse 21, He mentions the coming of Great Tribulation. However, long before this event occurs, Jesus mentioned in verse, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (vs.7-8).

Here He is talking about the BEGINNING of the End Time -- years before the final “Great Tribulation”! And notice! Right after this “beginning,” He declares: “Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold” (Matt.24:9-13, NRSV).

This persecution occurs *BEFORE* the Great Tribulation. *It is one of the very NEXT things prophesied -- on the prophetic calendar!*

Knowing this, isn't it high time we draw close to one another, begin to LOVE one another, and show by our attitudes and actions that we really are the children of God and servants of Christ? Isn't it high time we quit “judging” one another, or others who are proving their loyalty and devotion to Christ by their intense suffering, by accusing them of being “blinded,” or not really “Christian” because they don't understand certain things we do?

For shame! Jesus plainly said to His disciples -- and I hope that includes you: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love* one to another” (John 13:35).

In the coming years, those who truly belong to Jesus Christ/Yeshuah the Messiah, are going to be “tried” and “tested” to prepare them for entrance into God's Kingdom (Matt.5:48). Those who are wicked, who are tares, and goats, and who do not really belong to Him, will be discovered and found out -- their works, words and “fruits” will eventually, when the “heat” comes, betray them. David wrote in the Psalms: “The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind. The Lord *tests the righteous* and the wicked, and his soul hates the lover of

violence. On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur; a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face” (Psalm 11:4-7, NRSV).

Rather than worry about others, or sitting in judgment of them, let each of us examine HIMSELF or HERSELF before the Word of God! As Paul wrote, “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. TEST yourselves*” (II Cor.13:5).

Paul also wrote: “For no other foundation can any lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire [Tribulation]” (I Cor.3:11-15, NKJV).

Rather than judge other people, or other groups, let's focus on doing GOD'S WORK – and trust Him to sort everything else out, in His time, according to His will!

And what is God's “work”? That we LOVE one another. The apostle Paul shows us that judging and condemning each other is not of God. Comparing ourselves among ourselves is not wise (II Cor.11:4). We all have faults and problems and character flaws which we need to work on. What should we do then?

Yeshua sums it all up for us – will we heed His words? “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt.22:37-40, NRSV).

As Paul put it, “Owe no man anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8-10).

I know there are many who sit in judgment of me, who criticize this, that or the other doctrine, belief, teaching, or whatever. It is sad to see them do such a thing. For Christ is the final True Judge. The apostle Paul was also judged by other ministers and Church members in his day. He replied, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God” (I Cor.4:3-5, NKJV).



Rather than sitting in judgment of one another, as individuals, should we not “avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening”?

Paul added, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:14-15, NRSV).

Let’s study and examine closely the lessons of the seven churches of Revelation. We are “citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God” (Ephesians 2:19-22, NRSV).

As such, let’s be serious about our Father’s business, and do it with all our hearts, minds, and strength!

And let’s love one another! Then we may sparkle and shine forever as brilliant stars in God’s wonderful Kingdom (Dan.12:3)!

## Chapter 15

# “A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS”

Why was I called? Why did God raise me up to begin this end-Time ministry? What is the story behind Triumph Prophetic Ministries? What is reason another ministry is desperately needed in this time of world crisis – “End Time”? Where and why have all the other remnant churches gone into grievous error and sin? Here is the plain truth! Here is the true story behind this end-time Work of God!

We read in the book of Isaiah, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Often I have looked back over my life and reflected on God's dealings with me, and wondered in *amazement* to myself, "Why was I called?" "Why did God call me?" "For what special or specific purpose did He call me?"

Perhaps you have often wondered the same thing about yourself!

We know that Jesus Christ said, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). Jesus added, "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" (John 6:44).

Obviously, then, none of us called ourselves. It is God who calls us, and chooses us, for His purpose!

### *Our Calling*

The apostle Paul had more to say about this question. he wrote to the Corinthians,

"For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and *base* things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor.1:28-29)

Humanly, we would all like to glory in the flesh, in our nobility, or mightiness, or wealth, or wisdom. But God shows here that we cannot do so. Rather, God has called us and chosen us precisely because we are weak, and despised, and base, and virtually non-existent – the scum of the earth – the dregs of the world – the least among men!

*Humanly* we would like to glory in that which we are, or desire to achieve or accomplish of ourselves, but of ourselves we can do NOTHING spiritually (John 5:30)! Therefore, Paul tells us, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him *glory in the Lord*" (I Cor.1:31).

When we are called of God, we are nothing admired or looked up to in the world. We are less than nothing. Yet, as Paul wrote to the Romans, "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn; he will never go back on his promises" (Rom. 11:29, *The Living Bible*).

Paul added, "And so God's blessings are not given just because someone decided to have them or works hard to get them. They are given because *God takes pity* on those he wants to" (Rom. 9:16).

Those of us in God's Church were specifically *called!* God took pity on us, and lifted us out of the muck and mire of the world!

Why were we called? Specifically, to inherit eternal life as one of the firstfruits – and to reign as kings and priests and teachers during the Kingdom of God (Rev. 5:10). But we were also called to fulfill a role, and to help accomplish the Work of God during these last days – to do our part in God's great purpose and plan in getting the gospel out to all the world as a witness before the end comes (Matthew 24:14)!

Paul wrote the Philippians, "For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants" (Phil. 2:13).

### ***The "Cutting Edge" of Truth***

My own calling of God, as I said, I have often reflected over. All the fruits and evidence seems to show clearly and conclusively that God has specifically called me to write and publish books that support His great Work, and provide a foundation of truth – books containing the knowledge He has revealed to me, and to others, who are on the "front lines" of learning new truth, Biblical knowledge, and research, whether it be history, health science, archaeology, or prophecy! He has also called me to publish *Prophecy Flash* magazine, a unique magazine of understanding and in depth knowledge

of the truths of God, as well as prophetic insight. And, He has called me to prepare Bible Studies on the "cutting edge," as it were, of new truth and deeper understanding of the truths of God.

I am not perfect – far from it – I have made mistakes, and have made errors in judgment as to when Christ might return. But when I have seen I was wrong, I have been willing to change, to repent, and to admit and confess my mistakes. What more can a man do?

On the other hand, I have been told by some in the past, that the books I publish are on the "cutting edge" of truth exploring the frontiers of new knowledge! And God has revealed many new, and many old but forgotten truths to the Work of God – teachings and commandment few if any others have been willing to recognize in God's Word!

Because some of my writings, and Bible studies, contain NEW truth, and new revelation from God, some people are suspicious, distrustful, and doubtful of the contents or purpose of these writings and tapes. Some accuse me of being a "false prophet." Others worried about alleged "heresy," or "false doctrine." In such cases, what the people who are concerned ought to do is sit down and carefully *read* the material in question, and PROVE IT, one way or the other!

Unfortunately, some look upon *conformity as unity*. They would like us all to speak the same things, on every thing, *even if it is in error!* But if we did this, and the end-time Churches refused to accept new truth or revelation, no matter what the source, then the Churches would *cease to grow* in truth and grace. They would begin to atrophy, and wither, like a dead fig tree, and would cease to produce good fruit!

As all living things, we must all either GROW, or die!

However, whenever anything NEW is presented to human beings, even in fields of historical science, it often meets with a great amount of initial resistance – even if it is true! Robert Fulton's idea of a steamboat was initially hooted at with derision and laughter – until he proved to the world that it would work!

Thomas Edison was laughed at and jeered for his attempt to invent an electric light bulb. And people laughed at the Wright Brothers, for thinking they could ever invent a machine heavier than air that would actually fly!

### ***The Principle of Tolerance***

Even so, human nature is slow to accept new truth. However, none of us is PERFECT in knowledge. Therefore we should learn to be tolerant of new ideas, new truths, new revelations which we may not have yet investigated or proved. The principle of tolerance is part of the paradox of learning and discovery. If we close our minds to new ideas, we become reactionary, recalcitrant, ossified. We cannot grow. We must

strive to be open to new truth which God chooses to reveal to us, and not shut Him out because of preconceived opinions or ideas, prior prejudice, a spirit of intolerance, or an attitude of superiority, pride, or stubborn or even mulish obstinacy.

We should all humbly confess, as Sir Isaac Newton did, that we are all like a little boy standing before a huge seashore of knowledge, before the vast ocean of truth, remaining to be discovered.

Only despots profess to have absolute knowledge. Only tyrants claim to have complete certainty and truth. But the open-minded, humble person should always maintain capacity for re-evaluation, re-analysis, and even rethinking old concepts, when new knowledge or data bring them into question. Dogmatism is a fool's game which only fools play. When any belief becomes encrusted as dogma, error becomes enshrined and worshiped, and truth lies fallen in the dust.

Oliver Cromwell once said to his compatriots in England during civil war that raged in the land, "*I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.*" His words seem to have fallen on many deaf ears, not interested in proving whether their opinions are right or wrong – even many in the end-time church of God! Unfortunately, those guilty of dogmatism and ossified thinking seldom are willing to accept new facts and embrace new knowledge which would force them to divest themselves of old error and fallacious beliefs which they have held for many years.

It is *hard to change!* As Herbert W. Armstrong has often said, "It is *ten times harder to unlearn old error* than to accept new truth!" It requires a truly converted mind to be willing to always look at the facts, and REPENT, and CHANGE, when it is in error!

Because Triumph Publishing is on the salient edge of the discovery of new truth, there seems to be a lot of sparks flying, criticism, and reproach. Because of this fact, God has taught me that I must have the thick skin of a rhinoceros, and thick hide and immovability of an elephant, and the boldness and courage of a lion!

Character, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has said many times, is "to come to know what is right, to decide to do what is right, and to do it, regardless of the consequences."

Thus, for me to persist in the quest for truth, in the face of opposition and reproach, requires character of steel, and iron resolution – an iron will determination, with the help of the Spirit of God!

Would it be all right if I were to "compromise" with any of the new knowledge or revelation God gives to me? If I believe others might not accept it, should I just store it somewhere, and wait for a more "propitious time" to reveal it or share it? Should I just bury it somewhere, out of fear that others might not think well of me? This very idea was suggested to me in years gone by, by a very personal friend, whom I had considered a rather close friend, as we had worked for years together in the "Personal Correspondence Department" of the Worldwide Church of God, during the somnolent sixties and roaring

seventies. However, I spurned such advice as being mischievous and false, coming from Satan the devil, the arch-adversary of truth and who will stoop to anything to squelch and stomp out "truth." He will even "compromise" with it, so long as it isn't being "proclaimed" and "preached"!

### *The Spirit of Compromise*

Herbert Armstrong, in a "Personal" in the December 1976 *Good News* magazine asked a similar question. He queried: "Wouldn't it be all right to compromise, 'just a little,' on some 'unimportant minor point'?"

He later answered the same question by saying, "Nevertheless, *if we begin to compromise with God's TRUTH, even in smallest, slightest manner, we have allowed Satan to get a foot into the door of the Church, and soon he will push open the door (he is stronger than we) and take over the whole Church. A little leaven leavens the WHOLE LUMP!*"

Mr. Armstrong continues, "I have been charged with the commission of KEEPING GOD'S WORD. Keeping it inviolate – NO COMPROMISE! I have NEVER compromised with God's TRUTH – regardless of the cost or the circumstances. I never shall!"

However, Mr. Armstrong went on, "I *will* CHANGE whenever proved wrong. I will accept NEW TRUTH as often as PROVED to be new truth to me or to the Church.

"But I will not compromise with the truth! I never have!" He sums up: "I won't compromise – *not even 'just a little.'*"

I feel exactly the same way, about any new knowledge or TRUTH which God in His divine mercy has revealed, or will reveal, to me!

*I cannot* compromise! I will not! I *shall* not! I *dare* not! To compromise is to slap Jesus Christ, the Revelator, right in the face – it is to shame and dishonor Him! To compromise with the TRUTH of God, as He reveals it, is to despise the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to walk all over His bloodied body!

In an article in the December 1978 *Plain Truth*, Herbert Armstrong acknowledges, "Many NEW truths have come to light in the past thirty years. Some have been revealed through various of God's ministers. And also God has continued to reveal important and basic truths through me."

### *Wisdom from Herbert Armstrong*

Even so, we are all human, We all are capable of making mistakes. Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote in the January 1985 *Good News*, "We are all human. We are all fallible. I have been wrong. I have made mistakes. The same is true of all those God is

using in HIS WORK."

He goes on, "God says, 'PROVE all things.' That means *you* are fallible. That means all the 'great' men are fallible! ALL are human. ALL can be wrong – and nearly all are. The *whole world* is DECEIVED (Revelation 12:9). That means its religious leaders and churches are deceived!

"The very recognition of that fact is the *beginning* of right knowledge. We do recognize it – and that we ourselves could be wrong. That is the *first step* toward coming out of the fog of error and deception, starting toward truth."

Herbert Armstrong adds, with sharp insight, "It is not a matter of who has the greater intellect. A man may have the highest IQ in the world, and in his intellectual VANITY refuse to admit he could be wrong – reject all correction – and thus embrace error and deception."

Therefore, says Mr. Armstrong, "The second step, if you would know TRUTH, is to be *willing* to admit being deceived or in error, and to reject it and accept truth new to me – when *proved* even though unpopular – even though it cuts me off from my family, friends, associates or club members – even though everything in my selfish and vain nature rebels against it! Am I willing to *act on* it – OBEY the truth – no matter what the cost?"

This modern day servant of God adds, "To find and live the TRUTH requires a HUMBLED mind." He asked incisively, "Did you ever know a person of great intellectual powers who did not have the kind of VANITY that shrinks from confessing he has been WRONG – and has misled others?" I know of several such people – ministers in the end-time churches of God – who have acted in this manner! Such an attitude is a shame and a reproach to them!

Mr. Armstrong continued in this article, "But God had humbled me. He brought me to repentance and faith. And He opened my mind to HIS TRUTH by the gift of His Holy Spirit.

"But *I had to be willing, continuously, to confess being wrong*, and to embrace truths constantly NEW to me."

How many people do you know, who are willing to do that? How many are humble enough to publicly admit it and confess it when they are wrong?

Precious few, indeed!

We must all be willing to confess error, and to admit being wrong, and to CHANGE, and to embrace truths new to us, if we are to really GROW in "grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," as Peter wrote 1900 years ago (II Pet. 3:18).

Even as Mr. Armstrong wrote, I, too, have found, that "As I studied a portion of the Bible, I could now understand it. But I had to *walk in the 'light' as* God opened my mind to see. Regardless of the cost in the esteem of men, or in countering opposition and persecution, I had constantly to BE WILLING to follow GOD and not man. . .

"It is a matter of WILLINGNESS – not of superior and lofty minds. It is a matter of being LED by GOD'S SPIRIT into His ways that are so CONTRARY to this world's established customs and beliefs, not of personal human powers."

Mr. Armstrong says he did not start the Work of God, in his day, of his own accord at all. He added, "IT IS GOD'S DOING!" Even so I say of this END-TIME WORK of God, called Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God), even though it is very small, compared to various other end-time church groups, *this is not a work of "mere men."* I did not start it of my own accord at all. I did not want to do it. Or desire to. I desired to stay in the church – if only the church would be righteous and serve God in truth. But it went astray. It cast me out! So I determined to steadfastly obey God, regardless.

It never entered my mind to begin a NEW WORK. IT IS GOD'S DOING! As Mr. Armstrong wrote, "By circumstances, God forced me to submission. The living JESUS CHRIST so manipulated events and the force of circumstances that he literally PLUNGED me into His work. It is not my work – it is THE VERY WORK OF GOD."

Mr. Armstrong stated, "And *THIS* can be easily proved, to those willing to know the TRUTH!" *So I say to you, right now, THIS is the very work of GOD – and it is NOT "my work" – and this can be EASILY PROVED by those willing to know the TRUTH!*

### ***How to Handle "'New Truth'"***

When Mr. Herbert Armstrong began learning God's truth, it was revealed to him "a truth, a subject, a teaching, or a doctrine at a time" (Feb. 1972 *Tomorrow's World*, "Personal"). He did not get it all at once.

He wrote, "There were instances where, having felt I had come to understand the true Biblical teaching on a certain subject, other Scriptures discovered later put a different light on it. *I had, on occasion, to confess I had been in error, and to correct it.*"

He says, "I did not get it all *perfectly* at the beginning. No one could," he confessed, "And sometimes, in the light of other Scriptures, I had to confess error *and correct it.*"

Mr. Armstrong writes, "*There were at least two occasions when I was accused by hostile women, bent on discrediting me, of error. On more thorough research, in these two instances, I discovered I had unknowingly been in error – and they were correct. Humiliating or not, I openly and publicly corrected these errors at once.*"



Some, unfortunately, are only willing to admit error, or to be corrected, when it comes from an *authority above them!* They would never admit error when corrected by some lowly no account, or some lay member. If two hostile women brought a new truth to such modern end-time "ministers" – without a doubt, they would summarily cast the women out of the Church of God, and brand them as heretics, and forbid church members to have any connection or fellowship with them whatsoever!

Do you see the difference in attitude, between Herbert Armstrong, and the attitudes of these other "end-time ministers," who all claim to follow in his footsteps, and who profess to be wearing "his mantle"?

May God help you to understand, and to see through these modern imposters, and "show-boaters" and "pretenders"!

Mr. Armstrong wrote, "To confess and correct error is to be branded a false prophet!

"Yet they are all HUMAN. They are ALL subject to error, and so are YOU – and so am I – and so is this Work of God. Even though it is God's Work, directed, empowered and blessed by Him, He carries it on through frail, weak HUMANS, and we humans are ALL of us subject to mistakes!"

Mr. Armstrong continues, "If and when we find one [an error] in the future, we shall correct it! The one who follows that principle is the *MOST FREE FROM ERROR!*

*"So, confessing such an error is one of the SUREST proofs to identify the people through whom the living Christ IS WORKING – and whom HE is USING!"* (italics in quotation mine).

### ***Why This Ministry Is NEEDED***

What a statement! Yet the "fruits" prove beyond any doubt that ALL of the end-time "churches" that came out of Worldwide have REFUSED TO ADMIT ERROR – *to confess that they have been WRONG on such major doctrinal points as the true date of observing Passover, and the true manner, and the correct date to observe Pentecost! On these two TEST COMMANDMENTS they have all FAILED miserably!*

God raised up Triumph Prophetic Ministries, and He revealed to us the correct dates to observe Passover and Pentecost. It was nothing "spectacular," I suppose. I studied into these issues with an open mind, and came to see that the Jews have been observing the correct dates for thousands of years, and never lost this fundamental truth! Yet all the end-time branches of the churches of God, who observed the "annual holy days," *all were in error on this major point of truth!*

How can we explain this? Why are they so oblivious to the clear and precious

truth? WHY are they so BLIND?

Is it because they are together fulfilling the role prophesied in the book of Revelation -- the role of the end-time LAODICEAN CHURCH? God says of that church, "So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art **wretched, and miserable, and poor, and BLIND, and naked . . .**" (Rev.3:16-17).

Nevertheless, it is God's intent that there be an END-TIME WITNESS – a Work that will truly serve Him, and proclaim His true MESSAGE to a wicked and rebellious world, as well as to a rebellious end-time Church! For this reason, He raised up this Work of God.

### *Different Office and Duties*

God has called each one of us to do a particular job. Whatever it is, it is *important* to God, and to His Work! How are we to best understand our calling?

The apostle Paul wrote: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [that is, to profit others and God's Work as a whole]. For to *one* is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to *another* the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of MIRACLES; to another prophecy [or inspired preaching]; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues [foreign languages]; to another the interpretation of tongues [who can't speak them but can interpret them]; but ALL THESE worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally *as he will*" (I Cor. 12:4-11).

This passage of Scripture means, GOD gives the different GIFTS of His Spirit to each man, according to God's will, for the benefit of the Church of God and the Work God is doing! This isn't a matter of OUR choice. It's a matter of God's doing! He is the One who decides WHERE to place His Spirit, and its gifts, and HOW they will be used in His Church. This is a matter of *God's will – not man's will*.

We have no say-so of how God will use us in His Work. I am an instrument in His hands, to use where He chooses, for the benefit of the overall Work of God! – and, at the same time, for my greatest benefit, although I may not necessarily *see* it at the time! It was "hard" being disfellowshipped "without due process" and "without cause" by the ministers of the Worldwide Church of God in January 1987. I didn't want to be ejected from the Church, the body of believers, and be cast out on my "own."

Nevertheless, I knew I could not compromise, or come "crawling back" to a church which had already begun to go astray, which was misusing and abusing

"authority," and which was in "denial" of new truth which God had brought to them through me. In this case, the "new truth" was a new understanding of the amazing prophecies of Daniel 8 and the "2300 day prophecy." The new Tkach church government rejected it completely, without even looking into it. They decided to "disfellowship" me because of my independent publishing of religious books, and my intent on publishing a newsletter at the time. They viewed this as "competition," but Herbert Armstrong had allowed my book publishing business to continue without opposition from its inception in 1974 until his death in 1986 – almost 12 years.

As a recently disfellowshipped person, I had to pray and endure, and search the Scriptures for what God wanted me to do. He made it plain to me that I should continue preaching and teaching the truth of God, no matter what the consequences or circumstances. Some things may be hard to understand, at the time they happen – such as being disfellowshipped – but we must learn *to accept* them, in FAITH, and go on, doing our best to serve God in the job and position where He places us!

Notice what Paul says: "But now hath *God set the members every one of them in the body [in the Church, and in the Work of God, today], as it hath pleased HIM*" (I Cor. 12:18).

This isn't man's decision, It's not, never has been, up to *man*. *GOD IN HEAVEN* determines these things!

OUR responsibility isn't WHERE we are used in God's Work, or even HOW we are used. OUR responsibility is HOW WE FUNCTION in the job *God* gives us. YOUR duty is to do your BEST in WHATEVER job God gives you! God Himself put me in the writing and ministerial work, through Ambassador College. And then He called and chose me to publish books, in order to keep the truth of God alive. And then He inspired me to begin *Prophecy Flash* magazine, as a final "witness" to this end-time wicked and rebellious world, and as a final "witness" against the works of the end-time churches that profess His name, but deny Him in their works and doctrines and false teachings!

***Herbert Armstrong -- "NOT a Prophet!"***

In the February 1972 *Tomorrow's World* magazine, Herbert W. Armstrong asserted emphatically, so that no one could miss the point: "Thousands know that I, personally, have been called and chosen for a very definite commission in God's service. But I have definitely NOT been called to be a PROPHET. . ."

He continues, "*Emphatically I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks specially and directly*, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new and special instruction direct from God -- separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I never have claimed to be."

Mr. Armstrong continued, writing in 1972, "There is no such human prophet living today!" And, of course, he was absolutely right! If there were any at that time, I

surely didn't know of them! The only ones I knew would have to be called FALSE prophets! This frank admission and confession by Herbert W. Armstrong certainly puts the LIE to the statement and belief that he was the "Elijah" prophesied to come before the return of Christ! Read our article, "Is Herbert W. Armstrong the Elijah to Come as Many Believe?"

But does this mean that God will not raise up men to the station of prophets during these last days, immediately prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ?

### *The Office of "PROPHET"*

The answer must be an equally emphatic and resounding, *NO!*

The office of prophet is very clearly one of the offices which Jesus Christ ordained for His Church. He distributes gifts in the Church through the Holy Spirit. As the apostle Paul wrote, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom . . . to another *prophecy*" (I Cor.12:7-10).

Paul emphatically stated, "*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily, PROPHETS. . .*" (v.28). He goes on to ask, "*Are all prophets?*" (v. 29).

In the New Testament church there were "prophets." "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers . . ." (Acts 13:1). "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great famine throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar" (Acts 11:27-28).

In fact, Paul tells us, the Church of God is "built upon the foundation of the apostles *and the prophets*, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone" (Eph.2:20).

### *God Does the Calling*

Did the original twelve disciples choose to become apostles of God, and then fit themselves for such a mission in life? No – notice the words of Jesus Christ: "Ye have NOT chosen me. BUT I HAVE CHOSEN YOU, *and ordained* you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

This should be perfectly *plain*. They did not seek this office. Why, Peter and his brother and cousins were simple *fishermen*. When they began following Christ, they STILL had no idea of what really lay ahead of them. They thought Jesus would set up a physical kingdom on earth, right then and there. They had no idea He was training them and commissioning them to become APOSTLES of His Church! They thought, at best, they would be His aides and governors and assistants in administrating a physical kingdom which He would establish!

But they were wrong, weren't they?

Jesus called them for a PURPOSE – to become "fishers of men." They were called and chosen, because of natural ability, strength and talents [along with their personal weaknesses] to become pillars in the Church – the FOUNDATION of the Church of God (Eph. 2:20), along with the prophets!

### *The Prophets and Patriarchs*

But what about the men of God of old? Did Abraham choose to become the "Father of the faithful"? No – look at the record. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country . . . and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. 12:1-2). Again, you see, GOD did the choosing. He APPOINTED Abraham to this high office (he was a prophet, but much more than a prophet – the original *promises* were made to him!).

And, of course, what about Moses? Moses was one of the GREATEST MEN IN the Bible – responsible for writing the LAW, the first five books of Scripture! Did he choose this awesome job? "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush . . . And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, *God called* unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" (Exo.3:23).

Moses had a right attitude – his heart was right. He wanted God to perform everything He said He would for Israel. But Moses, himself, did not begin to feel worthy to be the chosen vessel of God to DO these things! Moses was well aware of his weaknesses. He objected. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo.4:10).

Do you see how Moses tried to get out of it? *Vanity* was not his problem. He was, perhaps, too negative, too self effacing, and didn't have *enough* confidence. God had to "jack him up" and encourage him, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing. or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and TEACH thee what thou shalt say" (vs. 11-12).

Still, Moses was reticent – and God had to get strong with him – and COMMAND him to go, telling him Aaron would help him where he was weak!

When God called David to be king over Israel, he was only a *runt* of a family – the youngest of eight, the tail-ender of the brood – a young shepherd boy. Samuel wanted to anoint one of David's older, more powerful appearing brothers – but God said, "*Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as a man seeth; for a man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*" (I Sam. 16:7).

When the older brothers were paraded before Samuel, he told Jesse, "The LORD hath *not chosen* these" (v.10). No one thought about bringing David before Samuel. "There remaineth yet the youngest," Jesse said, thinking, "Who would ever want to see David? He's just a youngster – a boy!" And he added, "behold, he keepeth the sheep" (v.11). But when David came bounding in, God told Samuel, "ARISE, anoint him: for this is he" (v. 12).

David naturally, had NO IDEA of what they wanted with him! He did NOT choose himself to become KING over Israel! God chose him! He was merely a young lad, serving God as a shepherd – and he was probably very content with being a shepherd out in the hills, where he could commune with God and talk with Him, while composing beautiful music under the stars, as he drew close to God!

Let's go a little further. What about Isaiah? When God called him to be a prophet, and showed him an awesome vision of His Throne, Isaiah cried out. "Woe is me! for I am undone [Heb., cut off; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa.6:5).

Isaiah did not feel worthy, either. Yet God cleansed him, and converted him, and inspired him to be a mighty prophet!

Jeremiah was another young lad, like David, whom nobody would have paid any attention to. Yet God said to him, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ORDAINED thee a *prophet* unto the nations" (Jer. 1: 5). What was Jeremiah's response on learning of this?

"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, *I cannot speak! for I am a child*" (v. 6). God, however, did not listen to his excuses as to why he could not be a prophet. God had chosen him, and that was it! God answered Jeremiah, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD" (vs. 7-8).

Jeremiah had no choice about the matter. God didn't ask him, "Would you like to be a prophet?" God simply told him he was chosen to be a prophet – and that was that!

Jonah was another chosen to be a prophet by God – but he tried to run away. He finally came to see there was nowhere to run, no way out for him. Finally, Jonah repented of running away from his responsibility – and God sent him to preach to the city of Nineveh, prophesying its downfall.

Notice! All these great men of God were CALLED by God to do a job – to perform a "work." They did not have high opinions of themselves. They were not inflated with ego. They were "small" people, as the world would look upon them – and yet God called them, and prepared them, and then USED them to do His Work for that

time and age! What about us, today?

### *God's Standard*

Will God justify and honor one man more than another, merely because of his office? Does God have "respect of *persons*?" Of course not!

David wrote: "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psa.62:9).

Isaiah wrote: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a *very little* thing." And, "All nations before him are as NOTHING; and they are counted to him *less than nothing*, and VANITY" (Isa. 40:15,17).

God's true servants are well aware of this. They are not inflated with self-importance. They do not strut in pride and vanity, proud of their office, preening their feathers and glorifying themselves. They know – they *KNOW* there is no unrighteousness with God, and that God will judge each man fairly, not according to his office but according to HIS WORKS! For this reason, God's true servants humble themselves – strive to remain "small" in their own sight. They fight against getting the "big head" over their position of honor and respect. They don't allow their office to "turn their heads." They would be AFRAID of the descending judgment and wrath of God! They *KNOW* God is able to humble and abase a man who allows pride to lift him up!

In some respects, although he was a minister and an apostle of God, Paul felt somewhat inferior to the other apostles. He wrote, "For I am the *least* of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor.15:9). It should be plain, Paul did not have a big head over his job and duty. He felt very little – very humble. He did not "exalt his office."

Nevertheless, of course, Paul did have great respect for the OFFICE which God gave him. He did not belittle it or its responsibility. "But by the grace of God I am what I am," he said, "and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured MORE ABUNDANTLY than they all: yet *not I*, but the GRACE of God which was with me" (v.10).

Paul felt very humble. And so God used him very much. Paul never glorified himself, or his office. He wrote the Ephesians, "Whereof I was *made* [not took to myself, or made myself, or because of my merits I "qualified"] a minister, according to the GIFT of the GRACE of God given unto me by the effectual working of HIS power [not Paul's own ability and struggling, or choosing!]."

He continued, explaining how he felt about this tremendous "honor," as most people would look at it – but realizing that as GOD looked at it, it was not an honor or badge for him, it was a DUTY, a job, he had to perform – Paul continued, "Unto me, *who*

*am less than the least* of all saints, is this *grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8-9). He appreciated God's calling. He did not "put it down," or "take it for granted," or deprecate it, or diminish its importance. But, on the other hand, he never got a "swelled head" over it, or an "inflated ego," either!

### ***"The Calling and Gifts of God"***

Paul writes, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

God calls whom He calls, and chooses whom He chooses, for each job He needs to have done.

Therefore, God tells us through the apostle Peter, "As every man hath *received the gift*, even so MINISTER THE SAME one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the *oracles of God*, if any man minister, let him to it *as of the ability which God giveth*: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (I Pet.4:10-11).

The apostle Paul added, with divine insight, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us*, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching, or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. *Let love be without dissimulation*" or pretence and falsehood (Romans 12:5-9).

I know, from the fruits, and the history of God's dealing with me, that He has called and chosen me to write and publish and proclaim His end-time Message – His Truth – to a dying, sin-sick world of suffering and wickedness. God has called and chosen me to go forth and to "bring forth much fruit." He says: "Ye have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father, in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16-17).

The *Prophecy Flash* magazine, the Bible Study Tapes, the reprint articles, the books of Triumph Prophetic Ministries – these are the tools God has given me to use to serve Him at this time and place. I know that God Himself raised up this Work. I know that it is HIS Work.

I know that God has blessed me with certain "gifts" in this regard.

Even so, in these "last days" of this present world system, I rejoice in the gifts and calling God has given me as a writer, speaker, leader, and an instrument in His hands to



reveal amazing new truths of God – to write with divine power and inspiration! I thank Him often and repeatedly for "calling" me, and giving me the talents, experiences, training and ability to preach and teach, to make prophecies plain and understandable, to make doctrine clear and easy to comprehend. I thank Him also for the ability to make Bible Study tapes, CDs, DVDs, and to post our Bible Studies on our websites on the internet! I thank Him also for those whom He has given to us, to help us so mightily and powerfully to continue and to accomplish this end-time ministry!

Where would we be without all our faithful co-laborers and co-workers? Nowhere, that's where! God sent each one of them to help us, and how we appreciate their effort and sincere help, their financial donations and contributions, their self-sacrifice, and desire to serve in any way possible!

We are very thankful for God's people, and Paul reminds each one of us: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered (served) to the saints, and do minister (or serve)" (Heb. 6:10). God also encourages us when He says: "Keep up the good work and don't get discouraged, for you will be rewarded" (II Chron.15:7, *The Living Bible*).

God calls each to do a special, particular job – so the over all WORK OF GOD can be done of preaching the gospel to the world and bearing witness to the TRUTH of God, BEFORE Jesus Christ returns! (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10.)

We all have a job to do! Even though you may not be called to be a minister, YOUR job is important!

### ***The Purpose of Triumph Prophetic Ministries***

Why did God pick me to do this particular "job" or "Work"? What qualifications do I have? Have I "exalted myself" to this position and responsibility?

Some, judging by the appearance, may conclude that such is the case. But Jesus Christ says, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

The apostle Paul also says, "PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess.5:21). Solomon wrote, "The simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Prov.14:15). The way to prove whether a man is truly serving God, or himself, or Satan the devil, is to check up on him, and judge "by the fruits" (Matt.7:20).

Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony [of the apostles and prophets]: If they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is NO LIGHT in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

The way to evaluate this "work," and every other "ministry," is to compare them

with the Word of God, and judge according to the "fruits." Who is preaching the TRUTH? To whom is God revealing NEW TRUTH? Where is new understanding coming from?

We should never assume, or take any thing for "granted." *We could be wrong!* It never hurts to "prove," and to "check up," even one more time – just to be certain! Some might say, "Well, I proved that many years ago, there is no need for further study!" But in saying such a thing, they prove that they have closed their minds, and are not willing to admit it if they were wrong!

### *Who Am I?*

That is a fair question. According to the Word of God, there is much meaning in a "name." My name from birth is "William Frederick Dankenbring." My father was not a religious man, he was a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. My mother was a "southern pearl" from Kinston, Alabama, a "Richardson." Her maiden name was "Fanny Jewel Richardson." Her forebears came from England. The name "Richardson," or "Richard's Son," very likely indicates that her ancestors trace their lineage back to King Richard the Lion-Hearted, King of England.

My father's side of the family came from Germany. The name "Dankenbring" is a German-construct name – that is, it is not really "German," but "German-sounding." Many people when they hear it wonder if it is "Dutch." An engineer at the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena tells me my ancestors were very likely "Jewish," because Queen Mary Teresa of Austria compelled all the Jews in her empire to exchange their Jewish names for Germanic names.

The name itself means "Danken" – "Thanks"; "bring" – "bringer" or "one who brings." If the name were "Bringendanke" or similar, it would mean "one who brings thanks." But because the name is turned around, it literally means "Thanks for bringing" -- that is to say, it means, by translation, "Bringer of good news or glad tidings," or "messenger of good news" – that is, people will thank me for bringing them the "good news." In ancient times, when a messenger brought bad tidings or evil news, he was often summarily shot, or hanged. Messengers who brought good news, however, were handsomely rewarded! In my case, the name literally means "one who brings good news," causing people to be thankful and rejoicing.

The name "William" means, literally, "Iron-will," "helmet of will," "Resolute." My middle name, "Frederick," in German means "Kingdom of peace" – "freid" means "peace," and "rick" comes from "reich," meaning "Kingdom" – i.e., "peaceful kingdom" or "kingdom of peace." That, of course, is a reference to the Kingdom of God!

Thus, put together, in German, my name spells out: "The resolute, iron-willed bringer of glad tidings or good news of the [coming] kingdom of peace [the kingdom of God]."

I find that very interesting, since I had nothing to do with the choice of either my last name (I was born into it), or my first and middle names! I find it even more interesting, however, since Isaiah the prophet foretold of one who would fit this description! He wrote:

*"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that BRINGETH GOOD TIDINGS, that PUBLISHETH PEACE; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth SALVATION; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isa.52:7).*

We are indeed bringing the world "good tidings" of the coming of Yeshua the Messiah! We are also "publishing peace" – publishing articles and books and *Prophecy Flash* magazine, with the theme being the way to "peace" (God's truth), the "peaceful kingdom" – the Kingdom of God.

Are we fulfilling this prophecy? Has God called me specifically to do this end-time "Work"?

Interestingly, also, is the *Hebrew* meaning of my cognomen. "Dankenbring," in Hebrew, contains the roots "Dan" which means "Judge," "judgment," and "ken" – which is short for "cohen," which means, by definition, "Priest." Therefore, my name identifies me as "the priest who brings judgment," "the priest who judges," "the priest who announces judgment," "the judging priest." This indicates that my lineage goes back to the "cohens," who were of the Levites, the priestly tribe that served at the Temple of God, but not only that, who were also descended from Aaron – the *cohanim*.

God has called me to announce *His* judgment, and to proclaim *His* anger and wrath, and to *warn* the end-time churches that they had better get their house in order, and get their "act" together, and REPENT of their sins NOW, before it is too late?

Think about it!

God says: "For the time is come that *judgment must begin* at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Pet.4:17-18).

But even today, there are people envious of me, and the Work God has given us to do. They viciously attack, accuse me of being a false prophet, and seek to destroy this Work of God. But in God's own timing, they, too, will perish. As Gamaliel the chief Rabban said to the Sanhedrin when they were attacking the apostles and the early church of God: "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men . . . Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nothing; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:35-39, Scofield Reference KJV).

### *The Right Attitude*

Paul shows us the attitude we should have towards our place in God's Work, whatever it is! "Having then gifts differing according to the GRACE that is given to us, whether *prophecy, let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:6-8).

And meanwhile, Paul says, "Let LOVE be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be *kindly* affectioned toward [NOT COMPETING AGAINST]one another with brotherly love; in honour PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER [not exalting oneself and comparing oneself with others!]; not slothful in business [our particular job]; FERVENT in spirit; *serving the Lord*" (Rom. 12:9,11).

How many really have this loving, outgoing, considerate attitude today?

Remember what Paul says in the beginning of this same chapter: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye PRESENT YOUR BODIES A *LIVING SACRIFICE*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (v.1)

What IS a "living sacrifice"? It is one that is DEAD to SELF! It is DEAD to selfish ambitions. It is alive unto *God*, in complete dedication and service. Have you SACRIFICED your own ideas, ambitions, ideas, attitudes, aims – putting *them on the altar* before God? Have you yet really GIVEN UP YOUR LIFE to God, sacrificing your own time and desires, to do what HE wants you to do, WHEN He wants you to do it?

Our duty, then, is to strive to honor and serve and glorify God as best we can with our lives – to be a GOOD servant before Him – to please Him in all we think, say, and do. We are instructed to do our work, "with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, *as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers*, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:5-6).

Remember the words of Paul: "And whatsoever ye do, *do it heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that *of the Lord* ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye SERVE the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24).

Whatever our calling, it is nothing to glory about, or to be proud of. Paul said, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, *woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!* For if I do this thing *willingly*, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (I Cor. 9:16-17).

God says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth *glory*

*in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23-24).*

Do you glory in knowing God? Do you rejoice in understanding God's truth and His plan? Do you marvel in knowing the Creator of the ends of the earth?

God doesn't say He regards, or respects, the mighty and noble man – or the man in a high office. There is no respect of persons or offices with God. A ditch-digger has just as much right to get on his knees and pray to God as does the President of the United States. And a truly humble ditch-digger is a much better man than a proud and haughty President!

And in God's Church, a newly converted babe in Christ can have just as much access to God as a well-known evangelist! – that is, *total access* through Jesus Christ!

But God says, "But to *this* man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa.66:2). God does not have respect to those who are vaunted up in their own self-esteem; nor to the proud, for God is far off to the proud – "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. 4:6). James says, therefore, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up"(v.10).

This is the way to TRUE exaltation, honour, and glory, both now, and at the return of Jesus Christ to reward His saints!

### ***Beware of End-Time Critics, Impostors and Pretenders***

At the same time, I know there are those who are insanely jealous – there are those who accuse me of being "mean spirited" and a host of other vicious adjectives, too crude and coarse to mention here. There are many who love to sternly frown, and sit in seats of judgment, who love to criticize and find fault!

They seem to have forgotten the admonition of the apostle Paul, who wrote "*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom.14:10-13).*

So don't listen to critics and fault-finders! Listen to GOD! Look at the FRUITS! Compare the teachings with God's Word – and THEN decide who is right, where the TRUTH is, and obey IT!

Paul knew what he was talking about. He himself had to stand up against highly

placed individuals of the Church of God, even at headquarters, to *defend* his own ministry. He was called on the carpet, and called to account, because he did not compel Gentiles to be physically circumcised when they repented of their sins (Acts 15:1-30; Gal. 2:3-10). Paul said of some of these "leaders" of the Church, "*But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person)* for they who *seemed* to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me. . ." (Gal. 2:6).

### ***Apostasy Prophesied!***

Satan is not blind. Nor is he helpless. He is just as able to stir up controversy, and strife, within the scattered remnants and branches of the Church of God, today, as he was 1900 years ago! He is just as able to insinuate his servants at or near the highest offices within the Church of God, to strive to lead the Church astray, into error – particularly Pharisaical, self righteous error!

Haven't we seen this very thing occur, over and over again? Look what happened to the "flagship" end-time Church of God – the U.S. "Worldwide Church of God"? Like a mighty battleship, it proclaimed the truth of God to a wicked world, led by Herbert W. Armstrong, a man who had his faults and shortcomings, but a man who strove never to "compromise" with the Word of God. But after his death, look what has happened to the very Church he founded, and gave his life for!

Obviously, the end-time Worldwide Church of God has gone into error – apostasy – just as Scripture foretold would happen (II Thess.2:1-10). It happened in the days of the apostles (Jude, II Peter 2, II Tim.3-4). It has happened again. And again. And again.

Are we sometimes naive, and blind to the truth of this fact? Don't we recognize how Satan often pulls a "flank attack" in order to attack us from a direction we are not facing, or expecting? He is an expert in military strategy and tactics. Therefore, he often tries to mislead us *from within* the Church, through individuals who unwittingly or unknowingly have allowed him to influence their attitudes and minds. He tries to get to *us – each one of us – through our FRIENDS, and people we know!* He is no "fool." He is very clever, and tries to get us "off the track" of truth through erstwhile "friends" and people whom we "trust."

But God says, "Trust NO MAN." He says, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD, his God; who made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; *who keepeth truth forever; who executeth justice for the oppressed; who giveth food to the hungry*" (Psalm. 146:3-7).

David was inspired to write: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9).

Sometimes our worst opposition and persecution comes from *within* certain elements of God's Church, as in the case of Paul!

So take note! If you see these things begin to happen during our age, you should not be overly surprised, or caught off guard – just remember, it has happened before, and it will certainly happen again! Only the faces and names change – but the attitudes remain the same! The machinations of the devil remain constant! Things therefore are never as rosy and serene and unified as they may appear on the surface!

This is why it is necessary for each one of us to DRAW CLOSE TO *GOD*, as never before, and *prove all things* from His holy Word (I Thess.5:21). This is your duty – your God-given obligation.

May God help each and every one of us learn to love and appreciate each other, and the gifts and talents that God has given to each one of us. And let us remember that we truly love one another without dissimulation or hypocrisy – with genuine, heartfelt, fervent love, as Paul exhorted (Rom.12:9), and with "fervent charity" as Peter encouraged (I Pet.4:8), for this kind of love will "cover a multitude of sins" (I Pet.4:8).

And let each one of us *do our part faithfully in the END-TIME WORK OF THE LIVING GOD*, for God has said, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a *remnant* shall be saved; for he will *finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a SHORT WORK will the Lord make upon the earth*" (Rom.9:27-28).

## Chapter 16

# *A Spiritual Odyssey*

Who is William F. Dankenbring? What is the story behind the origin of Triumph Prophetic Ministries? This is my own story of spiritual struggles, trials, and triumphs. It is a spiritual odyssey.

I was born on January 30, 1941, just eleven months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, beginning America's involvement in World War II. My father was in the U.S. Navy, and spent much of the war stationed in Central America.

My spiritual life began in once sense when I was about eight years old. We were living in Norfolk, Virginia. My dad was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy and spent much of the time overseas, fighting in the Korean war, stationed on the battleship *U.S.S. Missouri*, BB-63. I remember spending enjoyable evenings eating dinner in the officer's mess, when the ship was in port, and watching movies afterwards. I remember Bob Hope movies, and one show in particular – “The Thing.” It scared the daylights out of me and I had nightmares for weeks afterwards.

We used to go fishing and crabbing in Chesapeake Bay, and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, where I learned how to swim. One evening, on our way home, we stopped to eat at a popular seafood restaurant, and I ordered fried oysters. That night I had a horrendous stomach ache, like none I had ever had in my life.

With a terrible aching stomach, and tears rolling down my cheeks, I asked my mother what I could do. She gently told me, as I sat there crying, “You should pray to God about it.”

“Pray? What's that?” I asked. “How do you pray?”

She answered, “Just talk to God and ask Him to heal you and make it well.”

So I closed my eyes and fervently prayed to God, asking Him to heal me and make the stomach ache go away. Within a minute or less, my stomach settled down, the intense pain completely disappeared, and I felt just fine! It was a miracle, and I was very thankful!



About a year or two later, in 1950, my mother died of a heart attack, at the age of 30. She had a weak heart, due to stress from scarlet fever when a child. Her funeral, held in Strong, Arkansas, where granddad T.Q. Richardson lived, was the most excruciatingly sorrowful experience of my life up to that time. I remember my brother and I, sitting in the church for the memorial service, just breaking down and bawling the most lamentable, earth-shattering wails you could possibly imagine. I was nine years old, and it felt like I hardly knew my father, since he has been away in the Navy so much of the time. I was greatly affected by the loss and only wondered what life could possibly have in store for us now.

### **Baseball and Sunday School**

My dad was transferred to Seattle, Washington, at that time, so we left the beautiful state of Virginia, and traveled west. It was October, and we drove an old Chevy, I believe. I remember hiding my eyes and crouching on the floor of the back seat, when dad drove through the mountain passes of Wyoming and Idaho. Twice he spun out and went off the road, due to the icy conditions. When it seemed particularly scary, he gave my brother and I a drink from a little flask of brandy he kept in the car. It was to “settle our nerves.”

When I was in eighth grade, dad was once again transferred, this time to Formosa – the island now called Taiwan – just ninety miles off the coast of Red China. He had since remarried, to a fellow lieutenant in the Navy, Hattie Pearl Vestal. When he left for his post, my brother, step-mother, and I moved to Strong, Arkansas, and lived on a farm with her parents. I had become quite a baseball player, having played “pitcher-catcher” for months with a friend across the street in Seattle. He taught me how to throw a fast ball, curve, and knuckleball, and so when we got to Strong, the local boys wanted to see my “stuff.” They were impressed with my curve ball (it broke about 3-5 inches), and ability, and wanted Bob and I to join the local team in the “Piggy League” (for boys 13-15 years of age).

There was only one hitch. To play, we had to attend a local Church! The team was sponsored by the local Baptist church, with Brother Gullede the minister, and he told us we could play if we attended his church or Sunday school, or the local Methodist church. Most of the boys went to the Baptist church, so we chose to do so as well. For weeks, we attended Sunday School, and played baseball.

Once day, after church, I was shocked to see my brother Bob walking up the aisle to the preacher’s pulpit while they were playing the hymn, “Softly and Tenderly.” I felt “left out,” and asked the boys in the balcony where we were sitting what in the world he was doing. They whispered, “He’s joining the church.” I was startled. I thought to myself, “So that’s how you join up. I might as well join up myself!” So I proceeded to walk down the aisle as well.

I was really shocked when I got to where Brother Gullede was. He asked me to bow m y head, and then asked if I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour,

repented of my sins, and so on and so forth. I stammered, “Yes,” not knowing what else I could do, and so he prayed for me and scheduled our Baptism by immersion a week or two hence. We were both duly baptized, and almost immediately our dad sent word for us to join him in Formosa. It was about June, 1954.

### **Taiwan and True Conversion**

Our step-mother didn't want to go, so Bob and I met another family in Little Rock, Arkansas, who were joining their father in Formosa. They agreed that we could go with them, so we packed up, road the Trailways bus to San Francisco, and met them there. We sailed on the U.S.S. General Daniel L.Sultan to the orient, leaving San Francisco bay amid bands playing and farewells. We sailed for Taipei, Taiwan, disembarked at the harbor of Keelung, and flew down to Kaoshiung, at the southern part of the island, where our day was stationed at the Naval base at Tsoying, seven miles away.

It irked me, meanwhile, that I had supposedly become a “Christian,” and I felt that I didn't even know what a “Christian” was! The most important thing on my agenda, in Taiwan, was to try to find out what it meant to be a “Christian.” Maybe I didn't want anything to do with it!

I discovered an elderly missionary lady was holding regular Sunday school for those young people who were interested. I was 14 years old, and began attending. She gave me a copy of the New Testament, when I asked, and I began reading it to see what being a Christian meant.

Those were interesting days. We attended a two-room school for dependants of military personnel, my dad organized a Boy Scout troop (and I became Senior Patrol Leader of the two patrol troop, numbering about 10-12 boys), and we hiked, swam at the beach, went on overnight camping trips, flew to a special joint Jamboree camp in Taipei, the capital, one the second year we sailed courtesy of the U.S. Navy on a cruiser to Okinawa for a week long summer camp. On another occasion, the older boys 14-15, who were considered “Explorer Scouts,” flew to Tachikawa Air Force Base in Japan, for a week's special training, classes, and recreation.

Meanwhile, I had begun reading the New Testament. At first I read 5 chapters every Sunday, but then decided that if I really meant business, then I should read at least one chapter every day, plus 5 on Sunday. Before you knew it, I was reading 5 chapters daily, and read through the New Testament four or five times.

During this time we met some missionary children, and we learned that Billy Graham the famed evangelist had made a film about what it meant to be a Christian, and the need for salvation. They invited us to join them to see the film. It was a very moving film all about his crusade, inviting people to accept Christ, and to become Christians. This motivated me even more to continue my studying the Bible.

About that time, as I was reading the New Testament, and studying a small booklet someone had given to me, I discovered that becoming a Christian was a process. First, you had to believe the Bible is the Word of God, and accept Jesus Christ as your personal Redeemer and Saviour. You had to repent of sin, being a sinner, and failing to live up to God's standards of righteousness set forth in the Bible. You also had to "follow Christ" – which meant you dedicated your life to Christ, and served Him. As an outward symbol of this inner change, you had to be baptized (immersed) in water, and receive the Holy Spirit. All this was new and revelatory to me, and as I studied, I saw intensely my need for Christ to save me. I saw myself for the first time as a lost sheep who had gone astray, as one who had transgressed God's laws – for the Bible said, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom.3:10). I wept and cried – like I had never done since my mother died. That night I accepted Christ as my Saviour and completely dedicated my life to Him. I knew, at that moment, that God had called me and revealed Himself to me. I studied the verses where Christ called His disciples and said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt.4:19).

I believed I was called to "follow Christ" and He would make me a "fisher of men" – He would use me somehow, in my life, to serve Him and be a witness to Him – but I had no idea how this would work out or for what specific purpose He had called me! I accepted Christ and began to follow Him, believing He would reveal the rest in due time. I only knew that I now belonged to Him and my life was dedicated and devoted to Him.

Shortly after that, a Taiwanese military man, in the air force, came to give us all a four week Bible study on the book of Daniel. Intrigued, I went and learned about Bible prophecy. At the end of the period, he asked if anybody desired to be baptized, as a sign of their acceptance of Christ as Saviour.

I decided that I had to be baptized all over again, for it was obvious to me that my first baptism was invalid – I really didn't even know what I was doing. It was sort of like being coerced into it. So I was baptized again, in the spring of 1956.

### **Another Life-Saving Answered Prayer**

Not long after this time, our Boy Scout Troop went for a day of swimming at Tsoying Beach, about twelve of us. When we hit the beach we raced into the water, last one in is a – whatever. But there was a strong undertow that day, and many boys began to have trouble getting back to the beach. As one of the stronger swimmers, I helped one or two, and then we counted heads. Two were missing – one was my brother Bob! We looked out at the ocean, and there, about a hundred yards out we saw two tiny black specks, bobbing up and down in the water. They were being carried out to sea!

The predicate was indicative of a terrible disaster in the making. Immediately, I walked a little bit off to myself, bowed my head, and prayed fervently – like I prayed when I had that stomach ache many years before. I begged God to save my brother, and Richard, the boy he had been attempting to save. I didn't know what else could be done,

I couldn't think of anything, but I prayed and prayed as if my life – my brother's life – depended on it.

Somebody yelled, "Look up the beach!" I did, and there I saw a group of Chinese soldiers – frogmen – launching a rubber pontoon raft into the surf. They quickly stroked the oars of the pontoon raft and headed out to sea, in the direction of the two little pinpricks bobbing up and down in the sea. It seemed like only a few minutes later, and they arrived back at the shore, where we were standing waiting, thrilled beyond measure, exultant and thankful. My brother and Richard were all right. Bob said later that Richard had panicked and tried to pull him down a few times, but they managed to stay afloat till the raft arrived. (Bob and I had taken the 'Life Saving' merit badge in Scouts, and no doubt he put it to good use on that occasion.)

I saw that rescue as nothing less than a miracle from Almighty God – a direct answer to earnest, heart-rending prayer!

### Stateside

A few months later, in June, we returned to the United States on board the *U.S.S. Anderson*, another troop ship. Before departing Kaohsiung, the missionary lady gave me a present – a whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments. As we journeyed across the sea, I spent hours and hours reading from Genesis through the Bible – about a book a day – for two weeks. It was very mysterious – the parts about the genealogies, the sacrifices, the Temple, and the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt. But I found it to be fascinating.

When we reach America, we docked in San Francisco, and once again moved to Seattle, Washington. My dad retired from the Navy and became a real estate developer and builder of homes. In my newfound Christian faith and zeal, I tuned into every Christian religious program on the radio – "Back to the Bible," "Radio Bible Class," "The Lutheran Hour," "Billy Graham," and a host of others. One of them was called "The World Tomorrow" program, with Herbert W. Armstrong. I was intrigued, and wrote off for literature. I was still in high school.

As I read the literature from various ministries, and that which I received from the World Tomorrow program, I gradually became upset, and concerned. It became obvious that they were not all preaching the same gospel message. I prayed fervently that God would protect me from error and from false prophets, and wolves in sheep's clothing. And I kept on studying.

The summer of 1957, my brother and I received the rank of Eagle Scout, at the same court of honor, with about five other scouts – the event was so unusual that we made the 6:00 pm evening news on King Television! That same summer on a two week camping and hiking trip to the Olympic Mountains, I searched my heart and soul, begging God to show me the way – His way – His truth. On that trip, another scout noticed that I was "spiritual," and prayed, and asked me about my faith. It turned out he

was Catholic, very well educated, and believed in the theory of evolution. We had quite a discussion about it, neither one convincing the other.

As I continued searching for the truth, listening to various ministers, and praying, I heard one minister on radio claim that wine in the Bible meant grape juice. He quoted something from Plato to that effect. Yet I heard Herbert Armstrong say on the radio that wine in the Bible was real wine – not grape juice – and their magazine had an article proving it. I also heard him say that the magazine had an article on the “secret rapture” doctrine as well. I had just received a booklet from Dr. DeHaan on the rapture, so I thought to myself, “Aha! Now I’ve got him! I’ll *prove* Herbert Armstrong is a false prophet!” On his broadcast he kept challenging people, “Don’t believe me, don’t believe any other man – check up, and dust off your Bible, and see what the *Bible* says!” So I intended to do exactly that. I felt I really had him dead to rights!

When the literature came, I was astonished. He turned out to be right – the Bible clearly showed that “wine” was real wine – not grape juice! And, the rapture I discovered could not be “secret” – for it came with the blowing of a great trumpet blast, and the loud voice of an archangel, and the Scriptures said that “every eye will SEE Him!” – that His coming would be in the clouds of heaven, with great glory!

The more I continued studying, the more I proved that Herbert Armstrong was right – and right again – and again and again – on many things. I could not fault anything that he taught. Of course, I was only a teenager, but still I could see that his teachings matched up with the Bible in many, many ways, and were far more Biblical than any other church. They actually taught and believed we should follow the Bible, and not man! So I made an appointment to have a minister visit me. In the meantime, I wrote for every available piece of literature, old issues of the magazine “Plain Truth” and “Good News,” and every booklet and pamphlet that was printed. I studied, and re-studied, and checked out *every single verse quoted or referred to!*

In the spring of 1957, I believe, I was visited by the local minister, Mr. Jimmy Friddle, and discovered the nearest church was about 35 miles away, in Tacoma, but there was a Wednesday night Bible study in Seattle, downtown. I began attending. I joined the local “Spokesman’s Club,” and the Tacoma church, and even traveled on my own to Big Sandy, Texas, to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in 1958. I studied the church literature and the Bible intensively, preparing to attend the church’s college in Pasadena, California – Ambassador College.

Perhaps indicative of the direction my life would take, I wrote a 120 page term paper as a high school junior on the Spanish American War. My first year at Ambassador, in World History class, under Dr. Herman L. Hoeh, when students were asked to identify themselves, he wrote my name on the black board, smiled and said, “That’s a good name for a writer.” It almost seemed like a prophecy, for later I would write over one hundred articles for the church magazines, including booklets on quitting smoking, world famine, one on “Hippies, Hypocrisy and Happiness,” and a number of Bible Correspondence Course lessons!

## College Years

From 1959 to 1963, I attended Ambassador College. I was warned by Mr. Friddle not to expect the “kingdom of God” at the college – the students were not all “converted” and things would not be “perfect.” This warning was a great help to me, for indeed, things were far from perfect at the college. I noted first that many of the classes were not very professional. Still, I thought, it was “God’s college,” so who was I to complain? Weren’t they doing the best they could? And where else was the “truth” of God being taught so fully and completely?

After four years, I graduated with a bachelor of arts degree. I began working in the Letter Answering Department, and began writing articles for the church’s magazines. In the ensuing years, I became an Associate Editor of *The Good News*, *The Plain Truth*, *Tomorrow’s World* magazines and *The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*. My life’s work seemed to be on a steady trajectory. I spent my time working in the ministry, writing letters, writing articles for the church, and visiting members, and spent six months in the San Francisco area, giving sermonettes, leading songs, and Bible Studies in the Bay Area churches. I thought I had a great future laid out by God, and in faith served Him.

### *The Dark Side of Paradise*

However, as the years passed, I began to see the seamy side of life in the Church of God. Ministers did not always live up to the standards expected. There was serious mismanagement in various departments in the church operation. Human nature, which supposedly was being suppressed, seemed to be in strong form (Jer.17:9). The worst problem I saw was simply lack of true Biblical conversion, humility and love for one’s brother. What good is “truth” when you don’t have love? What good is knowledge when it goes to one’s head?

As I observed the scene, and worked at “headquarters,” I began to see flaws of all kinds. Primarily, it seemed that most of them originated from two false concepts. First, it was commonly believed and taught that this was the *only true church* – all others were deceived and were therefore teaching error (Rev.12:9). This teaching caused much frustration because there were so many shortcomings in this church, too. All men are fallible. Although this church had much knowledge, did that automatically make other churches “satanic”? Of course not! But it was difficult to see this truth and grasp hold of it in the mind-set which was steadily taught? Many began to feel superior and more righteous than others – but like the Pharisees of the New Testament, it seemed to me that they were guilty of “tithing mint and cumin and neglecting the weightier matters of the law” (Matt.23:23).

### *Where the Church Stumbled*

The worst aspect of the church, it seemed to be at that time, was an over-emphasis on “church authority.” Of course, authority is needed in any church, and of course God gave His ministers authority to run the church and teach the gospel (Eph.4:11-14; I

Cor.12:18). But did this give them *carte blanche* to run over people or mistreat them? It became apparent that being a “minister” often went to a person’s head, and many ruled their congregations with an “iron hand,” and even advised members what kind of truck and what color of truck to buy! It was commonly joked among students, that if a minister said “jump,” you were to immediately jump, and ask “How high, sir?” on the way up!

Judgment was everywhere. Older students “judged” younger students and wrote up “visiting cards” on them, as training for the ministry. Teams of ministers visited the homes of brethren, to counsel and encourage them, but this practice degenerated into a sort of “Gestapo” program of “checking up on people,” and attempting to search out their personal problems. Authority was very heavy handed, or so it seemed to me.

This concept of ministerial authority stemmed from Jesus’ words to His disciples, giving them authority to “bind and to loose” (Matt.18:18). But it seemed obvious that this was taken to an extreme. Ministers were taught to “rule,” but they were not taught to be gentle, circumspect, or loving. Young men going out into the ministry, only in their early twenties, were taught, “Let no man despise your youth” (I Tim.4:12), but forgot to be humble and respectful of older people and those who were more experienced in life. The main problem, however, is that they forgot or ignored the fact that *all judgment had to be in accord with the plain Word of God and no man had the right to impose his own opinions on others in the guise of “church authority.”* Beyond the plain words of the teachings of the Scriptures, there was *no authority* to impose one’s own will over that of other people! All too often, this fact was ignored, with tragic consequences.

Truly, I found, the church of God was *not* the kingdom of God on earth! There were far too many problems, even in this supposedly “enlightened” and knowledgeable church! What began as a journey into the truth of God became in many respects a nightmare. Truth gave place to authority. Love gave place to authoritarianism and totalitarianism. If you didn’t like it, you were told to “get out.”

What made this all the more unbearable and harmful was the implicit assumption that this was “the only true church.” This meant that any one who left it was believed to be headed straight for the gates of hell. This idea was a strong unifying influence in maintaining church discipline and order – but it came at a price – the price of liberty, freedom, and equality. Lurking beneath the calm exterior was a monster of frightful countenance – a form of spiritual slavery and dependency was fostered. So long as only truth was being taught, perhaps this could be dealt with, but alas – over time I discovered that Ambassador College and the Worldwide Church of God not only had its own set of problems, it also had its own doctrinal errors!

In 1967, Mrs. Loma D. Armstrong died of an impacted bowel, which she refused to allow surgery on, trusting in God to heal her. Why had she refused to be operated on? Mr. Armstrong blamed her condition on spiritual problems in the church, and called for a church-wide fast. But she died anyway. He seemingly could not admit that it was his

own teaching against medical doctors and surgery that caused her death!

This brought up the first serious area where I discovered errors in the church's teaching. Sure, they saw the errors of other churches, and the paganism which had crept into them. Sure, they were right that the Sabbath day was enjoined by God to be observed by His people, not Sunday. Sure, the annual holy days were part of God's Law, and to be honored and observed. So far, so good!

But what about doctors and healing? The church taught that God is our Healer – which is right and good (Exo.15:26). But does this fact negate all doctors, medicines, and drugs? In the writings of Herbert Armstrong, it did. He wrote that doctors and drugs were of the devil – that all medical treatment was “idolatry” – looking to human treatments for healing instead of looking to God!

The teaching had an “appearance” of truthfulness to it – it seemed logical, the way he presented it. But oh how much misfortune, misery, and death came in its wake! Older people went blind because they were counseled not to have an operation to remove cataracts from their eyes. Children died because of a lack of medical attention. Law suits were filed against the church, so the church became more cunning in how it dealt with such problems. Ministers were told to *never* tell people what they should do in any case – but only to say it was a matter of faith and up to the individual. However, the clear implication was that if you went to doctors, you showed a lack of true faith in God. No one seemed to stop and think that it was the teaching itself that was in error – that there is no violation of Christian faith to see a medical doctor for treatment of a disease or for surgery when needed. (Write for our booklet, “Does God Heal Today?” for a clear explanation of the relationship between God and human medicine.)

I began to see not everything was copasetic in the Church. Questions were arising on church teachings and doctrines on healing, tithing, divorce and remarriage, and other issues. As I worked in the Bible Correspondence Department, somehow I got a hold of an article in *True Magazine*, a man's magazine with adventurous articles, and sometimes exposes of wrong-doing. That particular issue had an expose on the Worldwide Church of God and its “dark ages” healing doctrine. According to the article, former ministers had accused the church of causing the deaths of some members by denying them medical help, and teaching that drugs and medicines were all “poisons” and of the devil. I was chagrined. As I scanned the article, it hit me in the solar plexus like a rabbit punch. It knocked the wind out of me. How thankful I was that I was not teaching such things, but I questioned the wisdom of the church leaders for ever having allowed such a thing to happen. The hypocrisy was great. Some ministers had eye surgery for a detached retina, but denied any medical surgery for members claiming to resort to such was “lack of faith.”

Then the divorce and remarriage issue hit the fan. About 1972, traveling in Texas on one of the college's airplanes, the pilot gave me a book by Guy Duty on Divorce. I



read it in the following weeks, and saw that the Bible nowhere forbids divorce if a mate is guilty of adultery or desertion. Yet the church at that time was in the business of breaking up families and forcing people to leave their mates, if either one had been married before – no matter what the circumstances were. (The only “out” was supposed to be if the previous marriage had been “fraudulent” and therefore not really bound in the first place.)

Because of the hue and cry, in 1974 Herbert Armstrong rewrote the Divorce and Remarriage booklet. When the ministers raised a huge cry, it was quietly abandoned and Herman Hoeh was appointed to revise the church’s doctrine. After some study, he wrote that God has no involvement in marriages in the “world.” He only “binds” marriages performed by ministers in the “true church.” This effectively abolished the church’s teaching on the subject and permitted people to be married as often as they wished, before becoming part of the church. But once baptized,, they had to remain faithful and never remarry, no matter what happened!

Needless to say, the new doctrine did not work. Marriages performed in the church were just as unhealthy as those in the world. Couples divorced and remarried and the ministry quietly looked the other way. Herbert Armstrong himself married a divorcee much younger than he himself (and that marriage ended in a nasty public divorce costing the church hundreds of thousand of dollars). To his dying day, Herbert Armstrong never revised his basic misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Greek word *porneia* which was the key which prohibited remarriage. He refused to accept that it meant “sexual immorality” and “adultery” and insisted to the end that it only referred to “premarital sex” or “sexual fraud” committed prior to marriage and not disclosed to the other partner! For a true understanding of the divorce and remarriage issue, and what the Bible really says, write for our free booklet “Marriage and Divorce – A New Look.”

### **Where the Church Went Wrong?**

The problems with church government, the healing doctrine, and the divorce and remarriage doctrine, were merely the tip of the iceberg. The main problems in the church, I came to see, was nothing less than hypocrisy. The church had the identical problem as the Pharisees did in the time of Christ. The leadership were “control freaks.” They could not and would not acknowledge that God was working through anybody else but themselves. All other churches were painted as apostate and under the control of Satan. Some of the ministers in the church even said from the pulpit, “God does not answer the prayers of anybody in any other church,” and that people in other churches were really praying to “Satan, the god of this world.”

I never subscribed to that belief, and thankfully to my knowledge it was not stated very often. Nevertheless, Herbert Armstrong never bothered to correct it, either. Indeed, the Worldwide Church of God was just like the ancient Pharisees of Jesus’ time. They too were “control freaks.” Jesus said of them, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in you stop them. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make one convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves” (Matt.23:13-15).

The Pharisees were the acknowledged leaders of the Jews during the time of Christ. They “sat in Moses’ seat,” as Jesus Himself attested (Matt.23:2). He told His followers, “Do whatever they teach you and follow it; *but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach*” (Matt.23:3).

Jesus went on to say of them, “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen of others” (verse 4-5).

Jesus went on to call the Pharisees religious “hypocrites,” six times (Matt.23:13, 14, 23, 25, 27, 29). He called them “blind guides,” twice (v.16, 24), saying, “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!” He called them “blind fools!” (v.17), and finally declared of them, “You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?” (Matt.23:33, NRSV).

Yes, what goes around comes around. Solomon wrote in his day, “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl.1:9). Solomon declared: “I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted” (Eccl.1:14-15).

These words perfectly described the deplorable condition to which the Worldwide Church of God had sunk in the 1970s, and from that point on it only got worse.

Not knowing what else to do under the circumstances, I began preparing for the future, by simply going about doing my own job, quietly, praying and seeking to please God in everything I did, and not worrying about what men in high office thought. In other words – I “endured.” I did the best I could, writing articles and serving as I was able, but waited for God to direct my steps and show me what He wanted me to do under the circumstances.

### *Marriage*

In 1967, the same year Loma D. Armstrong died, God blessed me greatly and I married the former Capitola Callihan, a young lady who had attended Loma Linda University, and had become a registered nurse. As God’s Word says, “A prudent wife is of the LORD” (Prov.14). This was a true moment of happiness and joy. God provided me with just the right wife to assist me in the ministry to which He was still calling me and training me.

This was the greatest single blessing of my life, up to that time, and I believe surely and firmly that God Himself chose and selected and prepared my life's mate. Herbert Amrstrong had said, even from the pulpit, "There is no one so beautiful as our own Cappy Callihan!" I did not know he ever said that at the time, but I had started dating her, once a year, after I graduated from Ambassador in 1963. I always thought she would marry someone older than I (she is four years older than I), but somehow it never happened. Then one day, it is as if the blinders just fell off my own eyes. And suddenly, I "knew" this seemed to be the "one." She was beautiful, competent, intelligent, had a vivacious personality, and all in all far above and beyond my human expectations. God truly brought us together by working out many miracles! Praise be to His Name forever!

When one of the division head's wives heard the news, she exclaimed, "Cappy is marrying Bill Dankenbring! *Feature that!*"

We honey-mooned by driving up the California coast to a beautiful resort town on the coast called Carmel. During the next six years we were blessed with three children, Nathan, Natalie, and Nancy. Overall, my job situation seemed secure, with a bright future. But trials loomed ahead of us.

During these years, I worked in the Letter Answering Department, then was transferred to the Bible Correspondence Course department. The Correspondence Course was terminated after a couple of years, so I found myself working for the *Plain Truth* editorial staff. After a short while, I was transferred to the *Good News* staff under David Jon Hill, evangelist, and wrote for *Tomorrow's World* magazine. This magazine was discontinued after a short stint, and I found myself working for the *Plain Truth* again, this time under the new management of evangelist Herman L. Hoeh, where I was his "managing editor" for the staff. You will see how "unstable" the whole situation really was – it was as if an earthquake struck every year as I worked for five different departments of editorial in the space of five years!

There were many ups and down in the Editorial Department, and a great deal of politics and spiritual in-fighting, as Herbert Armstrong and Ted Armstrong kept rearranging the management and changing direction. At the time, it seemed my star was rising, and I was able to travel more broadly in writing articles. I visited Washington, D.C., to do interviews, went to see the Apollo 15 moon-shot at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and visited the Bahamas, and things seemed bright and hopeful for the future. But trouble was brewing, and a hurricane was forming just over the horizon which would soon strike with a vengeance and a fury.

### **Church Tragedy**

In 1972, everything began to unravel. A monstrous tidal wave struck the church. What had seemed to be the "best church on earth" and "God's true Church" suddenly began to sprout "horns."

At first nobody was the wiser, except the highest ranking ministers. But gradually the word got out that there has been ongoing misconduct and immorality by the son of Herbert Armstrong, the church's leading spokesman, Garner Ted Armstrong. He had been committing adultery with numerous young woman at the college, swearing them to secrecy lest they and their families be cast out of the church. Many young women were involved. Rather than coming clean, Herbert Armstrong hid the truth from the congregations, and simply said his son had had a "spiritual breakdown" due to too heavy a work load. But that explanation itself was a load of manure. The truth was that his son had been having many illicit affairs, one with the stewardess of the Falcon jet, owned by the church.

As the revelations became better known, Herbert announced to the entire church that this was a private matter, and that he was dealing with it, and that if any members tried to investigate further to discover the truth, they would be summarily punished by banishment from the Church – "disfellowshipped" – the worst words one could expect to ever hear! At the time, of course, everybody thought that this was God's own "true" church, and to be cast out of it would mean you would forfeit salvation itself.

As these events transpired, the blinders completely came off my eyes. I became hot with righteous indignation. I became furious – livid with anger. I prayed fervently about the matter. But I asked myself, what could I do about those things? I was angry beyond mention. But I was helpless to change anything.

The hypocrisy, the horrible chicanery, the sheer effrontery, the gall, the utter chutzpah of it all! It was overwhelming. I almost left the church in 1974, when all the allegations hit the fan and I learned that Ted Armstrong had not merely been guilty of one or two cases of adultery – but it had been a regular, on-going PATTERN of behavior, involving *literally hundreds of women*, including Ambassador college coeds who later married "ministers" in the church!

Why didn't I leave? Some did, and started up a new association of churches. But as I beheld their efforts, I did not see the hand of God in it. They had their own spiritual problems. I did not want to throw the baby – the truth – out with the bathwater, so to speak.

The Church's decision to orchestrate a massive cover-up of Ted Armstrong's heinous sins and adulteries caused God to turn His back on the Church, and now "politics" replaced spirituality in high offices in the Church. During this time of upheaval and turmoil, many long-time, faithful employees were terminated from their job in the Editorial Department, Radio and Television studios, and many ministers left the Church in anger, bewilderment, and consternation. It was "the night of the long knives."

### **Ambushed**

At that time, suspecting nothing, I was on a trip to Mexico and Yucatan, researching an article on "Who Really Discovered America?" My young family was

with me. Upon returning after two weeks, including a short vacation stop at Acapulco and Mazatlan, we arrived in Pasadena, refreshed and ready to plunge into work.

But disaster struck! I was told that the Plain Truth staff had been once again reorganized in my absence. Herman L. Hoeh had been fired by Garner Ted Armstrong. Art Ferdig was once again placed in charge of editorial, and given carte blanche authority. *I had been terminated – given my walking papers!*

Even though I had been the most prolific writer and editor at the time, I was let go because the new editor believed he could do the job without any help from me. Brian Knowles, one of the editors at that time, told me, “You are one of the walking wounded.” He had nothing else to say. I had been blind-sided. It cut to the quick. What would I do? How would I serve God, now?

While I was visiting Mexico, Garner Ted Armstrong had decided to rearrangement of the deck chairs on the Titanic. That is, he decided to change the Plain Truth magazine to a cheap newspaper rag. In the change of management, the new managing editor cut me loose. At first, I was stunned. But believe it or not, I viewed it as a blessing from God – God’s will in action – and His deliverance.

I was thankful to God – grateful – that I would no longer be working for such a mercurial, transparent, egotistical, and empirical organization which was more concerned about finances and reputation than it was about the “plain truth” or plain old-fashioned “morality” and living by “every word of God.” More and more, it seemed as if the leaders were merely “playing church” and acting *as if* this was the true church of God when they were privately seeking their own selfish agenda! It was horrendous, and it felt liberating and FREE to be out of all the turmoil, politics, and wickedness and hypocrisy!

As I look back on those years, it is obvious to me that the Spirit of God had left the church when the Church stopped following God’s truth and began covering up immorality. It slipped out the back door, quietly, while Satan the devil came in the front door. Therefore, in view of what was happening all around me, I was thankful to be let go. It was a test of faith – but my faith was in God, not in man. All my life, since conversion, I have look to God and not to man. I did not intend to stop trusting God at this juncture of my life.

I knew that if I intended to continue serving God, now I would have to serve God independent of ANY church organization anywhere. Since I had given my life to Christ, to sue as He saw fit, I vowed to keep on writing, and publishing, and using my talents to serve God directly – and began writing books. I remained a member of the Church, but no longer felt bound by them or their dictates. They no longer had any authority over what I researched or write. So I struck out on my own, publishing and writing books. I launched “Triumph Publishing,” in 1974, with nothing but faith and a “shoestring” – my severance pay, which came to about \$6,000, and a loan from a local bank. Some 13 years later this enterprise became “Triumph Prophetic Ministries.”

### A New Beginning

God was definitely in charge of my life and was working out His purposes. It was like a ‘body blow,’ being terminated, but I had faith in God that He would work everything out for the best (Rom.8:28-29).

Considering the sad and deplorable condition of the Church at that time, and the enormity of the sins which were being covered up, and the division then wracking the Church, I was grateful to be “on my own,” able to simply trust in God. So determined not to be deterred, and in a spirit of deep devotion and service to God and His people, I launched Triumph Publishing Company, and began to write and publish books, still proclaiming the truth of God, as God gave me to understand it. I wrote nine books on *The Keys to Radiant Health*; *The First Genesis: A new Case for Creation*; *The Last Days*; *Beyond Star Wars*; *The Creation Book for Children*; *Overcoming Satan*; *Last Days of Planet Earth*; *Escape from Armageddon*; and *Satan’s Fate*. The *Keys to Radiant Health* and *Beyond Star Wars* were reprinted by other publishers in mass marketpaperback editions.

I also published books by others, including *Millennial Agriculture* by Paul Syltie; *Health Secrets from the Bible*, and *Supernatural Phenomena*, by Ron Wlodyga; *Ascent To Greatness*, by Raymond F. McNair; and *Faith and Doctrines of the Early Church*, by Mark Bower. In this way, I was able to continue proclaiming the true gospel, Bible prophecy, and true doctrine, as best I could under the circumstances. Over the next few years, I wrote and published over fourteen books, including my own.

However, this activity on my part did not go unnoticed by ministers in the hierarchy of the Church, and some vehemently disapproved. This seemed to set me on a “collision course” with the Church administration. Many were jealous; some sought to have my head nailed to the wall; but no one dared frontally attack my books and publishing activities so long as Herbert W. Armstrong was still alive. No one knew for sure what he would do.

Nevertheless, as my publishing work grew and prospered, some Church officials became envious and felt threatened. In their arrogance, they pointed out to members that I was not an “ordained minister” and that my books did not have the “seal of approval” of “headquarters.” They failed to tell people that “headquarters” did not engage in evaluating books, at all, and that they did not “disapprove” of them either. Headquarters simply remained “silent” – that is, until 1982. In other words, you might say my books were “damned with faint praise.”

Persecution came to a head in 1982, when I was suddenly blindsided by a vicious, scathing article written in *The Pastor General’s Report*. It seemed to bear the stamp of legitimacy. This publication came out in April, 1982, and was reported on in *Ambassador Report*, issue #39, September 1987. I will quote the entire article which discusses the trials and tribulations of Triumph Publishing and myself, due to jealousy and hypocrisy in the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God. Remember, this was

21 years ago! Here's the article:

### **Dankenbring's Triumph Publishing**

William Dankenbring is a name many former WCG members will recognize. After graduating from Ambassador College in 1963, Dankenbring wrote for the *Plain Truth* for 11 years. He wrote on an amazing variety of subjects, and one former *Plain Truth* editor has called Dankenbring "one of the best writers the church ever produced." In 1974, however, the *Plain Truth* went through an editorial department reorganization and Dankenbring found himself no longer working for the WCG.

In the years that followed, Dankenbring, a hard-working family man who was once an Eagle Scout, went on to careers in insurance and real estate, and in recent years has been a high school registrar. His first love, however, has remained the Bible. Cut off from writing opportunities with the *Plain Truth*, Dankenbring, nevertheless, remained loyal to Herbert Armstrong and the WCG's theology. But he still desired to use his writing and business skills in a way that would advance what he saw as "God's truth." That desire led to his founding Triumph Publishing, an independent publishing company devoted to disseminating -- on a commercial basis -- many of the same teachings the WCG was promulgating.

Right from its start, Triumph did not thrill the WCG. Dankenbring was not criticizing the WCG's leaders and he was in harmony with all its teachings. In fact, he remained a loyal, tithe-paying member. But Triumph still made many in the WCG uneasy. "Who gave you the authority to do this?" was a question frequently put to Dankenbring by members who could not fathom 'truth' coming from any source other than HWA or his hirelings. The ministry, too, on a number of occasions, challenged him on certain wordings that appeared in his articles and on whether it was appropriate for him to market his books during the WCG's Feast of Tabernacles. Behind his back, however, the official WCG position toward Dankenbring was vehement. In an article either written or approved by Tkach, the April 23, 1982 *Pastor General's Report* (a publication sent to WCG ministers) contained this attack on Dankenbring:

"Question: Several ministers have asked about Mr. William Dankenbring's advertisement for his books which have been distributed to members through mailings, at Feast sites, etc. Are the books endorsed by the Church? Does the Church approve of them or recommend them? Is Mr. Dankenbring still a member of the Church?"

"Answer: Mr. Dankenbring is classified as a member of God's Church. But that does not imply that his privately-sold writings have the approval or endorsement of the Church. Human nature seems to want to use God, or God's Church, for personal gain or profit. The moneychangers used God's temple as a place of business to sell at a profit to God's people. In blazing anger, Jesus drove them out. Jesus said, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise' (John 2:16). We, the members, are God's house, builded into a HOLY TEMPLE (Eph. 2:20-21).

"In II Peter 2:3 God warns, 'And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.' Yes, SELLING FOR PROFIT their words in writing to the members of God's Church.

"Perhaps the selling of doves and things for sacrifice was not in itself wrong, but exploiting God's HOUSE as a place or means of selling to God's people was.

“The membership of God’s Church has been exploited for private gain a number of times by those no longer members.

“God has commissioned HIS CHURCH -- not private members on their own -- to feed the flock. The Church publishes much literature -- magazines, booklets, books, reprint articles besides the personal ministry, to feed the flock -- AND WE DO NOT CHARGE A PRICE OR MAKE MERCHANDISE OF OUR MEMBERS IN SO FREELY GIVING GOD’S TRUTH! [Editor: Recall that books by HWA, Raymond McNair, and Stan Rader have had price tags.]

“Although Mr. Dankenbring is a graduate of Ambassador College and has studied under Mr. Armstrong and our ministers, he has stated in writing, “I appreciate him (Mr. Armstrong) very much, although I have disagreed with him from time to time on some relatively ‘small’ or ‘little’ things.” But what the writer might consider ‘small’ or ‘little’ disagreements might in God’s eyes be vitally important disagreements.

“God’s Church therefore does not endorse nor give approval to Mr. Dankenbring’s books, nor those of others than the Church’s own publications or those definitely approved.”

Still, Dankenbring was not disfellowshipped. Triumph continued to grow, and by 1986 more WCG members than ever were familiar with Triumph’s books and articles.

Official WCG tolerance for Dankenbring, however, ran out some months ago when, instead of simply putting out materials that echoed official church dogma, Dankenbring published an article that put forward a new view of the 2300 days prophecy of Daniel.

The article was distributed to a few members and a handful of ministers, most of whom seemed to view it favorably. He was then to learn, however, that in the WCG “new truth” can still only come from one source -- the man at the top.

After 30 years of dedicated service to the WCG, Dankenbring was summarily disfellowshipped in January. None of his old friends in the ministry cared enough to even want to discuss “his problem” with him. Phone calls requesting counseling on the matter got him nowhere.

The WCG again showed itself to be a very cold and cruel church. But in dumping Dankenbring it may have also (once again) shot itself in the foot. Dankenbring, like many others, is now convinced that the WCG is the Laodicean church of Revelation and he has put out a number of new articles challenging the WCG on some important doctrines. Our mail indicates that despite official WCG warnings against doing so, many Worldwidens are reading and passing around his publications. Those interested in Dankenbring’s books, articles, and Prophecy Flash newsletter should write for his price list. The address is Triumph Publishing, P.O. Box 292, Altadena, CA 91003.

### **From Rags to Spiritual Riches**

Needless to say, the article in the *Pastor General’s Report* was a savage, unholy, vindictive personal attack on me, written in clever words to insinuate I was guilty of “fleecing the flock” and “making merchandise of the brethren.” The “powers that be” refused to entertain the idea that I was doing a “service,” by publishing books no one else would publish, books of great value and intrinsic spiritual worth. Instead, it was insinuated that I was “in it for the money.”



How was I doing this? By writing and selling BOOKS! Most of the books I published were written by Church members! One was even written by a top evangelist in the Church, Raymond F. McNair! But even so, I was condemned with innuendo and insults. The article was written behind my back. I was given no advance warning and no fair hearing or opportunity to defend myself.

The nasty diatribe appeared in the *Pastor General's Report* of the Church in spring of 1982, four years before the death of Herbert Armstrong. It carried no byline. When I first heard about it, I was very upset and angered, and telephoned Joseph Tkach, the one who was over the ministry and publisher of the PGR at that time. I requested an audience, a hearing, and he said he would take care of it, professed sympathy, but he took no action – he did nothing. A year or so later, when rummaging through the files of the Ambassador College Library, I came across an official book listing the authors and titles of every article published by the Church. Curious, I look up my own name, and found probably about one hundred or more articles listed which I had by-lined and written.

Then I noticed something else – following those listings was another listing of articles written *about me*. There was only one, as I recall – it was the one in the April 1982 *Pastor General's Report*. And interestingly enough, listed as the author of the little ditty, was the name of none other than – *Joseph W. Tkach!* Perhaps that is why when I objected to the nasty article, and demanded a hearing, even before Herbert Armstrong, Tkach quietly buried the request and did nothing. He was to blame for the vicious attack and slander!

### ***The Tkach Years of Apostasy***

Four years later, in January 1986, Herbert W. Armstrong died under suspicious circumstances, as he lay ill in his home in Pasadena. In charge of supervising him during his illness was none other than Joseph Tkach. At HWA's funeral, Tkach said nobody could fill Herbert Armstrong's shoes, but he would certainly follow in his footsteps. But within a very few years, he veered off the path laid out by Herbert Armstrong and began changing every basic doctrine and teaching of the Church!

The Church was plunged into the waters of dire apostasy! But the changes in doctrine began with great subtleness and were very quietly instituted. Most people, like the frog placed in lukewarm water, and then has the heat turned up until it is boiling hot, did not catch on to the massive changes until it was much too late!

When these changes were being implemented – just one year after the death of Herbert Armstrong they were already begun – the Church still had a “problem.” There was this “member” whom they did not trust, and whom they had pilloried in the *Pastor General's Report* in 1982, still promoting and selling books on creation versus evolution, keys to radiant health, Bible prophecy, and Christian living. What were they going to do with him? He was like a burr under their saddle. That person, of course, was me. It did not matter to them that I had been a faithful member of the Church from 1957 until 1987 – thirty years – nor did it matter that I had graduated from Ambassador

College with a B.A. degree, and a Masters in Theological Journalism. It did not matter that I had written for the Church magazines for 14 years, beginning in 1963. Those things mattered not at all. The course was set. The die was cast.

### *The Kangaroo Court*

One year subsequent to HWA's death, on January 16, 1987, Tkach sent his ministers – Jim Reier and Curtis May – to my home in Pasadena to suspend me from attending services, due to the fact that I was apparently a “thorn” in his side because of my publishing activities. The initial cause of the visit was a letter I had written to a church member in Australia. He had asked my opinion on the “new leadership” of the Church, now that Herbert Armstrong was dead. Would it be an “enlightened new era” or more rigorous “authoritarianism.”

I wrote to him that the jury was still out – we would have to wait and see. Somehow the Australian fellow showed my letter around, and it was seized by the local minister, Bill Winner, who sent it to Pasadena headquarters. At the same time, Tkach and his cronies were looking for an excuse to nullify and disapprove my publishing activities. They seized on the research paper I had written on Daniel's 2300 day prophecy.

It was now forbidden, apparently, for any Church members to publish anything of a religious, doctrinal or prophetic nature – even if it was the truth! Now, with Herbert Armstrong out of the way, the new leadership decided to take action. I was accused of being a “false prophet,” and the Church suspended me on January 16, one year to the very day from the death of Herbert Armstrong. The next week I was disfellowshipped, and the Church “marked” me as a “heretic” the third week from all the pulpits of the Church around the world.

I was categorically rejected, thrown out of the Church, without any hearing, without a chance to defend myself, without being given any opportunity to address the charges! This was the “new version” of the Worldwide Church of God! My fears of a new “dark age” for the Church were well grounded and completely justified. The “jury” was no longer “out.” The verdict had been rendered in blazing anger and totalitarian brutality! I was now “history,” so far as the Church was concerned.

After this action, the Church began changing its doctrines, one by one, with impunity, plunging down the slippery slope of apostasy. Soon the books and articles written by Herbert Armstrong disappeared from the Church inventory. After a few years, even the weekly Sabbath was done away, and the annual holy days were declared optional. Bible prophecy was buried and repudiated. The laws of God were considered “abolished.”

Before long, unclean meats, which the Bible says should not be eaten (Leviticus 14; Deut.12) were being consumed with glee by an apostate ministry. Under the new regime, it seemed “everything went”! The teaching about the nature of God was subtly

changed, and the pagan “trinity” doctrine was introduced. The Church’s understanding of Bible prophecy was turned on its head – no longer was there a “6,000 year plan of God.”

The Church began endorsing Easter services, Christmas celebrations, and called them “Christian.” Black was white, and sour was sweet and impure was now pure. It was a scene straight out of Alice in Wonderland – or Dante’s “Hell.” Herbert Armstrong’s very memory was impugned and maligned and his teachings consigned to the waste basket, condemned as “heresy.”

*Considering the errors Herbert Armstrong made in covering up the sins of his son, perhaps this was nothing more than God’s divine judgment upon a church which was already sinning and going astray! Perhaps God allowed these things to transpire because of the horrendous SIN which had already engulfed the church, and this apostasy was the sad result!*

When I was suspended and disfellowshipped, in 1987, I sought a hearing to defend myself. However, one was not granted. I prayed and fasted for three days about the situation, but the Church was adamant. If I wanted to continue in the Church, I would have to “repent” of all my publishing activities, and seek to engineer my way back into their good graces by getting an evangelist “friend” to plead for me. I would have to kow-tow in complete obeisance and submission to the Church’s perceived authority and government. I would have to bitterly confess that I had done wrong, even though I had done nothing to merit such action.

However, I knew that God had called me, long before I had ever heard of the “World Tomorrow” program or the Worldwide Church of God. I also knew that He had trained me, taught me to write, and had given me a gift for writing, and He had used me for fourteen years in writing for the Church publications, from 1963 to 1974. And I had published books on spiritual subjects from 1974 to 1987, thirteen years, while also doing other work.

But now, in 1987, unless I would submit to “church authority,” and repent of publishing books, and humbly surrender myself for church judgment, even though wrongly accused, there was no longer any place for me in the Church. *Disfellowshipped!* Charged with *heresy!* But I knew it was a false charge, and it was the Church itself which had gone astray! How much it was going astray, I myself did not yet comprehend, as the ensuing years would show.

At that time, my disfellowshipment made few waves. It seemed the vast majority of the Church membership didn’t understand, didn’t seem to care, and most people just assumed I had committed some grievous sin. My “friends” no longer spoke to me. Long-time friends now gave me and my wife the cold shoulder. We were “cut off.”

## **ESCAPE – from the Worldwide Church of God**

Although it came about through devious means, I was now free. I could breathe the scent of fresh, clean, pure air. It was electrifying – satisfying – thrilling. I was now FREE from the shackles and chains of men, masquerading as servants of God. I had sought for years to try to help reform the church from within. But obviously no one paid much attention. My books were for the most part ignored – or treated with “silent praise.” At other times, they stirred up the wrath of the “powers that be” to the extent that they called me on the carpet to question me about my motives, actions, and advertising to church members on my mailing list – the contents of letters I sent out to people, and advertising the books at the annual festival convention sites.

Now I no longer had to pay attention to such implied criticism or the opinions of men. I was free! I felt like I had escaped from prison, having served a term of confinement in a religious penitentiary for about thirty years, from 1957 to 1987. My books had been ignored. My warnings about end-time pastors and Pharisees and false prophets leading people astray, as I wrote in my book *Escape from Armageddon*, had been ignored – but now I was free to be more bold, plain, and straight-to-the-point!

Angered at having been sorely mistreated and cavalierly dismissed out of hand, with no fair hearing, I took action and began a new fledgling newsletter – about 12-16 pages – called “Prophecy Flash.” I began writing articles about the growing apostasy within the Worldwide Church of God. As the months rolled by, a reader asked me why the Church kept Pentecost on a different day than the Jews. I researched the question and found to my utter astonishment that he was right – and the Jews had been right all these centuries!

I began to look into other doctrines which we had all assumed to be true – such as the correct day to observe Passover. We had proved to our own satisfaction that the annual holy days should be kept by God’s people, but who ever thought that Herbert Armstrong would be leading people astray as to WHEN to observe the Festivals? I found out that Passover, as well, was being kept wrong – a day too early. Once again, the Jews had it right all along!

One thing led to another, as God opened my mind to NEW understanding on many central doctrines and issues. It was exhilarating!

### **A New Work Begins**

God did not forget me. I remembered the words of David, who wrote, “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, will I seek.’ Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me” (Psalm 27:7-10, NKJV).

It was January, 1987. The course was clear. I saw that my future course of action was pre-determined. I settled in my own mind that I would obey God – not man! It was obvious to me that the Church was abusing its authority, and treating members like filthy no-accounts – abject peons. There was no respect. There was no honor. I felt like Peter and the apostles who had to defend their actions before the religious hierarchy of their day, the Sadducees and Pharisees. The religious authorities had imprisoned them for preaching the gospel. They had whipped and scourged them. But Peter rose up in his own defense, and declared to their human court, composed of the leading rabbis and ministers of that day, with firm conviction: "*We must obey God rather than men!*" (Acts 5:29). That's exactly how I felt!

So in January, 1987, Triumph Publishing Company became part of "Triumph Prophetic Ministries," which was created as a non-profit religious organization to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to feed the sheep of God, and to do the Work of God, as He enables us and inspires and leads us.

At that time, *Prophecy Flash* magazine was born. Every week, we began doing regular Bible Study tapes. A few years later, we went on the Internet and created our own internet Web site called [www.triumphpro.com](http://www.triumphpro.com). During the past 17 years we have published hundreds of articles, about 100 magazines, and hundreds of Bible study audio tapes and video tapes.

### **What's In a Name?**

This brings to mind the statement by Dr. Herman Hoeh in 1959, as I sat in World History class, when he wrote my name on the blackboard (he didn't do that for anybody else's name). And he said, "That's a good name for a writer."

What does a person's name signify? In the Bible, God names people what they are. Abraham was "father of nations," Sarah was "princess of God," Moses meant "drawn out," and Jesus ("Yeshua") means "salvation." What does my name, given to me by my parents, and inherited in part from them, signify? Or does it mean anything? Could God have caused me to receive that name as a prophesy of how He would one day use me in His work?

Paul wrote in the book of Romans, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom.11:29, NRSV). God determined ages ago how He would determine and use certain people – who He would call, and how He would use them in His work. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph.1:4-5, NKJV). "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestined* according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory" (Eph.1:11-12).

So it may be of interest to take a look at the name I was given at birth.

### The Name “Dankenbring”

I was born with the last name “Dankenbring.” “Dan” in Hebrew means “judgment.” “Ken” is a word meaning “knowledge.” In Hebrew, it comes from *cohen* which means “priest.” The priests were the ones who were to teach God’s knowledge to the people (Malachi 2:7). Thus my name can be interpreted different ways. It can be as “bringer of knowledge of judgment.” or “Bringer of knowledge to [or from] Dan” (the tribe of Dan). One critic ridicules these things, saying I claim to be “the priest who brings judgment.” That is not precisely true. Rather, my name can mean, in Hebrew, “the priest who brings knowledge [or a warning] of judgment,” or, “the priest who brings [announces news of] judgment.” I am not the “judge” and never claimed to be. God is the Judge – I am merely His *messenger, sent to warn* His people of His impending judgment – the days of reckoning which are fast approaching!

Much of our nation is settled by Danites of the tribe of Dan. Our religious work is located in the United States – modern-day Ephraim – and this Work is telling God’s people just who they ARE, and is *warning them pointedly* of God’s judgments and wrath, and the need to repent! Once again, in this way this prophecy can also refer in a unique way to this very end-time Work of God!

Gerhard Marx and Emil Schnee, two gentlemen of German descent, independently verified the meaning of my last name in the German language. Technically, they said, “*Danken* in German means ‘thanks,’ but the construction is backwards to normal German. *Danken-bring* means ‘thanks for bringing’ something.” They went on, “This means your name says you are a ‘bringer of good news,’ because those who brought *bad* news in ancient times were not appreciated.”

“So your name says you are “a bringer of good news.”

The name “Dankenbring” is a German construct – not really German, but a name my ancestors took while living in Austria, under the reign of Queen Teresa, who forced Jewish citizens to take Germanic names. This suggests that my lineage is Jewish. Very likely I am descended through the tribe of Levi, and am of the descendants of Aaron, since “ken” also comes from the Hebrew “cohen” meaning “priest.”

The name “Dankenbring” then, literally, in German, means “one who brings good news or glad tidings.” My full name means –

“William” – “Resolute, Iron-willed,” “Resolute Protector”;  
 “Frederick” – “Kingdom of Peace”, that is, the “Kingdom of God”  
 “Dankenbring” – “Bringer of glad tidings or good news.”

In other words, I am a “strong willed bringer of good tidings of the Kingdom of Peace” – that is, the coming Kingdom of God! Or, to put it another way, I am “The resolute protector” or “The resolute, iron-willed priest who announces the day of judgment and the coming of the Messiah.”

Could this Work of God, which God raised up through me, be prophesied in the Scriptures?

Notice! Isaiah 52:7 appears to be, at least *in part*, a direct prophecy of this very Work of God! It says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who *brings good news*, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isa.52:7, NRSV).

Who is the “bringer of good news?” Who is the “messenger who announces peace”? My last name, in German, means: “Bringer of good news or glad tidings!” My full name means “resolute, iron-willed bringer of good news of the kingdom of peace.”

Isaiah 52:7 certainly seems to be, at least *in part* a direct prophecy of THIS very Work of God, publishing *Prophecy Flash!* magazine, and our website on the internet. You can visit our website at: [triumphpro.com](http://triumphpro.com).

I do not say these things with any sense of pride. But a deep sense of unworthiness. The very thought humbles me and makes me feel totally unworthy. I feel like George Mueller, the apostle of faith in the 1800s, whom God used in His work – I am just a “poor unworthy servant of the Lord.” I feel as if I am “the least of the saints,” as Paul did (Eph.3:8). I feel much like Jacob, who said, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant” (Gen.32:10, NKJV). As David said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?” (II Sam.7:18).

I say with David who wrote in the Psalms, “O LORD, I am your servant, I am your servant, the child of your serving girl” (Psalm 116:16, NRSV). Nevertheless, I believe the fruits prove that I was called of God to be His servant, and a “watchman” to end-time Israel – to be a “bringer of good tidings” to Israel.

God called me as a teenager, and began to reveal His truth to me at the tender age of 15, as I was studying His Word while living in Taiwan, formerly known as “Formosa,” a island 90 miles off the coast of China. He called me to be His servant and to serve Him and His people.

As I was studying the book of Matthew, reading about the calling of the disciples, praying and meditating, it was as if the Spirit of God spoke to me, saying, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt.4:19, NKJV).

At the time, I had no idea what that meant, or would mean, in my life. But from that moment it is as if God took hold of my life and began directing it, and preparing me to become His messenger and servant!

What hath God wrought!

### *Apostasy and Rebellion*

During that same time, from 1987 to the present, the “fruits” of the Worldwide Church of God and its new leadership have become very apparent to the vast majority of Church members. There are no good fruits at all. Instead of figs, there are thistles; instead of apples, briars; instead of peaches, nettles and thorns.

How time flies! Joseph W. Tkach, who took over from Herbert Armstrong, is now dead, having died of gross cancer about nine years back in 1995. The Worldwide Church of God, or what is left of it, is now under the rulership of his son, Joe, Jr. He is listed in their by-laws as “Pastor General for life.” Although the Worldwide Church of God has professed that it is changing these archaic rules and bylaws, and becoming more collegial and democratic, in government, nevertheless it has not done so to this day.

During the past 22 years, since I parted ways with the Worldwide Church of God under its new hierarchy, the church itself has gone steadily backwards instead of forward. The church has disavowed the weekly Sabbath observance and is compelling members everywhere to meet on Sunday. It has rejected all the annual Holy Days of God, calling them “Jewish,” and says they are a hindrance to preaching the gospel. Instead, it has adopted and embraced the paganized holidays of Christmas (derived from the ancient Roman Saturnalia and worship of Mithra the sun god on December 25 by the ancient pagans), and Easter (named after the *Eostre* the Teutonic goddess of fertility and spring), and has forsaken all the “laws” of God, claiming that we are no longer obligated to perform God’s “laws” but are now under “grace.”

In reality, the apostate Worldwide Church now rejects ALL the Torah of God – the laws of God which are the very definition of His divine CHARACTER and the FOUNDATION of His true Government! Never have so many plunged into paganism so far and so fast in all the history of mankind!

Jesus Christ Himself, made the truth about this very plain when He said to His disciples: “Do not think that I have come to ABOLISH the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to FULFILL them” (Matt.5:17, NIV). Jesus did NOT come to “abolish” the law of God, but to bring it to the FULL BRIM – full and overflowing! He said, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, *not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will be any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished*” (Matt.5:18). He concluded, “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called *least* in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven” (verse 19).

Did you notice that? Not one little mark or stroke will perish from the law of God until ALL is fulfilled – the Law of God will endure so long as heaven and earth still exist!



Truly, the Worldwide Church of God has plunged over the cliff, spiritually, and is headed for the great “abyss.” I pity the poor members who can’t see beyond their noses, who are still blinded to the reality of their situation.

### **The Spirit of Apostasy**

Since those days, many members of the Worldwide Church of God have left that organization, and formed many new churches, meeting in various halls, homes, and locations. But they are all divided and splintered into disagreeing, competing sects, factions, and organizations. Ministers cannot get along with each other. Each is seemingly trying to out-do the other. Everybody wants to step into Herbert Armstrong’s shoes and claims to be the one who most truly follows his teaching – even things which he taught which were in error! The remnants of the Church still worship the vain image of a *man*, and have lost sight of the vital importance of Scripture and “PROVING ALL THINGS” (I Thess.5:21).

How sad!

The Laodicean church is here, now, and very much in evidence!

Even the churches which came out of Worldwide, when it began apostatizing, have refused to search the Scriptures, and admit their sins and errors. The Worldwide Church of God is going to pay horribly for its wickedness and sins. But what about all the other churches which came out of Worldwide? They still have spiritual blinders on. They are stuck in the mud, unwilling to confess error or to change. Position and income, salaries and the perks of the ministry, seem too important to them to be willing to sacrifice for the kingdom of God’s sake!

Jesus Christ declared, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:15-16, NIV). Many of the new churches are continuing to lead people astray, into further darkness. They have become the church Jesus Christ warned about in the book of Revelation – the end-time lukewarm “Laodicean Church.” Christ declared of this church, “You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev.3:17). Write for my free article, “The Laodicean Church Rises Up!”

### **Prophecy of a “Foolish Shepherd”**

As I have said, Herbert W. Armstrong was far from perfect. But that does not negate the fact that he also taught a lot of truth which no one else was teaching during his lifetime. I think it would be a grave miscarriage of justice to throw the good out with the bad, or to become “offended” and make shipwreck of the truth, and many have done, in the wake of the revelations of his impropriety and foolishness.

Herman Hoeh at one time directed my attention to a prophecy of a particular shepherd whom God said He would raise up the latter days. Zechariah declared: “Then

the LORD said to me, Take once more the implements of a worthless shepherd. For I am now raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for the perishing, or seek the wandering, or heal the lame, or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs. Oh, my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be completely withered, his right eye utterly blinded!” (Zech.11:15-17).

Isn't it interesting that in his later years, Herbert became blinded in his right eye; and isn't it remarkable that his “right arm” in the church, his son Garner Ted Armstrong, split off and started his own competing church, in 1978, when differences arose between the two men? The prophecy was fulfilled.

Even so, does that justify a person throwing the Bible, the Word of God, out the window, and rejecting Christ and His truth? Of course not. We should never blame God for the mistakes, errors, or sins of men. Each will one day have to answer for his own conduct on this earth!

### **A Warning to the Church**

Herbert W. Armstrong, while he was alive, actually warned of the condition the Church would fall into after his death. At the time he didn't know it, but his words would come back to haunt the Worldwide Church of God and its off-shoots.

Decades ago, while he was still in his prime, Herbert Armstrong made a very interesting radio broadcast in which he covered some very fundamental truths. These are vital concepts which we should all review and think deeply about. His words describe vividly what we see happening in the various branches of God's end-time Church, today!

About forty years ago, while he was still alive, Herbert W. Armstrong gave a powerful radio broadcast in which he discussed some of the fundamental problems with religious groups, churches, and denominations in the world. Let's take a look at this old radio program. Herbert thundered in his own inimical style:

“My friends, in today's world, I wonder if you understand the difference between the true Church of God, and I mean, the church that Jesus Christ said that He would build. You know, Jesus Christ said, ‘I will build My church.’ Where is that church? Which of all these churches that you see, of all these many denominations, which could be that church?

“I want to tell you, when you find that church, as you find it described in the Bible, as you find it in the beginning of the New Testament, there is one thing that differentiates that church from all other churches. Now listen carefully: Here it is! And you can tell by this whether you belong to that church or not. The Church that Jesus Christ is the living head of, the church that Jesus Christ built, the church that He said the gates of hell would never prevail against, is a church that is under the authority of Jesus Christ and under the authority of God Almighty, as the Supreme Creator Ruler of this Universe. . .”

What is the supreme TEST that Herbert Armstrong spoke of? He went on to speak of people in ancient times who worshipped God. He declared:

“They never knew really how to worship the true God, however. But people would do whatever the man/leader said, and people today do it. But as Paul said to the Corinthians, he said that there were *divisions among them*, and one of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another wanted to be a follower of Apollos, and another the follower of Peter or Cephas, and another wanted to follow Christ. He said, *‘Is Christ divided?’*”

“Now today we have our various sectarian denominations. And one is supposed to be a follower of one man and another of another man. I won’t mention any names because I don’t want to cast reflection on anyone or any organization, but I want to get the principle or the truth out to you so that you really understand it.”

What was this great principle or truth? Notice exactly what he said!

“So, what are the differences? Now what do we have in our sectarian denominations? They are the followers of a man, in nearly every case. *And whatever the man who started the denomination or the sect or the religious organization – whatever he took as doctrine, whatever he set as the doctrine to be practiced, his followers took it, they put a frame around it, and they refused to accept anything more or less. They refused to ever acknowledge that there was any error whatsoever.* And there is not a one of those that does not have error, and when the error was exposed, the followers of that church, that denomination, had built up an ecclesiastical organization *and they could not for political reasons admit any error in what they taught.* And that doctrine has been the test of fellowship in nearly every case. . . .”

### ***The TEST of God’s Church***

Did you get that? Herbert Armstrong himself said the TEST of God’s true Church is that it will CONFESS ERROR and admit it! It will admit that the original leader or man ***COULD HAVE BEEN WRONG in certain of his teachings!*** But all the churches of MEN have a tendency to “enshrine” whatever the founder taught, and to “put a frame” around it, and they “refused to accept anything more or less.”

How utterly astonishing! He said, “*They refused to ever acknowledge that there was any error whatsoever!*” Does that sound like the various ministers and leaders of the churches of God which came out of the Worldwide Church of God – the very church that Herbert Armstrong himself founded in this present age?

*Yes it does!* To put it another way, *history repeats itself!* What Herbert Armstrong pointed out about the churches which began in the Protestant Reformation has happened to his very own church organization during this present age!

Herbert Armstrong went even further. In this amazing radio broadcast, he declared:

“And so, *if you don't believe just what is set, you can't belong*; you're expected to believe it; *swallow it hook, line and sinker, true or false*. When new light is revealed, and we find that the prophecies were closed until the time of the end, we're in that time now . . . Now most church denominations were founded before that time. But my friends, you will find, that now that the prophecies are opened up, and about one third of all the Bible is prophecy, and it could not be understood until now, you will find, that there is not one church sect, not one church denomination, that has *admitted it was teaching the prophecies incorrectly, and that it was in error, and not one has ever dared to come out, and publicly expose its own error, and confess it, and repent of it, and change around and accept the truth now that the truth is available. . .*”

It is fascinating to hear his voice on the tape of the broadcast! His expose, however, sounds just like the various churches that have split off and come out of the Worldwide Church of God *which he himself founded!* They all expect their members to believe and accept *exactly what they teach, to “swallow it hook, line and sinker!”* Yes, *“true or false”!*

Rather than continually growing in truth and admitting error, just as Herbert Armstrong wrote of those churches founded before he came on the scene, even the remnant “branches” of his own church have fallen into the very same trap! Not a one of them or their leaders *“has ever dared to come out and publicly expose its own error, and confess it, and repent of it, and change around and accept the truth now that the truth is available”!*

How many churches today do you know of that are willing to admit error, to confess mistakes, and to repent and change their doctrines and teachings?

### **Time to WAKE UP!**

Herbert went on, driving the point home, saying:

“Oh, I tell you it's time for some voice to CRY OUT, and to EXPOSE THESE things, and to WAKE YOU PEOPLE UP, and to show you the TRUTH of God, that somehow you haven't had [pause] . . . and have been blindly following wherever other people go. We've been concerned with *what will people think*. And many of you that hear me. And we find that the errors of the time were turned clear around until we get right-side up and get the truth.”

Yes, it is time for everybody to WAKE UP – and to search the Scriptures, and to ADMIT ERROR, and to REPENT, and to CHANGE! God IS revealing NEW TRUTH – but most people are “blindly following wherever other people go”! Too many of us are too concerned with “what do people think”! It's high time we turn clear around, so we can get “right-side up and get the truth”!

Herbert Armstrong continued:

“And you find its different from anything you ever heard before. And many of you are afraid of it. And you know why? Because you say, What would the church people think and what would other people think? Can those people save you, my friends? Can they

impart eternal life to you? You're going to stand before Jesus Christ in the JUDGMENT some of these days, and THEN what are you going to think? THEN what are you going to be concerned about? – and whether what your friends think counts, or whether what God thinks about you counts?"

This is powerful, explosive material. Think about it. Herbert Armstrong was thundering over the radio some of the most basic, fundamental, underlying principles of TRUTH! What really is important? Is it what PEOPLE THINK about you? Or what Almighty GOD thinks about you? Indeed, we will each one of us stand before the judgment seat of Christ and Almighty God one day soon! What will we think about these things THEN?

### **Early Church Leaders and Prophetic Statements**

Herbert Armstrong went on to discuss the Protestant Reformation and its leaders. He declared in plain, clear words, what happened in the succeeding generations to the churches which those men had founded:

Notice what he said and think about *today's church ministers and leaders!*

“And you know some of those great original Protestant leaders, and they were great men, and they followed the light as they saw it, they were honest men, but I tell you, my friends, men who were steeped in the customs and traditions of the time, could not see all of God's truth all at once. But what about their followers?”

“Their followers *should have seen a little more* – and accepted it when they did – but they *never did*. Every one of them, *they have taken what their leaders had, and they have clung to it, and they have not accepted anything that has been revealed new, neither have they rejected anything that was in error that they found.*”

Notice that these men's followers did not grow in new truth or grace and knowledge – they merely clung to the doctrines they had inherited from the original man who founded the denomination or church. They were stuck in a rut. Bugged down in a quagmire. They were actually following a man, and not Jesus Christ!

Herbert went on to say:

“One of the great leaders said, before he died, that *he had only recovered part of the truth, he had not restored it all, and he urged his leaders to continue as he had done, to find new truth, and to expose new error, but they didn't*. They continued right on to this day just as he had, they set their frame around what he had, they wouldn't let any of it get out, they wouldn't let anything else get inside of it, and they kept it there, and that is one of the four or five largest denominations in the western world today. And that's the way it has been, my friends.”

How astonishing – and amazingly prophetic!

Little did Herbert Armstrong know he was describing what was going to happen in *his very own church which he founded!*

The ministers who followed after him have, like these other ministers of other churches, refused to accept new truth, have put a frame around everything he taught, and have refused adamantly to admit or confess error, or to repent of error, and to be willing to CHANGE when proven wrong! How prophetic were his very own words about his own church and its various branches and leaders, today!

### **The REAL Bottom Line**

Herbert Armstrong concluded, saying:

“Now the thing that differentiates the TRUE church that Jesus built, that Jesus is the head of, is that they are doing as Jesus said we should, *living by EVERY word of God*. They are obedient to God. They look on God as Supreme Authority. They realize that God has set limitations on the human mind, and that *we don't know it all*, and that God's mind is perfect, and that God is a God of love, and that God wants only that for our supreme happiness and our good – that God wishes above all things that we might be prosperous and be in health, and that God wants us to enjoy life, but not to do those things that give us a temporary kick and then kick back at us as a boomerang and give us the headaches tomorrow morning.”

How true! Jesus Christ Himself said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). “Every word”! If we do this, we will experience the truly “abundant life” (John 10:10).

This is what differentiates God's TRUE church – a spiritual organism – and all the politically motivated churches of MEN! God's true people will follow the TRUTH – wherever it may lead them! God's true people put His Word first in their lives. They strive to live by ALL God's commandments. They search the Scriptures, daily, constantly, continually, striving to find more and greater insight so they can obey Him more fully, implicitly, and completely.

God's true people will be willing to fearlessly “go where no man has gone before,” as the Word of God and the Spirit of God lead them! They know that obedience to God is the most important thing in life and is the WAY to eternal life and happiness throughout all eternity!

Herbert Armstrong left these words ringing in our ears in that fateful broadcast. He thundered, as he was wont to do, with a clarion call of authority:

“Now, obedience to God, living by EVERY word of God – how do we do it? God gives us His laws, His Words, in the Bible. And it gets down to this – regarding the Bible as the SUPREME AUTHORITY in your own personal life, in your Church life or business life, or every-thing. Now most people would say . . ., ‘What does religion have to do with my politics, or my business life, or my social life? That's something separate.’ Oh no it isn't, my friends. When you come to the truth of God, it IS your life. This IS your life. The Word of God, the way of God, and you must live by it, in your business contacts, in your social contacts, in everything, and you should read it to see

what your political life should be, if any. And you will get your eyes open on a lot of things.

“Today people say, ‘Well, I don’t think it makes any difference.’ Do they TREMBLE before the Word of God? Do they FEAR it, do they look on it as an authority? They say, ‘Well, this is the way I look at it.’ They aren’t concerned with the way GOD looks at it, they aren’t concerned with the LAWS of God that are going to judge them in the judgment day, that are going to determine whether they have eternal life, but they say, ‘This is the way I look at it.’ How many are going to really look to God, and look to the Bible, as Supreme Authority? *Do you know any that do?*”

### *Lessons Being Learned*

Those are powerful words. I am sure that at the time, Mr. Armstrong meant every word he said. His words were right on the mark. But, as we have seen in this article, he himself did not always practice what he preached. As a result, the church he founded came upon hard times, and eventually apostasy took it over. Satan had pulled an amazing “coup d’etat.”

What should we learn from all these things?

I look back over my life – and I must admit that it has been eventful, filled to the brim – with both wonders and miracles, trials and triumphs, tests of faith and endurance. I feel somewhat like the apostle Paul who wrote, “From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (Gal.6:17, NRSV).

I have learned several lessons from all these things. First and foremost is the truth of God’s Word and His warning, when He said: “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in mortals. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Psalm 118:8-9).

David also wrote, “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish” (Psalm 146:3-4).

Jeremiah goes even further. He wrote, “Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land” (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

But, Jeremiah continues: “Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is in the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the

stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green” (verse 7-8).

In other words, the second lesson to be learned from these experiences is the lesson of faith in God. David wrote: “The LORD is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me” (Psalm 118:7). As Solomon wrote: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

At some point in our lives, we must learn not to be followers of men – however well meaning or sincere, but still only mere men. We must learn to place God and His Word above all other considerations. As Jesus Christ Himself said: “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt.6:33).

God says in the book of Isaiah the prophet, “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who *trembles* at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). He goes on to say, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye that *tremble* at His word: Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name’s sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (verse 5, KJV).

Do we *tremble* before the Word of the living God? Or do we follow men, mere human beings, who claim to have the truth, but who are ignorant of much of God’s truth? Many today claim to follow Herbert Armstrong and who insist he could make no error or mistake, but they are falling into the same ditch were he fell. They have not grown spiritually since his death, but have retained all his own errors and false teachings.

How is one to know the truth? And *know* that he knows the truth? David wrote, “How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word” (Psalm 119:9). David continued, “With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments” (verse 10). And, “I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you” (verse 11).

Do you have the attitude of David, who was a man after God’s own heart? (Acts 14:22).

We need to get back to BASICS! We need to re-study and re-investigate and re-research the Word of God – all of its, from Genesis to Revelation. We need to stop assuming we have it made spiritually, and we need to STRIVE to obey God and study His Word, making time for it above everything else!

The apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT *your own*



*salvation with FEAR AND TREMBLING*” (Philippians 2:12, NKJV).

I truly fear many are on the verge of losing out on their salvation, because of neglect, compromise, following men, and not adhering to the Word of God in every facet of their lives. What will it take to make us learn this vital truth? What suffering must we endure to learn that the most important thing in life is God’s Word?

As Paul wrote, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we *drift away*. . . *How shall we escape if we neglect so GREAT a salvation?*” (Heb.2:1-3).

Perhaps the most serious problem I have noticed among many of those who consider themselves to be “God’s people” is that they presume for one reason or another that they themselves are “special.” They think their church is the *best* church, the most faithful church, or perhaps the “only true church.” They tend to look down their noses at other churches who don’t have the same measure of “knowledge.” Yet when we examine the picture more closely, we find that much of their supposed “knowledge” is assumption and error – not true knowledge at all!

Isn’t this very dangerous?

In particular, I’ve noticed (in my years under the sun, as Solomon wrote) that many Sabbath-keeping churches, especially those which came out of Herbert Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God, seem to think all other churches are still “deceived by the devil” and therefore cannot be God’s true Church. But the truth is, *ALL CHURCHES HAVE SOME ERROR! Not one is “perfect”!* If we are to judge any church by its perfection, that would mean ALL are “false” and have been “deceived” somewhere or another!

To judge others who have accepted Christ and their Lord and Saviour, even if they believe differently, as to Sabbath observance, or observing Christmas, or Easter, or disagree on some doctrine or other, is **WRONG!** As Paul wrote to the Romans, “Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? . . . For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. . . So then each one of us will be accountable to God. Let us therefore *no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another*” (Rom.14:10-13, NRSV).

What will it take to teach us this lesson?

It’s high time each one of us stops judging others and gets serious with our own salvation, Bible Study, prayer, and research of God’s Word, not letting anything slip out of our grasp. Let us follow Paul’s admonition to Timothy, when he said, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be

ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth” (II Tim.2:15).

Those who love God, and love His Word, will search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). They will continually take stock of themselves, review their beliefs, analyze their previous convictions, and place the spot-light on their assumptions and conclusions – always being willing to admit error, to confess mistakes, and to CHANGE and redirect and reorient their lives, as the changing, evolving situation warrants!

How many today are willing to do just that?

Isn't it time we all WAKE UP and come to our senses, and seek God's way and study His Word and strive to obey Him and do His will, as *never ever before*? Isn't it time we took seriously the admonition of the apostle Paul who wrote, “PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess.5:21)?

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

Yes, how time flies! The apostasy of the 1970s is history. The events of the 1980s are history. The great changes in the Churches of God in the 1990s are also history.

We are now living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Herbert Armstrong is dead. Joseph Tkach is also dead. And now Garner Ted Armstrong also is dead. A new generation of leaders is rising up.

Where do we all go from here? What does the future hold?

Look around you.

We are now in the epicenter of the greatest earthquake in human history -- on the threshold of the greatest time of trouble and world disaster -- in the eye of the most ferocious hurricane ever to strike mankind. One era of church history has passed. Another one has begun. And mark my words, friends – we really ARE in the “gun lap,” now! We are approaching the END OF THE RACE!

Indeed, there is truly *not much time left!*

The apostle Paul declared: “The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13:11-14, NIV).

Paul also exhorted, “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:1-2).

Paul also warned, “So, if you think you are standing firm, *be careful that you don’t fall*” (I Cor.10:12). He told the Philippians in words which apply to all of us, “*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil.2:12).

To the Hebrews, Paul exhorted, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us **RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE** that is set before us, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Heb.12:1-4, NKJV).

The time is urgent. One era has passed. The “gun lap” has begun. I remember clearly hearing Herbert W. Armstrong say repeatedly, in his sermons in Pasadena, the headquarters Church, “We are in the gun lap.” As a young athlete, running the 440 yard race, at Ambassador College, I remember clearly what the “gun lap” meant. It was the final lap – the final sprint – to the finish line!

Have you begun your final “kick”? Have you begun your final “sprint” for the finish line?

“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36, NIV).

Bill and Cappy Dankenbring, at Malibu, California, spring of 2003.

