

“ANOINT YOUR EYES”

Christ’s Warning
to His People

by David C. Pack

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Christ warns Laodiceans to “anoint your eyes”—WHY? What did He mean? WHO did He mean—and how can you know? This all-important instruction, to *all* Christians living in the last days, *must* be understood.

This extensive book—the most crucial written to the WCG splinters—thoroughly covers things never before explained, and in extraordinary detail. For those hoping to escape the Great Tribulation, it reveals *exactly* what Christ meant and how to apply this most critical warning!

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INTRODUCTION

Few doubt that the Laodicean age has arrived. This means questions of supreme importance stand before the twenty-first century Church of God. Prophecy reveals that most brethren today will avoid them or answer them incorrectly. Why? Because they will be unwilling to believe and obey Christ's counsel to "*anoint your eyes...that you may see*" (Rev. 3:18). The result will be that they will never come to understand *how* to apply His instruction to "buy of Me [Christ] gold tried in the *fire*."

Once the Great Tribulation is here—the worst fire of all time!—only one-half of Laodicea will be saved, but then only after enduring torment and death. Having lost God's Spirit as the only means to spiritually survive, the other half will accept the mark of the beast, trading eternal life for only a very little more physical life.

What could be more serious for those who miscalculate—who make the wrong decisions at the end of the age?

Yet, who really questions or talks about "anointing their eyes"? Very few, if any. How often do you hear, or have you *ever* heard, people discussing the meaning of the term? Even though there is nearly universal agreement that the Laodicean age has arrived, and even though Christ *commands* Laodiceans to do this, when was the last time—if ever—that YOU were concerned about it? Also, have you *ever* heard a sermon about this subject, even one? Almost certainly not, and this is because virtually no one believes that he or she could be Laodicean.

Why examine or study what could not apply?

Questions arise: Where is Laodicea? Whom was Christ addressing? Have you anointed your eyes? Are you sure? Are you certain you know what this means?

You *can* know WHAT—and WHOM—Christ meant!

Understanding these questions, and the issues they represent, is vital to *every* true Christian. While all of our books to the “splinters”—addressing crucial issues now facing each one of God’s people—must be read to grasp the scope and manner in which the prophesied *falling away* arrived, this book overarches the others, with the exception of my book *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* It puts into perspective the decision you cannot avoid if you hope to escape the Great Tribulation—and receive eternal life!

Making the Right Comparison

This book will look at the subject of Laodicea in detail—and in a way that most have never begun to understand. We will closely examine *what* Christ said to this era and *why*. This will include an examination of the ancient city of Laodicea, as well as what Mr. Armstrong taught about the final era of the Church. We will also carefully review what a Philadelphian is, and this includes a fascinating look at *ancient* Philadelphia. Also, since the last era is known for being lukewarm, this volume will explain how to take your temperature—in relation to what JESUS CHRIST reveals, not to how your organization fares when compared to others.

Paul warned, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or *compare ourselves* with some that *commend themselves*: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, *are not wise*” (II Cor. 10:12), then added, “For *not* he that commends himself is APPROVED, but whom the Lord commends” (vs. 18). The meaning of “approved” will slowly grow in your thinking.

In two places, Daniel stated that at the “time of the end,” only “*the wise shall understand*” (12:10). He was referring to unfolding conditions and events, and God’s purpose (11:32-35). In other words, in part, whom God commends—APPROVES!—and whom He does not. Both of Daniel’s passages identify and connect this understanding with being spiritually “tried, purged, made white and purified.” All of this will be made abundantly clear as the book progresses. You will not be able to misunderstand, unless you *choose* to!

There is much, much more in what Paul recorded than meets the eye. You will learn what the process of receiving God’s approval is, and how

it directly ties to Christ's New Testament command for His people to "anoint your eyes."

Two Views—Both Wrong!

Two incorrect views—one hostile, the other simply wrong—describe how most have seen "*Anoint Your Eyes*" – *Christ's Warning to His People*.

On the one hand, for obvious reasons, certain brethren and leaders feel threatened by this book. This has caused some to attack it. Of course, they have done this at their own risk, jeopardizing their own future safety. That is their decision. But you must ask whether *you* will allow the attacks—and the "analysis"—of others, in effect, to do your thinking for you.

On the other hand, some generally agree with the book but reduce it to merely containing some "nice points" or "good principles" or "interesting insights." Be very careful of summing up the book in this way, because you could be fooled into thinking this meant you applied its message. Any who diminish what should be the tremendous impact of its message on the reader into simply "helpful hints" has, in fact, completely *missed* the message of the book!

Extensive Spiritual Exercise

What you will read is not an intellectual treatise, written for the scholarly, in the language of scholarship. It has been written as much as is possible in a style similar to Mr. Armstrong's. God's people are generally "the weak and foolish of the world" (I Cor. 1:27-29). Since I am not an exception, I know we need things clearly spelled out.

Therefore, this book is written as a practical guide explaining precisely what the title references. At times, it will use very explicit detail to make points impossible to miss.

It will reveal how you must undergo an extensive—and intensive—spiritual exercise, not able to be accomplished through the application of an easy formula. It will tell you *how* to be "wise" to Christ's instruction to His people—*how* to "anoint *your* eyes." It will explain *exactly* how to be "approved" of God in this age—and why Christ says that He "counsels" His people about this.

"*ANOINT YOUR EYES*" will explain what Christ meant when He described Laodicea as "naked," and how this was connected to a certain kind of "shame." All of this is directly tied to Laodicea's "lukewarm(ness)," which, in turn, is connected to other aspects of what Christ describes as Laodicea's condition.

You will learn why Christ said, “Be zealous and repent”—and the specifics of *how* it is ZEAL that propels Laodiceans to grasp what they must repent of to achieve the *only* proper spiritual outcome that Christ will accept. We will see what they must repent of.

You will also learn how *all* those with God’s Spirit *must* return to Christ’s one Body. Those who do not answer His knock, when Christ calls them “by name” (John 10:3-4), will wither and eventually spiritually die.

All of this must be *explained*, and the book will thoroughly do this.

I am aware that some have seen the title and skipped reading it, on the *assumption* that they have already fulfilled Christ’s command or know its contents. I pray the number doing this is few, because they have almost certainly not *correctly* done what Christ requires—and in all likelihood have not even *begun* the process!

From time to time, in the book’s early stages, I will sprinkle critically important statements without immediate qualification. But we will later return to examine them in greater detail. I urge you to be patient with the need to develop this enormously important subject in the only way to do it. There is too much to cover, and too much at stake, to dismiss the book early on because you may see things mentioned before they are thoroughly addressed!

Compelling Reading

In the world, books containing mysteries are often the bestsellers. Everyone seems to like a “Whodunit?” The meaning of Christ’s instruction to His people in the last days *has* been a MYSTERY!

The mysteries of men’s religions always *remain* mysteries. They are never explained—never solved—in the end, and followers are told to accept this on faith. Of course, most do. Yet, the Bible’s mysteries can—and should—be *made plain* (I Cor. 2:9-10). What Jesus taught about anointing the eyes should be UNDERSTOOD!

What has happened in our time *is* truly a modern “Whodunit?” As with any mystery involving a crime, there are several critical elements that must come to light: perpetrator, victim, crime scene, weapon, motive and other evidence.

Although some crimes remain mysteries—and there are those guilty of *spiritual* “crime” in this matter—Christ has *solved* this one through and within His Word! We will watch the Bible interpret the Bible in everything that is covered. No guesswork will be necessary—anywhere in the book!

Consider. Most people do not typically think of technical Bible explanations as “compelling reading.” But this book is an exception. It is truly the story never told—until now.

If you will set aside any personal offense that you may feel early in your reading, particularly when your group is being described, you will go on to learn things more fascinating than you can now dream. And, if you read far enough, you may not be able to put the book down.

Armstrong Worshipers?

At the risk of being called “an Armstrong worshipper,” I have chosen to quote Mr. Armstrong periodically—and sometimes extensively—throughout. There will also be quotes from other apostles. But this does not mean I worship any of them. The term “Armstrong worshipper” has been used to denigrate and belittle those who HOLD FAST—who will not compromise the truth—to make them feel guilty for doing this and for being “unable to grow” with others who have not been willing to take the stand for *proven* truth that such “Armstrong worshippers” have taken.

Tragically, the apostasy *has* produced a class of “survivors” who do largely worship Mr. Armstrong’s person. These *have* mistaken God and Christ for focus on a man. Like the Catholics with Mary, these people need a visible, physical human being from whom to draw their strength to continue. (Remember, a lesson of the world’s religions is that physical minds require visible idols to substantiate their worship.) They confuse the teachings and work of Mr. Armstrong with the man himself. My experience with such people is that they rarely recover. They are perhaps the group least likely to “see” that Christ’s command applies to themselves, and most certain to believe that it is addressed to others—assuming they believe this subject to be important at all.

But, in general, there are those who understand and accept what Mr. Armstrong taught, and those who will not. It is also unlikely that I can say anything to this latter group to change their minds. However, Mr. Armstrong’s statements are included, without apology, for those with an open mind—for those who wish to remember his words.

The Full Picture

Finally, I caution you now: What is written here is both graphic and direct. This is not by accident. Understand that your group, if you are in one, will likely be named. Very strong language is used because this is

what today’s circumstances demand. Vital truths are contained here and I am trying to communicate them in the most urgent manner possible!

This book is also very comprehensive. What the living Jesus Christ says about and to His people in the final Church age is much more profound than meets the eye, yet, again, virtually no one bothers to consider it. That is the biggest part of the problem.

Understand therefore. To get the complete—FULL—picture being presented, and to realize what you must do to receive God’s approval, you must read it all. Each section builds on the previous one—and each chapter builds on the one before it, causing the entire book to build as it continues. Realize that it is only in the book’s latter chapters that its many elements are completely tied together.

Do not lose sight of this method in which the book is written.

While some may feel they can “hop around” within the text, and still get the point, this *cannot* be done! Neither can you speed-read any part, including the quotes from Mr. Armstrong. I urge you to study each page most carefully, and then read the book a *second* time with an open Bible.

The points, principles, scriptures and teachings that will be covered are neither suppositions, hypotheses, theories nor opinions. They are the facts of our time—and are *proofs*, straight from God’s Word, history, Mr. Armstrong and basic logic, about the truth of what you face.

Note that the complete picture of events at the end of the age, because of the apostasy that struck the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), is presented and explained in additional detail in the books listed at the back. Various sermons—all part of our *Splinter Explanation Packet*—also shed light on truths explained in this book. Each assists in helping to fully understand the other. (So do the crucially important books *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?*, *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties*, *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* and *Why The Restored Church of God? – Should You Join?*) Occasionally it has been necessary to repeat certain principles from other parts of the packet because of their direct application to Christ’s warning. There will also be some necessary repetition *within* the book. This will happen when different aspects of related points need to be driven home in a different context.

For reasonable minds, this book will explain beyond all question *exactly* how to “anoint your eyes”—and *exactly* to WHOM the warning is addressed!

Christ’s time to reveal this vital understanding has come. But first the stage must be set, and this will take time.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

World history is replete with historians who revisit, review, revise and sometimes even completely rewrite the actual truth of events to reflect what current circumstances seem to dictate. They bring their own agenda and worldview to history.

In the same way, within the Church, thousands have either forgotten or never understood even the most fundamental facts of what has happened since Mr. Armstrong's death. The *who, what, when, where, why* and *how* of recent Church history have become blurred almost beyond recognition by people who think that they have a grasp of the basics.

Some review sets the stage for the rest of this chapter.

A Brief History

Herbert W. Armstrong died in early 1986. In summary, here is what followed. In the years after Mr. Armstrong's death, false leaders captured the corporate church and ceased to believe and teach virtually *every one* of the doctrines revealed through him. Over time, these men completely threw out the truth and destroyed the visible church, leaving it spiritually dead. Subsequently, several ministers left the Worldwide Church of God to form organizations comprised of brethren generally unhappy with the changes that had occurred.

Through the first half of the 1990s, approximately 75 percent of the members completely departed from the truth. The remaining 25 percent

scattered into various splinters, holding to varying degrees of the truth. Most agreed on certain *basic* doctrines, but disagreed on many others.

The problem is best defined this way: While most agreed that they *disagreed* with Mr. Armstrong on various doctrines, they could not agree on *where* they disagreed. As a result, thousands found themselves no longer able to “walk together” (Amos 3:3) in the unity that the Church once enjoyed. Thus, they scattered into *many* places—where they could meet with others of relatively similar belief. However, in every case, these groups generally saw themselves as “standing up for the truth.”

A vital distinction must be made at this point. These organizations are not to be confused with *earlier* groups that left in the 1970s, *prior* to Mr. Armstrong’s death. These were born of rebellion *against* the truth and God’s government when the Church was on track. Most brethren were once able to recognize that *none* of these organizations were of God—period. We all knew they had left Christ’s Body. Time, coupled with the blindness that has settled over most of God’s people, has clouded the ability of most to even see this much. Many *now* consider these early groups to be additional, viable options. This new position represents an astonishing *reversal* of understanding.

Now let’s briefly profile the groups that appeared *after* the truth began to be cast from the Church.

In December 1989, the first true WCG “splinter”—The Philadelphia Church of God (PCG), led by Gerald Flurry—was created. This organization eventually became home to several thousands, who went there believing it would help them hold to the full truth.

In December 1991, another pastor, John Ritenbaugh, left, claiming the Work was over and that Mr. Armstrong had put too much emphasis on it. He named his organization The Church of the Great God. Over time, several hundred people came and went from his group.

In January 1993, The Global Church of God (GCG) formed. This occurred after Roderick C. Meredith, who started it, petitioned Mr. Armstrong’s successor to remain in the WCG “as a Local Church Elder.” Only after being turned down did he begin his group, and it quickly grew in size. This group later became The Living Church of God (LCG).

In May 1995, the largest splinter formed, The United Church of God (UCG), consisting of hundreds of ministers, with certain senior WCG leaders, and many thousands of brethren. This group had finally decided to end their inaction after witnessing almost 300 doctrinal changes. They organized under the leadership of an elected committee, which in turn elected the group’s leader.

In 1998, GCG and UCG suffered major splits within their ranks, each involving 1,500 or more brethren. Both of these splits were essentially power struggles, and were almost entirely unrelated to doctrine. In late 2010, UCG split again, almost down the middle, with those departing forming the Church of God, A Worldwide Association (COGwa). These organizations have experienced the breakaway of numerous additional smaller offshoots. PCG has also suffered numerous splits, often over administration and dictatorial government, but also over doctrine, because of the absolutely blasphemous, unbiblical nonsense taught by its leader.

Like the vast majority who remained in Sardis, UCG, having begun with many false doctrines already in place, is quickly passing out of Christianity altogether. This is because it continues to accept additional heresies and continues watering down the remaining truths it has. The end of the age and the Great Tribulation will not cut short their accelerating journey back to the world. They will have already returned.

On the other hand, the leader of PCG has already completely departed from God, becoming as false as the original apostates themselves. Tragically, the others near him at the top have followed his lead. This organization has developed two mindsets—those who agree with the leader’s many assumed titles and offices and those who do not. It appears that more splits there may be imminent, with survivors choosing where to go or giving up entirely. Attendance has already dropped by thousands.

The result of all this has been that LCG (although becoming increasingly Pentecostal and suffering ongoing and severe internal problems and tragedies), and a couple of other smaller groups, sit smugly in the middle, believing themselves more balanced, loving and “able to grow” than PCG, and more zealous and doctrinally faithful than UCG. These “middle” groups generally see themselves as the best option—the “*true* remnant of Philadelphia.” Therefore, it will be harder for them to see their ever-worsening condition in a true light.

We will learn why *none* of these groups could remotely be the true Church—or represent Philadelphia!

Mr. Armstrong Shouted Warnings

Throughout his ministry, Mr. Armstrong “cried aloud and spared not” when fulfilling his duty to warn those headed for punishment—for sudden calamity. He always “lifted up his voice like a trumpet,” never worrying about what people thought. He told people what they *needed* to hear, with no regard for what they may have *wanted* to hear.

With a consistent boldness, strength and descriptive language, Mr. Armstrong continually practiced—in reality, *obeyed*—Isaiah 58:1. He saw the clear responsibility to warn those—of either physical or spiritual Israel—who were headed for the Tribulation. (To learn more, see my thorough article on this subject, “‘Cry Aloud, Spare Not’—What *ALL* Forgot!”) We must examine how he did this, taking extra time as we do, so that you will never doubt Mr. Armstrong’s approach to warning those headed for certain disaster, *if* they did not awaken.

Following is an extensive series of urgent quotes from Mr. Armstrong. In effect, they are his voice, fulfilling the responsibility to warn *you* now. Later, we will read statements from other specific areas of what he taught, which directly apply to Christ’s command to “anoint your eyes.” This will happen periodically throughout the book.

Be careful you do not find yourself offended at the strength of Mr. Armstrong’s language, which you may not have heard for many years. Instead, savor his words, beginning to carefully reflect on your own condition. These set the tone for how I have tried to write the entire book. (Most of the emphasis is Mr. Armstrong’s, and some—generally the italics—is mine throughout.) Read slowly, carefully:

“Brethren, I am terribly DISTRESSED and sick at heart at the reports from all over, that MANY of our members are LUKEWARM, or entirely LETHARGIC, spiritually. If YOU are one of those, I have to warn you—you may not be on the way to God’s Kingdom—but on the way to your END in the LAKE OF FIRE!”

“Reports indicate that many have ‘come in’ to God’s Church in this manner: They have come to really SEE and KNOW that this is, truly, GOD’S Church. They know there is terrible WORLD TROUBLE just ahead. They have heard how God’s Church is to be taken to a PLACE OF SAFETY...So these people come in, selfishly, for a sort of spiritual and physical SECURITY—to assure PROTECTION when the Great Tribulation bursts upon the world! *But they are NOT themselves ‘on fire for GOD!’ They are spiritual DRONES!* And God will not give them protection!”

“LET ME BURN YOUR EARS before the Almighty GOD burns YOU in the Lake of FIRE! If that has been YOUR attitude—if YOU are only on the GETTING side, and SHUN helping, and giving to the cause of GOD, then I say to you ON AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST, if you don’t REPENT and QUICKLY, and change...you DO NOT BELONG in GOD’S CHURCH! You are some of the ROTTEN, PUTRID, spiritual WASTE that has been PLUGGED UP INSIDE THE SPIRITUAL BODY OF CHRIST’S WIFE...” [Editor’s note: Does this language offend you—or does it lift and stir you to action?]

“And if THAT doesn’t make your ears tingle, and AWAKEN you, then Jesus Christ says to YOU through me, YOU are in danger of the Lake of Fire!”

“Did you ever read of Gideon’s experience in choosing men for battle? There were 32,000 men. There are about 32,000 actual BAPTIZED adult members (or professing members) in the Church of God today! God had Gideon proclaim to them: ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people 22,000; and there remained 10,000.’ Then God put them to a TEST, and, finally, ONLY 300 out of that 32,000 were chosen by the living ETERNAL!”

“Oh BRETHREN! MUST it be that way with God’s CHURCH today—the very BODY of the living Christ?”

“Unless I PUSH you—PULL at you—REMIND you to act in this DUTY TO GOD AND HIS WORK, you don’t go along on God’s road—you lie down and QUIT...”

Brethren Letter, Mar. 2, 1967

“The world has sunk into a complacent, indifferent slumber.”

“The world is too busy enjoying this new found prosperity, basking in the comfortable sunshine of luxury, to be much concerned about the on-coming NUCLEAR World War III that WILL, unless prevented by Almighty God, simply erase human life from this planet!”

“Soft words and pretty speeches do not arouse people out of this pleasant dream. *It takes a JOLT!*”

“Personal from the Editor,” PT, Sept. 1965

“Ezekiel’s message is for *our day*—a prophetic warning for America and Britain, *now!*”

“*Always the true prophets and ministers of God have stood almost alone, and opposed by the overwhelming majority in Israel. That is Israel’s history of old. It is true today.*”

“Ezekiel catalogs our sins—our customs and ways which seem right in *our* eyes but which are contrary to God’s laws and an abomination in *HIS* sight.”

“Our people today can’t see where *these* things make any difference! But Ezekiel says the preachers have deceived the people, and led them astray. They have condoned all these things, until the people have lost God’s pure TRUTH!”

“In the meantime, *our job is to WARN America and Britain of what lies ahead! To shout the warning to come out of BABYLON* (Rev.

18:4)—that those who heed may find God *now*—may come under His divine protection (Psalm 91), and by a true Spirit-filled life obedient to GOD’S WAYS and laws, be prepared to become a ruler or a teacher in Christ’s soon-coming glorious Kingdom!”

“Will Russia Invade America?”, PT, Nov. 1948

“There are times, I have to confess, when I feel impotent, helpless, frustrated. I wonder if any of our readers could put themselves in my place, and realize what I see and know, and how I feel.”

“Yes, MILLIONS are *hearing* God’s last solemn, frantic WARNING! Would you suppose that fact would fill me with joy, sweep my being with elation? IT DOESN’T! Instead, I feel defeated—FRUSTRATED!”

“Do you know WHY? Because I see, as Christ said of HIS preaching to the people, that ‘they seeing *see not*, and hearing they *hear not*, NEITHER DO THEY UNDERSTAND.’ Only at Nineveh did the people ever *heed* a warning!”

“It gives me a feeling of utter futility—of putting forth supreme effort, fighting thru the years with all my own strength and energy, plus all that I’ve been able to drink in from God—and yet, it’s like being on a tread-mill—actually making no progress!”

“I, personally, SEE what lies ahead! It fills me with frantic TERROR—for the safety of all the people whom I love—people who *could* be spared and protected from the catastrophes they are bringing on themselves—even as I fully expect to be spared thru God’s supernatural protection—BUT THEY WON’T!”

“WILL YOU UNDERSTAND? Will you HEED—and spare your own precious life from the things to come? WILL *you* take warning?”

“God says that if we ourselves SEE these things coming, and WARN you, we have acquitted ourselves—your blood is not on our hands. But that is not enough to satisfy me—just to save my own skin. I WANT TO SEE YOU SAVED, TOO!!”

“Heart to Heart Talk With the Editor,” PT, Apr. 1956

“If someone tells me my house is on fire, I’m not going to laugh at him and refuse to take it seriously. I’m going to examine, and BE SURE! If he’s wrong, then at least I shall *KNOW* my house is safe. I learned years ago that it can be very dangerous to carelessly ASSUME, or just take for granted. It’s much wiser and safer to *get all the FACTS*, and then decide.”

“And one’s LIFE for eternity is much more precious than his house.”

“I have given you God’s Word faithfully. It is not popular. It is not what the popular majority tell you.”

“My responsibility ends with TELLING you. I have cried aloud. I have lifted up my voice.”

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath? (1976), pp. 7, 107

“God sent His prophets—HIS DIVINE SON—His Apostles—His true ministers, *pleading* with a world forced to *choose*—warning this world of the inevitable result of its folly of rebellion.”

“Most people today are like a person in a deep sleep, dreaming a pleasant dream. When one tries to arouse him to tell him his house is on fire and he’s about to be burned up, he drowsily protests:”

“Don’t! Don’t wake me up! Go ’way—let me sleep!”

“Well, listen! Your house is on fire!”

“I have to warn the people—or have their blood required at my hand! God Almighty commands me, ‘CRY ALOUD, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions.’ (Isa. 58:1). God doesn’t say ‘whisper.’ He does not say, ‘preach soft and smooth things soothingly.’ He tells me to lift up my voice—to CRY ALOUD!—to THUNDER forth His warning!”

“The time for soft, dainty, purring, soothing preaching is past!”

“I do not talk softly, soothingly, on the air. I CRY ALOUD! I do not spare you—I tell you the TRUTH with all the power God gives me!”

“We seek not to please people. We seek only to obey GOD, and to help and to SAVE people—because we love them!”

“In His Message to His true Church of this time, which is yielding itself to be His instrument for shouting this very warning, and carrying Christ’s GOSPEL to the world, Jesus said: ‘Because thou hast kept the WORD of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of trial (Great Tribulation—DAY of the Lord), which shall come upon all the world.’ (Rev. 3:10). But those that are lukewarm, careless, indifferent, Christ says He will spew out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16).”

“I feel exactly as the prophet Jeremiah felt, when God revealed to him the destruction soon coming on the land of Judea, because of the sins of the Jews of his day. The Chaldean armies of King Nebuchadnezzar were about to march on Jerusalem. Jeremiah SAW it—realistically. But the people were SOUND ASLEEP. It made Jeremiah sick at his stomach.”

“‘My bowels, my bowels!’ Jeremiah cried, clasping his hands tightly around his abdomen. ‘I am pained at my very heart! My heart is beating wildly. I cannot keep silent!’ (Jer. 4:19.)”

“Yes, I know how Jeremiah felt!”

“DO YOU THINK I CAN KEEP SILENT, TODAY? God has revealed to me *your danger!* I can also see your lethargy.”

“Some few have written me gripes and criticisms. Some few have not wanted to SEE such realistic pictures of WHAT’S COMING IN REAL LIFE! Some few have threatened to stop reading The PLAIN TRUTH...”

“...if by God’s grace, thru His power, I can make this REAL enough, I can be the means of saving *some* of you. And your lives are VERY PRECIOUS! Every single one that is saved is worth all the effort—all the criticism from those who want soft and smooth things and deceits—all the persecution.”

“YOUR life is *very precious*. It’s a potential CHILD OF GOD! I hope to see you, and *know* you, and LOVE you, in the KINGDOM OF GOD! Yes, YOUR life is very precious to ME! I’m going to try to WAKE YOU UP to reality, if I can. Criticize and condemn me...I can do no other than to MAKE THIS WARNING PLAIN! It’s motivated by a spirit of LOVE! God help YOU to wake up and HEED!”

“Yes, I Know,” PT, Feb.-Mar. 1955

Does it upset you that I have quoted Mr. Armstrong so many times and in this way? Do you think it was presumptuous? If so, why?

The principles and truth of Mr. Armstrong’s words are timeless. Of course, he is no longer here to deliver—to *shout!*—these warnings himself. Someone else must do it for him, recognizing that the danger he spoke of is now greater—more IMMINENT—much closer at hand—for those who have not heeded!

All ministers of God must possess the heart of a shepherd. True shepherds love God’s sheep, and must be prepared to give their lives for them. God says that He chastens every son that He loves (Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:6-11), and He often uses His servants to bring His chastening. If the balance of this book offends you, that may be good—if it stirs you to ACTION. If you choose to resent my words, this is a price that I am prepared to pay—with the hope that it could then awaken you *later* to what you must do.

There is no longer time in this age to speak any way but boldly. But doing this—and with AUTHORITY—comes at a price. I will continue to do this—no matter the price for me personally, and no matter how few or many are willing to pay it with us! Those who will *not* pay God’s price *now* ought to recognize that prophecy reveals that price will *soon* increase dramatically for His people—and for all people on Earth.

Fix this clearly in your mind: It is still not too late to forsake the majority and escape what they must endure!

Proving People of Two Conditions Fleed

Over time, it became apparent that when the WCG completely left the truth, leaving it a dead church, brethren of potentially *two* different Church eras (Philadelphia *and* Laodicea)—actually two different CONDITIONS—were forced to flee. They did this in a *co-mingled* fashion. This departure process from the WCG continued throughout the 90s.

Before continuing, and before one can understand all that has happened since, it must be recognized that those reflecting Laodicea and those few possibly then still reflecting Philadelphia *both* left the Worldwide Church of God! To conclude otherwise is to believe that the WCG is still part of Laodicea—and any who believe this either no longer understand or *never* understood God, the Bible and the truth—period!

Therefore, departure from the apostasy has always been a *two-step* process. Let me explain.

When the WCG leadership rebelled against God and completely fell away, as explained, *all* converted minds there were forced to leave that organization to survive spiritually. The vast majority have *long since* done this. (Although highly unlikely, possibly some very last few could still wake up and leave.) And this was the *first step*.

The *second step* mirrors Mr. Armstrong's willingness to leave the Sardis era to fully serve God. Today, those with God's Spirit, seeking to return to the condition of Philadelphia (the sixth era), must subsequently depart from the splinters and slivers, or from sitting at home. *This* step has been much more confusing and difficult for most to understand.

Of course, prophecy shows that many will never recognize and accept the need to take the *second* step! It is much like the proverbial "frog in the pot," sitting in water slowly being brought to a boil. Before long, the frog is too cooked to escape.

Unlike the frog, those who *are* willing to take the second step know that they have to escape the hot water—destined to get much hotter in the Tribulation. But, in the strange twist of today's circumstances, those who want to escape being boiled in the hot water must actually *increase* their own temperature to do it.

This book will clearly demonstrate—beyond all doubt—that Christ has established His one unified Church and Work for those with clear vision and who are willing and strong enough to take *both* steps. And, gradually, more and more faithful brethren have separated from the splinters. All who love the full, pure, uncompromised truth, as the

whole Church once understood it, and want to finish God’s Work, under His government, as the Church once did it, now have a place to do this!

Forgetting What You Once Recognized

Because I was fired in early 1993, I watched and counseled a great many people who were fleeing the apostasy very early. They were seeing things that thousands of others, who followed later, could not yet see. Many once knew that they had an obligation to act, even though tens of thousands could not yet bring themselves to take a stand and leave. Herein lies a true irony. Let’s understand this.

In *retrospect*, we *now* know that the WCG completely departed from God. They threw out practically every single doctrine, and details within them, that brethren all once identified as truth. Again, this disqualifies that organization from further consideration in God’s equation for His Church. This much is *now* at least generally, though not *fully*, understood.

Here is the point. Thousands were not sure of this prior to early 1995, when many had either already left or were in the process of leaving the WCG. Therefore, a fascinating reality becomes evident: Large numbers of people were willing to leave the WCG *when they believed that it was Laodicea*. They did this believing that it was necessary in order to remain Philadelphian!

But a dramatic change has occurred. Most brethren have come to be unwilling to take an *identical* step—A SECOND TIME—that they were once willing to take!

Many thousands of brethren once heard my “90 Reasons to Follow the Truth” sermon series (given in 1993-94). These reasons have the exact same application—once again!—that they did when God’s people left the WCG. In one sense, they are even *more* applicable now—and I cover several of them throughout the book, with a section near the end devoted to many more. For those who have heard these points, recall that one of the very first of the “90 Reasons” explained that objects eventually take on the temperature of the room they occupy. This is still the same danger for all of God’s people!

Here is the difference now—and this is what is confusing so many. The splinters, large and small, house the majority of Laodiceans today, having become what we once thought the Worldwide Church of God would remain. Their acceptance of a mixture of right and wrong doctrines, continually adding more that are wrong, and now reflecting what the WCG taught in the early-to-middle stages of the apostasy—plus

new false teachings—proves this. (Our other splinter books demonstrate this beyond question.)

Why then do so many remain among them? What happened to the conviction of most, when they were willing to join a smaller group even though the majority would not?

I liken it to what Paul told the Galatians: “You *did* run well; who did hinder you that you should not [any longer] obey the truth?” (5:7). This verse has come to pass in the lives of many thousands of God’s people. They took the *first* step correctly—then stopped dead in their tracks!

Of course, UCG, formed in the spring of 1995, may be somewhat of an exception to what I have said. Here is why.

This was the only organization (essentially the last to form) that left the WCG as it simultaneously passed completely off the Christian radar screen. When the previous Pastor General there threw out the Law, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing and the knowledge of unclean meats, all doubt about whether the remnant of WCG would remain Laodicean was removed.

More than any other, from the beginning, UCG almost seemed to set out to prove *itself* Laodicean. We will discuss later how their formation is subtly confusing many thousands who are not with them. Keep this in mind. Having demonstrated their ability to tolerate far more heresy than those who had left earlier, the people in this final organization may be the least likely to understand what I have just explained.

The vast majority of God’s people are Laodicean. They are simply *not* fully holding fast and are *not* Philadelphian—but are kidding themselves that they are. Many today like to refer to “the Laodicean *climate*,” as though the problem is not Laodicean *organizations*, comprised of Laodicean *individuals*—in the same way that there were *Sardis organizations*, comprised of *Sardis individuals*!

Organizations are made up of INDIVIDUALS, of which *you* are one. It is not merely a *climate* issue as so many gullible people seem willing to believe.

When the Time Comes to Flee

Let’s look ahead for a moment. A kind of mystical, superstitious, blind “faith” now exists that all Philadelphians will magically—and simultaneously—arrive at Petra, or wherever the place of safety is, but supposedly come from *many* organizations and backgrounds. The great majority today, of those even *still believing* in a literal place of safety, have accepted the idea that Christ will gather Philadelphians from throughout the splinters *when it is time to flee*.

This theory is wrong, actually ludicrous—and can be proven to be impossible! Yet, so many seem to believe it.

Imagine thousands of people arriving at the entrance to the place of safety with a host of different doctrinal ideas and approaches to government. They would be coming from *different* organizations, practicing *different* beliefs and *different* traditions, having followed *different*—and favorite—leaders. There would be mass confusion over just the question of which leader to follow, let alone the division caused by all the other doctrines that some might think should or should not be believed or practiced. Loyal to their chosen organizations, as the best background from which to come, most would never even be able to agree on who the leader should be, let alone what *form of government* he should employ. And in today’s environment, have no doubt that people would want their voices heard in this matter. (And then there is the separate question of how people in many organizations would simultaneously receive and recognize God’s signal to flee. This is covered in much greater detail in a long latter chapter of *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!*)

Let’s state this again for emphasis: Everyone would have been practicing totally *different* forms of government—under *different* leaders—in *differing* groups—with *different* beliefs and traditions—and doing so for *years!*

God would NEVER reward such compromised organizations and people with protection. Doing this would be merging the confusion of those who have *not* held fast with the unity and clarity of those who *have*. Grasp this central understanding! God would also never permit such *impossible* circumstances—such terrible DIVISION—to exist at the place of safety. Supposed “Philadelphians” of every stripe could not arrive with a hodgepodge of *different* ideas, and be able to circumvent Amos 3:3, permitting them to “walk together” in *disagreement* in such a close confine for 3½ years, with *other* very different kinds of supposed “Philadelphians.”

None should be foolish enough to believe there are many faithful people (“Philadelphians”) hidden invisibly in every organization who are *secretly* holding to and carefully practicing all the correct teachings that the rest of their organization is not. You cannot decide, in effect, that “I will just be a ‘Philadelphian’ in the middle of all these Laodiceans. I don’t have to actually *do* anything, or take a stand now.” You will learn that you do.

This is identical thinking to those who claim that they do not have to actually eat unleavened bread, during the seven days, as long as they

merely have “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” in their *minds*—their “hearts.” Many in the world know and practice this verse and others like it in exactly this way.

This said, those small few, who may already *now* be in the process of anointing their eyes, and who *could* soon be ready to take action, will—and *must*—also soon, come to understand that they have to leave their group. All others who eventually leave will have to *first* anoint their eyes to be able to see and accomplish this.

Mr. Armstrong repeatedly explained why there must be *complete* unity in God’s Church. While no organization should claim to hold your *automatic* “ticket” to the place of safety (and one group does claim this), all those who will be protected must come from a common background, administration and doctrinal position—meaning from ONE ORGANIZATION! They must all see the truth in the *same* way. This subject is covered in detail in my book on *THE TRUE CHURCH*.

(To learn who will and will not be protected, take time to read our detailed booklet *Promised Protection – Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?* Again, the chapter just referenced in *THE WORK OF GOD* covers this.)

It is my hope that after reading “*ANOINT YOUR EYES,*” you will reject the soothing, reassuring (and rehashed Protestant) siren song illusion that God will accept you and your beliefs “just as you are”—regardless of your spiritual condition, your beliefs and the organization you have chosen—and then permit you to be protected from the Great Tribulation!

What Mr. Armstrong Taught about Government, Unity and Division

You do not need to believe me on this matter—you may read Mr. Armstrong’s own words. The first quote asks you to “stop and think.” In one sense, this is the greatest goal of this book. Take time to consider how each quote is intertwined with Church government, unity and division. Also notice that these statements span many years in Mr. Armstrong’s thinking:

“What about the ‘loner’ Christian who says, ‘I will serve Christ in my own way’? What about the one who *leaves* God’s Church to have *his own private relation* with Christ—to *get his own salvation*—without *giving* his part of the Church’s effort to send the true gospel into ALL THE WORLD?”

“Or, what about the one who follows a MAN because of that man’s personality, charisma or attractiveness, or some other group?”

“*Stop and THINK!*”

“Is Christ going to marry a number of differing groups, not in complete harmony with each other—yet all ‘professing CHRIST’?”

“Jesus said, ‘He that is not *with me* [and since He is the Head of God’s one and only Church, He plainly meant with Him where HE is working—in God’s one Church] is against me; and he that gathers not *with me* scatters abroad’ (Matthew 12:30).

“Jesus Christ is going to marry THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE CHURCH—not a number of scattered groups or scattered individuals.

“...The one who tries to GET his salvation *apart from the one Church* Christ is going to marry is on the ‘GET’ way. Those loyally in the Church are GIVING of their prayers, loyalty, encouragement and support...in GIVING the GOOD NEWS to the world—its ONLY HOPE!”

“7 Proofs of God’s True Church,” PT, Sept. 1979

“The Word of God clearly teaches us that there is but the ONE Spirit, and the ONE Body. (I Cor. 12:12-13, 20).”

“That ONE BODY of Christ, carrying on HIS WORK, must function as a UNIT. It must work in harmony and unity, with teamwork, for God is not the author of confusion. There must be no pulling off in different directions by different men *in* that one Body. There must be no competition, or division. And any who knowingly promotes, or encourages anyone in promoting, such disharmony, competition, and division, *becomes the enemy of God, and is serving the devil and not God!*”

“In order that this ONENESS—this UNITY of purpose and action—this HARMONY and co-operative teamwork, be maintained and preserved in GOD’S WORK, God has ordained GOVERNMENT IN HIS CHURCH. And He has empowered His Church with DIVINE AUTHORITY.”

“That government in God’s Church is government from God, thru Christ, thru apostles, thru evangelists, thru pastors, thru other elders, in that order!”

“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained by the Hand of Man?”, GN, Oct. 1962

“Until about 1969 we in God’s Church *did* all ‘speak the same thing.’

“By 1978 many...ministers were speaking *different* things! God had withdrawn...His blessing and power that for 35 YEARS caused the Work of His Church to grow at the approximate rate of 30 percent every year over the preceding year!”

“WHAT CAUSED GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS BLESSING AND POWER?”

“Precisely the same thing that choked the growth of the Church of God at Corinth from A.D. 56, 25 years after the Church was found-

ed at Jerusalem. *They were following different leaders, speaking different things, watering down the sacred and precious truths of Christ!*"

"Christ's apostle wrote to the Corinthian church, in A.D. 56, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment' (I Corinthians 1:10)."

"They were starting to follow different leaders teaching different doctrines. The Church was becoming divided! And a church divided against itself cannot stand!"

"It is only common sense to realize that if everyone teaches what he, personally, believes, or if we follow different leaders each speaking his own thing, WE HAVE ONLY CONFUSION!"

"But the self-minded among us, even...in the ministry, DO NOT UNDERSTAND!" [Author: Do you?]

"Christ Sets Church...on Track Doctrinally," GN, Apr. 1979

"I want you, brethren, to think about and *understand* what happened to God's Church in the 1970s LEST HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF! I want you to see the 'fruits' of rebelling against God's way and God's government."

"After all, the basic issue all along was that of God's government in the Church. One who followed one liberal who, as the apostle Paul predicted, sought to draw away followers after himself (Acts 20:30) said, 'We are liberated from that church government and now have a loosely knit organization, and that's the way we like it.'"

"The Church is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord' (Ephesians 2:20-21). Note, the Church is organized and fitly framed together, not organized with competing and differing *branches*."

"Notice Ephesians 4, there is only one organized church 'fitly joined together and compacted' (verse 16)—compacted as if welded together into one well-organized body. And how did He organize this body? How was it governed? 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith...(Ephesians 4:11-13). It is not DISunity or some other type of organization and government. Paul also said 'that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions

among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (I Corinthians 1:10).”

“To make clear one of the reasons—if not the primary reason—for the conflict caused by the liberal element, I quote from a Western newspaper. In an interview with a former minister, who had sought to draw away a following of members after himself, it was stated concerning this split-off church that they have ‘a *completely different administrative structure.*’ [Author’s note: This is the problem in so many of the splinters.]

“Most...dissension of the past in the Church has been over...government. The dissenters believe in a very liberal government—the way of Satan and his world.”

“We who remain in the one and only true Church grieve over the loss of those who are so far *failing in their final exams.*”

*“Recent History of the Philadelphia Era
of the WCG,” WN, June 24, 1985*

“...the one and only true CHURCH is NOT an ORGANIZATION OF MEN, but a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM. Yet that fact does not preclude organization.”

“This spiritual organism is the ‘Body of Christ’ existing for the PURPOSE of carrying on THE WORK OF GOD.”

“If every individual in it goes out alone, independently, trying to carry out the divine Commission in whatever way he sees fit, we shall have confusion, a house divided against itself.”

“Christ has, indeed, ORGANIZED HIS CHURCH, SO FITLY joined together as a physical building put together with the precision of every part of the most expert craftsmen.”

“Just What Is the Church,” Reprint, 1970

“But it is still true that two can’t walk together except they be agreed. I am agreed with God and with Christ the Head of the Church. I shall never water down the TRUTH He has revealed to me, nor in any manner compromise with it. We are ALL OF US going to have to AGREE with God and with Christ HIS Son, if we are to walk together with them, into God’s Kingdom.”

*“Reports About Garner Ted False,”
WN, Mar. 6, 1981*

Mr. Armstrong spoke constantly of organization, structure and absolute *unity* within the Church, so necessary to stabilize and feed the flock. Many today have come to believe that Christ no longer requires such complete unity—or that it was ever possible in the first place. As a result,

believing it passé, many no longer even *look* for this among God's people and are content to ignore many false teachings within their splinter.

Such people have almost become blind BY CHOICE!

Mr. Armstrong Left Sardis

It is well known that Mr. Armstrong slowly ceased contact with the Sardis organizations that he originally fellowshipped with during and after the time he learned the truth. Armed with the facts necessary to make a correct decision, he made a conscious choice to *separate* in order to not compromise what he had proven.

Given the same choice in the 30s (and assuming you could have known then that Mr. Armstrong was leaving to establish what would become the Philadelphian era), would you have remained in any of the then dominant *Sardis* groups of the *fifth* era? Would you have ignored the opportunity to join the tiny organization led by Mr. Armstrong? Would you have believed that you could either be or become Philadelphian while staying in Sardis?

Of course not! *Why?* Because all once understood that only those who *left*—who removed themselves from fellowship with—the fifth era and actually *joined* with those of the sixth era could be considered part of it. Why then are so many unwilling to leave a dominant group of the *seventh* era? Why have they forgotten that they still—today!—must actively join—must do the Work with—must fellowship with the brethren of God's one Church—of those striving to be of the sixth era and condition?

Laodiceans *are* Christ's people, but in a weak and deplorable condition. They must allow Him to lead them to His Body—out of their organizations. Again I ask, why? Most probably understand by now that the word *Laodicea* essentially means, “the *people* rule, judge and decide.” It was Christ who gave all those of the final era this name! Surely He understands that He is not ruling those to whom He gave *this* name!

We will learn later that Mr. Armstrong taught that the government of God was re-established only in the Philadelphian era. *This* is the only place where people *actively* hold fast the full truth. *This* is the only place where Christ is leading and present within the government.

This is plain. Any converted people in Sardis (are there some tiny few today? – Rev. 3:4) could never be considered Philadelphian unless they stop making excuses, *leave Sardis* and join Philadelphia. The same is true of any “Thyatirans,” of which some few apparently carry at least certain thinking (however highly improbable that any could or will be converted), somewhere on Earth today (Rev. 2:25). These all would eventually have to

come to the one, unified Body of Christ—and this is what Mr. Armstrong taught as early as 1954 regarding those who may still have had God’s Spirit in Sardis!

If *this* has long been obvious to everyone, why do so many seem unable to see that those who wish to be of Philadelphia must do the same—that they must *separate* from those who do not want to return to all of God’s Way? Why do thousands exempt themselves from what God’s people have long recognized about other Church eras?

Let’s be most plain. One is Laodicean until he takes action—moves!—*all* excuses notwithstanding—whether he is a laymember, deacon, elder, pastor or evangelist. Yet, how many brethren may have the best of intentions, but will never leave the comfort and familiarity of their organization, deciding instead to just consider themselves “Philadelphian” where they are?

Remember that God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good *and* evil (Gen. 2:16-17). The great lesson of this instruction was to AVOID a *mixture* of true and false knowledge. This would certainly include right and wrong *doctrinal* knowledge. Mr. Armstrong repeated this scores, if not hundreds, of times, throughout, and especially near, the end of his life. This constant theme was, quite literally, the essence of his final message to God’s Church before he died!

Of course, Mr. Armstrong practiced this himself throughout his life. This unwillingness to compromise the truth began with the decision—and willingness—to leave his association with Sardis to fellowship with a tiny, initial group of just 19 people (six of whom were his own family) in October 1933. But his determination went on to include *every* later encounter with error that tested his resolve.

In retrospect, I cannot help but believe God allowed Mr. Armstrong to leave this often-repeated “two trees” message as a strong witness—and WARNING!—to those in the final era, who now seem to have so completely ignored or forgotten it.

It will become evident by the conclusion that one had to be commissioned to bring you Christ’s next and almost certainly final warning, explained in this book.

THE ONLY PLACE TO START

Many years ago, a popular television commercial illustrated how most people were not inclined then to wear a seatbelt when riding in a car. Of course, laws have changed and this is now generally required everywhere in the United States, and in many other countries. The message sought to convince travelers of the danger of not buckling up.

The commercial worked off a familiar cliché—“accidents only happen to others.” It went something like this: “Of course, we all know that accidents only happen to others, but, just in case *you* are one of the ‘others,’ please wear your seatbelt.” The commercial took a left-handed approach to get peoples’ attention. I never heard statistics demonstrating whether it worked before laws changed, but it was catchy and it worked from a correct premise in the thinking of the majority of human beings.

Most people *do* live their lives believing that bad things generally only happen to others—*other* people get cancer—*other* people’s houses burn down or are struck by tornadoes—*other* people’s children die of drug overdoses—and so forth. The truth is that for everyone who is forced to suffer one of these tragic events, there is someone who probably believed such awful things could only happen to someone else.

Discerning Philadelphia and Laodicea

God understands human nature. He recognized that the natural tendency in people to whitewash themselves, coupled with the nature of society in

the last days, would give birth to the final era. He also knew that most brethren alive at the end of the age would start with the assumption that Laodicea is *somebody else, somewhere else*—that this accident could only happen to others. Therefore, He would have to be sure that no one had an excuse for accidentally choosing the wrong era. He had to provide a plain, clear way for all those humble, determined and sincere brethren to be able to KNOW where He is working, so that they can escape “the hour of trial,” prophesied to strike the whole world (Rev. 3:10; Luke 21:35).

God expects and *requires* each converted person to properly recognize—correctly discern—Church eras or conditions. Yet, most are confused about the identities of Philadelphia and Laodicea (and, of course, some have now rejected the whole idea that there *are* Church eras).

But they are without excuse! Here is why.

Let’s return to consider Sardis for a moment. No one with any understanding is confused about their identity. Why? Because the Church was taught who they were by the Bible, Mr. Armstrong and history. Likewise, everyone was also taught—again, by the Bible, Mr. Armstrong and history—how to recognize the identity of Laodicea. (We will later examine this much more closely.)

Almost no one has become confused about or forgotten the identity of the *fifth* era. So why have so many become confused about who constitutes the *last* era of God’s people?

What is it that they have forgotten?

Understand this. Virtually *no one* will tell you that he is Laodicean. Neither will any group. Yet this era is now dominant. On the other hand, virtually *everyone* will tell you that he is Philadelphian. So will almost every group. Yet, this era is *not* dominant now. Remember, Christ said that Laodiceans are BLIND. Obviously, just from this single sampling of peoples’ thinking, a great many *have* become blind to the reality of their condition—and the era or condition in which they reside.

This great question arises: How does one know which is which—who is who?

Remember, God *expects* you to correctly discern the difference between the two final eras, or spiritual conditions. Again, since what *people* say is obviously not a sufficient guide, *God must reveal this!* Sincere people must have some *means* to discern the earmarks of each era. God must offer a STANDARD—*His* standard—of how to do this. Otherwise, He could not hold individuals accountable for the conditions they select.

Recall that Christ taught the apostles to “Beware when all men speak well of you.” Therefore, what *persecutors* or *detractors* say about this,

that or the other group, could not be the guide—except perhaps to serve as an indirect *compliment* of who may be *right*, depending upon what is being said (John 15:20; II Tim. 3:12). Therefore, God’s people must have a clear means—a **SCRIPTURAL** method—of discerning an organization’s true “fruits”—its doctrine, Work, government, objectives and how it feeds the flock. It has become my task to explain this.

Mr. Armstrong always emphasized that prospective members should never simply believe what he said, but rather should **PROVE** his words from their Bibles. As an aside, let me say at this point that the same is true of The Restored Church of God as with any *other* group. Our teachings, Work, government, objectives and fruit should be easy to determine—and examine! The same standard should be applied to all groups.

If you read this book and apply its contents to anoint your eyes, the fog of confusion will lift from your thinking in an astonishing way! This is why I spent thousands of hours writing well over 2,000 pages of “splinter” material, with this volume as one of the four all-important centerpieces, thoroughly **PROVING** who truly represents the remnant of Philadelphia—and where Christ is now gathering His faithful flock.

Beginning in 1999, and led by God more than I then knew, I determined to remove *all* doubt and opportunity for procrastination and excuse-making by those who seemed unable to make a clear decision. Almost every conceivable question one could ask about the enormous choice now facing all who have God’s Spirit is answered by this book and the rest of our splinter material.

I urge you to read **ALL** of it!

However, in all probability, because of what prophecy states, even *you* will be tempted to procrastinate, ignore or explain away the need to take the *second step*! This book could make the difference—if you dig deep into its message, and **ACT** on it.

“He who thinks he stands...”

One of the greatest warnings in the New Testament is found in I Corinthians 10:12: “Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” If the entire Church had merely practiced *this verse*, the Laodicean age would never have come. Sadly, almost no one applied it—and the seventh era hit with full force!

The context in which this statement is found offers fascinating insight into what people are willing to blindly tolerate, while thinking their spiritual condition to be sound. Take a moment to read the seven verses preceding verse 12. Almost the entire chapter is about ancient

Israel’s tendency to slip into idolatry and the worship of false gods without resistance. Actually, this is exactly what most of *spiritual* Israel did from October 1992 until the spring of 1995.

Let me explain, because an amazing insight arises from it, bearing directly on what happened.

The infamous *God Is...* booklet arrived in the WCG in November 1992. This booklet plainly introduced a FALSE GOD to the Church. It was soon followed by acceptance of the idolatrous, pagan symbol of the cross in January 1993. It was during this three-month period that I determined I had to leave the Worldwide Church of God. I do not condemn others who left sooner, but I knew my point of departure had only then arrived.

Let’s understand. The context of I Corinthians 10:13 reveals that God creates a way of escape at *this point* of false doctrine entering the Church. After all, once the true God has been removed by Church leadership, it can no longer be the Church of God. Rather, it has become the “church of *another* god.” Of course, many of God’s people remained in the WCG even though the true God was gone. Technically, it was at *this* point, not when the Law, the Sabbath and the Holy Days were cast aside, that the WCG officially rejected the God of the Bible, thus passing out of true Christianity.

Do not miss this central reality!

Here is the point. Most brethren who eventually left were neither reading nor practicing I Corinthians 10:5-13. If they had been, they would have left long before they did. This is important to understand because it shows that the vast majority of people who eventually came to believe they were “standing up for the truth,” had, in actuality, been perfectly willing to sit for *years* in an organization that had disfellowshipped the true God. Incredibly, they did not seem to miss Him!

This alone reflects an astonishing BLINDNESS in most brethren, already present on a scale that surpasses the ability to characterize in words.

Of course, about 75 percent of the WCG happily, knowingly, willingly and *permanently* accepted this false god. Understand therefore. I am only speaking of the condition of those who were strong enough to eventually *leave*. This is one of the greatest proofs that the blindness (Rev. 3:17-18) of the Laodicean age had *already* descended on the Church.

Do you see this? *Will* you see this?

A Revealing Prophecy

Let’s examine an aspect of human nature, through use of a familiar prophecy. It illustrates most poignantly the amazing ability of human be-

ings to become blind to impending danger, and virtually overnight, even in the face of repeated strong warnings, given over a long period of time. Let's fast-forward, in our minds, over 1,000 years into the future, to the end of the millennium.

All brethren know that Satan is prophesied to be loosed "for a little season" at this time. Revelation 20:6-9 describes how just before the millennium ends vast numbers of people—described as "Gog and Magog"—will become so deceived (apparently happening very quickly) that they will actually turn and *attack* what is called "the camp of the saints," gathered at Jerusalem, possibly for the Feast of Tabernacles. Their rebellion will result in immediate destruction at the hand of God.

How could this happen? What quirk of their own nature could allow so many to be so completely deceived so suddenly—and in the face of so many warnings?

Think. Obvious, intensifying and ever more frequent warnings of Satan's imminent release from the bottomless pit will be given as the millennium draws to a close. The approaching "little season" will surely be much talked about. Despite all nations having been continually cautioned—for 1,000 years!—that millions will soon be deceived, it will happen anyway. No doubt, prior to this, none of these same millions will believe "It could happen to me"—yet it will! The extraordinary aspect of human nature, hidden in this prophecy, testifies to people's ability to become blind—faster and more profoundly than they could believe possible!

Similarly, in our age, though long foretold, the "falling away" took the vast majority of the WCG by surprise. Though God knew it would, this should never have happened. But further, in the apostasy's wake, the arrival of the Laodicean age, in the very *same* way, caught people almost completely by surprise. Despite repeated warnings *for years*, from Mr. Armstrong and others, most of those with God's Spirit (apparently, as he often wondered aloud, most in the WCG *never* had it) took on all the characteristics of the last era in short order.

This occurred almost entirely because so many assumed "accidents only happen to others." They were unwilling to "take heed lest they fall."

When Judgment Begins

In John 9, Christ had an unusual—and most instructive—exchange with the Pharisees. A familiar verse, though not quoted as often today, serves to introduce it.

First, notice the apostle Peter’s warning to the Church. It sets the stage: “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?” (I Pet. 4:17).

A basic question arises: Why does God begin His judgment of mankind with those who are *in His Church*? Two verses reveal the obvious answer—and set up the account in John 9. All of this has a direct bearing on the prevailing blindness in our age. The first is James 4:17: “Therefore to him that KNOWS to do GOOD, and does it not, to *him* it is sin.” The second is Hebrews 10:26: “For if we sin willfully *after* that we have received the KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.”

These verses show that those who have been given the *knowledge* of what sin is—in other words, what is *not* “good”—are the ones held responsible for avoiding it. Hebrews 10:26 drives home what is at stake for all who ignore their responsibility to act on what they know. *Knowing* the truth is not enough. People must *act* on it or they will be judged for sins they recognized but did not address and overcome. This is not new understanding, but it forms a helpful review serving as the background for what follows.

Those Claiming “We see”

All of this has a direct bearing on another incredible quirk of human nature. It explains why some will anoint their eyes at the end of the age and most others will not. It has to do with what people may claim to see or not see in regard to matters for which they are responsible. The following account carries a remarkable parallel with the condition of God’s people today.

Now for Christ’s fascinating discussion with the Pharisees in John 9. The exchange is specifically about those who “see” and those who are “blind.” Notice verse 39: “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that *they which see not* MIGHT SEE; and that *they which see might be* MADE BLIND.”

What is Christ saying?—what is He talking about?

The Pharisees wanted to know what He meant, and if this applied to them: “And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we *blind* also?” (vs. 40).

Before reading Christ’s answer, let’s consider the similarity of the above passage to Christ’s statement in Matthew 9:13: “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” In the previous verse there,

He had just said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (vs. 12). What Christ meant was, “I come *not* to heal the righteous, but to heal the sick.”

Since the Bible says, “There is *none* righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10; Psa. 14:1-3; 53:1-3), what did Christ mean? He was talking about the *self*-righteous—those who *think* they are whole, when they are actually sick, or even very sick. This is another way of saying that many people *think* they are righteous when their lives are actually filled with sin. The problem is that they do not *see* themselves as GOD sees them.

How does this relate to Christ’s words in John, “that they which see not *might see*”?

God calls the weak of the world—people not having so many talents and abilities that these would cloud their ability to see the truth that God is trying to show them (I Cor. 1:29-31). Those God calls are people who admit—who *are* able to *see*—that they “see NOT.” Do not be confused. This is not difficult understanding. These are people who generally know that they are not the “great” of this world. They *can* at least see that they do *not* see the answers to life’s biggest questions. They realize that only God can reveal these spiritual truths to them.

On the other hand, the world is filled with people who *think* they see the answers, who *think* they know it all. They *think* they see the right approach to life—the right culture, church, society, political position, comfortable philosophy to live by, and so forth. In general, no one can tell them that they are wrong. Because such people *think* they see, Christ states that His judgment is to make them blind—another way of saying, “they which see might be made blind.”

To those who are willing to admit, “I see *not*, I do *not* understand life, I do *not* know what makes me tick, or why I was born, or what makes the world go around,” Christ says, in effect, “I am come that you who are willing to admit that you are blind, *will see*.”

Christ continued with the Pharisees in verse 41: “*If* you were blind, you should have no sin...” In other words, *if* they had no knowledge of their sin, or sin in general, they would not be judged at that time. Instead, the Pharisees *claimed* to see. Christ acknowledged their position, “...but now *you say*, WE SEE”—and His conclusion was: “...therefore your sin remains.”

Without realizing it, the Pharisees had painted themselves into a corner. They saw and portrayed themselves as people who understood the Law, could explain the Bible, knew who Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David were, what Solomon wrote and who the prophets were. They were plainly saying to Christ, “*We see*, therefore, we don’t need You to

teach us!” Christ answered, in effect, “Well, if that’s your thinking, then your lives are loaded with sin and that sin *remains*.” Truly, Christ could not teach such people.

This account presents a titanic message for every spiritually blind Christian of today—all those of Laodicea!

In truth, all who *claim* to see had better hope that they have *always been blind*, because otherwise God was and is judging them. Could *you* be doing what the Pharisees did? Could *you* be saying that you see when you are actually blind and need to “anoint your eyes...that you *may see*”? Does it concern you that just *claiming* to have sight, when *you* could be completely blind, will bring Christ’s judgment that “*your sin remains*”?

Consider—and reconsider—and consider again—this account very carefully. Its message is to *every* person alive in the Laodicean age. Jesus tells you, “Admit that you are blind and I will help you see” or “Continue to claim that you see and I will ensure that you remain BLIND—and that your SINS REMAIN!”

Will you receive Christ’s counsel in this book the way the Pharisees received His counsel?

The Greatest Wrong Assumption

As previously explained, it is now clear that the Worldwide Church of God totally left the true God. If you accept this reality, a painful question looms: If the WCG is not even *Laodicea*, then where are all the people of the dominant, seventh era? In other words, WHERE ARE ALL THE LAODICEANS?

No one hoping to escape Laodicea—to recover from its condition—can escape a direct confrontation with this towering question!

Remember, this group forms the *majority* of God’s people at the end. Their numbers are so *large*—so *dominant* among God’s people in their time—that Christ declares they constitute their own era. Also remember the pattern of Church history. We have long understood that there is a change in eras when the *majority* of Spirit-begotten people in God’s Church have taken on a completely different set of spiritual characteristics. This can be either very good, as with Smyrna and Philadelphia, or generally quite bad, as with Pergamos, Sardis and Laodicea.

Let’s return to the above question. My experience is that most brethren even willing to consider the question of identity begin with this assumption: Laodicea is SOMEBODY ELSE—SOMEWHERE ELSE!

This is the crux of *why* almost all today are Laodicean! Again, this very majority factor is why God calls it an *era*.

We now ask a greater question in two ways: How could this happen when we were forcefully warned for decades that this era was coming? It arrived and few were ready! Why? What was it that set up so many people to be caught in a trap they could not see coming?

For the time being, set aside *who* these people are, and keep your focus on these questions.

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

The American justice system holds that those accused of crimes are “innocent until proven guilty.” Almost everyone is familiar with this phrase. Though this has now changed, the British justice system historically operated on the opposite premise—one was “guilty until proven innocent.”

These two legal templates have a direct application to all Christians living in the Laodicean age. Let me explain!

As described, most people start with the assumption that they are *not* Laodicean. Though no longer true, there was a time when, at least theoretically, this might have been a more fair way to start the personal examination of one’s spiritual condition.

When Mr. Armstrong was alive, the Church was on track doctrinally, God’s government was in place, the Work was going full force and we were in the Philadelphian age. No one was confused about these things. In principle, converted people within the WCG were possibly—perhaps even *probably*—more likely to be Philadelphian. In effect, regarding being Laodicean, brethren were a little more generally “innocent until proven guilty.”

This has all changed!

The dominance—the majority factor—of the Philadelphian era is gone, replaced by the Laodicean age and condition. Strangely, most do not start with the assumption that they are part of this *new* era. Yet, this is the case. Actually, it has to be the case.

In the Laodicean age, *everyone* is “guilty until proven innocent.” It could not possibly be any other way! It does not have to *remain* this way—for anyone—but recognizing this is the only correct STARTING POINT toward recovery!

Another question looms: Why are so few willing to believe they are part of an era that is dominant in their time—that involves the vast majority of all those with God’s Spirit? Again, why is it that only rarely will anyone start with the assumption, “If this is the Laodicean age, the odds are that it includes ME”?

The greatest reason people do not begin by examining *themselves* is because Laodicea, among other things, is “*blind*”—and also “*naked*” (Rev. 3:17). These two characteristics work together. Would anyone unintentionally walk around *naked*, unless he were also *blind*? Of course not! Therefore, the worst part of being “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” is being BLIND! Look at all that just this one condition leads to.

Why do I say this?—why is blindness worse than the other bad characteristics of this era? Do not all these qualities sound equally bad?

The answer is that if one is *not* blind, he can *see* that the rest of this description applies to HIMSELF. *This* is why Christ tells Laodicea to *first* “anoint your eyes with eye salve.” This era does not *see* itself for what it is—its brethren do not see themselves for what they are! Nothing can change until their EYESIGHT is restored. Above all else, this must happen first.

The remainder of this book is to help *you* see what so many others now cannot see.

Christ also tells His people in the seventh era to “be zealous...and repent”—and to “buy gold tried in the fire.” Unfortunately, prophecy shows that the majority will never awaken to their condition—will never attempt to “be ZEALOUS...and REPENT.” They will not be willing to put in the effort to anoint their eyes, and to improve their spiritual condition and character (“gold”). They will never come to accept *how* to anoint their eyes, and *where* to buy more gold. This is because they will stubbornly insist that they *already* see. Sadly, although this is not necessary, prophecy foretells that blindness will *permanently* grip most brethren at the end of the age.

My prayer is that these words sober you—as they should!

All human beings are free moral agents. You need not *remain* blind. You *can* break rank from the majority. You *can* recover, even if most others do not!

A LOOK AT THE WARNING

No one enjoys issuing a warning. Certainly I never enjoy having to warn or caution brethren whose conduct is jeopardizing either their personal safety or their eternal life. It is a serious responsibility—never to be taken lightly.

The most important part of a warning is to be sure that people understand what is at stake, if they reject it. Christ has issued a very powerful warning to His people at the end of the age. If you reject it, you need to understand *what* you have rejected.

Double Warning to Laodicea

Revelation 2 and 3 describe Christ's evaluation of, and (in five cases) His warning message to, each of the seven eras of His Church (Matt. 16:18). At the end of each message (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), Christ cautions, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches." The phrase is identical in every case. The implication is that some in every age will not hear—will not listen to—Christ's words.

Naturally, this warning is also repeated to Laodicea. This is interesting because their problem has to do with *sight*—with the need to anoint their *eyes* as the way of addressing and solving their problems. In effect then, with Laodicea, Christ is emphasizing a *double* need for *all* people there to stop, LOOK *and* LISTEN—to start with a *personal* examination in the light of how He describes them.

Obviously, some in every era have a tendency not to listen. But only this era is in danger of being both DEAF—AND BLIND! In other words, in this case, Christ is saying, “If you have *ears* to hear, you will anoint your *eyes* with eye salve!” (We will later learn what the eye salve is.)

This is the message of this stronger—DOUBLE!—warning from Christ to His people in *this* age! In Laodicea’s case, it is as though His warning is to receive *special emphasis*—and He is adding *extra punch* to what He is trying to convey.

Christ actually PROVES that blindness is this era’s worst problem, because He instructs His people to “anoint your *eyes*.” This is because it is the anointing of the *eyes* that STARTS them on the path to recovery.

Above all, get *this* straight!

(An aside: At this point, it is understood that we are not explaining *what* the anointing process is—what it consists of. This will come later. But we must establish that Laodicea has a *vision* problem—that one’s *eyes* must be corrected.)

Obviously, self-righteousness and smugness also define this era, with an attitude reflected by “It can’t include me, so it must be somebody else, somewhere else!” Yet, it *does* include many thousands who do not see themselves within the parameters of Christ’s command.

The problem with these brethren is that so many are not *willing* to anoint their own eyes. The Pharisees proved that very bright, educated, knowledgeable people can think that they see, when they are actually stone blind! Take time to read these additional passages in which Christ repeatedly labeled them “blind” (Matt. 23:16, 24, 26).

First, you must deeply *desire* to see the spiritual condition of your character! You must desperately want to avoid ingesting false information, false doctrines—and anything else that is false.

Over and over again, the lesson of *physical* Israel is that they refused to see the truth, preferring soothsayers to the messages of God’s true servants. Here is the point. God, in His Word, states that the accounts of their mistakes are “written for *our* learning” (Rom. 15:4), and “they are written for *our* admonition, upon whom *the ends of the world* are come” (I Cor. 10:11). Note this last verse well. It is found in the verse immediately preceding “Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Also note this well: The time of the “ends of the world” has arrived. This time is NOW—so this means US!

The command to “anoint your eyes with eye salve” applies to *all* Spirit-led minds throughout the splinters. Here is how you know this.

Let’s return to the current condition of the WCG. Having fallen away and returned to the world, they are no longer God’s people—either

having never had God's Spirit or having lost it if they did. Anointing *their* eyes—and you will learn later why this would be impossible—is out of the question. They would never be willing to consider it. (I am not saying some *very few* still retaining a tiny amount of God's Spirit somehow could not still leave the WCG, if they repent and take action SOON—but the WCG remnant has been in a Protestant church and in the presence of a false god and false ministers since late 1992.)

I often hear of people who remained there who supposedly still believe in “government.” This is ridiculous! Understand that 99.9 percent of *these* have already fallen away—demonstrated by the fact that they now meet on Sunday and have ingested many other abominable doctrines, no matter their protestations to the contrary. They are also sending God's tithes to assist His very worst enemies. They have been directly helping these enemies to murder God's flock! “Following government” is merely an excuse to avoid the decision to follow truth, no matter the cost.

Therefore, recognize this. Christ's “counsel” to “anoint your eyes” has to be primarily to those who *escaped* the WCG apostasy—but who have *not* reflected the eight crucial characteristics of Philadelphia.

Christ “Counsels” His People

While Christ's words to Laodicea could be described as *correction, instruction* or *warning*, He uses the word “counsel” to describe His intentions. Notice: “I COUNSEL you to *buy of Me gold* tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and *anoint your eyes* with eye salve, that you may see” (Rev. 3:18).

The Greek word for “counsel” is *sumbouleuo*. Its meaning is fascinating, and particularly instructive for those interested in *receiving* the counsel. It means: “To give or take advice *jointly*, to recommend, consult, give or take counsel *together*.” After Christ had stated, in verse 17, that Laodiceans are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, He says, in effect, “Let's talk about this *together*.” Another way of describing the meaning of this word is similar to when Christ, as God of the Old Testament, said, “Come now, and let us reason *together*” (Isa. 1:18).

This form of counsel includes give and take—involving the willingness of a Christian to ask Christ to counsel him about *why* he is in such an awful spiritual condition! Extensive “give and take” must occur. This becomes more fascinating to understand when you read verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any *man* [spoken to individuals]

hear My VOICE, and open the door, I will come in to *him*, and will sup with *him*, and *he* with Me.”

Once again, being *willing to listen* first appears to actually precede what Christ will say to individuals who open the door, and accept Him into their house so that they can reason together. Since *listening* to Christ’s voice (calling from outside the house) *precedes* receiving His counsel, we must know precisely—removing all doubt—*how* to identify Christ’s voice.

First, recognize that this verse pictures an open dialogue, initiated by Christ, but accepted by the one who answers the door. The result is a meal shared *together*, for the obvious purpose of discussing what Christ wants the individual (remember, “if any *man*,” not “if any *organization*”) to see regarding his spiritual condition. (Take note: Organizations do not—and will never—*collectively* wake up, so Christ does not picture Himself knocking on the door of churches, groups or organizations. This is critical to see. Note it well.)

Defining Christ’s Voice

At this point, we must note that the living Head of the Church always warns His people when they are in danger. An extraordinary promise is outlined in John 10:3-5, revealing what Jesus Christ *always* does when His sheep are threatened. Let’s take a moment to read it.

Now notice that Christ says He calls His sheep “by name” at these times: “To Him the porter opens; and the sheep hear HIS VOICE: and He calls His own sheep *by name*, and leads them out. And when He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know HIS VOICE. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the *voice of strangers*.”

Christ’s use of His voice to call His sheep is specific—individual—by name! It is not general in nature. Christ is concerned about *every one* of His sheep—*every one* of His brethren. But all these—unless their condition is too weakened!—will still “know HIS VOICE.” This will be true even if they find that they have not heard it for a long time.

But we must ask the all-important question: Exactly what *is* the “voice” of Christ?

The most critical of the twelve rules of Bible study is that the Bible always interprets the Bible. (How many of these rules do you still recall?) Therefore, Jesus must *define* His voice or the statement has no meaning. He does this eight chapters later in John, where He was conversing with Pilate: “Everyone that is of THE TRUTH hears My voice” (18:37). This

“VOICE of TRUTH” will take on far greater meaning to you as the book develops. But it is certainly clear at this point that the most important matter that Christ would discuss—“counsel”—with each person would be a series of issues involving the *truth*—and its relationship to them per doctrine, conduct, receiving His government, doing His Work and where to fellowship with others who believe and do the same. This much should now at least be obvious.

Revelation 3:19 shows that the core of Christ’s message involves having to “rebuke and chasten” those who let Him in the door. He understands that JOLTING people is the only way to awaken them to their awful, deplorable spiritual condition! However, it should be easy to see that most people’s natural tendency would be to avoid this kind of unpleasant discussion. I liken it to a bill collector or one with a legal subpoena ringing the doorbell. It would be natural and easy for human nature to make excuses, and to hide in the back of the house until the person stops knocking. No one enjoys potentially unpleasant confrontations.

Do you see this? Christ wants you to “answer the door.” If you do not return to God’s Church, you will eventually be spiritually dead. Notice that Christ talks about gold “tried in the fire.” The word “tried” means “ignited, to glow, be refined, to be inflamed, on fire.”

We will learn later that the Tribulation is actually Christ’s *second* choice for which kind of fire Laodiceans can use to “buy gold.” The “wise virgins” of Matthew 25:1-13 will take this path. Of course, many will never do this at all, choosing the *third* kind of fire—the lake of fire—by refusing to return to His Church. These will succumb to the mark of the beast, and fail God’s greatest test. We will learn that these are the five “foolish virgins” of Matthew 25.

Grasp this central understanding. The warning to Laodicea to “anoint your eyes” is actually *ongoing*—continuing up to and *into* the Tribulation—for those unwilling to take action now to regain their sight. Once Christ’s message is ignored beyond the arrival of the Tribulation, a person has, by his (at this point) long inaction, *chosen* to place himself into the Tribulation where he must then anoint his eyes. So Christ’s warning actually stands for the rest of the age.

Therefore, if you are going to have to do this to receive eternal life, why not address it now? Why wait until circumstances force you, when the steadily worsening condition for those who have not done it will make it harder to do? Either way, you must return to God’s Church before the Tribulation, or become a foolish virgin having lost God’s Spirit. Also, there is another *hidden* danger in delaying, which will be revealed later in the book.

As God’s minister, in the spirit of Christ’s message, I now counsel you about something that I have learned, which, for reasons I will explain, could not be discerned by any other minister in any other organization.

What Our Website “Downloads” Reveal

We will see that The Restored Church of God is in an extraordinary—a truly unique—position, one unlike that of any other organization on Earth. This allows us to make an observation that no one else can about God’s people and, to some degree, no other can make about those in the world.

Two things make this observation possible, and distinguish us from other groups. We now offer *more literature*—more TRUTH in writing (in number of pages *and* publications)—than at any other time in the history of God working with mankind. (You may wish to carefully check this for yourself.) The second point is that we offer all of this on our websites, thus making it more *readily available* around the world than at any other time in history. In fact, we are the largest (most extensive) religious *publishing operation* in the world today.

To help get a sense of proportion and why I can make the above claim, as you may be aware, we have rewritten all of the books, booklets, articles and form letters from the past—and many more besides, including books such as this one—at a record rate. I do not say this to boast, but rather to illustrate a vitally important point. Our websites, collectively, are also now among the largest (and most extensive) *religious* websites of any kind IN THE WORLD!

Because we offer so much literature *on our websites* (some other groups post items but have produced relatively little material to do this), a very clear *pattern* of “downloads” has developed—many thousands of items per day and going up—which we can carefully measure. What it reveals is astonishing—a true commentary on what the people of God in this age are thinking!

First, here is what we are able to do. Our Website Services staff is able to track which literature moves faster and which moves slower. We can measure individual pieces of literature, sermons and other items by country, and do it in snapshots of months, weeks, days, hours and even *minutes*! With well over 400 pieces of literature just in English (not counting magazines and the articles they contain, which we can also track), you can imagine the treasure trove of statistical information available to us on a regular basis!

Before discussing what we have learned, let me say that we can *generally* tell—by timing, topic, search engine statistics and other means—when those from the world, from Restored or from the splinters are coming to our site. (Without being able to differentiate, it would somewhat skew what I am about to explain.) It is too complicated to fully explain how we can do this, but there are a variety of sophisticated indicators that we use to measure information with significant accuracy. Typically, a very large report is generated every week, revealing the previous week’s activity and breaking down the many thousands of items that were taken.

When we post a new item, depending upon what it is—and because we generally announce each new posting in advance—the item initially goes through a period of virtual explosion from our site. This has happened literally hundreds of times. Obviously, over time, this initial burst wanes and settles at a level reflecting search engine activity and advertising, which continues to steadily bring people primarily of non-Church-of-God background to the item.

With almost no exceptions, the following pattern continually repeats itself in four categories:

First are downloads of literature about prophecy (we offer far more than any other organization in the world), which absolutely dwarf all other topics. There are three additional categories that invariably also rank high on the index of weekly activity.

Second are controversial topics, such as the use of makeup, birthday-keeping, military service, evolution, sex and Mr. Armstrong’s role (almost no one else publishes material on any of these or similar “controversial” topics).

Third are items explaining the origin of pagan holidays and customs (we also offer far more of these than any other organization, and these are mainly being taken by people of non-Church-of-God background).

Fourth is the enormous and increasing amount of material we offer for children—*The Story of the Bible* series, coloring and activity books, *Children’s Bible Lessons*, etc.—that people generally take by the *thousands* in the first 48 hours of their release.

Here is the shocking truth. Downloads of any kind of literature about Christian growth, personal development, character building and how to strengthen one’s relationship with God lag *far behind* the above four categories. While the first categories are important, they have become much *more* important to most than matters of personal growth and one’s relationship to God.

Christ states that Laodicea’s temperature is “neither hot nor cold”—but rather is “lukewarm.” Through many tens of thousands of weekly literature downloads, our websites are literally—and accurately!—“taking the temperature” of thousands in the splinters, and in a way no other group can really begin to do!

Here are two illustrations: First, many thousands read our *The Story of the Bible* series, written largely for children, but choose to generally ignore our books and booklets about childrearing and marriage, which are both directly connected to *working with children*. On one occasion, we posted a *Children’s Spring Holy Days Activity Book* on the same day that we posted our booklet *You Can Build a Happy Marriage*. The children’s book was downloaded at over ten times the weekly rate of the marriage booklet. This continued for weeks. Related to this, our *Children’s Bible Lessons* typically see between 8,000 and 15,000, or even more, taken per week. (Obviously, even the biggest splinters, which, for instance, do not produce these, cannot measure such a thing. Their members come to *our* site for these lessons.)

Second, almost 2,000 people took our book *America and Britain in Prophecy* in the first two or three days it was available. That number has continued to soar. Downloads of my many sermons about prophecy also exceed others on different topics by a wide margin. However, booklets and articles on conversion, faith, overcoming, aspects of salvation, healing, prayer, study, fasting, meditation and exercising God’s Spirit consistently rank far below the above-listed “hot button” topics.

For example, I have written a very clear, thorough and strong booklet on healing, yet only a few thousand have shown interest in it. This is a sad commentary on peoples’ priorities. While going to doctors is certainly not *sin*, we will see that this practice does, however, reflect a fascinating parallel with those who lived in ancient Laodicea and were pre-occupied with doctors and medicines.

Consider this: Most brethren who use the Internet are familiar with the almost endless number of prayer requests and lists, shared between groups on websites and in chat rooms. Yet, how many actual—true—*healings* are being announced? Ironically, at the same time, most do not even realize the futility of the Church at large praying for sick relatives and others *in the world*. Christ’s own prayer in John 17:9 applies to *God’s Church*. It does not replace James 5:16, which is to be done between *brethren*. Further, “healings” is a gift given and evidenced only within the Body of Christ, and most no longer have even a clue what this means. (The one with the gift of healing must be in Christ’s Body.)

Also, most no longer appear to understand or even *remember* whom God promises to heal and whom He is *not working with!* Remember, the world is cut off from God, but a true minister could be used to heal one being called. Finally, with so much of even this most basic understanding now lost to most of God's people, it is not strange then that so many brethren today spend nearly as much time in doctors' offices as do those in the world.

Despite its relatively small size, in comparison to the big splinters, The Restored Church of God is experiencing dramatic healings, including demons being cast out. There is a reason for these miracles. Christ describes Philadelphia as having "little strength" (Rev. 3:8). We have always understood that this is directly connected to a little *miraculous power*. This is what the Greek word here means. Laodicea is not so described. (In this regard, many should also read I Corinthians 11:28-30—it might yet save their physical lives through healing.) The Revelation 3:8 reference can be easily proven to be a by-product of apostolic power and authority present. (*THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD* book to the splinters explains this.)

Take your own overall spiritual temperature on this crucial point. Those with a Church of God background should ask themselves: "Which topics on Restored's sites—or anyone else's—do I find most interesting?" Honestly assess your conclusion for the message it is sending you.

A Lovely Song

There is a potent message in what we have just discussed. Most brethren (not all) today seem to *assume* that their character is generally in order and, as a result, choose to focus on prophecy, controversial topics and material that will occupy their children. Why, for instance, are more not focusing on *how* to have a happy marriage, tying this to *how to TRAIN* their children?

Let's begin, from God's Word, to make the point more strongly.

Mr. Armstrong repeatedly taught that the Ezekiel warning is for the nations of modern Israel. Chapter 33 summarizes the responsibility of God's Church to act as a "watchman." Mr. Armstrong recognized that he held this role. In verse 30, God speaks to Ezekiel about how "...the children of your people [the modern nations of Israel]" talked constantly to each other about his apparently attractive message and wonderful style of preaching. Verse 31 describes how these nations want to *appear* to be God's people, as they sit before Ezekiel: "...and they *hear* your words, but they will not *DO* them." Verse 32 describes this prophet's

words as “a very *lovely song* of one that has a *pleasant voice*, and can play *well on an instrument*.” But the verse goes on to repeat, “for they *hear* your words, but they *do them not*.”

While this prophecy speaks primarily of the millions around the world who heard Mr. Armstrong preach the truth, then did little or nothing about it—still occurring with the millions hearing us today—it is also an exact commentary on God’s people of the last era. My literature and sermons are *also* apparently a lovely song to thousands of God’s people in the splinters. While I could be flattered by this, I am not. Rather, as with Mr. Armstrong’s statements quoted earlier, I am sick at heart! I am profoundly sad that so many have grown so terribly and desperately *blind* to their need to seek Almighty God—and to clean up their CHARACTER, along with their woeful and confused doctrinal understanding. Like Ezekiel “sighing and crying” (9:4) for the sins of modern Israel, I personally sigh and cry for the wretched, deplorable condition of so many thousands of brethren whom I know personally!

Helping Some Now—Others Later

If you are unwilling to accept the need to endure the trial—the modern Christian tribulation (Acts 14:22) of holding fast doctrinally *now*, and cleaning up your character *now*—then you are headed for the most horrible time *ever*—the Great Tribulation! In other words, if many will not accept the Philadelphian’s more difficult path of personal “tribulation” before “Jacob’s trouble” begins (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1), they should expect to endure the far worse one later.

This is the choice each person makes.

But I take heart in the following two points of understanding. First, more and more people *are* waking up, recognizing who and what we are, and are joining us to finish the *true* Work of God, and to prepare for the Wedding Supper. Second, of those thousands who read our material and return to God’s Church, but who will not wake up *before* it is too late to escape, it will be the witness, work and zeal of *this* Work that they will reconsider when they are in the horrible Great Tribulation. We take consolation in this—and those of brotherly love understand that we still have a responsibility to help all of God’s people escape this coming trial on the modern descendants of ancient Israel (Dan. 11:32-35)!

Those who remained Laodicean *will* remember the doctrinal understanding and fuller way of life that God restored through His Church, lost to so many now, and will yet be saved in the Tribulation!

INSIDE ANCIENT LAODICEA

You have probably heard it said that “the past is prologue!” This means that events, patterns and trends of the past are always repeated in the future—they serve as an *introduction* (a prologue) to what will happen again. Actually, Solomon made a similar statement long before this modern phrase was coined. He recorded, “There is nothing new under the sun.”

This passage is more true of the twentieth-century apostasy than you might have realized. The first-century falling away, which began to occur before all of the original apostles had died, was a very close parallel to our time. So were other later periods in Church history. Therefore, it is worth briefly examining the first apostasy for lessons we can apply.

At very least, you will be surprised.

First-Century, Post-Apostasy Splinters

About A.D. 135, the Jews were defeated by the Romans in their second revolt (the Bar Kochba rebellion) since the Church’s beginning in A.D. 31. After the Romans put down this rebellion, they destroyed Jerusalem, renamed what was left “Aelia Capitolina” and forbade Jews to re-enter the city.

At this point, the Jerusalem-Pella congregation of the true Church came under the control of an Italian “Christian” named Marcus. This

persuasive leader was able to convince the majority of the congregation (largely Jewish converts) to renounce the “Law of Moses”—the Ten Commandments. This gained them admittance to Jerusalem by the Roman authorities.

Here is what the famous historian Edward Gibbon said about the few who refused to follow Marcus (emphasis mine throughout): “...the crimes of *heresy* and *schism* were imputed to the *obscure remnant* of the Nazarenes, which refused to accompany their Latin bishop...In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy, whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation...[the followers of Marcus] excluded their Judaising brethren from...the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life” (*The Decline and Fall*, ch. 15, pp. 516-517).

Nazarenes, Ebionites and Quartodecimani

The *majority*, so willing to give up the truth they once embraced, began to shun and condemn the *few* who held fast to what they had *all* formerly believed. The *Nazarenes*, those who chose to remain loyal to the teaching of the apostles, were accused of being divisive—charged with being guilty of creating “schisms”—meaning more than one group of disagreeing factions.

“Nazarenes” came to be a contemptuous term, given by the world to Christians, especially in Judea. It later came to include all who still acknowledged and kept the precepts of the Law of Moses—meaning all the laws of God, including the Ten Commandments and Holy Days. As early as about A.D. 57, the Jews had accused Paul before Felix (the Governor in Caesarea), calling him a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). The name “Nazarenes” is derived from Nazareth, where Christ had lived. It simply meant “Christian.”

Because they kept God’s Law, the Nazarenes were looked upon with wonder by the world: “Nazarenes, an obscure Jewish-Christian sect...they dated their settlement in Pella from the time of the flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, immediately before the siege in A.D. 70; he [Epiphanius] characterizes them as neither more nor less than Jews pure and simple, but adds that they recognized the new covenant as well as the old, and believed in the resurrection, and in the one God and His Son Jesus Christ...born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again, but adds that, ‘*desiring to*

be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other. They used the Aramaic recension of the Gospel according to Matthew, which they called the Gospel to the Hebrews, but, while adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy as regarded...sabbaths, foods and the like, they did not refuse to recognize...Paul or the rights of heathen [Gentile] Christians” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 19, p. 319).

During the closing years of the Ephesian era, many lost their first love and fell prey to *shades of false teaching*, which slowly gained momentum.

Those who remained faithful—the ones who determined to exactly follow the apostle John and those loyal to him—were considered inflexible and uncompromising about receiving “new enlightenment.” This is often said of The Restored Church of God.

The Smyrna era suffered the full brunt of the apostasy. During this time, those faithful to the truth were in the *small* minority. Persecution by the Roman Empire affected all forms of Christianity—the true Church, various other groups (including a variety of groups that splintered from the truth into hybrid mixtures of truth and error), and even the early Catholic movement at Rome.

By the mid-second century, the Judean Nazarenes *seemed* to disappear, with those called “Ebionites” replacing them. But, as Gibbon explains, these were the same people: “The name of Nazarenes was deemed too honorable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received, from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites” (*Decline and Fall*, ch. 15, p. 516). Also note: “...the Nazarenes of the 4th century are...to be identified with the Ebionites” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 19, p. 319).

Their enemies called them Nazarenes, Ebionites, or Quartodeciman— they called themselves the Church of God.

The faithful few who remained, constituting the true Church, were scornfully called Ebionites or “paupers” in reference to their “simplicity” in accepting the Bible literally. This group was certainly never considered “rich and increased with goods,” like the bigger groups who disdained this remnant for striving to obey God as the apostles had taught them.

Maintaining their headquarters at Pella, they spread into Syria near Damascus. There is record of a small group in Boerea (not the Greek Berea of Acts 17), today called Aleppo. Traces of Ebionites were found here as late as the fourth century.

Other “Ebionite” Groups?

Because most of their writings have perished, we know little of Ebionite history. Most information about them is from their enemies. They were few in number, with at least *two other groups* bearing the same name—one rigid and Pharisaical, and a larger liberal group that adopted certain of the most popular doctrines and philosophies of their time. These were nothing more than early splinter groups, mistakenly connected with God’s Church.

The more rigid splinter, labeled Ebionite, was actually antagonistic to Paul. It was composed of carnal Jews who did believe that Jesus was God, but who opposed Paul for letting Gentiles rise to the level of Jews by “allowing” them opportunity for salvation. Irenaeus indicated that this group was strict like the Pharisees and only accepted the gospel of Matthew.

The most popular, larger splinter bought into various Gnostic doctrines. As the second century ended, many had exchanged the simplicity of Christ for a blend of truth and Essenism (radical conservatism). Some became known as Elchasaïtes, after their leader, a false prophet led by demonic visions (a stunning parallel to today’s Philadelphia Church of God [PCG], but also some smaller groups). Adopting a strange mix of Gnosticism and outright demonism similar to modern spiritism, another of their leaders, Alciabides, spread their doctrines to Rome about A.D. 220.

All three groups of Ebionites existed side by side during the Smyrna era. The former Nazarenes, who maintained the apostles’ teachings to the letter, were fewest in number and most despised by the majority—yet were accused of causing division by not *joining* the majority.

The liberals, under influence of apostate leaders like Marcus, were prone to compromise—and were willing to adopt the latest intellectual attraction, Gnosticism. (The parallel with the largest splinters, so obviously, but unwittingly, still under the hypnotic spell of the WCG apostates, is unmistakable. This is also seen in my splinter book about *THE TRUE CHURCH*.) Similarly, the faithful Quartodecimani of Asia Minor were ultimately betrayed by the “enlightened” majority who had abandoned *some* of the truth.

At the other end of the spectrum were those who seemed more comfortable with a Pharisaical code of beliefs in an atmosphere of tyrannical leadership. (This again reflects the first large modern splinter—PCG—plus several smaller “slivers” that came from it.)

Differing shades of belief have reappeared in the final era of the Church—in the twenty-first century.

Nothing New

Well-known Harvard professor George Santayana stated, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Recall again what Solomon said: “There is nothing new under the sun.” God’s people continue to make the same mistakes for generations, centuries and millennia!

Recognizing the parallel between liberalism today and what, by comparison now, must be acknowledged as the *less* liberal years of the mid-70s in the WCG, let’s read what Mr. Armstrong said about this. It was written about nine months after he began to put the Church back on track following those early liberal years (emphasis his):

“God says to His Church, through the apostle Paul, ‘Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (I Corinthians 1:10).”

“This passage continues saying the church at Corinth, precisely like today’s Church of God, was following various and differing *men* with differing doctrines.”

“What happened in those churches...has happened to us today. Those guilty of causing division are fighting God and shall be judged by Him!”

“This group of liberals assumed the authority of setting Church doctrine [with the goal of unity in mind]...that is, unity in watered-down doctrines that older loyal ministers did not and *never would accept!* THAT WAS NOT UNITY—IT WAS *DIVISION!*”

“*What Is a Liberal?*”, GN, Mar. 1979

Human reasoning has affected every era of God’s Church. When false leaders manage to seize internal control, human reasoning springs to life and devises a variety of partial solutions—because most are not willing to wait for God to reveal *His* solution. No wonder it has also been said, “The lesson from history is that nobody learns from history.”

The first-century pattern of splinter development offers a vital lesson for us today. Do not let it be lost on you. Eventually, the Nazarenes—God’s true Church—were discounted because they were deemed too small and rigid. The large splinters moved on without

them—and, in the end, moved completely away from God and became lost to history!

(The reader is urged to take the time to read our inspiring and truly fascinating book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* It offers revealing—and stunning—insight into the path that God’s Church has walked for 2,000 years.)

How Mr. Armstrong Described Laodicea—the Ten Virgins

This book would not be complete without an in-depth examination of how Mr. Armstrong saw and described Laodicea. His numerous and thorough statements stand as one more stark testimony, sweeping away excuses, to those looking for a reason to whitewash themselves.

Many have erroneously come to believe that the parable of the ten virgins, in Matthew 25, means that half the Church is Philadelphian and half is Laodicean. Mr. Armstrong never taught this—and it is certainly not true, because Christ said *all* of the virgins “slumbered and slept.”

The first three quotes below bring a chilling reality to the grave danger of misunderstanding this parable. Based directly on Matthew 25:1-13, referenced in the first three quotes, Mr. Armstrong always understood and taught that Laodiceans—depicted by all *ten* virgins, not just the five foolish ones—only have a 50/50 chance at salvation.

Do not be confused—these are *your* odds if you do not awaken!

I urge you most strongly not to read these statements as though they apply to *someone else, somewhere else*. Read them as though they apply to YOU. Those who ignore Mr. Armstrong’s warnings do so at their own peril. You and I are guilty in this age unless *proven* innocent! Once again, be very careful not to give yourself a passing grade when the facts do not!

I have included more quotes than might seem necessary. This is done for a purpose. As you read, notice the constant thread in Mr. Armstrong’s thinking directly connecting Laodicean lukewarmness to WATERING DOWN AND COMPROMISING DOCTRINE. (Italics generally mine—all other emphasis is his.)

“While we are in this place of safety three and a half years, the two witnesses shall be preaching to the whole world, protected from Satan. But Satan in his mad wrath will then make war with the REMNANT Church. This has to be the Laodicean era of the Church (Revelation 12:17).”

“Finally, what of the Laodicean era of God’s Church? Remember, it, too, is GOD’S Church—having the commandments of God and Testimony or Word of Jesus (Rev. 12:17).”

“But that era of the Church is pictured in Matthew 25. Matthew 24 shows the sign Jesus gave prior to His coming to end the present world order, and the Great Tribulation, Day of the Lord and Second Coming.”

“Matthew 25 shows the time just before Christ shall return. It pictures the Laodicean Church as 10 virgins who took their lamps (their Bibles) and went forth to meet Christ at His coming. But five of them—half of the Church—took their lamps (Bibles) but without oil to light the lamps (having the Holy Spirit to enlighten their minds to UNDERSTAND the Bible). *Some translations render this into English indicating they were losing the Holy Spirit, because of negligence, lack of prayer, fellowship with the brethren and with God and Christ and being overcome with materialistic and worldly interest.* Are some of us like that, even now?” [All italics are mine here for a reason more clear later.]

“While they—the backsliding half of the Church—were trying to get back closer to God, the coming of Christ shall take place, and the door into God’s Kingdom will be SHUT in their faces! WHAT A TERRIBLE AND AWFUL TRAGEDY! It could happen to you or me.”

Co-worker Letter, Jan. 20, 1981

“Now back to Revelation 12:17: Satan shall be full of WRATH against the REMNANT—the last remaining generation of the Church—the ‘Laodicean’ Church, and will terribly persecute her. But Matthew 25 shows that though that final generation of the Church shall be LUKEWARM—not less emotional, but more ‘liberal,’ more secular and less spiritual—*less strictly biblical*—yet half of them shall be SAVED at Christ’s coming, though half shall be spewed out of Christ’s mouth (Rev. 3:16).”

“Personal,” PT, Aug. 1980

“We are getting frighteningly close to the END of this age.”

“This Church was drifting into a Laodicean condition.”

“The Laodicean church will be characterized by *spiritual lukewarmness*—half of its membership (Matt. 25:1-13) will be shut out of the Kingdom of God.”

“But, the BAD NEWS, as it appears today, my dear brethren, is that we, undoubtedly of the Philadelphia era—my son’s ridicule notwithstanding—are in serious danger of BECOMING also the Laodicean era. I am

personally much concerned about that. If YOU are NOT concerned, then indeed we *are in mortal DANGER*.”

“*What God Never Did—Never Will —Allow...*,” GN, Aug. 1979

“The...Court...has now removed the Receiver, but the lawsuit is not over.”

“We need to ask seriously, WHY is God allowing [this trial]? I can answer that. Our people of this ‘Philadelphia’ era were becoming lukewarm, drifting little by little into the ways of this world. Even some *ministers were ‘watering down’ the truths and doctrines* a loving Christ had put in His Church.”

“We need a real EXPLOSION to wake us up!”

Brethren Letter, Feb. 24, 1979

“...when my son...came to take over more authority than had been delegated to him, surrounding himself with a group of liberals, who LED him, and MISLED him into *watering down God’s doctrines*—under their false influence a *Laodicean lukewarmness and indifference, losing the LOVE of God’s TRUTH*, found root in the Church.”

“*Christ Sets Church on Track*,” GN, Apr. 1979

“The Church was being turned upside down. It seemed to be a matter of going as far as possible in the ways and beliefs of this world’s ‘Christianity’ as influenced by Satan—which amounts to going as far as possible into Satan’s ways and AWAY FROM GOD’S WAYS!”

“The HARM that was done as a result of this attitude to GOD’S CHURCH is *INCALCULABLE!* It harmed, in a way I think my son did not realize, thousands of members of the Church of the living GOD. It led to *lukewarmness, a more careless attitude toward real or strict obedience to the ways of God.*”

“*Reports About Garner Ted False*,”

WN, Mar. 6, 1981

“Instead of wholeheartedly OBEYING Christ through HIS WORD, THE BIBLE, there was creeping in, during years when I was in other parts of the world up to 300 out of the 365 days in the year, a *LIBERAL spirit of SATAN.*”

“Those leaders to whom I had delegated the responsibility of ADMINISTERING the POLICIES and DOCTRINES Christ had set in God’s Church through His apostle, went way BEYOND the authority given them. They started CHANGING POLICIES and *watering down*

God's TRUTH, changing DOCTRINES, compromising—seeing HOW CLOSE they could go—and lead the Brethren in going—to the ways of SATAN! They wanted to be more LIBERAL—more like THIS WORLD OF SATAN.”

“...there still remains among a FEW of us a tendency to LET DOWN—to lose our zeal—and even to become LUKEWARM.”

Brethren Letter, Sept. 15, 1980

“Of the ‘Philadelphia’ Church, Christ says, ‘I know that you have but little power.’ It is probably the WEAKEST in numerical and physical strength and power—the smallest in membership, of any of the Churches from the time of the Apostles until the Second Coming. It has but few ministers.”

“But SOME of those in the Church today will grow weary with well-doing. They will brag about being the true Church—thinking they are spiritually rich, when they are, in fact, almost spiritually destitute. Because they are indifferent to the real WORK OF GOD, lukewarm, lacking in zeal, Christ will spew them out of His mouth. THEY cannot be used in His work. THEY shall lose the very salvation they boast of having unless they repent! God help you to never drift into the LAODICEAN church!”

“Must God’s Ministers Be Ordained By the Hand of Man?”, GN, Oct. 1962

“Jesus Christ, the Head of God’s Church, has been moving swiftly to RE-AWAKEN and set His Church back on the track, during the past five months.”

“We are shaking off the Laodicean lukewarmness that was beginning to drug us to sleep.”

“We’re OFF TO AN INSPIRED, AROUSED NEW START! Let’s now INCREASE our dedication and deep devotion. GOD’S WORK is FAR FROM FINISHED!”

Brethren Letter, Oct. 23, 1978

“‘A house divided CANNOT STAND,’ says Jesus. My son has made God’s Church DIVIDED! Up until ten years ago, WE WERE NOT DIVIDED!”

“Again God says to us, ‘Except GOD build the house, they labor in vain that build it.’ GOD through the living JESUS CHRIST built God’s Church of OUR time, as surely as the time of the first original Apostles. The Work GREW AND GREW with God’s blessing for the thirty-five years up to 1969—SINCE THEN GOD’S BLESSING HAS

BEEN WITHDRAWN. We had been tending to forget GOD, letting Laodicean lukewarmness leaven us. *CHRIST SAYS NOW, AWAKE! Rise up from this stupor that has drugged us! RALLY BEHIND CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLE! LET'S GET ON WITH GETTING THE JOB DONE.*”

Brethren Letter, June 28, 1978

“When we face a serious or alarming situation, there is...a tendency toward LETTING DOWN IN PRAYER—in BIBLE STUDY, and consequently in that zeal and willingness to sacrifice for GOD’S WORK.”

“Do you suppose Satan does not know all this? He knows! He will do all in his power to get you DISCOURAGED to get you to find some fault—to LET DOWN in prayer and Bible study—to LOSE YOUR INSPIRED ZEAL for God’s Work!”

“I KNOW that most of us have not, yet, come back to that full WHOLEHEARTED energetic ZEAL for GETTING ON WITH THIS WORK that we MUST have to finish it!”

“Looking at present FACTS, and TRENDS, that might seem impossible! But this is THE WORK OF GOD—A WORK OF FAITH—and existing facts, trends, circumstances, HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FAITH. The living Christ has resources, and ways WE KNOW NOTHING OF!”

“And whereas, it is incumbent on us...to CONFESS and deplore... our SINS in allowing worldly interests and pleasures to start drawing us away from our God, and our zeal for HIS WORK, I call on all Brethren to CONFESS this lukewarmness...and to PRAY, with all FERVENCY and CONTRITION, for God’s pardon for these offenses, and for a permanent BLESSING on HIS WORK henceforth, continuously to its final completion.”

“Brethren, many if not most of us have let other interests creep into our minds and hearts till we do not have ANYWHERE NEAR the ZEAL for the GREATEST WORK ON EARTH, that the football players have for a football game.”

“WHY can football players get themselves ‘UP’ in almost fanatical ZEAL, motivated by HATE, when we are indifferent, ‘DOWN,’ and lukewarm about the MOST IMPORTANT AND GLORIOUS CALLING OF ALL TIME?”

“...Christ is DOING HIS PART—opening new doors. Only ONE THING has been WRONG!—and we must FACE IT!—too many of us have been GROWING LUKEWARM...”

“We may think, because we keep [God’s] Sabbath, that we have no wicked ways or sins to turn from. *But laxity...can be sin.*”

Brethren Letter, Nov. 2, 1972

This last quote began by referencing prayer and Bible study. We will later see that intensive prayer and thorough, detailed Bible study is far more important than most begin to realize in regard to those whom God approves.

Before continuing, it is crucial that you settle the following understanding in your mind: Throughout the remainder of the book, it is of central importance that you accept Mr. Armstrong’s understanding—straight from the Bible!—identifying all ten virgins of Matthew 25 with Laodicea. This is an enormous key to seeing the danger that *you* are in, if *you* do not anoint your eyes in the way Christ instructed—and if you do not return to God’s Church first. This parable is about the dominant number of brethren at the end of the age. Half return to God’s Church but never return to Philadelphian condition. The others, remaining outside Christ’s Body, and thus cut off—“unplugged”—from Him, simply lose God’s Spirit. Their character slowly collapses because they would not return to God’s Church *or* do what Christ tells them is necessary for them to recover! And the latter is impossible while cut off from the Vine.

An alternative understanding, that half of the virgins are Laodiceans and half are Philadelphians, has taken root in those who any longer even concern themselves with this issue. This is particularly dangerous thinking! It lulls those who accept it into the much more comfortable belief that being Philadelphian or Laodicean is A 50/50 PROPOSITION, and also then—and this is the greatest problem—that missing out on salvation is not seen to be part of the question!

This simply could not be more wrong! Laodiceans have become numerically dominant—involving the majority with God’s Spirit today. Remember, they are big enough to be called an era. You must—you MUST!—grasp this central reality! The “50/50” chances are strictly related to who survives *eternally* and who does not—from a number who *all* enter the Tribulation!

Inside the Ancient City

Jesus Christ compared the seventh and final era of His people to the ancient city of Laodicea. Now let’s see why He chose *this* particular city to reflect the majority of Christians alive in the last days. There are numerous parallels, and they set the stage for what *any* of God’s people can

determine to understand. Christ knew that the record of history would have to assist us—and it does. I will point out the more obvious parallels as we progress. Most will be reserved for a little later.

As we proceed, be careful of the tendency to scoff or sneer. Christ had very specific reasons for choosing a comparison of *this* city with His people of the final era. These parallels will become obvious to those with “ears to hear” and “eyes to see”—to those who truly want Christ’s insight.

Antiochus II founded the original city of Laodicea between 261 and 253 B.C. and named it after his wife Laodice. Antiochus II was a Seleucid king who ruled Syria (Laodicea was originally part of greater Syria) after Alexander the Great died. It was more accurately known as *Laodicea ad Lyceum* (“on-the-Lycus” river) to distinguish it from at least six other cities with the same name. Two roads, actually important trade routes, passed through the city.

The area in and around Laodicea is beautiful country, with pleasant fertile valleys surrounded by rolling hills, leading to an easily accessible, excellent harbor on the southwest coast of today’s nation of Turkey. Farther inland, however, the country becomes much more rugged and difficult. It was easy for travelers to want to stop at this point, when they may have originally planned to go farther inland.

Many visitors found the atmosphere in and around Laodicea too inviting to leave. It enjoyed a Mediterranean climate with plenty of rainfall, moderate temperatures and gentle sea breezes, even during the relatively hot, dry summer. Only an occasional snow or frost appeared in the higher altitudes around the city in the winter. Also, two small rivers passed by at some distance on either side of the city, and surrounding hills were generally covered with forest. I have studied many pictures of the area and it is lovely.

Playground of the Wealthy

The commercial environment of Laodicea was vibrant, with a number of successful businesses there. (This is possibly connected to the fact that in the first century, it had a large Jewish population.) Extensive vineyards grew on the hillsides all around the city and a bathing beach was nearby, as was Hierapolis, just 6 miles north, famous for its thermal baths.

Within the city were fountains, public baths, gymnasiums, an immense stadium, special meeting and banquet halls, and two lavish theaters (one large and one small). These all reflected the prosperity of Laodicea and why it has been described as “a favorite pleasure resort frequented by dignitaries,” including governors and royalty.

As the banking center of the Roman province of Asia, Laodicea, widely known for its wealth, was the most prosperous city in the region. Its numerous mausoleums are a testimony to the number of the wealthy buried there. The citizenry was so wealthy that, when its first major earthquake destroyed their city in A.D. 60, they refused Roman aid, choosing to rebuild the entire city themselves. This made Laodicea famous as an example of self-sufficiency.

Is it any wonder that Christ said *modern* Laodiceans proclaim, “I am *rich*, and increased with *goods*, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17)? A study of the key words in this passage demonstrates that Christ was referring to *monetary* wealth and accumulation of *material* goods. Upon returning to God’s Church, they are introduced to greater and fascinating knowledge about what this means.

Laodicea also derived some of its wealth from its textile industry, being famous for weaving—and its citizens wearing with pride—a soft, silk-like, glossy-*black*, wool fabric. Once again, it is easy to understand *why* Christ counsels modern Laodiceans to buy the “*white* raiment” of purity and righteousness. It is fascinating that so many young people in the world, but also in the large splinters today seem to pride themselves in wearing all black clothing, deriving this trend directly *from the world*. For those who look closely, God always provides enough clues to get the big picture!

The big splinters, like Laodicea itself, are felt to be pleasant, comfortable places, entered with easy access from the “harbor” or “major roads” of popular travel. Of course, brethren arriving there would not be eager to go farther “inland” where travel is more difficult and challenging. Also, many senior “dignitaries” of God’s Church (evangelists and senior pastors) reside (“vacation” *is* probably a better word because of the tiny “workloads” most carry) in the splinters, where the “climate” is pleasant, the “wine” is good and the “beaches” are sunny. (Take note that, while Philadelphia’s true remnant today has what could be called the “goods”—much, much more literature and other materials to continue God’s Work and feed the flock—the big splinters for a while offered more “services”—a few more local halls, pastors, Feast sites, youth camps, socials and fellowship.)

Historic Meeting Place

In the fourth century, Laodicea became the scene of at least two important religious councils, reflecting how outside theologians and church “dignitaries” also felt comfortable in its pleasant confines. In about A.D.

365, Roman Emperor Constantine personally presided at “The (Catholic) Council of Laodicea,” in which he decided that Roman Catholicism was to be the single state religion of the empire. It was here that Sabbath observance was officially made illegal.

The original WCG *Correspondence Course* states, “The most famous canon from this council—the twenty-ninth—reads thus: ‘Christians must NOT judaize by resting on the SABBATH (GOD’S true rest day), but must WORK on that day...and, if they can, resting then (on Sunday) as (professing) Christians. BUT if any be found to be Judaizers (God’s true Sabbath keepers), let them be anathema (ecclesiastically accursed) from Christ’ (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XIX, p. 148).”

This massive heresy—forbidding the very sign that identifies the true God with His people (Ex. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12)—was introduced to the empire beginning at Laodicea. How ironic that it was from *this city* that those serving the true Jesus Christ were formally declared anathema by the Roman church!

Remember! The word *Laodicea* generally means “the people rule, judge and decide”—because Christ’s leadership has been unwittingly expelled from this era. Regarding the political environment of Laodicea, it is interesting to note that this ancient city practiced democratic rule. It prided itself in allowing the *people* to have a voice in civil affairs. Interestingly, and we will see this, history records that the ancient city of Philadelphia, just next door, was led by a series of benevolent monarchs.

Sudden Destruction

In A.D. 494, a massive earthquake devastated Laodicea without warning. Eventually, it was *totally* destroyed by Islamic invaders, who left it what has been called by historians “a scene of utter desolation.” Two later attempts to rebuild it were unsuccessful. While it rose to significant prominence, the city of Laodicea ended in complete ignominy, with little more than shattered fragments of archeological remains, across an area approximately one-half square mile in size, as a permanent testimony to its destruction. It has remained uninhabited for almost 1,500 years. Historians and archeologists have marveled at the scant, very “unspectacular ruins” (as one historian described it) of this once dynamic, thriving city.

The parallel of these two events (the earthquake and invasion) striking ancient Laodicea is an unmistakable parallel to what will strike the final era of God’s Church. For this reason, the section of Revelation de-

scribing it omits any statement that Christ will “come” to this era. This is because it will not yield a single survivor still alive at His Return. Half of the “virgins” will have died in the Great Tribulation by beheading (Rev. 12:17; 20:4), the result of *Satan’s* wrath on physical and spiritual Israel—and the other half long before will have sold out and gone on to accept the mark of the beast, thus dying in the Day of the Lord, the time of *God’s* final wrath on all nations before Christ’s Return.

A Water Problem

The one drawback to Laodicea’s location was that it had no local water supply—neither the cool well water of adjacent Colossae nor the hot springs of Hierapolis, just beyond the Lycus River valley. As a result, Herod the Great built an enormous aqueduct to the city. Significant portions are still visible, as is the tower from which the water was distributed. There are still a few remnants of the “pipes,” made from cut stone, which are partially plugged today from the heavy mineral content of the water they carried. (I have been able to examine close-up photographs showing them to be over 80 percent clogged.)

Unfortunately, the only source of spring water available, for any aqueduct that might be built, was at some distance, allowing this already mineral-laden water to become stale and lukewarm in temperature by the time it arrived in the city. The result was that this water often induced vomiting in those who drank it!

No wonder Christ tells those of the seventh era that “I will spew [Greek *emeo*: “to vomit or throw up”] you out of My mouth.” Despite the enormous prosperity and manifold pleasures of living in Laodicea, the inhabitants had to get used to stale, mineral-laden water always at this temperature.

A stunning and unanticipated parallel will later present itself!

Treating Bad Eyes and Ears

Finally, a very famous, respected medical school (initially 13 miles to its west, but eventually moved to Laodicea) existed there, whose doctors were so famous that their faces were inscribed onto the local coins. This school produced a special ear ointment and an eye salve (called “Phrygian powder”) made from alum, and famous from as far back as the time of Aristotle.

This powder, exported in tablet form throughout the Mediterranean region, was sold to improve, or supposedly even cure, weak eyes. It

was placed, topically, directly on the eyes. While Laodiceans took enormous pride in their medical skill generally, and in their particular ability to help those with *hearing* problems, they specialized in helping those we might describe as “legally blind.”

As explained, many of God’s people today form a remarkable modern parallel. Most brethren in the splinters frequent doctors almost as often as do their counterparts in the world. How sad that we seemed to be the only organization that has written a booklet about healing.

It is important to note that history records that the citizenry of Laodicea also saw themselves as especially perceptive, and prided themselves on their education, wisdom and intellect—their keen “mental eyes.”

No wonder again that Christ tells His people of the modern era to buy eye salve so they might have spiritual vision. It is also interesting that a special ear ointment was commonly sold in this city. Yet, the majority of *modern* Laodiceans are not only blind but also do *not* “have ears to hear” Christ’s words of warning to them.

COMPARING THE MODERN ERA

The examination of the ancient city of Laodicea only has value if we use it to help understand where the same conditions or characteristics have reappeared in the modern age. Otherwise, all we have had is a geography and history lesson that however interesting reveals nothing of *spiritual* significance or value.

From here on, the book will slowly develop and build toward the completion of a graphic picture for all Christians in the twenty-first century to analyze with themselves in mind.

Nothing Good to Say

At this point, it is critical that we re-introduce the central question: Where are all the Laodiceans? Remember, the Bible shows that all of them are in an absolutely terrible spiritual condition, and that their numbers are dominant. Christ would surely offer enough information about their identity that those who choose to remain in such a large, dominant condition must do so without excuse. So, recognizing them should be easy—if one has “eyes to see.”

All those who participated in a WCG Spokesman or Ambassador Club know that the first rule of effective speech evaluation is that the evaluator should always begin his remarks with praise—he should have something good to say about the speaker’s efforts. Similarly, Christ always had *something* good to say about each of the first six eras (and *noth-*

ing bad to say about Smyrna and Philadelphia), before offering correction. Yet, He has absolutely *nothing* good to say about Laodicea. Christ’s warning “counsel” is sharp, strong and clear, underscoring the truly awful condition of Laodiceans. Again, this should make the task of identifying them very easy. Their spiritual condition alone separates—and *distinguishes*—them from faithful Christians!

Eight Signs of a Laodicean

The Bible has, in fact, given specific and descriptive SIGNS—OR EARMARKS—of those in the Laodicean era. They are not difficult to identify or enumerate. While there are seven *obvious* earmarks, we will actually examine *eight*—the eighth is unique and must be explained to be understood. This happens at the end of the chapter.

The Message

To better reference Christ’s warning to Laodicea, here is the entire message to this era, found in Revelation 3:14-22: “And unto 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; I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are LUKEWARM, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of My mouth. Because you say, I AM RICH, AND INCREASED WITH GOODS, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING; and know not that you are WRETCHED, and MISERABLE, and POOR, and BLIND, and NAKED: I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: *be zealous* therefore, *and repent*. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcomes 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. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

The Water Problem Reappears

Verse 16 describes the *FIRST* condition—being “lukewarm.” The obvious problem is that these brethren are not hot with *ZEAL*. We will later see that, like the ancient city’s difficulty with obtaining water, and having to

settle for it being “lukewarm,” modern Laodicea’s *spiritual* problems are traced *directly* to insufficient SPIRITUAL water in their lives (John 7:38-39)! Also, like the many minerals in the water of the ancient city, which were fouling the value of the good “H₂O” they were in, the “power, love and sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7) of God’s Spirit within modern Laodicea are also being “fouled,” if you will, by a different another spirit. We will see that what John called the “spirit of error” (I John 4:6)—and Paul called “another spirit” (II Cor. 11:4) and the “spirit...of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2)—is intermingled with God’s Spirit in their minds.

Their lukewarmness leads to six more conditions, all relating to a lack of zeal.

The SECOND problem is expressed as “I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” Like those of ancient Laodicea, this is an attitude of self-sufficiency. Such people feel no need, compulsion or urgency to examine themselves. Self-satisfied, and happy with themselves, they reflect the Protestant song “Just as I am.” This causes the next three conditions, specifically, to be largely byproducts of the first two.

Most have not understood the extent to which Jesus Christ specifically, and repeatedly, explained the degree to which those who would be His true followers must “sell all that they have” (Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22) to be His disciples. When the verses are all put together on this subject, and read objectively, the message is stunning. In fact, it is impossible to misunderstand. Jesus said so much about it, as did Paul and others, that I had to give four sermons to cover it all. The result is that “rich and increased with goods” carries a much greater meaning than most ever realized.

The THIRD, FOURTH and FIFTH conditions are described as “wretched,” “miserable,” and “poor.” Interestingly, the Greek word for *wretched* can be translated either “wretched” or “miserable.” The word for *miserable* means “miserable” or “pitiable.” These words are so similar that it is as though Christ is using words comparable to *awful*, *terrible*, *appalling* and *deplorable* to intensify His point!

The Greek word for “poor” (*ptochos*) is particularly fascinating. It means to “crouch and cringe as a beggar, pauper, poor.” This brings to mind images of homeless street people. What average resident of wealthy, ancient Laodicea would have been willing to even remotely consider himself to be in such a debased condition? On what basis would he have come to such a conclusion about his own state? This condition reflects the difficult challenge facing Christ in reaching His people today.

If those in today’s Laodicea had merely followed Christ’s very first two instructions to His disciples, given in the Sermon on the Mount—to

develop attitudes of being “poor *in spirit*” and to “mourn” (Matt. 5:3-4)—they could not have continued feeling so rich (including trusting in physical goods and money) while remaining so spiritually poor. If they had recognized their own weakness of being insufficient in God’s Spirit, they would have regularly mourned over their sins and continually “hungered and thirsted after righteousness” (vs. 6).

Tragically, this did not happen.

Everything Traced to Blindness

The most fascinating part of Christ’s description of Laodicea comes to light in the SIXTH identifying sign. The only possible way that anyone could not see such an absolutely horrible condition as the one that Christ describes is if he is totally BLIND! The Greek word Christ uses for “blind” is *tuphlos*, meaning “OPAQUE, blind, physically or *mentally*.” In other words, the vision problem afflicting the Laodiceans is profound—what we would call “stone blind”—and is much worse than the mere *weak* eyesight of those who actively sought treatment with Phrygian powder 2,000 years ago.

Let me reiterate an earlier point: It is the very condition of *blindness* that is Laodicea’s worst spiritual fault. Remember, if those of this era were not blind, they could *see* that they are lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, etc. Of course, no ancient Laodicean, thinking himself to be intellectually enlightened, as well as an expert in both physical eyesight and perception (mental eyesight), would *ever* even remotely consider that he might be *totally blind!* How interesting that the foolish virgins of Matthew 25 apparently do not *see* themselves slowly losing God’s Spirit—the “oil” in their “lamps” (Bibles)—until it is too late.

Note that the Smyrnans (Rev. 2:9) were described by Christ as being the polar opposite of the Laodiceans. This era, like Philadelphia, did not receive any correction from Christ. Take note. Historically, the Smyrnans were *physically* poor, yet Christ described them as *spiritually* rich. Knowing this, they were willing—like their Philadelphian counterparts—to let their enemies call them *Ebionites*—meaning spiritual “paupers.”

There is a thunderous message here for Philadelphia—what might be called today’s “Ebionites”!

Where the Wealth Is

Be willing to examine the big splinters in a different light. Annually, these organizations take in millions of dollars, individually, and scores of

millions, collectively. Be honest with yourself and admit that these groups openly acknowledge their relatively vast financial reserves.

For five years, upon inheriting it in 1995, I owned and managed a fairly successful company. (I also watched my close relatives and parents build several successful companies.) I probably have at least as good a working knowledge of business *balance sheets* and *profit and loss statements* as any other minister. That even UCG would keep several millions of dollars in the bank, when there is so much to do and when well over one hundred million dollars of *annual* income were lost in the apostasy, is a towering testimony to being *literally* “rich and increased with goods” in an organizational sense. The other four larger splinters are, proportionately, similarly wealthy. Holding so much in reserve to *physically* protect themselves, particularly ministerial salaries and unbiblical retirement Mr. Armstrong never allowed, when the need to expand the Work is now so great, is a deeply selfish—and truly appalling—attitude.

Bank balances of this size go a long way toward producing a confident, self-sufficient *feeling* of invincibility—a kind of mental insulation—against what the future would be able to bring upon such an organization. It is this very temptation that caused Paul to instruct Timothy to “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, *nor trust in uncertain riches*, but in the living God...” (I Tim. 6:17). Verse 18 contains the antidote—what Timothy was also to charge the rich: “That they do good, that they be RICH IN GOOD WORKS, ready to distribute...” This means individuals and organizations.

In this light, at least briefly examine the enormous scope and Work of The Restored Church of God, which is being accomplished by the tithes and offerings of a relatively small number of people, and a staff of over 70 who work almost unending hours to continue God’s Work and to give His full truth back to people who had it taken away. Yet, like the very miracle of the “fish and loaves,” *God* multiplies the output of our effort, allowing us to do vastly more than our size might seem to permit.

A Pleasure-Loving Age

The modern age, through scientific advancements, increases in knowledge, but also breakdown of character, has produced a pleasure-crazed world, with western societies awash in physical, material accumulation of goods, and the money necessary to buy more. Seemingly, this has become the only thing that most in this generation think about.

Paul said that conditions in the Church, in the “last days,” would reflect many who had become “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of

God.” Take a moment to carefully read the passage from II Timothy 3:1 (where CONDITIONS “in the *last days*” are established as the context) through chapter 4, verse 4. While most readers think that the first few verses of chapter 3 have only to do with *society’s* descent into greater immorality, character breakdown and sin, even a cursory glance at the full context shows this is not the case. Though modern society *is* certainly included in the description, the primary focus there is the Church, where “not enduring sound doctrine” could happen. (We will see this demonstrated much more clearly later in the book.)

This worldwide pursuit of pleasure has had a far greater impact on thinking *among God’s people* today than most people would ever suspect. And this is exactly what happened to the brethren living in the similar environment that was ancient Laodicea. God’s people cannot help but be affected by what is happening in the world around them. This is why so many want the “services” of the large splinters instead of the “goods” held by Philadelphia’s remnant. Brethren should have seen this change in materialistic thinking coming—except that widespread *blindness* had *already* set in, preventing it.

Get clearly in your mind *who* Paul is talking about—then reread the first few verses of II Timothy 3 to appreciate the kinds of awful attitudes and conduct so many of *God’s people* have fallen into right along with the world.

A Spiritual Nudist Colony

We must at least briefly comment at this point on the fact that Christ also calls Laodiceans *naked*—the SEVENTH earmark. This is exactly what the Greek word means: “nude – absolutely, relatively, literally or figuratively.” Stated bluntly, it is as though the entire last era has become a *spiritual nudist colony*. I do not say this—Jesus Christ does! More than the other conditions afflicting Laodiceans, we might again ask: Would people walk *naked* unless they were also *blind*? In addition, if all the others around them were *also* blind, they could not expect anyone *among their constituents* to point this out. This changes upon returning to God’s Church.

It takes someone with SIGHT to tell a blind person, or a whole group of blind people, that he or they are naked. The messenger (Rev. 3:14) sent to warn them *must* have SIGHT and thus must come from *outside* this era. Naturally, this man is part of God’s Church.

Once again, it is the very blindness afflicting Laodiceans that prevents them from seeing all the *other* bad qualities within their spiritual condition. Therefore—let’s say it again!—addressing blindness FIRST is

the key to clearing away the rest of what is weak or wrong about them. You now know *why* Christ warns His people straight at the heart of the problem—that they must anoint their EYES, so that they can regain their SIGHT, as the first step to recovery.

Before continuing, remember that Christ tells His people that the “*shame* of [their] nakedness” must be removed. In fact, at least generally, most would not be ashamed of exposed body parts unless their *private parts* were exposed. It is the PRIVATE PARTS of the body that must always be covered.

Now let’s see the special emphasis the Bible places on covering one’s “loins.”

Paul instructed the Ephesians to “Put on the whole armor of God” (6:11). Verses 14-17 describe the six pieces of “gospel armor” that Christians must wear to “stand against the wiles of the devil” and, ultimately, to achieve salvation.

The very FIRST piece that Paul mentions is to “Stand therefore, having your LOINS girt about with *truth*.” This is an astonishing scripture for all who will receive it! Laodiceans have forgotten enough of the truth they once knew that their “loins”—their PRIVATE PARTS—have become *exposed*! Simply put, they are walking in this shameful condition because they have forgotten many true doctrines, but cannot see that they have.

Before this book is complete, this point of understanding will be proven beyond all doubt! You will have no choice but to believe that this is *exactly* what Christ had in mind when He counseled His people to “anoint [their] eyes.”

But there is another aspect of the nudity problem that is directly affecting YOU. It has to do with naked *teachers* bringing their false doctrines to you. I must be most graphic. Unless *you* regain your sight, you cannot recognize when you are being “flashed” by spiritual “streakers” flaunting their new doctrines at you, and trying to also rip *your* clothes off!

Think of the future course—the punishment—awaiting Laodicea in this way: Those of this era had—and threw away!—much truth, understanding and special knowledge. This wonderful truth was re-established for God’s Church (Philadelphia) after 19 centuries—and much of it had not been understood by *any* other era since the apostles’ age. Also, even the original 12 apostles did not understand certain major aspects of prophecy, sealed until the time of the end (Dan. 12:9), but revealed through Mr. Armstrong. To have been given so much truth and understanding—that uncounted billions have been denied for millennia—and to either let it slip away or to reject it outright, Christ considers unconscionable.

Magnificently adorned in the beautiful clothing of all God’s doctrines, so generously given to them, and at such great sacrifice by God’s leading servant, the members of the last era stripped themselves naked in public. He cannot hold such people guiltless—and He does not!

But, let me say this again for emphasis. Christ would never punish an entire era—or even one person—for becoming “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” without having first made PLAIN exactly what this *means*—in other words, exactly what would bring the punishment. Therefore, the Head of the Church is duty-bound to explain, in crystal clear detail, precisely what “anoint your eyes” means—and He does!

Before studying in the next chapter the vital first phases of what this instruction means, recognize that this chapter referenced EIGHT distinctive earmarks of all Laodiceans. We have only discussed *seven*. Since it applies to one half, the EIGHTH sign is that of a *permanent* Laodicean—one who, after *admonition* and *warning*, will still *not* anoint his eyes, thus sealing his fate eternally!

For those who *truly* want to understand what they now must DO, continue reading. All others may want to stop here.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Mr. Armstrong spoke repeatedly of the law of CAUSE and EFFECT, and how it permeates every action in life. He continually reminded the Church of how man treats the *effects* instead of the *causes* of his problems, because, cut off from God, he does not *know* the causes that produce world peace, happiness, abundance, well-being and prosperity. Until humanity yields to God, it will never be able to identify the way—the now hidden CAUSES—behind its problems, evils and ills. Hence, real and lasting solutions remain elusive.

Laodicea has a problem similar to the world at large. It can never resolve its many problems, reflected by its awful condition, until it deals specifically with the CAUSE bringing them. Christ identifies it, for those who *first* exercise “ears to hear.” After all, His entire message to this era is just nine verses long—and much of this describes the *effects* of their condition *before* identifying the CAUSE.

But the living Christ has not left His sheep without *specific* direction from Him pointing straight at the CAUSE behind all of the bad effects in their lives!

Anoint Your Eyes

If you are willing to HEAR—the *first* step to regaining sight—we now ask: Exactly why does Christ use the term “anoint”?—and why does He specify the “eyes”?

The answer involves the second step.

Remember that, historically, the citizens of Laodicea saw themselves as especially perceptive. They prided themselves on their education, medical skill regarding seeing and hearing, and their wisdom and intellect. This is a classic reflection of our time, sometimes referred to as the Information Age.

Today’s society *is* more educated and informed than any other in history. The modern person generally sees himself as very enlightened. Yet, all of God’s people know that the world is utterly blind to the global calamity lying immediately ahead.

In part, it is this very *feeling* of ENLIGHTENMENT that becomes the cause of the blindness. Like the Pharisees of John 9, why would people who already think that they see be motivated to take steps to correct a supposed loss of vision? Can you see this connection?

Just as the world’s pursuit of materialism has smitten the Church, the above prevailing modern “information” environment has also literally incubated the final era of God’s people. Now consider this: Within the greater “church” at large today—*church* merely means “called out ones”—a broad variety of splinter-produced literature, coupled with numerous independent websites, offering vast amounts of “church” information, leave most of God’s people quite content with the available knowledge that they are able to obtain on a regular basis—and easily.

These seemingly countless websites, newsletters and tape ministries, run by self-appointed “teachers,” “gurus” and sundry “sources of light,” now plague God’s people as never before, and add immensely to the general confusion that now exists. Again, though, this leaves people feeling quite pleased that they are getting—and *seeing*—the “big picture” of all that is happening among the different organizations. But this also *generates* another reason that so many believe they can see—that they are “okay.” Thinking of worse problems, attitudes and conditions that they observe *elsewhere* in other groups, many decide, “I’m not *that* bad!” Self-satisfaction enters.

This is why I cannot help but believe that there will not be a great number who will take seriously even a sobering book such as this—and also when so much is at stake!

Could you be one of the exceptions?

Extraordinary Passage

A remarkable passage in I John 2 unlocks the door to understanding the phrase “*anoint* your eyes” and answers the two questions introducing the

last subhead. What this single scripture reveals is truly “eye-opening”—if you will receive it.

Written in the 90s A.D., after all of the other apostles had died, all three of the apostle John’s epistles are against the backdrop of a developing apostasy, with many brethren beginning to exchange the truth for false doctrines. Like his gospel, the words *truth*, *true*, and *truly* are found over and over throughout John’s epistles. While known as the “apostle of love,” John should probably be at least equally known as the “apostle of TRUTH.” This is because this very old apostle so urgently—and repeatedly—exhorted God’s people to *hold onto the truth!*

This sets the stage for what we can learn about anointing the eyes. As we read, you will not have to accept my word. Once again, the critical rule of Bible study is to *always let the Bible interpret itself*. Watch how clearly the Bible interprets Christ’s words to Laodicea.

Open to I John 2 and read each verse cited.

The context of John’s message is also vital. Verse 4 warns that anyone who claims “I know Him [Christ],” but “keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and THE TRUTH is not in him.” It is crucial to note that verse 5 goes on to reveal that only those who “keep HIS [Christ’s] WORD” can develop and perfect the love of God in their lives. (In the end, others can only *talk* about the law and love.) After all, John 17:17 states, “Your [God’s] word is TRUTH.” Keeping “His *word*” is identical to keeping or holding to the *truth*.

Do you clearly see this?

I John 2:11 goes on to issue a warning by speaking of any man who “walks in *darkness*, and knows not where he goes, because that *darkness* has *blinded* his eyes.” Of course, this is the central problem with every man and woman in Laodicea. So, let’s read carefully.

The “Unction”—the “Anointing”

The context, building to verse 20, continues with a warning about not slipping back into the ways of the world. Verse 20 begins the explanation of how to avoid—or recover from!—blindness and the resultant departure from truth that inevitably accompanies it. Notice: “But you have an UNCTION from the Holy One, and you *know all things*.” Verse 21 continues, “I have not written unto you because you know not THE TRUTH, but because you know it, and that *no lie* [doctrinal or otherwise] is of THE TRUTH.” So then, this unction, which allows recipients to “know all things” *of the truth*, is crucial.

But what is it?

Let’s continue. John was showing that it is this “unction” that keeps people secure in God’s TRUTH. Note this well. The exact *same* Greek word is translated “ANOINTING” in verse 27. It is most critical to understand this. The Greek word translated “unction” and “anointing” is *chrisma*, meaning, literally—“the endowment of the Holy Spirit: *anointing*, unction.”

Let’s speak plainly—let’s leave no room for misunderstanding: At conversion and baptism—through begetting, making them sons—God *anoints* all new Christians with His Holy Spirit. However, the amount varies from person to person, and this can be even more so over time. We will learn that it is this variance that introduces the biggest part of the problem.

Verse 26 reveals why John had to write as he did: “These things have I written unto you concerning them that *seduce you*.” Here was the problem. Certain leaders were trying to pull the brethren away from elements of the truth. This was the challenge that the brethren were facing and John was addressing! Of course, it is the same today.

Verse 27 makes absolutely plain the connection between the Christian “anointing” with God’s Holy Spirit and retaining “truth.” (Make a mental note for later that anointing is always done with oil.) Now read carefully: “But the ANOINTING which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same ANOINTING teaches you of all things, and *is* TRUTH, and is *no lie*, and even as it has taught you, you shall *abide* in Him.”

Spirit of Truth

But how does one “abide” in Christ? The answer to this is more important than you may think.

On the last night before His crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples that He would send them “the Comforter...even the SPIRIT OF TRUTH” (John 15:26). A few verses later, He adds, “Howbeit when it, the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, is come, it will guide you into *all truth*” (16:13).

A Christian is to “abide” only in what the SPIRIT OF TRUTH has led the Church, and therefore him, to see. Think! It should be obvious that this is not an endorsement for anyone, anywhere to follow *any* supposed “spirit of truth” as he sees fit, because the *real* Spirit of truth, the only one flowing from God, will *always* guide brethren toward doctrinal truth *already proven*. Do not miss this!

Can you better understand why James wrote, “Of His own will begat He us with the WORD OF TRUTH, that we should be a kind of firstfruits...”

(1:18)? Of course, it is the HOLY SPIRIT (of truth) that, in fact, enters the new child of God at baptism (Acts 2:38), begetting him.

The Holy Spirit is synonymous with “the word of truth” and “the Spirit of truth.” Grasp this. These three are all one and the same.

Now you can better understand I John 2:4—“the *truth* is not in him.” This is another way of saying that the “*Spirit* of truth,” or the “*word* of truth,” is not present in people who are not obeying God.

Let me repeat again for emphasis: All of the virgins of Matthew 25 were running out of “oil”—the Holy Spirit. Half had dwindled so far in their supply that they lost it, and thus could not spiritually recover. By now, it should at least begin to be obvious that they were long in the process of losing this unction—the *anointing!*—the oil!—the word of TRUTH!—the “*Spirit* of TRUTH!” This is why the foolish virgins in the parable were instructed to “go...buy” oil (the Holy Spirit) from “them that sell” (the Father and Christ). But it was too late!

So, we can now state one of the most vital conclusions to be drawn in this book. Christ’s use of the term “eye salve” can now be understood—it stands revealed. It is the Spirit of truth—*spiritual* “Phrygian powder”! The wise Laodicean will go buy more NOW!

Removing the Cause of Shame

We are ready for the next verse in I John 2. Verse 28 begins (and *only* begins) to explain the all-important tie between the ANOINTING with God’s *Spirit*—to be able to clearly see the TRUTH—and why Christ connected the anointing of the eyes as the way to eliminate the “*shame* of their NAKEDNESS.”

Notice what John adds: “And now, little children, abide in Him [Christ]; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be *ashamed* before Him at His Coming.”

Standing before God with “our loins girt about with truth”—because we are anointed with an abundance of the Spirit of truth—removes the condition of being naked and ashamed. The Greek root for “shame” and “not ashamed” is the same, *schune*. The meaning of “not ashamed” could also be correctly translated “not *disgraced*.” It certainly would be a shameful disgrace to stand before God with exposed *private parts*, when you are expected to appear before Him in spotless white clothing.

No wonder Christ will send such utterly “shameless” people into the Great Tribulation, the last remaining place where they can recover—where they can “buy”—sufficient character and truth (“gold”) to receive salvation.

Are you beginning to understand why brethren of the seventh era—who have been shown to have but little interest in regular, diligent prayer, study, fasting and meditation—have a dwindling supply of the Spirit of truth? And why many may have already lost this Spirit?

Let us state this plainly. You must “anoint your eyes” with much more of the “Spirit of truth,” or you will never remove the “shame of your nakedness.” While we will learn much more later about *how* to do this, you must see that this connection has been established by God through *His* words—not mine!

In order to receive *your* sight back from Christ, you must first be willing to recognize—to admit—that you ARE blind. Also, you could certainly never help any other person with eye problems unless you first address your own.

All real understanding of God’s Plan and spiritual truth comes from God. It was only the action of His Spirit that opened our eyes when we were first called. Notice again the Bible interpreting the Bible: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the *spirit of wisdom* and revelation in the *knowledge* of Him: the EYES OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING *being enlightened*; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what [are] the [real] riches of the glory of His inheritance” (Eph. 1:17-18).

If you will admit that you have grown low in God’s Spirit, causing you to lose sight of some or much of the *truth*, then God will replenish, once again, “the EYES of *your* understanding.” *You* can once again “be enlightened” to *all* that you previously understood.

Recall that ancient Laodicea seemed to have everything—except good water to drink from a local source. Can you begin to see the strong parallel with Christ’s people in the final era of the Church? Similarly, brethren today seem to “have it all,” except the one thing that really counts—enough of the living water of God’s Spirit of truth flowing out of their spiritual “bellies” (John 7:37-38). They desperately need strong eye salve to see all that they have lost!

Loving—and Living—the Truth

Before concluding this section, one more absolutely vital seed from I John 2 must be planted into your understanding. It introduces how what we have just learned about truth is also inseparable from Christian *conduct*—RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The last verse of I John 2 expands the context into another element, continuing into chapter 3: “If you know that He is righteous, you know

that every one that *does* righteousness is born [begotten] of Him” (vs. 29). Loving the truth is not merely an act of the mind. It involves building righteous character—*doing* righteousness—as evidence that one has been begotten with God’s Spirit. It involves “*deed* and truth” (I John 3:18).

Notice that the first two verses of chapter 3, which are really the continuation of chapter 2 (men made these divisions), speak of receiving salvation and becoming “like” Christ in the resurrection. Verse 3 adds, “And every man that has this hope in him *purifies* himself, even as He [Christ] is *pure*.”

In Chapter 8, we will learn the vital and fascinating spiritual connection between righteousness, the Christian *purification* process—LIVING the truth—and the Laodicean condition.

What Many No Longer Discern

On one occasion, when both the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ, tempting Him for a sign from God, He cut to the heart of their problem. Here is what He said: “When it is evening, you say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and threatening. O you hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky; but can you not *discern the signs of the times?*” (Matt. 16:2-3.)

Here is an irony—this verse with a modern twist. Unlike the Pharisees, many people today seemingly *can* (at least partially) discern the signs of the times—ominous and continually worsening world conditions—but they can no longer fully *discern the TRUTH* and the all-importance of building character. It is as though these brethren have lost the ability to even recognize what they once claimed to have *PROVEN*. Christ’s explanation for why He spoke in parables has come to pass in their lives. While many have come to believe that they still see what God teaches, these same brethren have returned to blindness.

Notice this: “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because *they seeing see not*; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall *not* understand; and seeing *you shall see, and shall not* PERCEIVE: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their EYES they have CLOSED; lest at any time they should SEE with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matt. 13:13-15).

Certainly, all those who were there listening to Christ were not without physical sight and hearing, but rather were without any ability to *perceive* the MEANING of things they saw and heard.

This describes Laodicea!

When Mr. Armstrong decried the false doctrines that had entered the Church in the 1970s, he was generally referencing many of the very same wrong ideas now so popular in the splinters—wrong government, altered definitions of what is the Body of Christ, birthday-keeping, wearing of makeup, mixing the Person of Christ with the gospel of the kingdom, believers marrying unbelievers, interracial marriage, de-emphasis of Christ’s broken body for healing, voting, compromising or even dismissing some of God’s tithing laws, laxity regarding Sabbath dress, improper hair length for both men and women—and so many other doctrines and traditions lost today (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6).

Besides all these ideas, a whole host of *other*—NEW!—false teachings, which Mr. Armstrong could not yet even remotely have had in mind, have also appeared throughout the splinters and slivers. Conditions have grown much worse today!

Yet, like those hearing Christ’s parables, few seem to be able to *perceive* what is happening! You are learning why.

Those Who Love the Truth

Another critical New Testament passage reveals what God explains has always been at stake for those who do not sufficiently love the truth—who stop replenishing the spirit of truth within their minds. Can you guess—do you recall—what I am referring to?

In II Thessalonians 2:3, Paul foretold the “falling away” to occur prior to Christ’s Return: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Christ’s Return] shall not come, except there come a *falling away* first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...” Of course, the falling away has now become a fact of history!

The next six verses in the chapter describe the incredible deception perpetrated by the final man of sin. Then, verse 10 reveals which people are swept away by deception. Read carefully: “And with all deceivableness of UNRIGHTEOUSNESS in them that perish; because *they received not the love of THE TRUTH*, that they might be saved.” We have seen that half in the last era of the Church will eventually buy into this horrific final deception.

Verse 11 explains the great hidden danger inherent when people begin to compromise the truth—and when their LOVE of it begins to dimin-

ish: “And for this cause God shall send them STRONG DELUSION, *that they should BELIEVE A LIE.*” This will happen to at least half of the people who are now saying, “Accidents only happen to others.”

Guarding the Pearl of Great Price

Has *your* love of the truth waned? Have you forgotten all that is at stake for *everyone* who does not continue to love this greatest of all possessions? When was the last time you read the above verse showing what God will send upon those who will no longer take a stand for the “pearl of great price” they should have sold *everything* to buy? These same people were once also presumably willing to sell everything to purchase the “hid treasure” found in a “field.” Recall the parables.

Is it important to *you* that the “pearl of great price” is not permitted to be chipped or blemished? Do you still thrill to *all* of the precious items found in God’s special chest of “hid treasure”? Force—FORCE!—your mind to give an honest answer to these questions. If you quickly answered, “yes,” stop and repeat the question, because you did not even *consider* it.

Are you further understanding why Christ always warns His sheep with the VOICE OF TRUTH when they are in danger (John 10:3-5)? Remember, He calls each one “by name,” because He is concerned about every one of them. Do you also now better understand why He said that His true sheep “*know* His VOICE...OF TRUTH” (18:37)?

Such is this book!

Also recall I mentioned that the term “VOICE of TRUTH” should take on far greater meaning to you as the book develops. It should now be obvious that the most important matter that Christ would discuss—“counsel”—with each person who answers His knock would be matters involving *truth*—doctrine and conduct—and how much of the *Spirit* of truth he has lost!

Vital Sermons

You should now be seeing this importance more clearly. The sermon “Do You Love the Truth or the Idea?” on our website will be most helpful in understanding how so many have fooled themselves into believing they love the truth, when they are merely intellectually attracted to and in love with a theory or concept of it.

Also, many have lost the central truth of who and what is the Body of Christ, and how one must remain in it to be connected to the only

Source of where they can receive more of the Spirit of truth. This subject is addressed in Chapter 11, and is carefully explained in *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?*

The nineteenth-century philosopher, William James, once declared, “The ultimate test of what a [the] truth means is the conduct it dictates or inspires.” How true! Previously, we talked about those who *purify* themselves in order to receive salvation. These are the people who *live* the truth. It is not enough that we just “love” it—we must also LIVE it! In Chapter 8, we will analyze in careful detail what it means to LOVE *and* LIVE God’s truth!

Next, however, we will take an in-depth look at Philadelphia—both the modern era and the ancient city.

WHAT PHILADELPHIANS CAN SEE

In a previous chapter, we discussed the fact that Laodiceans are, in effect, a spiritual nudist colony, an entire Church era of God's people that walks naked—unclothed.

Being fully clothed means wearing *several* pieces of clothing. One of the most important garments, which no Christian can be without, must be introduced at this point. In turn, it introduces all of Chapter 7. This garment could probably be equated in importance to the outer garments that all people wear.

Clothed With Humility

Here is what Peter wrote, "...be *clothed with humility*: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God..." (I Pet. 5:5-6). Similarly, Paul instructed the Colossians to "Put on [like clothing]...*humbleness of mind, meekness...*" (3:12).

By now, you have surely seen the need to approach your task at the end of this age—and the scriptural instruction in this book—with extraordinary humility. No other approach has any chance to yield true success—God's approval. Without this most basic of Christian qualities, none of us have any hope of seeing ourselves as God sees us—let alone actually building His character by growing, overcoming, improving, and learning—LIVING—His truth! It takes a truly deep humility to

acknowledged that you *might* be blind, wretched, naked, etc.—especially when your *feelings* may be strongly telling you otherwise (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

In this light, what do Philadelphians see that Laodiceans cannot? Having described the signs of a Laodicean, what then are the signs of a *Philadelphian*? In effect, what have those of *this* era remembered that all Laodiceans can no longer see?

Humility Introduces Eight Philadelphian Signs

The people of God live in an age when their counterparts in the world no longer care about international events and conditions in the way that most once did. Many factors, including information overload, have contributed to mankind feeling jaded to what is now happening all around it.

Christ described our age as a time when “iniquity (lawlessness) abounds” and “the love of many waxes cold” (Matt. 24:12). Yet, Ezekiel 9:4 records that God places a special mark on those who “sigh and cry” because of every kind of “abomination,” now occurring on a worldwide scale. Obviously, for an entire group to receive this mark, there must remain a very special people who have *not* allowed themselves to become calloused.

These are people who still care!

We have always understood that the Church of God, in every age, is directly affected by the society around it. To some degree, its condition ebbs and flows with prevailing social trends and character traits. This was exactly the problem with the brethren living in ancient Laodicea—and is part of the very reason Christ compares His people today (though they are a *spiritual* city) to the citizenry of that physical city. Today, with spiritual blindness comes the inability to still deeply *care* either about people or important matters. Most of God’s people have become, at least in part, “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19) toward human conditions, events and other things that once moved them. This includes doctrines that have slipped from their understanding.

At the same time, relative to the above point, an entire generation of people (actually several, which have come in waves) absolutely *filled* with PRIDE (the opposite of humility) has emerged in society and completely surrounded God’s people. This makes it much easier for even those with God’s Spirit to naturally absorb this attitude. Recognize that even the normal human *physical* humility of just a generation or two ago has almost completely disappeared. Any kind of conscien-

tious, regular approach to a humble personal examination is much like the old American South—it is “gone with the wind”!

Before proceeding, accept the incredibly arrogant spiritual environment in which you live.

The Message

To become a Philadelphian, one must first examine Christ’s description of this era. Then he must examine *himself* for where he reflects it—or, in the Laodicean age, where he almost certainly falls far short. You will find that there are also *eight* different signs reflected in those of Philadelphia.

Here is how Christ describes the sixth era of the Church in Revelation 3:7-13: “And to the angel of the church in PHILADELPHIA WRITE; these things says He that is holy, He that is true, He that has the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; I know your works: behold, I have set before you AN OPEN DOOR, and no man can shut it: for you have A LITTLE STRENGTH, and HAVE KEPT MY WORD, and have NOT DENIED MY NAME. Behold, I will make them of the SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN, WHICH say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have KEPT THE WORD OF MY PATIENCE, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: HOLD THAT FAST WHICH YOU HAVE, that no man take your crown. Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

Before discussing the other seven earmarks of Philadelphia, recognize the one that Christ considers most important is the characteristic for which He *names* the sixth era. It is, quite literally, “the brotherly love era.” We will see that He could have given it several other names, yet chose this one. We will also discuss this first trait—that of brotherly love—in some detail later. Suffice to say at this point, Christ’s name for this era reflects how important it is to Him that His people retain BROTHERLY LOVE, while those around them grow more jaded and calloused to the lawlessness mankind is enduring. Therefore, one of the two vital areas of Christianity that Philadelphians never stop caring about is their fellow man—in the world, as well as God’s people.

This is the FIRST earmark describing the sixth era.

The Second and Third Earmarks

The SECOND—and most vital—point that Philadelphians continue to care about is the need to hold on to the entirety of God’s truth and traditions. They understand that they must “hold...fast *what they have*” at all costs! They continue to “see” the need to not let the truth slip away. Obviously, the amount of God’s Spirit of truth, necessary to do this, is not allowed to wane. When they see that it has, they return to the only Source who can replenish it—and continue to do this over and over again throughout their conversion. This necessarily begins with returning to God’s Church. There is no hope of recovery until one permits God’s Spirit to lead him (Rom. 8:14; John 16:13) back to the only Church where the truth is taught.

This is actually a central part of “enduring to the end” in order to be saved (Matt. 24:13)—and it is no accident that this instruction immediately follows the warning about those whose love waxes cold (vs. 12). Remember, Romans 5:5 shows that “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the [same] Holy Spirit” that is the Spirit of truth.

These two elements are *interconnected* within the instruction to endure!

Jesus tells these people, “You have kept My word” (Rev. 3:8). Some use this phrase as license to *change* doctrines by asserting, “I get my doctrines directly from *God*—from *the Bible*. I keep *God’s* words, not Mr. Armstrong’s.” Of course, everyone, including the Pope, the apostates and every other religious leader and minister, always claim this same thing. Naturally, so do the splinter leaders. Would any claim to get their doctrines from *outside* the Bible? (Recall how often Mr. Armstrong stated that Christ establishes doctrine *only through apostles*. This will be addressed later in much more detail.)

While many *consider* themselves to be Philadelphian, it is impossible to *be* Philadelphian if you are not holding fast to EVERY doctrine (and established tradition!) the Church was taught. Ignoring just *this* point specifically disqualifies one for protection in the place of safety (vs. 10). Only this unwavering group is protected from the “hour of trial” that will soon strike all civilization.

The Laodicean remnant, described in Revelation 12:17, apparently has at least some of the core doctrines in place, such as obedience to God’s commandments, but falls short of what Christ calls “holding fast.” He considers the difference in their doctrinal positions profound!

GRASP THIS! It is on *this point* that He also ties in the danger of one losing his crown (vs. 11). This will be discussed in an unexpected and fascinating way throughout the next chapter.

Verse 10 contains the THIRD earmark of Philadelphians. Notice the phrase “You have kept the word *of My patience*.” This underscores the fact that Philadelphians recognize the ongoing need to patiently endure, as Christ instructed His people living at the end: “In your *patience* possess you your souls [lives]” (Luke 21:19).

This is the most *impatient* age in history. People want instant gratification and fulfillment in almost everything they do. With the advent of the “*now* generation” some decades ago, few are willing to wait patiently for almost anything. Yet, practically everything of worth requires some amount of patience to achieve. In the end time, when very SALVATION is at stake, the familiar cliché is even more true *spiritually*—“Good things come to those who wait.”

“An Open Door”

The FOURTH sign of a Philadelphian is that he recognizes he must continue to participate in and support the Work of God—“I have set before you an *open door*.”

The true people of God always try to do the Work—and their hearts are in it. Their brotherly love is partly seen in their desire to take the *full* truth of God to their fellowman in all nations. Matthew 24:14, 46 and 28:19-20 show that this effort continues until the Tribulation. Mr. Armstrong always considered supporting the Work of God to be a *minimum* standard for being a Christian at all.

Once those of Laodicean thinking became dominant in number, the size and scope of the Work ceased to be relevant in the *same* way that it was when Mr. Armstrong was alive. This should be very obvious. Those looking for the greatest church *size* today fail to understand that there has been a change in era. This is one of the biggest reasons I will not talk about the numeric size of The Restored Church of God’s attendance or income. This is no longer our time—and we understand that “largeness”—“bigness”—“size”—of numbers in God’s Church, or amount of income, works *directly against* groups more than *for* them, as it once did when the golden age and wonderful time of Philadelphia and Mr. Armstrong’s ministry were flourishing. The bigger groups have a *big problem* in explaining how their members are *not* part of the big, dominant era of Laodicea.

On the other hand, the big splinters are attempting *some* “work.” Because of their collective size, they (though divided) have for a time

done a larger “Work” than the small remnant of Philadelphia. (Of course, their work has no real meaning, because their doctrines reflect a mixture of truth and error—and Christ is not leading them.) The Work done by God here is already passing—and will soon dwarf—all the *human* efforts in the splinters and slivers.

You must not miss this overall point!

The Work that Philadelphia does is covered in more detail near the end of this book. But it is also covered in much greater detail in my book to the splinters devoted entirely to this subject, *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* All whose hearts are still in the Work of God will be left in awe after reading of what is being—and is yet to be!—accomplished in The Restored Church of God.

Here is what so many cannot see regarding God’s Work. Philadelphians are very evidently *not* “rich and increased with goods.” (Remember, the Greek words in Revelation, paralleling ancient Laodicea, specifically mean *financial* wealth and *material* goods.) How could Philadelphia possibly produce the same size Work as before, when it obviously does not have large amounts of money? Beware of those crowing about the great size of their “work.” (Of course, I do not preclude that God must have a plan to inject, for a short period, extraordinary, or even miraculous, super income into His final Work before the age is complete.)

All with even *one* “eye to see”—squinted half shut—cannot miss *this* point. Yet, there is a way that Philadelphians compensate, without great financial resources.

Zeal Under Persecution

This leads directly to the FIFTH sign, which is that Philadelphians, once again as opposed to Laodiceans, *are* tremendously zealous. Christ does not have to remind the sixth era to “be zealous and repent.” An extraordinary fervency toward the preaching of the gospel and other truths is evident in the incredible production—and *speed*—at which this very dynamic group continues the Work. This is because it is empowered by an abundance of God’s Spirit!

It should also be evident that their *zeal* causes them to do the Work, not with the soft, purring sounds that the splinters typically use, but with Mr. Armstrong’s plain, straightforward style, trumpeted in the spirit of Isaiah 58:1!

Because of their zeal, unity of purpose and the vital special blessings poured upon them—because Christ *is* leading this undivided

group—they are, as mentioned, still able to accomplish far more than their size would ever seem to permit!

Their zeal is also obviously witnessed, among other kinds of actions and service, by their love and preservation of the *full* truth, as explained above.

The SIXTH sign of Philadelphians is that they endure terrible persecution at the hands of the “synagogue [Church] of Satan.” People also fail to understand that there are not just Philadelphians and Laodiceans at the end of the age, but there are also *tares*, some—an increasing number of them—vicious, among the wheat (mega-tares when they are in a leadership role). Some of these tares, in the form of the synagogue of Satan, persecute Philadelphia, as they did faithful brethren of other eras. (Recall that Smyrna—Revelation 2:8-9—was also described as physically poor, but spiritually rich, and received no correction from Christ. How interesting that they were also persecuted by this “synagogue.”)

The Restored Church of God is certainly the greatest testimony to this persecution. When properly understood, the enormous amount and nature of the outrageous things said about us, generally, and me, personally (as was always the case with Mr. Armstrong—before and after his death), becomes a testimony to who we *are* much more than who we are *not*!

Though this is addressed briefly in the last chapter, I have also devoted an entire book to the subject of persecution and issues related to it. Vital to all at the end of the age, it is *Should Accusers Be Answered?*

Therefore, recognize that “*ANOINT YOUR EYES*” is being and continues to be countered, both with scare tactics and certain measured “explanations” seeking to rebut the soundness of Christ’s counsel to His people. Completely missing the point as it applies to themselves, and lacking in a sufficient amount of God’s Spirit, many easily dismiss it as “Mr. Pack’s personal opinion.” I recognize this, and you should, too.

Verse 9, referencing the “synagogue,” concludes with a fascinating statement about, and to, Philadelphia, overlooked by almost everyone: “I will make them to...worship before your feet, *and to know that I have loved you.*”

Read this passage again. It is as though people simply cannot recognize Philadelphians for who they are until God *reveals* His love for them. They appear to remain a small, discounted, largely unrecognized and despised group, perceived as irrelevant, only to be *later* identified by God in front of the synagogue of Satan, the world and even Laodicea for who they were.

A Little Miraculous Power

The SEVENTH characteristic visible in Philadelphia and its remnant is somewhat related to size and lack of financial resources, mentioned in number four. Philadelphians have *little strength*—though they *are* spiritually strong, they do *not* have a lot of MIRACULOUS power. I have previously explained that in Restored we see a variety of miracles on a regular basis—which are again directly connected to apostolic authority given to this era—but these are only significant when considered collectively in comparison to our small size. (Of course, not everyone was healed every time even when Philadelphia was on track and Mr. Armstrong was alive.) Therefore, it should be clear that faithful people, having only a *small* amount of miraculous power, could not possibly be described this way unless they represent a relatively *small* organization.

Be sure to get this picture squarely in mind!

Upholding Christ’s Authority

The EIGHTH and final earmark of Philadelphia is described in verse 8: “You have not denied My name.” The people of the sixth era comprehend all that this means, in light of the extraordinary presence that God brought to the Church when He was leading His twentieth-century apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong.

This man fully understood that Jesus Christ’s POWER—His AUTHORITY—His “name”—was behind all that he, personally, and the Church supporting him, did! Mr. Armstrong clearly recognized that no more than a tiny fraction of all that he accomplished would have been remotely possible without the miraculous power of God behind him (Zech. 4:6).

Anyone who forgot this, and some did, when talking to or trying to flatter Mr. Armstrong about his accomplishments, never forgot it twice!

As stated, Mr. Armstrong knew that *Christ* puts truth into the Church only through apostles. No other office can bring new doctrine to the Church with Christ’s authority—by HIS NAME. Mr. Armstrong also knew that the Church had to completely rely on God for all things—and he never exuded self-sufficiency, now so evident in people who seem to enjoy *talking* about God (and this only periodically), while ignoring so much of what He tells them to *do*!

It is the very AUTHORITY of Christ—embodied in His NAME—that the synagogue of Satan, indicted in verse 9 immediately after this ref-

erence, despises. This drives them to focus their persecution on Philadelphia. Understand that a whole booklet could be written solely about what it means to “not deny (Christ’s) name.” (The Bible says much more about this synagogue—this assemblage of devilish men—than meets the eye. My sermon “The Synagogue of Satan Identified—and *Marked!*” explains this final group, including where and how they came to be.)

What Philadelphians See

In an overall sense, Philadelphians see the truth, the Work of God, their fellow man and themselves. They also see *how* to recognize the place where God’s government is leading. Therefore, they still “see” the one true Church and Body of Christ (and Temple of God!) doctrine and how Christ’s leadership is not, and never has been, *divided!* They have not forgotten what we all once understood on this point. They can “see” that Christ is not leading *any* of the organizations where the people’s and ministers’ *opinions* “rule, judge and decide,” usurping His authority. They can “see” that all with God’s Spirit must *leave* these groups or lose God’s Spirit. They “see” that He *is* calling each sheep “by name” (John 10:3) to “follow” Him, and knocking on “doors” to enter “homes” (Rev. 3:20), where He can work with “any man” who hears His voice of truth.

Luke 21:36 describes those who “WATCH...and pray always, that [they] may be accounted *worthy to escape* all these things that shall come to pass.” Obviously, those who are blind cannot do this—it takes sight to *watch* anything! But Philadelphians do it continually, because they are equipped with enough of the spiritual element that allows them full vision.

All this understanding became darkened and completely lost from the minds of so many thousands of brethren who can no longer see. Spiritually speaking, thousands can no longer see the hand in front of their face. They have allowed themselves to become so blind even to things that were once so fundamental and so basic, that only half will ever be able to recover themselves—and it will take the fiery trial of the Tribulation to fully accomplish this.

The Great Propagandist

The governments of men typically use propaganda to spread their ideas, both good and bad. Generally, the worst governments use the

most propaganda, and it is always driven by their agenda—what they are trying to ultimately accomplish.

So many of God’s people have forgotten that the greatest propagandist in the universe is Satan the devil. They no longer seem to grasp the power of his ability to dispense misinformation (Rev. 12:9) from his government as “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4). Yet, he has spread so much disinformation, misinformation, outright lies and propaganda against both Mr. Armstrong and the truth he taught, almost all of the brethren have become terribly confused about what they once thought they saw so clearly. What once seemed like the PLAIN TRUTH is now open to debate, question, challenge or even ridicule. (I am not speaking about the false leaders of the WCG or those people and smaller off-shoots who, at every turn, vomit absolutely satanic rhetoric upon anyone who will listen—this is to be expected from these people—but rather of the apostasy’s “survivors.”)

Daniel said that “the wise shall understand” what is happening at the end of the age (12:10). Referencing him, Jesus re-emphasized this point in Matthew 24:15. Mr. Armstrong often expressed doubt about whether 90 percent of the Church “got it.”

In summary, Philadelphians “get it”—all of it! They remember where they learned the truth and know exactly what to do (II Tim. 3:14) during the period when “evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse” (vs. 13).

Conditioned to Compromise

Recall that the second point Philadelphians continue to care about—and it is most vital to recognize this—is their need to hold on to every point of God’s truth. They understand that they must “hold fast what they have” at *all* costs!

Most of God’s people live in democratic countries. Democracies function almost solely on the ability to get people of different points of view to *compromise* their position—and their values. This seems to be the only way any kind of even partial peace can be obtained. Like other elements discussed above, God’s people unconsciously absorb this spirit of compromise, permeating nearly everything in government, business, education, religion and society around them. It is as though people are conditioned—virtually trained!—to believe they have to “give on a few points” in order to get along or get what they want.

This is not the way of God. Philadelphians will not compromise—EVER. Unlike so many others around them in the last days (II Tim.

3:1; 4:3), they continuously “*endure* sound doctrine.” They refuse to be turned from the truth to “fables”—of any kind!

Think of the word *compromise* as having two parts—“com” and “promise.” *Com* means “with,” and *promise* means what it says. Those who COMPROMISE are attempting to take a NEW position and make it work with an OLD *promise* that they had made—in this case, made to GOD!

Will you continue such a pattern?

For those with “eyes to see” and “ears to hear,” this puts the whole matter of changing doctrines into a very different light.

Mr. Armstrong and Doctrinal Compromise

Mr. Armstrong had a great deal to say about doctrinal compromise. Here are some statements from him demonstrating how strongly he felt. The first quote is repeated from earlier in the book because of its re-application here.

Notice:

“But it is still true that two can’t walk together except they be agreed. I am agreed with God and with Christ the Head of the Church. I shall never water down the TRUTH He has revealed to me, nor in any manner *compromise* with it. We are ALL OF US going to have to AGREE with God and with Christ *HIS* Son, if we are to walk together with them, into God’s Kingdom.”

“Reports About Garner Ted False,” WN, Mar. 6, 1981

“Forty-three years ago, the living Christ committed to me His GREAT COMMISSION.”

“But during these 43 years, I have frequently been pressured to *compromise*—‘just a little’—with God’s TRUTH.”

“He entrusted me with this precious TRUTH.”

“But honestly, now, WHAT DO YOU THINK?”

“Wouldn’t it be all right to *compromise*, ‘just a little,’ on some ‘unimportant minor point’? Especially on some ostensibly unimportant point where we appear ‘crazy’ to the world.”

“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!...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!”

“Just as Israel is LITTLE in population and financial means among the nations, so GOD’S CHURCH is LITTLE in numbers and popularity among churches or religious organizations. But ISRAEL stands STRONG *and* ALONE among this world’s nations in determination to NOT YIELD ONE INCH TO THE OUTRAGEOUS METHODS AND DEMANDS OF TERRORISTS!”

“Satan is the chief of terrorists. He HATES God’s holy, sacred Word.”

“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!”

“I won’t COMPROMISE—not even ‘just a little.’”

“*Personal,*” GN, Dec. 1976

“Why are the different branches of ‘Christianity’ talking about UNION? WHY is it *possible* for them to make overtures toward *compromise*?”

“And anyway, is it not *right* that they should all GET TOGETHER? WHY should Christianity be divided?”

“The Vatican Second Ecumenical Council is making many overtures toward both Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox church. They are even taking a conciliatory attitude toward Jews. Recently Pope Paul VI assured the non-Catholic Christian world of his purpose to clear away every obstacle blocking ‘Christian unity.’”

“The BIG question is WHY is such *compromise* possible?”

“Can you imagine Jesus Christ beginning to *compromise* and get together with the Pharisees?”

“Did all the hundreds of differing and disagreeing sects and denominations calling themselves ‘Christian’ receive their varying faiths from the SAME SOURCE? Quite obviously not!”

“Now we ought to begin to see the answer to the question, HOW can these differing religious groups *compromise* and get together? Their beliefs, their customs, are the inventions of HUMANS. In actual fact, they did not receive their beliefs from the true and *living* GOD—or from His Word, the Bible. Their religions are of HUMAN ORIGIN. Therefore humans feel at liberty to alter or change their own beliefs and ways.”

“We ought to understand, therefore, how those who, like the Roman Catholic Church, reject the Bible as the supreme AUTHORITY—setting themselves, as a CHURCH, ahead of it as supreme authority...we

ought now to understand how they can *compromise* and GET TOGETHER.”

“Since [the one and only true Church] is ruled and guided by the *living* God, whose written Word *means* what it says, it cannot and will not *compromise* or unite with the churches of this world.”

“*Personal,*” *PT, Dec. 1964*

All brethren live in a world literally defined by the spirit of compromise. There is almost no end of ways that Satan, the world and human nature will work on God’s people to get them to compromise virtually every truth, law and principle in the Bible. While many still somewhat recognize this regarding sin—albeit to a much lesser degree than in times past—many have not ever fully recognized its all-important application to not compromising TRUE DOCTRINE at the end of the age.

Mr. Armstrong understood and taught the Church of God not to compromise—to hold fast—and one of the doctrines he taught the Church was that true doctrine only enters the Church through apostles. Realize that *this* truth must first be rejected before any *other* truth can be overturned.

Practice telling yourself Mr. Armstrong’s words: “I have NEVER compromised with God’s TRUTH—regardless of the cost or the circumstances. I never shall!” and “I won’t compromise—not even ‘just a little.’”

I have followed the practice of periodically repeating these phrases to myself for many years. Though I have not done this perfectly, it has served me in untold ways!

II Peter 3:18—and the Great Misunderstanding!

The apostasy should have taught all of us that there were dozens of methods that the apostates used to seduce the Church into hundreds of false doctrines. I have listed 43 of these tricks and ploys near the front of my book *There Came a Falling Away*.

Some of these gimmicks are practiced in the splinters with even greater skill than that of the WCG’s false leaders. The most popular—and by far the most effective—has been the gross misuse of II Peter 3:18: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This passage is often referred to in short with the phrase “We must grow in *knowledge*.” And those invoking this scripture almost always have *doctrine* in mind.

This verse is NOT talking about doctrine, but rather *knowledge*—and this is the Greek word used! A simple review reveals this. The word used here for “knowledge” is *gnosis*, meaning “(the act of) knowing, i.e. (by implication) knowledge.” This is not a hard word to understand. Almost everyone learns some kind of knowledge (*gnosis*) every day of his life. Of course, it is “the knowledge of Jesus Christ” that is the most important knowledge to learn. But make no mistake—this verse is talking about “knowledge,” *not* “doctrine.”

On the other hand, the Greek word for “doctrine,” found dozens of times throughout the New Testament (as is “knowledge”), is *didache*. This word means “instruction (the act or the matter), doctrine (what has already been taught).” Take special note of the phrase “ALREADY BEEN TAUGHT.”

Once again, the Greek word for “doctrine” (*didache*) is totally different than the one for “knowledge” (*gnosis*). I cannot state this strongly enough. There is a very clear *difference* between knowledge and doctrine.

Please, for your own sake—GET THIS STRAIGHT!

General Epistle

The background and purpose of Peter’s epistles is critical to appreciate. Each of his letters is what is known as a “general epistle.” In effect, they were open letters to all brethren in the Church throughout the ages. Imagine God inspiring Peter to tell *individual* Christians, and leaders, *everywhere*—for all time—to grow in *doctrine* through what would have to be, presumably, their own Bible research.

This is an absolutely ludicrous idea, and would be the surest way to have complete, absolute CHAOS and CONFUSION—not to mention horrific DIVISION—throughout the Church, and in every era! Yet, this is the very premise upon which so many unqualified teachers are justifying departure from truth straight into error—directly away from “what has already been taught”! Like the very apostates themselves, every splinter leader almost routinely introduces outright heresies in the name of “growing in knowledge.”

Not wanting to seem inflexible or resistant to growth, most of their members almost eagerly swallow their line.

Do not fall for such deceit—and stupidity! Anyone so ignorant of the Bible that they confuse *didache* with *gnosis* is hardly qualified to teach you the truth about *anything*—period! Such people need to first grow in their knowledge of the very word “knowledge.” Then they ought to spend their time focusing on, proving and holding fast to true doctrines they obviously never *proved*.

Mr. Armstrong repeatedly told new people learning the truth for the first time to “prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” Apparently, only a few bothered to do this with *all* of God’s doctrines. Also apparently, the vast majority in the Church may have almost *never* done it.

But there is a MIDDLE GROUP, consisting of those who seem to have “proved *some* things,” leaving themselves only able to “hold fast *some* things which are good.” These people have *really* put themselves in a dilemma. They are insufficiently prepared to RESIST the persuasions of those seeking to “turn them to fables.” It then becomes easy to rationalize their weak doctrinal understanding and commitment by simply asserting, “Oh well, Mr. Armstrong changed doctrines, so I am just growing in knowledge.” What has really happened is that such people’s “private parts” have just been further exposed.

Incredible! In effect, they just took their underclothes off—and pronounced that they now look better. Such blindness!

Here is a worse irony about such people. They often talk as though they have actually outgrown the “somewhat primitive,” or others will say “simplistic,” understanding that they like to dismiss as having “worked well for Mr. Armstrong in *his* time.” Can you imagine the sheer gall—and utter arrogance—of people walking around shamelessly naked, while asserting that they have outgrown Mr. Armstrong?

Let’s put this another way. You cannot “grow in knowledge” from what you have already *proven*! This is literally IMPOSSIBLE to do.

Proof is PROOF is PROOF!

Obviously, vast numbers of brethren never *fully* proved God’s truth. As a result, coupled with now being lower in supply of the “Spirit of truth,” they lazily claim that they have “grown” to see “new truth”—as they march straight into error.

Once again, you cannot grow out of things that you have proven. I repeat: You cannot grow out of, or *beyond*, matters you truly PROVED!

Those who accept false teachings, while calling them “growth,” are trumpeting that they never really researched and carefully *proved* what they are now throwing aside! They are virtually crowing that they believed neither God nor Mr. Armstrong—when he *was* alive—regarding I Thessalonians 5:21 and Romans 12:2.

How many would do this if they *saw* their actions in *this* light?

Appalling Ignorance

On a side note, I have been appalled at the outright biblical ignorance of many who I thought were giants in the faith. Circumstances *forced*

me to observe this. It was as though some of them could barely seem to find the book of Matthew—let alone resist false doctrine.

Believe me! I have sat in meetings with evangelists and senior pastors who almost appeared to be biblical illiterates. Some only rarely opened their Bibles, and this is when they had even brought them to meetings. I do not say this to put them down, but to recognize that Christ said, “By their fruits *you know them*.”

Do not be afraid to apply Christ’s statement in this regard—to know what and who He said you *can* know!

Sadly, many of these men learned to *parrot* Mr. Armstrong while apparently never actually building their house on the rock of *Christ’s* words, taught to them *by* Mr. Armstrong. It is no wonder that so many have failed in their responsibility to fulfill Titus 1:9, found in the middle of the qualifications for ordination into the ministry: “Holding fast the faithful word *as he has been taught*, that he may be able by *sound doctrine* both to exhort and to convince [convict] the gainsayers”—and, I would add, save a great many more people from being unnecessarily swallowed by compromising leaders pursuing a personal doctrinal agenda.

Paul warned of “dishonest” ministers who “handle the word of God *deceitfully*” (II Cor. 4:2), because they, like their students who are willing to believe them, “received not the *love* of the TRUTH” (II Thes. 2:10).

God’s true servants and ministers never—under *any* circumstances—follow these practices! They do not *ever* spin scriptures toward their own end.

In most cases, if one is properly trained and sufficiently grounded in the truths of the Bible, it is quite easy to see through and expose the deceptive logic misapplied to a verse, and to correctly explain it.

Now ask yourself: Has my pastor sought to protect me from gainsayers? In *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, Mr. Armstrong wrote, “It is the duty of Christ’s TRUE ministers (and *how scarce today*) to protect the begotten but yet unborn saints from false doctrines, from false ministers.”

This book is part of my responsibility to fulfill this duty.

I urge you to recognize that II Peter 3:18 has become the banner—but really the *ruse*—for introducing wrong doctrine. While everyone wants to and should be concerned with the need to continually grow in “the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” this verse has become an excuse for accepting false doctrine—a means for labeling plain false teaching as “growth.”

Now consider this for a moment, so that this vital point cannot be missed. Every minister will surely tell you that he hopes all of his sermons have brought listeners more *knowledge*—that people were able to go home aware of *new aspects* about *already established* doctrines—that they never saw in the same way before. I certainly do. This is basic and easy to see.

Try this little experiment. The next time you hear your pastor preach a basic, routine sermon, ask him if it involved new *doctrine*. He will almost invariably answer, “No!” Next, ask him if he hoped that the congregation learned any new *knowledge*. He will most certainly answer, “Yes!” Then you may wish to respectfully ask him if he always knows the difference!

Growing in knowledge has never been an equation with changing doctrine—without a living apostle guiding the process, as did Mr. Armstrong. I challenge any member or minister to find where Mr. Armstrong said otherwise—or that the Bible does!

A Look at Ancient Philadelphia

The subject of Philadelphia, like Laodicea, would not be complete without examining, this time in retrospect, the ancient city of Philadelphia. Though geographically close to Laodicea, Philadelphia was a very different place to live.

As with the old city of Laodicea, there are also several fascinating parallels between ancient Philadelphia and the modern brethren of this era. Even the briefest examination of this city reveals comparisons that are impossible to miss. History presents an inspiring picture, filled with spiritual meaning.

The city was named for its founder, Attalus Philadelphus II, king of Pergamum (159-138 B.C.). King Attalus was given the name Philadelphus because of his unusual love for his brother, and because of his reputation for loyalty and trustworthiness. Little did this king know what the name he then chose for the city would portend for the history of God’s Church.

Cities are often said to have their own “personality”—New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Rome, etc. When Christ inspired the apostle John to record the book of Revelation, the city of Philadelphia was about 250 years old. Therefore, the *nature* of the city was well established, and, when Christ compared it to the faithful brethren of the twentieth-century era of the Church, He was well aware of the city’s personality.

It is interesting to note that Philadelphia sits at a somewhat higher altitude than the other six “era” cities on the same major trade and mail route. It also stood above *all* the other surrounding cities, found closer than the six for which the eras are named. With this commanding view, it became a powerful fortress city.

The comparison here is clear—and I have seen this personally. Modern *spiritual* Philadelphians have become a kind of “fortress” among their brethren—impenetrable in determination and unwillingness to compromise. And they do have a clearer view of things. They are within a city that cannot be defeated—that, unlike the Laodiceans, *will* exist at Christ’s Return.

Communication, Water and Government

While wealthy Laodicea was a *banking* center, it is interesting that Philadelphia, somewhat less prosperous, was considered a vital link in *communication* to surrounding cities, including all those on the trade route through the cities for which the other eras were named. This “communication” parallel, to how Philadelphia has been and is still being used today, thunders home its point!

Mr. Armstrong’s ministry was unquestionably the greatest spreading of “spiritual communication” to the world that has ever occurred. Its twenty-first century remnant continues to produce an enormous amount of material in the same spirit as when the era was at its zenith. Just the modern accessibility of the Internet, coupled with this vast amount of literature, proves this point.

Unlike Laodicea’s lukewarm water supply, Philadelphia had a very good supply of water because the Meander (or Cogamus) River flowed along the north side of the city, below the knoll that the city sat upon. (The word *meander*, meaning “to follow a winding and turning course,” derives from the name of this particular river.) This knoll also overlooked the expanse of the Hermus River Valley. The Meander flowed into the Hermus not far from Philadelphia. These rivers afforded the city plenty of cool, fresh water. The next chapter will show the incredible parallel between ancient Philadelphia’s water supply and the modern era’s “water” supply.

In Chapter Four, we mentioned that democracy was Laodicea’s general form of government, with the populace having ultimate political control. Philadelphia was different in that it was governed by what came to be labeled an “Emperor cult”—a fascinating parallel to how some viewed Mr. Armstrong! It is most interesting that the people in

Philadelphia preferred to have one man—a benevolent monarch—govern the city, rather than practice democracy. This form of governance apparently lasted for many decades in Philadelphia.

We will later see a fascinating parallel with today's form of government, which was restored to the brethren of the modern era who still carry Philadelphia's name. This is understanding that they have *not* forgotten.

A History of Earthquakes

Perhaps the most fascinating part of Philadelphia's history is that it suffered a whole series of earthquakes, with most of them almost completely destroying the city. The worst was in A.D. 17. Each time, the city was rebuilt—demonstrating an indomitable spirit in the local citizenry that lasted for generations. However, these earthquakes made people more wary, causing them to live on the outskirts of the city, for fear of additional quakes and aftershocks. But they would not leave it.

While self-sufficient Laodicea was unwilling to accept help from Rome, after its first great earthquake, the Philadelphians *were* willing to receive aid from the Emperor Tiberius. Because of their tremendous gratitude, they actually renamed Philadelphia *Neocaesarea*, or “New Caesar.”

The comparisons here are obvious. Modern Philadelphians have suffered multiple *spiritual* earthquakes, but they have never given up and quit. The total destruction of the Worldwide Church of God, as God's Church, is a good parallel to the A.D. 17 earthquake, but both the modern brethren and the ancient city by this name endured other earthquakes.

It is also interesting that the citizenry of the ancient city, because earthquakes occurred so often, would actually bolt from the city at the slightest sign of a tremor. This is because they were attuned to the environment in which they willingly *chose* to live.

The famous Greek historian Strabo wrote, “Philadelphia has no trustworthy walls, but daily in one direction or another they keep tottering and falling apart.” It is reported that he questioned the sanity of the local citizenry because they continually wanted to return and rebuild! They are also reported to have been willing to live in makeshift huts on the outskirts of the city rather than abandon it to live elsewhere. Obviously, maintaining an appearance of wealth and prosperity meant little to such people.

Also unlike Laodicea, Philadelphia *always* rebounded from the earthquakes that struck it over the centuries. As a matter of fact, the city

of Philadelphia still exists today. Yet, the long pattern of earthquakes in the area *permanently* destroyed at least ten cities surrounding it.

Historian Edward Gibbon wrote, “Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, a column in a scene of ruin” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 509). The fact that he also refers to the more significant (than Laodicea) archaeological remnant of ancient Philadelphia standing as a “column” will momentarily take on greater significance.

Fortress City Defending Beliefs and Freedom

Gibbon went on to describe the extraordinary tenacity of the city’s inhabitants: “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” (Ibid.).

This is a truly powerful parallel with the modern age. As the book continues to develop, it will be even more clear that, even though surrounded by enemies, modern Philadelphians, like their ancient counterparts, battle to hold on to what they believe. They understand what it means to *defend* (Phil. 1:17, 27-28) what they have—their “religion [beliefs] and freedom.”

But RELIGION and FREEDOM, for the true Christian, are really one and the same. Here is how Christ defines true freedom—which is the core of true religion: “Then said Jesus...If you continue in MY WORD, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH shall make you *free*” (John 8:31-32).

Those who deeply know the full truth of God’s Word see that it is the only *real* way to be completely free—from bondage to Satan, human nature, the world, confusion, the penalty of sin (with its effects), unnecessary suffering, and so much more.

A City with Five Names

Philadelphia had an interesting history of changing names. A Roman city for over 15 centuries, it fell in A.D. 1392 to the Turks, who renamed it *Allah-Sheher*, or “City of God.” This in itself is interesting, because it still carries this name—and God still leads its modern counterpart.

However, in addition to *Philadelphia*, *Neocaesarea* and *Allah-Sheher*, the city also expanded its name to *Philadelphia Flavia* in the first century A.D. About two hundred years later, it was given the name

Little Athens, because it fell into widespread idolatry. The parallel with the WCG is unmistakable.

Christ's promise, in Revelation 3:12, to give spiritual Philadelphians a new name, takes on new meaning: "And I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God." One more name is all that Philadelphians can expect to receive for eternity. Since the city had to tolerate at least four previous name changes (thus, five names in all), it becomes obvious why Christ would make such a promise!

An Era of Pillars

Gibbon spoke of the entire city as "a *column* in a scene of ruin." This is also interesting because Christ describes each Philadelphian as becoming "a *pillar* in the temple" and that "he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). Philadelphians obviously have had to repeatedly "go out"—of either the ancient city, or the modern organization(s) they once attended, beginning with Mr. Armstrong himself—to save their lives.

It is also interesting that there are many more ruins of ancient Philadelphia still in existence than of Laodicea. One ruin is that of four powerful marble pillars that have survived all of the earthquakes. They stand as extraordinary testimony to the strength and endurance of modern *spiritual* pillars within Philadelphia.

This, coupled with Christ's reference to becoming pillars in God's Temple, are the reasons that our magazine, written for the members of the Church in the spirit of the old *Good News*, is called *The Pillar of the Truth* (generally referred to as *The Pillar*). A point of interest: This is why we carefully thought through the idea of putting a *pillar* design on the left front of all our books to the splinters (note this book's cover), beside our seal, which also shows the two enormous pillars of Solomon's temple (Jachin, meaning "establish," and Boaz, meaning "strength").

How many people will eventually choose to become pillars of God's way in an otherwise "scene of *spiritual* ruin" today, first in the WCG, and then within the splinters? In this light, recognize that the ancient city of Philadelphia was never very large in population. Despite its age, at over twenty-one centuries, it is still no more than about 40,000 to 45,000 in population. But even more interesting is that, after remaining small for over 2,100 years, the city's population suddenly doubled to its current size (though still remaining relatively small), beginning early in the *twentieth century*!

No explanation of this comparison, either to our time or the rise of the Philadelphian age, is necessary!

One other phrase from Gibbon’s quote should be addressed. Apparently, Philadelphians were also discounted—“forgotten by the emperor”—as a cause for concern. At one point, they were permitted to practice their religion without interference for over 80 years. Could this be a modern parallel of how this era will be “forgotten” by the authorities until it is time for God to remove it to safety, possibly because these brethren are eventually expelled by the governments of the countries in which they reside?

It will certainly require extraordinary faith to await how God works this out!

However, the much more pressing concern for those who will receive God’s coming protection is to be sure that they have *qualified* to be protected.

RECEIVING GOD'S APPROVAL

Though most have probably never thought of it exactly this way, the greatest goal of a Christian is to build whatever qualities that will ultimately bring him God's *approval* so that he can inherit the kingdom of God. What could be more important?

There is, in fact, revealed in God's Word, a certain spiritual "seal of approval" that *every* Christian MUST obtain. Specific actions in a person's conduct confer this approval upon him, and, because God is not a respecter of persons, there are no exceptions to what He expects. Without these actions, the Christian, no matter how sincere, has no hope for salvation.

Consider for a moment. In the context of the coming famine, noisome beasts, the sword and pestilence, foretold to strike modern Israel, the prophet Ezekiel wrote, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but *their own souls* by their righteousness..." (14:14). Verse 16 reiterates, "Though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; *they only* shall be delivered." Almost verbatim, verses 17-21 repeat this entire passage for emphasis. For those who still care about such blunt warnings, quoted so often in the past, this is chilling to read.

God's instruction has always been to "work out *your own* salvation" (Phil. 2:12). Most people are familiar with this scripture, but few any longer seem to take it personally as God intends. This had better change for many—and soon!

A Shocking Survey

Since entering the ministry, I have worked directly with well over 10,000 brethren. This has given me an enormous exposure to and understanding of the spiritual temperature of God’s people. Let me offer one case study for your consideration.

In each of my pastorates, beginning in the 1970s, I asked brethren during a sermon to *anonymously* answer five very simple questions (on a 3 x 5 card) about how often they were praying, studying and fasting.

The answers were always stunning—more like appalling! Invariably, about 20 percent would not even turn in the card, presumably because their answers were not good. (Some in this category were openly offended that they would even be asked to do this.) Astonishingly, another 20 percent *admitted* to being virtually *zero* in all categories. Yet, a third 20 percent prayed and studied only 5-10 minutes a day—on the days that were not zeros! A fourth 20 percent were generally praying enough, but not studying enough, and rarely fasting between Days of Atonement. The last 20 percent (interestingly, about the number surviving the apostasy) were generally praying and studying close to 30 minutes *most* days. But only about 2 or 3 percent of the total group were reaching or exceeding these numbers *every* day in both categories, and fasting on a regular basis.

Is it any wonder that 80 percent of the WCG did not survive the apostasy? I knew as early as the late 70s and early 80s, following the liberal years, that most never fully recovered the zeal they *may* have once had, and that most in the Church were headed for big trouble! While I certainly did not envision just how big that trouble would be, I saw a disturbing lack of use of the most basic Christian tools—tools necessary for any amount of spiritual growth.

Over this same period, I began to monitor what I came to call “The Disappearance of Self-examination,” and there is a sermon under this title on our website, describing this condition in some detail.

All of this forms a backdrop to examine some truly fascinating understanding that every person with the Spirit of God alive today *must* eventually have an opportunity to learn and address. Those who comprehend what we will now cover will find that it is the only corridor leading out of the dark tunnel of blindness to the spiritual light at the *end* of the tunnel.

In this chapter, we will walk this corridor step-by-step—scripture-by-scripture—so that you perfectly understand your path from blind-

ness, and learn the rest of what Christ meant when He said, “anoint your eyes...that you may see.”

Grasp this. The importance of this chapter cannot be overstated. No step described can be missed. May God help you comprehend the awesome importance of what you are about to learn!

God's Word Is a Lamp

Proverbs 6:23 states, “For the commandment is a LAMP; and the law is LIGHT.” The Hebrew word for “law” is *torah*, which literally means “to cause to see the light.” All of us are familiar with the phrase “see the light,” but probably very few know that it springs directly from the word “law.”

The Psalms expand this statement in 119:105: “*Your word is a LAMP unto my feet, and a LIGHT unto my path.*” When put together, there is no misunderstanding exactly how God intends His Word to function within our lives.

A New Testament passage expands this equation. But it uses a different way of stating what God's Word is, and we have referenced it in another chapter: “*Your word is TRUTH*” (John 17:17). When placed together, God's Word—the Bible—is revealed to be a LAMP OF LIGHT, identically defined as TRUTH. Before continuing, I urge you to stop and think about what you have just read.

The one thing that blind people do not see is any kind of *light*. Their world is pitch BLACK!

John records additional important insight into the natural tendency of human nature in every person to actually choose *darkness* over light, as well as why they do this. Carefully read—and *believe*—the following verse:

“And this is the condemnation, that LIGHT is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than LIGHT, because their *deeds were evil*. For everyone that *does evil* hates the LIGHT, *neither comes to the LIGHT*, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that *does truth* comes to the LIGHT, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (3:19-21).

Several points spring from this passage. First, remember that we talked about those who *live* the truth, as well as *love* it. Both are essential. Notice the passage above also talks about the one that “*does truth*.” And recall that everyone who has the “anointing” of God's “Spirit of truth” continually “purifies himself” (I John 3:3). Are YOU “seeing the light” here?

This process describes the one who regularly “comes to the light”—“the word of truth”—so that he can examine his “deeds,” to be *able* to see whether they are “wrought in God.” In other words, is he conducting himself like a Christian? Is his life filled with God’s Spirit and true doctrine—particularly as it relates to becoming *pure*? Does his life reflect Christ’s conduct? Is he growing in *character*? Only intense study of God’s Word reveals this.

It is most interesting that during the Days of Unleavened Bread, God instructs Christians to “*purge out*” leaven before eating the “unleavened bread of *sincerity* and *truth*” (I Cor. 5:7-8). You are about to see that there is much more here than what the surface suggests, and it relates *specifically* to “anointing your eyes.”

The Greek word for “sincerity” is fascinating. It means “*examine* by the sun’s *light* and to be found *pure*.” It is also most interesting that God links *sincerity*, carrying this meaning, with *truth*, and that *purging* (the process of making *pure*) is involved. *How* this happens will soon become more clear.

Next, back in John 3, the word translated “reproved,” is better translated “discovered.” Many Bible margins carry this word. Let’s state this plainly so that none can miss it. Most people will not come to the light of God’s Word because they do not want their conduct to be discovered—EXPOSED!—for what it is! They would rather remain in darkness, unable to *see* where they are going, than to admit they need to make changes in their lives. Read it again.

Also, if they are not *living* the truth, this contributes to their nakedness. Of course, some, having at least *partially* discovered that their conduct is sorely lacking, want to hide from the light. Obviously, not many people are eager to prance around naked in public. Sadly, however, they find it easier to turn out the light (avoid God’s Word) than to put clothes on!

Could this be you? Take very methodical inventory, and continue to do this as you read. Honestly recognize this powerful pull at work within *you*—honestly admit that you are naturally no different from anyone else.

There is much more to understand. Let’s watch the complete—and truly fascinating—picture slowly emerge!

Washing to Become Clean

In the Psalms, David recorded another critical element of what the purification process is intended to yield. After his sin with Bathsheba and

subsequent conspiracy to murder Uriah, he opens Psalm 51 by humbly asking for God's mercy.

In verse 2, David cried out to God, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and *cleanse* me from my sin." Verse 7 introduces one more element: "PURGE me with hyssop [an ancient herbal remedy used to purify], and I shall be *clean*: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Finally, he asks, "Create in me a *clean* heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...and take not *Your Holy Spirit* from me" (vs. 10-11).

Because he was in such a terrible spiritual condition, as a result of massive sin, the Spirit of God was waning in David, and he knew he was in danger of losing it. He knew that God might proceed to withdraw what little was left, if he did not repent. *Every* converted person should take note. If this could happen to David—and we will later see that Paul also held the same concern about himself—it could happen to you! In fact, if you do not return to God's Church, it WILL!

These verses link *cleansing* and *washing* to PURGING—*purifying* oneself with God's help. But *how* does God say to do this?

In Ephesians 5, Paul describes how husbands are to love their wives "as Christ also loved the Church" (vs. 25). Verse 26 continues, explaining the overall goal, "That He might *sanctify* [God's Word of truth sanctifies us – John 17:17] and *cleanse* it with the *washing* of water by the word [the word of truth]."

The Williams translation renders this best: "...cleaning her through His Word, as pictured in the water bath."

This passage introduces the element of *corrective* Bible study directly into the purifying, washing, cleansing and sanctifying process—core to everything a Christian is to practice!

Is it any wonder then that just before His betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples, "Now you are CLEAN through the WORD which I have spoken" (John 15:3)? This verse should now come to life for its real meaning.

But there is still much more to understand!

Correction and Truth

In II Timothy 3:16, sandwiched in the middle of a long passage about continuing in SOUND DOCTRINE, Paul explained that one of the four purposes of Bible study is "correction." This is translated from the Greek word *epanorthosis*, meaning "a straightening up again, rectification, correction."

The root of this word is used in medicine. *Orthopedics*—doctors who work with bones, connective tissue (ligaments, tendons, cartilage, etc.) and

general body structure—derive their name from this Greek word because they understand its connection to proper alignment and skeletal function. These physicians are skilled in recognizing and addressing posture problems—where a person is no longer physically *straight*. They understand that it often takes *surgery* to “correct” the problem, sometimes *major surgery*.

It should be obvious that Laodiceans *do* require major surgery, which Christ is willing to perform—if they will come to Him having done their part in preparation.

Jeremiah 5:3 and 7:28 connect accepting or rejecting *correction* to the production of *truth* in one’s life. Take time to read them carefully.

“Show Yourself Approved”

We are now ready to examine a crucial scripture, launching any who want God’s correction much further toward the light and *full vision* at the end of the tunnel. Probably once part of the scriptural vocabulary of nearly every member of God’s Church, it is one of the most important passages cited in the book!

Paul wrote Timothy, “*Study to show yourself APPROVED unto God, a workman that needs not to be ASHAMED, rightly dividing the WORD OF TRUTH*” (II Tim. 2:15).

Three huge and interconnected points spring from this single scripture. Each is profound:

- (1) Bible study, done properly, leads to being “APPROVED of God.”
- (2) Those who do this “need not to be ASHAMED.”
- (3) They must “*rightly divide the WORD OF TRUTH.*”

This passage almost explodes with meaning. First, the Greek word for “approved” is *dokimos*. Its meaning is fascinating, and vastly more important than most (of those few who even know of it) have realized. It is the central window into what Christ means by “anoint your eyes.” *Dokimos* means, literally, “to put to the *test by trial* in order to produce TRUTH and GENUINENESS; *without alloy.*” This word has powerful meaning, and once again connects truth and purity, this time to a kind of intensive Bible study—the kind that “*rightly divides the Word of truth.*”

This process is the KEY to being approved of God. Of course, those who study, but who cannot *rightly divide the Bible*, or those who do not study at all, will *not* be approved of God—and they *will* be ASHAMED!

Do you see the connection to Revelation 3:18—“buying gold tried in the fire”? By now, it should be impossible to miss. Recall that Christ said

Laodiceans should be *ashamed*, because they are *naked*. How are they naked? Remember, they do not have their private parts—their “loins”—“girded with *truth*” (Eph. 6:14). It is the *Spirit* of truth that guides “rightly dividing” God’s *Word* of truth.

We will come to understand that II Timothy 2:15 is saying that when you study the Bible, it should be a TRIAL—and this means a *fiery trial* if done properly. This is its message. You should be putting yourself to the TEST, to the end that *truth* and *genuineness* (purity, sincerity) result—gold *without alloy*.

No wonder Christ also taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the PURE in heart, for they shall SEE God” (Matt. 5:8). This is exciting understanding—and I hope you find its clarity of meaning inspiring! The connection to *purity*—and the ability to SEE God—should now be unmistakably clear. And so should be its tie to always pursuing TRUTH. Grasp that Laodiceans also CANNOT SEE GOD, including how and, until they return to His Church, even where He works.

But there is still more!

The Key Within “Dokimos”

Let’s briefly return to the Days of Unleavened Bread, this time focusing on what should always be done *before* Passover. I Corinthians 11 contains two statements that shed more light on precisely how to apply *dokimos* in our lives.

Before Christians may take the Passover, Paul instructed, “But let a man EXAMINE himself...” (vs. 28) so that he did not eat “unworthily.” The Greek for “examine” here is *dokimazo*, from the same root as *dokimos*. This shows that God intends the pre-Passover examination to be far more intensive than most have probably ever recognized. It also means that without this kind of examination, one is not even approved by God to *take the Passover*.

This examination is that vital! Did you know this?

Something else is important from earlier in this chapter, where Paul had previously used the word *dokimos*. It is tied directly to discerning truth from heresy—true doctrines from false ones. Notice: “I hear that there be divisions among you...For there must be also heresies”—WHY?—“that they which are APPROVED [*dokimos*] may be made manifest [obvious] among you” (vs. 18-19).

Now think hard about this. Only when people are swept away by false doctrine, obviously because they were not “studying” and “rightly dividing the word of truth” as they should (and also because the amount

of God’s Spirit in them was diminishing) do those who *are* practicing, believing and living the truth become immediately obvious (“manifest”) for what they are—“approved of God.”

Why? Because they are *not swept away* by the heresies. They can RESIST because they are pure in truth, and this necessarily includes having an abundance of the power of the Spirit of truth. They are able to avoid the “shame” of being “caught with their pants down” (naked) like those who got pulled into error and lost their clothes.

GRASP THIS!

Intensive, corrective Bible study, crying out to God to wash and clean you up, is much more vital than the blind of today want to believe! Let’s face it. Most brethren never have, and still do not, study very much—let alone intensively. They allow the “care of the world” (Matt. 13:22) to daily steal their time. Diligent, in-depth *dokimos* Bible study is necessary to return to true doctrine.

Will you make time for this?

Two Levels of Examination Required

In II Corinthians 13:5, Paul stated, “EXAMINE yourselves, whether you be in the faith; PROVE your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be *reprobates*?” We will examine each key word here.

We first focus here on the meaning of “reprobate.” Understanding this is central because it is the ultimate by-product of ignoring or misapplying this verse. Let’s strip away the mystery. The Greek word for reprobate is *adokimos*—and it simply means “unapproved.” Of course, *unapproved* is the opposite of *approved*.

Now for more insight. This verse actually describes *two* different levels of self-examination. One is summarized by “examine”—the other by “prove.” This is most interesting to understand.

Surprisingly, though *dokimazo* is found in this verse, it is not the word translated “examine,” which comes from the Greek word *peirazo*, meaning instead, “to test, endeavor or scrutinize.” This is the less intense personal examination that *some* are willing to do. Of course, many will not even do this much. But those who do must recognize that this passage shows *peirazo* to be merely the *beginning point* for proper, thorough examination—the STARTING POINT of determining whether one is “in the faith.”

Interestingly, the word *dokimazo* here is translated “prove.” It is not enough that a Christian just examines (scrutinizes) himself. He must also

go on to the more fiery level of intense examination, yielding “proof” of his conversion, character, purity and truth!

Understand! This verse commands God’s people to perform BOTH kinds of examination, and here is the point: Those who will *not* do these cannot even discern whether they *are* Christians—whether “Christ [the Spirit of truth] is in you” or whether they are “reprobates”—UNAPPROVED!

This is a truly pitiful condition for anyone to fall into.

Can you now begin to see why half of the Laodiceans are so far gone spiritually that they eventually fall away completely? Their problem is coming clearer.

Now notice that the greater context in II Corinthians 13 concludes with verse 8, which connects the process to being either “*against* the TRUTH” or “*for* the TRUTH.” (Take note that *dokimos*—“approved”—is also found in verse 7.)

Is your thinking being expanded? Do you see the vital role of God’s truth here? Be sure you are periodically stopping long enough to ponder key words and phrases.

The context in chapter 13 is discussing how some in Corinth were challenging Paul—actually questioning whether *he* was “approved” (vs. 6-7). In this light, it is important to note that five chapters earlier (8:8), Paul told the Corinthians that he was seeking to “PROVE the sincerity of *your* [their] love”—not his own in the matter. In that passage, *dokimos* (“prove”) is again tied to *sincerity*—and *love* (the fulfilling of God’s Law, His *light*).

However, a fascinating passage comes to light here concerning Paul—and ultimately us. In his first epistle to Corinth, Paul had expressed concern that even he could become a “castaway” and lose salvation. He wrote, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a *castaway*” (9:27).

The Greek word translated “castaway” is *adokimos*. Like David in Psalm 51, Paul was himself concerned about, and remained vigilant toward, his own spiritual condition, and whether even he, as an apostle, could be unapproved in God’s sight.

The point should be obvious—and hit you with the force of a loaded Mack truck. If even *apostles*, and converted *kings*, need to be concerned about approval from God, then what about you? Will you be cavalier—largely uninterested—about what PAUL *beat his body* to avoid?—what DAVID cried out to God about?

What Most Never Did!

Recognize this. There are two and only two categories of human beings on planet earth—the *dokimos* and the *adokimos*—the APPROVED and the UNAPPROVED!

All of this makes it easier to understand why Paul also told most of the other congregations he wrote to apply “*dokimos*” to their conversion. He admonished the Galatians this way: “Let *every* man PROVE [*dokimazo*] his own work” (6:4). Paul made no exceptions with them—“EVERY man” should do this.

He also similarly exhorted the Thessalonians. Recall how we saw that most in the Church never took the time to “prove all things,” and therefore have not been able to “hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21).

You guessed it! The word “prove” there is also *dokimazo*. This should hit you with the force of a thunderbolt accompanied by the noise of a bomb blast!

How many people do you think proved God’s truth early in their calling at *this* level of fiery Bible study? Surely not many! No wonder so many scores of thousands fell away. At best, a few tens of thousands seem to have applied *peirazo*, while only a tiny number ever went on to practice *dokimos*. Pause and reread the last sentence before continuing.

I want to offer a personal side note. It was this very kind of Bible study that reinforced in my thinking all of the understanding recorded in this book. In addition, rewriting all of Mr. Armstrong’s literature, in just 4½ years (when he had 52 years to write it)—actually well over twice as much overall—was one of the most incredibly intense processes of re-studying the truth probably ever attempted before now, at least in the same way I had to do this over such a short period. This is not said to brag, but rather to try to explain what I was *forced* to do because no other minister was sent to help me. In another sense, this endeavor—this “*dokimos* experience”—actually lasted over *ten* years, from the time I was first fired from the WCG in early 1993. I could never forget its value!

You can do the same thing. It is not too late to dig in and prove *now* what you should have proven earlier. But you must consciously *decide* to do it.

I cannot make this any plainer. I am literally trying to shout in your ears with all the force that I can muster—because it is not *yet* too late to do this. A little bit of time remains before the Great Tribulation, when it *will* be too late to avoid the second kind of fire that a loving God has re-

served for those who lack “ears to hear” and “eyes to see” what He commands them to do NOW!

The Restored Church of God has reproduced the entire body of God's truth in writing. If you no longer have Mr. Armstrong's books, booklets and articles, and the other literature that contained the truth, to help you do this (many threw them away in the early 90s when Pasadena directed them to), use ours, freely available on our website. We are honored to be of assistance in your effort, and hope that any who need additional help in this pursuit will just ask.

For reference, my exhaustive book *There Came a Falling Away* details and proves 280 WCG doctrinal changes, and it can be very helpful in your research.

Drawing Near to God

James wrote, “But be you *doers* of the word, and not *hearers* only, deceiving your own selves” (1:22). He went on to compare the “hearers only” to those who use a mirror to successfully identify their spiritual problems, only to then immediately ignore their findings. These are called “*forgetful hearers.*” Verse 25 describes those who “look into the perfect law of liberty” and follow it with ACTION.

This takes us to Hebrews 10, which expands on *how* to take action: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies *washed with pure water*” (vs. 22).

Only God can forgive our sins and help us to properly use His scriptural “pure water” to get “our bodies washed.” Notice that the verse begins, “Let us draw near...” This means *we* draw near to God through studying His Word and through fervent prayer. It is no accident then that the very next verse instructs, “Let us HOLD FAST the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised).” And this is in turn followed three verses later with “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of THE TRUTH, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and FIERY INDIGNATION, which shall devour the *adversaries*” (vs. 23, 26-27).

Do not misunderstand! All of this is most serious to God! He is indignant when people trample His revealed doctrinal truth, and considers those who take it lightly to be His *adversaries*. All brethren and ministers—and Paul's warning *is* to everyone with the Holy Spirit at the *end of the age* (vs. 25)—ought to fear and tremble at such a terrifying thought!

May God help all who read this to hold fast to every part of the truth and escape His fiery anger!

Now let’s return to James’ epistle, where an extraordinary biblical promise is found. It is introduced with “God resists the *proud*, but gives grace unto the *humble*. *Submit* yourselves therefore to God...” (4:6-7). Notice that the vital first key paving the return to closeness with God is once again seen to be HUMILITY. This is because pride brings—in fact, triggers—God’s resistance. It becomes more clear that donning the humility garment early, referenced previously, grows even bigger in importance in the recovery process.

Now for the promise: “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. *Cleanse* your hands, you sinners; and *purify* your hearts, you double-minded” (vs. 8).

Do not miss this. When we “draw near to God,” He promises to reciprocate—ALWAYS. He has bound Himself to do this—IF we *also* “cleanse” ourselves from sin (and we have seen that He even helps with this), now understood to happen through extremely intense Bible study, rightly dividing the word of truth—but also guided by the renewed and increased Holy Spirit at work in the mind. Verse 9 continues by adding, “Be *afflicted* [this means to *fast!*], and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness,” when circumstances demand this. In fact, most Christians at the end of the age are faced with exactly these circumstances!

Ask yourself: How many times have you been concerned enough about your condition to fast solely for the purpose of discovering whether you have unknowingly become Laodicean?

In a moment, we will see a fascinating connection between *dokimos* and the much closer contact with God that results.

Getting Started

It has been said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Where does *this* journey begin? The answer is to honestly admit where you are TODAY.

Proverbs 16:2 states, “All the ways of a man are CLEAN in his own eyes; but the LORD weighs the spirits [attitudes].” Accept this scripture for what it reveals. All human beings were born naturally believing that everything they do is “clean.” Proverbs 21:2 repeats the same thing, except that it uses the word “right” in place of “clean.” The meaning is the same in both scriptures. (Proverbs 12:15 specifically ties this thinking to foolishness.)

The natural human approach—yours, too—is a far cry from David's request that God “wash,” “clean” and “purge” him (Psa. 51).

These are the choices: Declare yourself “clean and right in your own eyes,” or ask God, who *weighs* attitudes, to cleanse you, truly making you right.

Since being “approved of God”—not “approved of ourselves”—is the goal, we must go to God, seeking correction from His inspired Word, so that we can be brought back to truth and purity. The process begins—is initiated—when we admit that we are *not* “clean” before God.

I ask yet again: Are you able to see the most crucial element of HUMILITY as the very first garment that you must “put on” to reach your goal?

Another important scripture, the last one using *dokimos*, bears directly on how some approve *themselves*—when they should seek *God's* approval. (It was cited at the book's outset.)

Notice the standard once again: “For *not* he that commends himself is APPROVED [dokimos], but whom the Lord commends” (II Cor. 10:18). The word “commends” means literally “stands near, set together.” That is right. God truly does “stand near”—is “set together” with—those HE approves! Remember that this is what Christ promises to do—to “[sit] together”—with all those who allow Him to enter their home for counseling over a meal (Rev. 3:20).

How marvelous to watch God's “living” Word (Heb. 4:12) fit together like a giant puzzle, revealing a magnificent picture, only clear when *all* the pieces are in place!

Do not misunderstand what you have read. God's approval, and His alone, is what matters. You cannot play games of self-deception, *declaring yourself* approved by simple assertion. You must be willing to COME THROUGH FIRE to the purity and truth that God requires! (This will also by itself lead one back to God's Church.)

Three Fires: Choose One

I Corinthians 3 introduces one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle, absolutely inseparable from the process we are learning. You must grasp how God builds character, and brings people to truth and purity. Remember, studying for CORRECTION—doctrinal or otherwise—*always* becomes a fiery trial.

The passage begins by introducing the different kinds of character that people build: “Now if any man build upon this foundation *gold*, sil-

ver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble...” (vs. 12). Three of these materials—likened to character—endure, and are actually *purified* through fire, while the other three are *consumed* by it.

Now notice what God says literally “tests the metal” (or precious stones) of every man’s character: “Every man’s work shall be made manifest [obvious]: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be *revealed by fire*; and *the fire shall try* every man’s work of what sort it is” (vs. 13).

Christian development involves many “fiery trials.” (I Peter 4:12 states this.) In a sense, I Corinthians 3 reveals that the entire Christian experience is one long “trial by fire,” which we have seen is inseparable from the meaning and ongoing practice of *dokimos*. Recall that this is the kind of trial that “produces truth and genuineness—*without alloy*.” The only way to remove alloys (false teachings and wrong or false conduct) connected with metals that are *not* pure—*not* the genuine article—is through extreme heat in a furnace of fire! These must be *burned away*.

Now read how righteous character, depicted by gold, silver and precious stones, purified through fire, brings God’s reward: “If any man’s work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” (vs. 14). On the other hand, wood, hay and stubble will not survive fire, of even much of the lowest intensity of added heat: “If any man’s work shall be BURNED, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; YET SO AS BY FIRE” (vs. 15).

Those whose character is depleted to the point that some of their work must be “burned,” meaning they “suffer loss,” *may* still be saved, but this can only happen “as by fire.” Understand that significant character loss could mean that salvation may also be lost.

This section references and describes *three* fires. Every human being—past, present and future—must, with no exceptions, choose one of these three fires.

First, there are those who choose to examine themselves by studying God’s Word in such an intensive, corrective fashion, seeking to grow in purity and truth, that God likens this to a trial by fire. These are approved. (Remember, this is not the other, lesser—non-fire—type of *peirazo* examination that only involves “testing at the level of scrutiny.”)

Second, are those whose lukewarmness and inaction now, because they will not enter the *dokimos* level of fiery trial, through study and prayer, including asking for much more of God’s Spirit, will require God to put them through the worst fire of all time—the coming Tribulation. Of course, we have seen that, like the six materials above, one-half of those who enter the Tribulation will “suffer loss,” but will be saved “as by fire.”

Third, as with those who do not spiritually survive the Great Tribulation, some will ultimately choose the *lake of fire* as their final “reward.”

At this juncture, recall that Christ specifically counsels Laodicea “to buy of me *GOLD tried in the fire...*” He explains that only this would produce the “white raiment” necessary to clothe the “shame of [their] nakedness.” Some of Laodicea will humbly accept and apply Christ’s counsel *before* the Tribulation. Others will delay the process (but having returned to God’s Church) and be forced to do it *during* the Tribulation. In other words, some will choose fire *now* and some will choose fire *later*—and, tragically, some will choose the lake of fire *much later*. (This is true of the other half of Laodiceans who, out of foolishness, fear and weakness, will completely corrupt their character—quench God’s Spirit—and give up the truth entirely—to *temporarily* save their physical lives!)

Like the old Fram Oil Filter television commercial, in which the customer is told, “You can pay me now or pay me later,” you can repent now and avoid the Tribulation, or repent later **IN IT**. While you can still be saved at that point, is *this* the path you wish to travel? That fire will be most real—even to those now blindly believing that “Accidents only happen to others.”

Understand! There are no categories other than dokimos fire *now*, Tribulation fire *later*—or the lake of fire *much later*!

Mr. Armstrong Understood

Mr. Armstrong understood more about the interconnection of scriptures and principles explained here than you may think. Let’s examine just a little of what he said about the importance of proper Bible study and crying out to God to wash and cleanse us within this type of corrective study. It prepares you for the rest of the chapter.

The first quote is repeated from an earlier section. This is because it particularly applies here. Having come to understand the vital meaning behind “dokimos”—being approved of God—reread it with yourself in mind (all emphasis his):

“When we face a serious or alarming situation, there is...a tendency toward **LETTING DOWN IN PRAYER**—in **BIBLE STUDY**, and consequently in that zeal and willingness to sacrifice for **GOD’S WORK**.”

“Do you suppose Satan does not know all this? He knows! He will do all in his power to get you **DISCOURAGED** to get you to find some fault—to **LET DOWN** in prayer and Bible study—to **LOSE YOUR INSPIRED ZEAL** for God’s Work!”

“I KNOW that most of us have not, yet, come back to that full WHOLEHEARTED energetic ZEAL for GETTING ON WITH THIS WORK that we MUST have to finish it!”

“Looking at present FACTS, and TRENDS, that might seem impossible! But this is THE WORK OF GOD—A WORK OF FAITH—and existing facts, trends, circumstances, HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FAITH. The living Christ has resources, and ways WE KNOW NOTHING OF!”

“And whereas, it is incumbent on us...to CONFESS and deplore... our SINS in allowing worldly interests and pleasures to start drawing us away from our God, and our zeal for HIS WORK, I call on all Brethren to CONFESS this lukewarmness...and to PRAY, with all FERVENCY and CONTRITION, for God’s pardon for these offenses, and for a permanent BLESSING on HIS WORK henceforth, continuously to its final completion.”

“Brethren, many if not most of us have let other interests creep into our minds and hearts till we do not have ANYWHERE NEAR the ZEAL for the GREATEST WORK ON EARTH, that the football players have for a football game.”

“WHY can football players get themselves ‘UP’ in almost fanatical ZEAL, motivated by HATE, when we are indifferent, ‘DOWN,’ and lukewarm about the MOST IMPORTANT AND GLORIOUS CALLING OF ALL TIME?”

“...Christ is DOING HIS PART—opening new doors. Only ONE THING has been WRONG!—and we must FACE IT!—too many of us have been GROWING LUKEWARM...”

“We may think, because we keep [God’s] Sabbath, that we have no wicked ways or sins to turn from. But laxity...can be sin.”

Brethren Letter, Nov. 2, 1972

“Now this tribulation [mentioned in Matt. 24:9] DID actually occur, in the typical forerunner sense, to the nation Judah, in 70 A.D. But that was merely the early type, and forerunner of the great NATIONAL invasion and captivity YET to occur.”

“[Matt. 24:10-13, 21]: ‘And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved...For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be...’

“Now this is also speaking INDIVIDUALLY of truly Spirit-begotten CHRISTIANS who have become so lukewarm, so *out* of PRAYERFUL contact with God, that they will not be accounted worthy to ESCAPE all these things. And THAT phase of this Great Tribulation is very clearly brought out in the opening of the 5th Seal of Rev. 6...”

The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last (1972)

The next and final quote from Mr. Armstrong (also repeated) sets the stage for absolutely vital understanding that both concludes this chapter and caps the connection between effective Bible study, seeing through false doctrine, the amount of God's Spirit that one has, and anointing one's eyes. All the parentheticals are his—read carefully his words.

Now notice:

“Matthew 25 shows the time just before Christ shall return. It pictures the Laodicean Church as 10 virgins who took their lamps (their Bibles) and went forth to meet Christ at His coming. But five of them—half of the Church—took their lamps (Bibles) but without oil to light the lamps (having the Holy Spirit to enlighten their minds to UNDERSTAND the Bible). Some translations render this into English indicating they were losing the Holy Spirit, because of negligence, lack of prayer, fellowship with the brethren and with God and Christ and being overcome with materialistic and worldly interest. Are some of us like that, even now?”

“While they—the backsliding half of the Church—were trying to get back closer to God, the coming of Christ shall take place, and the door into God's Kingdom will be SHUT in their faces! WHAT A TERRIBLE AND AWFUL TRAGEDY! It could happen to you or me.”

Co-worker Letter, Jan. 20, 1981

The first paragraph in Mr. Armstrong's statement reiterates that the “lamps” and “oil” of Matthew 25 are, in fact, the Bible and the Spirit of God, in this case, barely at work in the wise virgins' lives. Remember, the foolish virgins took “no oil” in their lamps, so obviously then the lamps had “gone out,” as it says. “Gone out” in the Greek means “to extinguish.”

Keep this foremost in your thinking.

This central question must be asked at this point, and it is all-important to the whole process of anointing one's eyes: How could those who once knew the truth so completely lose sight of it? What was actually happening within their minds? The correct answer lies in understanding exactly—precisely—what real conversion is!

Another Look at What Enters Upon Begettal

Let’s remain basic, and begin with some simple review. We saw earlier that the Bible reveals that a true Christian is actually begotten at conversion with what James called the “word of truth” (1:18). We also saw that Christ called this the “Spirit of truth” in John (15:26; 16:13), and that Peter identified both of these terms as another way of referencing and describing the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38), given after repentance and baptism.

The latter passage referenced in John (16:13) reveals that it is through the all-important Holy Spirit—again, the *Spirit*, or *Word*, of truth—that the Christian, as Jesus explained, is “guide[d]...into all truth.” The meaning here is absolutely vital to grasp. To comprehend what Jesus meant, we must examine another series of scriptures in careful sequence.

First, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that His true followers would be those who build their “houses” on His “sayings”—meaning on His *words*. When He instructed them to build on a “rock,” and that this would protect them from “rain,” “floods,” and “winds” (Matt. 7:24-28), this is what He intended they do.

Put another way, when new converts speak of building on Christ, they should actually be thinking of building on His INSTRUCTION—His truth—building as one who “hears these SAYINGS of Mine, and *does* them” (vs. 24).

Next, let’s revisit the middle of John 8, where the context is Christ speaking to those who “believed on Him” (vs. 30). Recognizing their unseen murderous attitude, and realizing they did not really care about His *teachings*, but had rather merely *assumed* that they were His followers, He explained to these empty “believers” that His disciples (Greek: students, learners or pupils) are only identified as *true* Christians “if [they] continue in *My word*, then are [they] My disciples indeed; and [they] shall know THE TRUTH, and THE TRUTH shall make [them] free” (vs. 31-32).

Let’s continue further. Earlier in John, Jesus had explained to His disciples that He was “the Bread that came down from heaven that a man may eat thereof, and not die” and that that man “shall live forever” (6:50-51). In verse 63, He explained what He meant: “The *words* that I speak unto you, *they* are SPIRIT, and *they* are LIFE.”

This is an extraordinary statement, and most have absolutely no idea what Jesus meant by it, or once knew and have forgotten it!

A Living Book

We must understand. Unlike any other book ever written, the Bible is, in a sense, ALIVE—remember, Paul calls it “quick” in Hebrews 4:12. In other words, the Bible is a LIVING BOOK. Those who study it must understand this, and that studying it is different than studying any work of men. When the Holy Spirit is at work inside a person, it is writing God’s words—His law—His truth—inside that person’s mind. This means that without this Spirit at work during Bible study there is no hope of achieving proper understanding. Further, for those who do have the Holy Spirit, but only a small amount at work in their minds, “another spirit” (II Cor. 11:4)—the “spirit of error” (I John 4:6)—can easily—and quickly!—corrupt the study and result in *wrong conclusions*! In fact, this is what always happens.

Even those who are at the stage of just being “drawn” to Christ, not yet converted, have the Holy Spirit at work “with” them (not yet “in” them), making initial understanding possible. (Take a moment to recall and read John 6:44 and 65, followed by John 14:17.) In fact, you literally *cannot* understand any of the points that I am explaining here if God, through His Spirit, is not either working *with* you—drawing you—or, if you are converted, *in* you (I Cor. 2:13-14).

Let’s return to Hebrews 4:12 because it also directly introduces a related point. God’s inspired, living Word is revealed to be a kind of “sword.” Notice: “For the WORD OF GOD is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any *twoedged* SWORD, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

But what exactly is Paul speaking of?—how is this sword more fully defined? This is answered in Ephesians 6, referenced several times previously, about the armor of God—“helmet of salvation,” “breastplate of righteousness,” “loins girded with truth,” etc. Notice this piece of the armor: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...and take...the SWORD *of the Spirit*, which is *the word of God*” (vs. 13, 17).

This is truly crucial understanding to every Bible student seeking to faithfully use God’s Word. You simply must not miss this if you hope to understand Scripture—or to recapture truths lost. The Bible is a living, Spirit sword, and this sword will cut *every* false doctrine to pieces, slicing with both sides—“two edges”—but this is only true IF the one wielding it has a *large measure* of the Holy Spirit!

For centuries, millions, even billions, in the world have studied the Bible—often diligently—yet without comprehension. Now you more fully understand why! Their minds lack the Spirit Word of truth. The Bible’s readers have *no chance* for spiritual understanding. But one who is low on God’s Spirit is only a little better off.

Anointed with Oil at Conversion

Finally, before leaving the subject of conversion, let’s look at one more related point, connected through several additional passages.

We saw in Chapter 6 that receiving God’s Holy Spirit is an “anointing” (I John 2:27). Of course, again, anointings are always done with *oil*, and we will return to what this means momentarily. Before continuing, recall that the entire first epistle of John repeatedly established the importance of holding to the truth.

Early in the second chapter, the connection between following the truth of God’s Word as the *only* means of perfecting the LOVE OF GOD is explained. Let’s notice again: “But whoso KEEPS HIS WORD [never compromises it], in *him* [and no one else] verily is the *love of God* perfected” (vs. 5).

This, in itself, though not the focus of this book, is incredible knowledge that very few in God’s Church seem to have understood. But those of brotherly love will not miss this connection. Millions talk about Christians having “love,” but almost none of them tie this to having the truth of the Bible! No wonder so few know the *Bible definition* of the LOVE OF GOD (I John 5:3; Rom. 13:10)—and then no wonder that so few practice it. The splinters and slivers have come to talk about and emphasize “love” over and over in their writings and sermons, but try to find a single time when your group connects it to I John 2:5!

They ignore this passage!

Next, in I John 2, with the subject of the special anointing beginning in verse 20, we saw that verse 26 explains that it is only through this anointing—receiving the Word or Spirit of truth in the mind—that one can successfully resist those who could, as John was warning, “seduce you” from the truth. This means again that a significant supply of God’s Spirit must be guiding regular, daily Bible study for this to be possible. Recall Mr. Armstrong’s final quote above.

Let’s tie everything together, including the connection to the foolish and wise virgins. The foolish virgins had permitted the “oil” to run completely out of their “lamps.” We have seen that only the oil of God’s Spirit lights the lamp that is the Bible.

Careful reading (and examination of the Greek) of Matthew 25:8 reveals that the virgins' problem was that the Holy Spirit was certainly first "going out" of their lamp (Bible), or more properly, their Bible study, before being "GONE out." They had not been daily replenishing and renewing the Holy Spirit. Outside Christ's Body—not in His one Church—and thus unplugged from His power, they are also not living His words.

By now it should be unmistakably clear that God's *Spirit* word of truth works together with Scripture—the *written* word of truth—in the converted mind.

Here is the MUST-NOT-MISS point: God's living Word is such that the *Holy Spirit* and the *study* of it reinforce each other. Lacking either one, the other, respectively, eventually disappears or becomes useless.

I repeat: Millions in the world study the Bible every day without being able to arrive at true understanding. Why? Because they do not have the Holy Spirit guiding their minds—they are not converted. At the same time, prophecy reveals that most of those today who in fact *do*, or *did* at one time, have God's Spirit allowed their supply of it to either run low or completely out. We will learn in Chapter 11 that this is inseparable from the subject and identity of the Body of Christ, and whether one is connected to the one place—the ONE ORGANIZATION—that the active, living Christ and His Spirit are at work and leading.

Remember that Jesus had also compared God's Spirit to moving water, explaining that it *flows out* of one's "belly" (John 7:37-39) actively producing "fruits" (Gal. 5:22-23).

God's Spirit is not static—it cannot be bottled up. It must be used and replenished on a daily basis (II Cor. 4:16; Luke 11:13). When the Holy Spirit dwindles in a person, truth and the ability to resist doctrinal error is lost with it—whether or not one is still regularly studying his Bible (and most, in fact, are *not* regularly studying it any longer)! This is because the lamp of God's Word becomes *utterly useless* without this all-important OIL that lights it in the mind of its reader.

The many thousands who lost sight of the truth that they once held allowed God's Spirit to wane within them, some grieving it (Eph. 4:30), others completely quenching (I Thes. 5:19), in their lives. Having come to lack sufficient oil, made worse by a declining interest in diligent, serious Bible study, many were fooled into accepting substitute, counterfeit explanations of many basic doctrines. They became the virgins of Matthew 25, with the future to reveal whether they will at least be among the "wise" five ones, who at least followed God's Spirit back to His Church.

Almost none have comprehended what you have just read. Certainly, the churches of the world have never understood or taught what this

chapter (with Chapter 6) has explained. Sadly, God’s people have become little better. However, perhaps some who once understood at least some of what has been explained here will be able to recapture what they lost.

Determine now that you will keep this knowledge clear—completely straight!—in your mind! Determine that nothing will shake you from this true understanding.

The Purpose of Bible Study

Before concluding the chapter, let’s momentarily return to the subject of when a person is called to conversion. There is a related point found in one of Christ’s parables.

In Matthew 13, Jesus taught perhaps His longest parable, that of the sower and the seed. Verses 4 through 8 describe “seed” that fell either “by the way side,” “upon stony places,” “among thorns” or “into good ground.” Jesus explains that the seed is shown in each case to be “the word” that is sown in the hearts of human beings when God begins to work with them. In three of the four cases described, the seed never fully germinates.

Jesus interprets the parable from verses 18 through 23. The seed that landed by the way side was eaten by “birds”—a type of Satan—who “catches away that which was sown in the heart” before it can take root. The seed that fell in stony places was able to put down roots, but they were shallow, and the sun—a type of severe trials (“tribulation”) or persecution—was able to quickly scorch and dry out the plant so that it died. The seed that fell among “thorns” is the person who hears, but the word in his mind is choked “by the cares of the world” and “riches.” Then there is the seed that landed on good ground—this is the person with a fertile attitude who not only “hears the word” but also “understands” it and goes on to “bear fruit.” These receive, utilize and regularly replenish the Holy Spirit within them.

Only those who are in the last category—good ground—will benefit from the truth of the teaching brought here, which is all part of anointing their eyes.

This leads to another important principle. Paul taught the assembled Ephesian ministry this: “I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to *build you up*, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

God’s Word certainly will build up His people—including *rebuilding* their understanding of sound doctrine—who study and employ it in their

lives. But this will only occur *after* they have anointed their eyes through receiving sufficient oil—the Spirit and word of truth—again to understand it! And neither of these will occur overnight. Each cut off “branch” (individual Laodicean Christians) must reconnect with the “Vine” (Jesus Christ) and begin again to receive the vital replenishing of the ultimate energy source (John 15).

“In Spirit and Truth”

A final word is fitting here. Many do not even seem to know what their organization officially teaches for doctrines. I hear this regularly. Upon telling these people what their group believes—and teaches openly—I often hear things like, “Oh, they do? I didn’t know!” They will sometimes go on to ask, “Are you sure?” At this point I am always incredulous, thinking, “Why don’t *you* know?—It’s *your* group! Whose fault is it that you don’t know? Are you checking—are you reading and studying your organization’s literature and listening to its sermons? If so, how much—and how carefully?”

Now remember, I John contains a warning about those taken and led by the “spirit of error.”

You must get this straight in your mind! There are only two spirits identified in the Bible—the SPIRIT OF TRUTH and the *spirit of error*. John ties hearing the voice of Christ (where the truth resides) speaking through His servants to discerning the vast difference in these spirits. Here is how he said it: “We are of God: he that *knows God* [reread I John 2:4] hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the *Spirit of truth*, and the *spirit of error*” (4:6).

As we discuss truth in such explicit detail, I might ask: Do you hear the Spirit of truth in John’s words?—and in Mr. Armstrong’s words?—and in my words supporting them? And are you seeing their overall application to you?

Consider your organization. Both these spirits cannot be *leading* it—or, for that matter, *YOU* (although both spirits are now *present* in all the splinters). It is either one or the other. Christ only heads (leads) *ONE* Church—one individual organization. You personally can neither seek nor continue to retain the SPIRIT OF TRUTH for very long, when the *spirit of error* has entered and is leading your group or organization. (Take a moment to read James 3:11-12.) This has been the case now for years. You have to be grafted back into the place where Christ’s government is at work, and thus into Christ Himself. Severed branches *must* be surgically rejoined to the Vine. (To learn much more about this subject, read *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?*)

Time is not on your side, because there is not much left in this age and because blindness only grows *worse* as time passes. So, to delay very long could be fatal.

Can you better understand *why* Christ instructs—actually commands—so bluntly, “The true worshippers *shall* worship the Father IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him *must* worship Him IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH” (John 4:23-24)?

God is composed of the Holy Spirit of truth. This explains why He will not accept worshipping Him in any other way. This is why His people literally—and it says this—“MUST worship Him in SPIRIT and in TRUTH.” Notice that this passage also uses the positive command that you “SHALL” do this. Obviously, this is impossible without a significant amount of the Spirit of truth—the Word of truth—in the mind, leaving no room for the spirit of error to enter!

It is my hope that you now understand why those who *live* and *love* the truth must come to the only organization—the one, unified Body of Christ—where there is the *full* light of that truth, and where God’s Spirit is present abundantly and in power. This is the test that defines which era—which condition—each person will ultimately choose. We will learn after the next chapter that there is another great element in this test—and every Christian in this age is on a direct COLLISION COURSE with it!

But first you must be able to measure how much your spiritual temperature has cooled.

TAKE YOUR TEMPERATURE

In the wake of the apostasy, with a variety of splinters appearing, many got confused, thinking that one of the groups forming directly from the WCG had to be Philadelphian, with all of the *others* constituting Laodicea. Yet, *all* of the groups were Laodicean because they had to be! This is the Laodicean age. The simple reality is that all these groups reflect this condition—and they *feel* the same to the spiritual senses. Taking even the most cursory view, the splinters and slivers “look, feel, taste and smell” almost the same to those who are looking back, having come out of them.

A few individual Philadelphians could possibly have filtered *through* (I never met even a single one, but only God knows)—and those who anoint their eyes *come out of*—the now obvious Laodicean thinking. This is because they are willing to take the *second step* others will not take—or even look for. They leave Laodicea just as they had to leave what became a *completely* false church (WCG). God requires Philadelphians to demonstrate, in a clear and unmistakable way, that they are *not* Laodicean—that they are *not* willing to settle for part of the truth. He requires them to take action.

This said, we regularly hear from brethren living around the world and who represent virtually all the splinters. The common thread in their thinking is that they want to completely “hold fast” (Rev. 3:11) to all of the doctrines placed into the Church through Mr. Armstrong. They recognize that they cannot remain where they are, and many *are*, in fact, leav-

ing the splinters. They recognize—see!—that there now *is* (and has been) an organization that compromises *none* of what the Church once understood.

I only wish I could share with you the sheer joy and excitement that these many brethren express as they thrill to know that *everything* they once believed has been rewritten and is again available to all those God may yet still call in this age. The thrill of watching people “come alive” to what they thought no one would ever be willing to produce again, and to see them re-experience their first love, is beyond the worth of a hundred paychecks!

In contrast, we also work with others in all of the major splinters who are *not* prepared to return to everything God’s Church once believed. After working with thousands of them, I have learned that there are only shades of difference between the organizations they represent. And their reasoning is very similar. We have discussed this before, but it bears repeating. As stated, they all disagree with Mr. Armstrong, but their problem is that they cannot agree on *where* to disagree with him and, therefore, cannot walk together. Their first love of the truth is long gone.

However, many others, *confused* by their circumstances, do not fall into either of these categories. They are in the middle. For these, the EFFECT of confusion *can* be removed—if they address its CAUSE!

The Splinters All Range Within “Lukewarm”

We need to momentarily cover something that has been addressed in other books. It relates directly to what I call the “confusion of temperature factor.” Let’s take a moment to review.

When Jesus spoke of Laodiceans being “lukewarm,” He was referring to a temperature *range*. Recall that He tells Laodiceans that He would rather they were cold or hot instead of lukewarm. *Cold*, *hot* and *lukewarm* are not precise, single degrees of temperature. Each reflects a *range* of temperature. For example, *ice cold* is colder than *plain cold* but warmer than *absolute zero*, the coldest temperature in the universe. *Hot* ranges from about 90 degrees (hot to a human being) all the way to the temperature at the center of the sun (27,000,000 degrees Fahrenheit). But, astronomers say the sun is actually a “cold star,” so even that level of heat is *relative*.

Here is the point. The brethren of the lukewarm era reflect a *range* of temperatures. Depending on the group, it could be a *little hotter* or a *little colder*, but still within the range of lukewarm. Have you recognized this?

This is what leads many to think they are better—or Philadelphian—while others are falling short. Having a *little more* truth does not make one Philadelphian. Being a *little warmer* than others does not make one *hot*. However, those who are a little warmer may be more likely to return to full faithfulness through martyrdom in the Tribulation.

This “a little warmer” condition often has to do with when one left the apostasy. The later this happened, the less likely a person is to anoint his eyes to his condition. (Of course, some of these could be relatively cool in temperature, at the *low end* of lukewarm, and, therefore, be unable to begin to see this worse condition.) Those who left the apostasy during its early stages seem most often to have been the ones willing to do this. This could change.

Think of this confusion of temperature in another way. Mr. Armstrong taught *hundreds* of doctrines (including details within them)—not *dozens*, as some think! Some groups are about half correct. Others believe perhaps two-thirds of the truth. One or two might have more, but I have never seen one. All *claim* to be 100 percent faithful—but none are even close! In effect, many are unconsciously settling for merely being within the *higher end* of lukewarm.

Consider this analogy. Like an alcoholic in an alley on a cold night, drinking to keep warm but whose body temperature is actually *dropping*, many are feeling an *artificial* heat, when they are actually slowly growing colder. This is at least partly explained by the fact that they are *surrounded* by a lot of lukewarm bodies artificially raising the temperature of the room—and giving a false sense of safety in numbers.

I pray that you will take heed before this illusory process leads to a spiritual frostbite that cannot be reversed!

Blindness in the United Church of God

Part of the confusion of temperature factor (and it is only part) at work within the splinters and slivers is caused by the sheer size of the United Church of God—now split into three main parts—that formed in the spring of 1995. There is no way around mentioning how *this organization* and its offshoots are indirectly causing a vision problem for almost everyone outside them. This is happening in the following way:

The spiritual landscape within this organization and offshoots is a scene of such doctrinal devastation that almost everyone who is not with them is able to see that it is in much worse condition than any other group. They have many more false teachings than any other splinter. In fact, they have proven to be unsound in ways that have greatly

exceeded the liberal years of the 1970s—and their ongoing changes in teaching seem to have no end in sight. In the very same way that the apostates formed a committee to examine all of the Worldwide Church of God’s doctrines, the United Church of God (UCG) has formed a committee (and it has endless committees and study groups) that is continually reviewing virtually *every* doctrine Mr. Armstrong taught. This has allowed it to fall into scores of unsound teachings (II Tim. 4:3)—with seemingly more every day—and they have also broken with many sound *traditions* that the Bible instructs should also be held fast (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6).

Their example is so public and “loud” that it cannot be missed—except apparently by most of those within it! Their condition is so appalling that even many ministers in the other groups (though these themselves are terribly compromised) are able to see that Mr. Armstrong, if he were still alive, would *immediately* disfellowship their entire ministry. This is no overstatement!

While there is the question of *why* anyone would follow such weak, compromised, doctrinally unsound leaders, it is not the greatest problem that springs from what this organization is doing.

Confusing Your Temperature

Once again, many groups can easily see the absolutely deplorable condition of UCG. Herein lies the problem. This splinter becomes the STANDARD FOR BLINDNESS—for being “Laodicean”—to many other groups who think that they “see” *by comparison*.

This group’s woeful condition is inadvertently providing a “cover” of scales that is blinding people in other splinters to the many false doctrines in their *own group!* The entire Living Church of God (LCG) is the biggest example. Again, other organizations see themselves as “holding fast” *by comparison!* UCG, and to a lesser degree, some other smaller groups, are blinding the majority of brethren, who observe them and say, “*They* must be Laodicean because we are a lot better (hotter) than they are”—when these are really only hotter within the *range* of lukewarm.

But UCG and its offshoots are about the farthest thing possible from being an accurate measuring stick because, given only a few more years, those in it will completely pass from the realm of true Christianity. Only slightly better than dead Sardis, they are even now over half Protestant. Of course, they do not think they are even *one percent* Protestant—but they are! If individuals do not leave UCG and its descent into confusion, divi-

sion and doctrinal disintegration, now so obviously led by the spirit of error, all who remain will eventually fall away completely.

But there is another enormous and *directly related* problem here, this time having to do with the *first* splinter that formed, in late 1989—the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG). This group is further complicating the picture that God’s people are seeing when they examine where they should affiliate. First, in their *own* eyes, this earliest group sees itself as best holding fast because they (initially) retained most of Mr. Armstrong’s teachings. Now it also owns the copyright to much of his literature.

But, perhaps more than any other, this group added, under the guise of “new revelations” received by their leader, so much outrageous error and misunderstanding of basic Old Testament prophecy, that they may now teach more false ideas than *any* other group. Also, because of the secretive, paranoid leadership there, their fiercely accusative attitude toward other groups, as well as terrible self-righteousness, they have given *holding fast* to what Mr. Armstrong taught an awful name.

Apart from their false doctrines, people recognize that this group could not possibly represent the era known for brotherly love. Yet, they further confuse and blur the vision because, to some outside their organization, they *appear* to be holding to the truth—and they name their corporation after the sixth era. But the top leadership is not remotely of God. It has *already* fallen away. (Remember, “by their fruits you *know* them.” No guesswork is necessary.)

There are almost 30 divine or religious titles that PCG’s leader appropriates to himself. It is impossible for any of God’s people to serve a blasphemous, raging false prophet, false apostle and a false christ—and still remain a servant of the true God. After one discerns he is following a false prophet, he must repent and leave the PCG immediately. Therefore, the need to leave the PCG is even more imperative than the need to leave others! (But, sadly, because of the virtual worship of the leader demanded of its adherents, many who leave this group turn out to be Mr. Armstrong *worshippers*, instead of merely his FOLLOWERS.)

Nevertheless, many fine people are found in both the above groups. Eventually, and before much longer, they will have to leave these organizations to even remain lukewarm.

In any event, the direction of PCG is so radical and bizarre, all done in the name of “holding fast,” that they terribly muddy the big picture for those only willing to look at the surface of the confusion.

Think about this until it becomes obvious. Then consider this.

Those in the Middle

Now that we have described the groups in the opposite ditches of the seventh era, it cannot be stated strongly enough how those attending the other big “middle” groups must not fall prey to the blinding, self-satisfied smugness of believing that they are God’s “best alternative.” While they *may* be in a somewhat better position spiritually to remain a Christian a little longer, that is the best they can hope for. Their doctrinal condition only looks good because so many in their attendance are using two such crooked, broken measuring sticks. For instance, LCG has developed a virtual Pentecostal obsession with “miracles” and “blessings” that its leader continually has his church fasting about, in order to supposedly “restore apostolic Christianity” as he seems to define this emphasis. This focus will only serve to increase this organization’s smugness about having a “closer relationship with God.” But it should be noted that additional compromise, including a false gospel and a growing number of false teachings, increasing loss of many ministers, as well as hundreds of brethren, and outright deceit are causing this implosion to accelerate toward probable, eventual breakup.

Let me say again that, for now, the first two organizations create a special problem for *all* other groups who, in light of them, can more easily say, “We’re holding fast or doing better *by comparison*”—“We are not as liberal as UCG or as extreme as PCG. We are more balanced, more loving and willing to ‘grow.’”

All those in these middle—more “centrist”—groups must carefully weigh these realities.

How many will recognize that only one Church has *all* the truth? How many will understand that most groups can easily assert, through a contrived, tortured view of themselves in comparison to the other splinters, that their organization holds the “Philadelphian” high ground? (Understand. We would be no different if we could not demonstrate, with *absolute proof*, that we truly do hold the doctrinal high ground.) How many will see that all of this is a high-stakes game, based on artificial jockeying and positioning, being played out on a grand scale in the splinters? How many will connect all of this to what is confusing thousands, and keeping so many from addressing their blindness?

UCG and PCG, and any others like them, present a huge obstacle that brethren have to address on an *individual* basis, because no organization is going to *collectively* admit to its condition—and conveniently solve the problem for all of its members.

Therefore, how many *individuals* will be willing to anoint their eyes so they can learn—“see”—that the STANDARD they are using is entirely wrong? How many will remember that “They that compare themselves *among themselves* are UNWISE” (II Cor. 10:12)? How many will forget: “For *not* he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends” (vs. 18)? This includes whole organizations.

Scrutinize All Areas

In the spirit of *peirazo*, explained earlier, one must take his or her temperature in a thorough, methodical way. If you are truly interested in “anointing your eyes...that you may see,” you must be willing to carefully examine *all aspects* of your conversion and Christian life. A cursory review, in the way some people typically prepare for the Passover, will not do, or even come close. I will offer the following list of questions that, as the barest minimum number, you should ask yourself, here focusing primarily on conduct.

Tools of Growth

Regarding the FIVE TOOLS of Christian growth: Are you regularly praying, studying, fasting, meditating—and actively concentrating on exercising God’s Spirit? In which of these are you weak? Where could you do better—or more? How long and how often do you do these things? Then, *how long* have you been insufficient in the use of these vital Christian tools, known to the Church for decades as the only way a Christian can grow spiritually?

Almost certainly, you are falling short in some areas. Ask yourself *why* you permitted this to happen—and how determined are you to do something about it. Is this something you are going to improve NOW, or something you will merely “address later,” when you “have more time”?

Sabbath and Holy Days

How do you view God’s Sabbath? Do you properly prepare for it—and welcome it when it arrives? Do you occasionally “forsake the assembling of yourself together”? If so, how often—and what has made you think that you can do this (Heb. 10:24-26)? Have you relaxed your dress code on the Sabbath from what the entire Church once practiced when it was on track? Is your conversation filled with idle words—are you actively striving to remove them from your Sabbath discussions with other breth-

ren? Do you still listen attentively at services, taking careful notes with an open Bible, because you plan to *revisit* those notes one or more times in the coming week? Is the television on during the Sabbath, and if so, how long and for what purpose? Has this element of your standard of conduct degenerated as per Sabbath-keeping? Do you still see the Sabbath as God’s *test command*?

What about the Feast of Tabernacles? Do you always attend every day of the Feast—and, once again, how do you dress? Do you still keep a full second tithe in preparation for the Feast, always turning in the excess before and after the Feast so that others, less privileged, may also attend? Does your attendance, at least where you are a member at this time, reflect a loyalty to your organization, or do you attend whatever site is nearest or most attractive to you, regardless of its affiliation?

Bible Study and Reading

How often do you study your Bible to intensively review basic doctrines (in a *dokimos* fashion)—or for personal correction in this way? When did you last pick up even one of Mr. Armstrong’s books or booklets—and carefully read it with an open Bible? (In this regard, I Timothy 4:13, “give attendance to reading,” has vital application.) How often do you do this, assuming you do it at all? You might ask yourself: “How many Christians of previous ages would covet the many books and booklets that are only gathering dust on *my* shelf?” How many years—or decades?—have passed since you carried out this exercise?

Lacking this practice, how often, and to what degree, do you typically practice reading your own group’s literature in this fashion? (This is not said to endorse its material, but to merely help you take your overall temperature.) How often do you think about, talk about or study with the concept of—the very word of—*truth* in your mind? How often do you find yourself consciously and specifically thinking about the need to HOLD FAST, with Revelation 3:11 in your mind? Ever?

Watching Prophecy Fulfilled

In this regard, how urgently do you study prophecy—meaning the *truth* of prophecy? Is even the subject of prophecy one that still gives you goose bumps, firing you up to the tremendous urgency of our time—and leaving you a more fervent Christian each time you study events that will soon come to pass?—events that will crash upon the **WHOLE WORLD** when they arrive.

No matter how long we have, there are far fewer years left than when Mr. Armstrong was alive and telling us to simplify our lives (January 1980) because he knew that catastrophic prophetic events were soon to crash upon an unsuspecting world. Over 30 years have passed. How thoroughly are you still applying Luke 21:36—“watch and pray always”—recognizing the extreme danger for *you* if you ignore verses 34-35 that precede it—and particularly verse 35? Can you still (or could you ever) correctly explain the beasts, heads, horns and toes of Revelation 13 and 17 and Daniel 7, and the great statue of Daniel 2?

Personal Conduct

What about other areas of Christian conduct? Do you drink too much alcohol? Does your conversation throughout the week reflect what Christ would say—and are you *actively* concerned with this? How is your marriage doing, and to what degree are you focused on improving this God-plane relationship you learned is “a divine institution, ordained of God”? Is it still special—and growing more so every day?

Are you routinely practicing the biblically-prescribed principles of childrearing? Are you consistent and unified in what you do, knowing that you are training little potential members of the God family, and knowing that you have them as only a *temporary stewardship*, administered on God’s behalf until they reach adulthood?

Do you still faithfully tithe on every dime you earn? What about offerings, also commanded by God (Mal. 3:8-10)? Do you still pay third tithe, or are you in one of the groups that has dismissed God’s eternal law on this subject, ignoring the command to take care of the widows, orphans, needy, strangers and Levites? Have you let the “arguments” of your leaders convince you that God did away with this law simply because *they* rejected it—because they convinced you that Mr. Armstrong would have made this universal decision for the Church if he were still alive?

Fervent for the Work?

When Mr. Armstrong was alive, he spoke continually about the importance of God’s Work. Aside from the correct framework of how God’s *true* Work is to be done and His full truth preached, do you, at least within your group, still thrill at progress in the Work being done around the world?

How often do you pray about God’s Work? How long and how specific are your prayers for more “laborers” (Matt. 9:36-38)? Do you think

in terms of regularly sacrificing with extra offerings, as Mr. Armstrong reminded us monthly in almost every Member/Co-Worker letter? How much do you think about the marvelous announcement of the kingdom of God going to all nations and the sobering Ezekiel warning going to the modern nations of Israel?

Examining and Overcoming

How often do you stop your activity and take the time to examine yourself? Recognizing the power of Jeremiah 17:9, how often do you fervently pray for correction (10:23-24), beseeching—begging!—God to show you yourself as *He* sees you? How often do you deeply repent of what God’s mirror (Jms. 1:22-25) reveals to you?

How concerned with copying the life of Christ are you? How often do you think about this continuous responsibility? How broken up about your conduct are you—and how determined are you to defeat your problems? What areas of weakness can you say that you have honestly addressed—and *overcome*? How often and to what degree do you feel a “hungering and thirsting after righteousness”? How often do you think about and try to display the nine “fruits of the spirit”—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Gal. 5:22-23)—recognizing Jesus’ sobering instruction, given four times in John 15, to “bring forth more *fruit*” (vs. 2, 5, 8, 16) as proof you are His disciple?

Why You Were Born!

How often do you actively—consciously—think about ruling with Christ—actually sitting on thrones reigning over nations? How much do you think about the process of *qualifying* for rulership? Are you connecting this to properly ruling all areas of your life now? Do you often—or ever—meditate on whether God is truly ruling *you*? Do you periodically remind yourself that you are in training to be a teacher?

This list could go on and on, but what I have listed here is not intended to be more than a starting point—a place to begin. It is far from complete—and the sincerity of your interest in regaining your sight will be partly defined by the length of your own list beyond the one I have provided. It will also be measured by how honestly you grade yourself. If you whitewash yourself, literally turning the prophesied “blind eye” to your Christian behavior, you will only hurt—and potentially eternally jeopardize—yourself!

GOVERNMENT IS EVERYTHING

The Bible, above all else, is a book about government. While I learned this from Mr. Armstrong, almost 40 years of studying God's Word has confirmed it to be true. Consider just these things: Lucifer's rebellion against God's government, Adam doing the same, how God governed ancient Israel (Moses, Joshua, the judges, kings and prophets, etc.), Korah's rebellion, Saul's rebellion, the special scepter (government) promise to the House of David, how Christ qualified to replace Satan, the government of God in the Church, why the governments of this world do not and have never worked, and the coming of God's world-ruling super-government, administered by Christ and the saints, to replace men's governments and bring peace, happiness, abundance and prosperity to all nations—and more—make this subject central to the Bible!

The gospel of the kingdom of God is a message entirely about government—the one just described—under the ruling Family of God. And this subject is the absolute bedrock centerpiece of the entire Bible. This is why government was the constant theme of Mr. Armstrong's writing, referenced and described, in one way or the other, in almost every one of his books and booklets. Believe me, having now completed the task of rewriting them *all*, I know! I now comprehend, in a way that I must admit I never *fully* understood before, *why* Mr. Armstrong taught, "Government is everything." You can probably remember his words, stated more than once in this exact way. We will read his statements in a moment.

There is a great reason why he felt this way, beginning in the winter of 1952-53, when God first revealed this enormous truth to him. Mr. Armstrong, with the Radio Church of God, then 19 years old, and beginning to grow much faster, began to take the gospel beyond North America to the world in January 1953. It was no accident that God revealed *this* particular truth at *that* time! God knew, and Mr. Armstrong understood in retrospect, that an enormous Work, girdling the globe and reaching all nations, must have the right form of government in place to achieve the immense size that it would eventually reach. An enormous prophecy had to be fulfilled. Had the Church been forced to suffer the infighting, competition and disagreement occurring in Sardis—because of their clumsy, inefficient and unscriptural manner of government, which also so badly divided their effort—the Work, under Mr. Armstrong, would have been slowed to a crawl and permanently limited to no more than a fraction of what it became.

Here are just two such quotes from Mr. Armstrong, introducing the entirety of this chapter, and the extreme importance of understanding the subject of *how* God governs His Church. All who read just the first statement will never doubt again how strongly Mr. Armstrong felt about—and how comprehensively he saw—GOVERNMENT. It was delivered in one of his final sermons, and it almost appears that God intended he say this at the end of his life as a special testimony to the Church of the crucial importance of the one thing the Church must *never* forget. Having listened to this portion again, I only wish I could transmit the power and intensity with which this then almost 93-year-old man delivered these words. The upcoming book to which he referred was *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. The second quote amplifies the first:

“But when I was challenged, before I learned about the Holy Days or anything, I was challenged on the point of God’s law and of God’s GOVERNMENT! The whole thing was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Satan took away was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Christ is coming to restore is GOVERNMENT. And what He raised me up for was to restore GOVERNMENT *in His Church!* And the *whole test* of the challenge in the first place after God had softened me by other things that will be recorded in this book was the point of GOVERNMENT.”

Rely on God, April 6, 1985, Sermon

“And this is Peter talking to them at that time. Verse 19 the third chapter of Acts. Peter said, ‘Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *when* the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; *and He shall send* (the time when He shall

send) Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven(s) must receive (now He'd ascended up to heaven and the heavens would receive Him *until* a certain time) until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.'

"Now restitution. Look that word up in the dictionary. Restitution means restoring to a former condition, a former state or condition. Restoring what had been taken away. Restoring what had been taken away [said twice]. So now I ask you, what is Christ coming to restore that had been taken away? What had been taken away was the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. The GOVERNMENT OF GOD! And if you know the whole Bible, that's the *whole story* of the Bible. That's the whole purpose—*everything*."

*The Mission of the Philadelphia Era of the Church,
Dec. 17, 1983, Sermon*

Savor what you have just read in these two short statements. They contain a theme that literally impelled Mr. Armstrong's entire life, ministry and thinking. He knew that God sent him to the nations of the world and its leaders with the constant message—the "announcement" as he put it—of God's coming WORLD-RULING GOVERNMENT under the GOD FAMILY in his mind and speaking.

Receiving False Prophets

One of Christ's final instructions to the Church was to warn that just prior to His Return, false prophets and false christs would appear—and would seduce many into following them. Jesus simply said, regardless of what any false prophet says, "Believe it not." These warnings have produced an incredible irony for the last era of God's people. Let's begin to examine it, and its ultimate connection to government—and to government in His Church. This next section helps to set up all of the remainder of the chapter.

The parallel chapters of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, called the Olivet Prophecy, contain several powerful warnings. Three times, in Matthew 24, Christ warns of those who would come and "deceive many." Notice: "For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (vs. 5). None can doubt that this has happened—both in the world and the Church. For 2,000 years, many *have* come "in [Christ's] name," which means by His authority—and many *have* been deceived.

Verse 11 is more specific, warning again of “many” being deceived, this time by “*false prophets*.” Jesus is speaking *to the Church!* How do we know? Verses 12-13 speak directly *to the Church* because it is only there where people may not endure to the end. Only *in the Church* could lawlessness (“iniquity”) abound in such a way as to cause godly love to grow cold. Do not miss this point. False prophets were foretold to deceive *the Church* at the end!

Remember, the world has *always* been deceived (Rev. 12:9)!

Now for Christ’s strongest warning: “Then if any man shall say unto YOU, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise *false christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall show great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told YOU before. Wherefore if they shall say unto YOU, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; BELIEVE IT NOT” (24:23-26).

Several points emerge. First, Christ warns His disciples that *they* could be deceived. Notice His repeated use of “*you*.” However, since the disciples did not live in the end time, but WE do, the warning must be for US today (24:3)!

Do not miss this emphasis.

Deception at the end is *so great* that the potential exists for God’s people to follow not only false prophets, but also *false christs!* Jesus is warning that the subtlety and sheer deception necessary for such false prophets or false christs to succeed—and more and more are—must be staggering! Yet, some today, in PCG, having been told that this cannot happen to the “very elect” (vs. 24), in effect, brush off this *greatest* of all warnings as not a warning to them at all.

This in itself is one of the *most incredible deceptions* I have ever heard!

Again, when faced with those saying Christ is “here or there,” Jesus said, “Believe it not” (Matt. 24:26). Yet, many in the splinters almost seem to *eagerly* believe false prophets and false christs, instead of the *true* Christ. As explained earlier, it has been my experience that people generally start by assuming *other people* are deceived or in danger of it. Christ warned that deception will get worse (vs. 24), and that some false prophets and false christs will even perform miracles. These will also deceive many, including brethren, because so many now blindly receive those whom Christ has NOT SENT. Ignoring the crucial importance of fruits, large numbers do not bother to examine—to *see*—if one is chosen of God, but rather only if a man *says* that he is! And I am not an exception. A leader must be able to stand up to the scrutiny

of God's qualifications—exhibiting the right fruits—but, in a sense, this becomes unnecessary if attendees are giving their leaders “a free pass.”

Astonishingly, two or three splinter leaders, who have professed themselves to be prophets, have duped thousands of people who completely ignored—or forgot—Christ's warning! They thought His warnings were for “someone else.”

Christ warned that all this would occur. Does it concern you? It should. He warned *the Church* about who *not* to receive! The result? More than 110,000 people (75 percent) left the truth! Most of the remaining 25 percent have bought into *some* false doctrines. Following the pattern of 2,000 years of Church history, this happened because people were only too willing to happily receive those God had *not sent*.

Keep the following basic principle in mind: There has never been an important warning—not one!—that Christ has given His Church that has not, at times, been ignored!

Let's continue with what is a colossal irony.

Truth Only Through Apostles

Many brethren, including all splinter leaders, have chosen to knowingly reject certain doctrines that the Church once believed. However, by now, it should be clear that most of God's people have simply *forgotten* certain other doctrines once known to the entire Church.

Most brethren will recall how Mr. Armstrong would repeat, for emphasis, the most important teachings—those that the Church must never forget or confuse. Despite this, some of even the most central doctrines he taught have been rejected or—again—*forgotten*! Few are more important than the basic biblical understanding that Christ puts truth into His Church through apostles—AND ONLY THROUGH APOSTLES!

Before continuing, let's examine just four statements from Mr. Armstrong. As you read them, see if the strength and clarity of his words do not revive memories of how we all once knew this. Notice at the beginning of the first quote, in regard to whom God sends, how Mr. Armstrong explains the definition of an apostle:

“The word *apostle* means ‘*one sent forth*.’

“The New Testament Church of God received all its teachings, practices, customs, FROM THE APOSTLES, with Peter chief over all the others.

“Yet the apostles were the teachers, who instilled in the Church the BELIEFS, TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS of the Church. And all

members of the Church were required by God to BELIEVE and SPEAK THE SAME THING!

“THERE WAS NO DOCTRINAL BOARD! The teachings of the Church did not come from a COUNCIL of ministers and/or lay members, who voted on what to believe.

“Right here, MARK WELL THIS POINT: GOD PUT HIS TRUTH INTO HIS CHURCH THROUGH CHRIST AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES!

“NOTE THIS! The Church of God is built on the FOUNDATION of the apostles and the prophets...

“I have shown you...that Peter was LEADER of the apostles—and that the Church received its teachings and doctrines FROM THE APOSTLES!

“So now let it be MADE OFFICIAL—by Christ’s present-day apostle—that this binding and loosing PLAINLY, CLEARLY was given to Christ’s chief APOSTLE—not to lower-rank ministers ordained by his authority—not by the CHURCH as a body—but by the APOSTLE!

“JESUS CHRIST is the living HEAD of this Church! HE built it through His apostle. And He, CHRIST, still rules SUPREME in the one and only area on earth where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered today!”

*“How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs,”
GN, Nov. 20, 1978*

“God says we in His Church must all believe and speak the SAME THING—we must be AGREED on what is truth and right and good as opposed to what is evil and sin.

“But *HOW*? How does Jesus Christ put HIS doctrines into His Church? How did He in A.D. 31? How in A.D. 1933?

“Only by His chosen apostles.

“Our teaching and doctrines MUST COME FROM GOD! Through CHRIST! And through His apostle!

“God has always, in dealing with humans, worked through ONE MAN at a time—one who believed God! Some in ancient Israel challenged this one-man leadership. Some, likewise, have challenged it today!

“First, Moses’ own brother and sister challenged his one-man leadership...‘And the anger of the Eternal was kindled against them’ [Num. 12:9].

“Yet, though our members and ministers all know this, some are NOT AFRAID to speak contemptuously, in hostility, or defamingly against Christ’s apostle today! They need not fear *ME*! For I will not turn on them or strike them.

“WHY, then, do they not fear GOD? It must be one of two things. Either they do not really comprehend this teaching...or they do not believe that God has chosen me as His apostle and human leader today.

“The CHURCH is *GOD’S* Church. The HEAD of the Church, under GOD, is Jesus Christ. Under Christ, on the human level, is His chosen apostle, through whom He has *raised up* and *built* this SPIRITUAL *TEMPLE* to which the reigning CHRIST shall soon come in glory (Eph. 2:20-21).

“All doctrines in the Church as it began, A.D. 31, were put in *by the apostles*. All doctrines in the present Philadelphia era were put into the Church by Jesus Christ through His chosen apostle.”

“*And Now Christ Sets Church Back on Track Doctrinally!*”,
WN, Feb. 19, 1979

“Church teachings were being changed. The most resultful booklet of all, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, was attacked...the same with a number of other basic and important booklets written by Christ’s apostle.

“How does God’s Church receive its doctrines, beliefs and teachings? Direct from God, through the channels of Jesus Christ as HEAD of the Church, and from Him through *the apostles!* NEVER by any others! NEVER by a group of ministers appointing themselves as a Doctrinal Committee! So it was in the first century.

“How did the Worldwide Church of God receive its doctrines, beliefs and teachings? EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH CHRIST’S APOSTLE!

“BUT EVERY DOCTRINE, BELIEF AND TEACHING IN THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD HAS COME FROM CHRIST THROUGH HIS CHOSEN APOSTLE!”

“*What Is a Liberal?*”, WN, Feb. 19, 1979

“The living Jesus Christ founded the one true Church of God, A.D. 31. The same living Jesus Christ started the Philadelphia era of God’s Church through me, as His chosen apostle, August 1933.

“God commands in His word that we all ‘SPEAK THE SAME THING.’ That ‘same thing’ He put into His Church through His apostle.”

“*Watering Down—Or Slowly Building Solidly Up?*”,
WN, June 11, 1979

Numerous other statements, some extensive and equally strong, could also have been included. But these four should be sufficient for all those who wish to know the truth about—and who are determined to return and adhere to—what Mr. Armstrong taught regarding how all true

doctrine enters the Church. Before continuing, reflect for a moment on whether you still believe this.

Worshipping Mr. Armstrong or Faith in God Based on Proof?

Those who refuse to make exceptions in holding to the doctrines the Church once believed, and believed came only through apostles, are often accused of “worshipping Mr. Armstrong.” I referenced this in the INTRODUCTION and again later. Apart from the point to be made in a moment, this is another irony.

Consider. When almost 150,000 people held to what Mr. Armstrong taught, while he was alive, no one suggested that we were “worshipping him.” Why do some say this now? What changed?

Many brethren have long striven to follow the teachings of *other* apostles (Peter, Paul, John, James, Matthew, Jude) and no one has ever suggested they were worshipping any of *them*. Why is Mr. Armstrong singled out for special attention in this way?

Consider this. Like all apostles before him, Mr. Armstrong died. Those who practice *balanced* obedience to the instructions of *other* deceased apostles are not said to be enshrining or worshipping them. This should include Mr. Armstrong. Truly, he *is* an apostle “*without* honor from those of his own time” (Mark 6:4)—to those who think merely *following* him (I Cor. 11:1) has become *worshipping* him, now that he is gone.

Mr. Armstrong plainly taught that true doctrine could only enter the Church through the highest New Testament office. This, in itself, was a strongly held doctrine. Most knew not to challenge the solid proof Mr. Armstrong offered. But how many internalized that proof? Rejecting this colossal understanding is actually its own false doctrine. Think again! People must *first* reject *this* doctrine to be in a position to reject *other* doctrines. Recognize that this is the only way to accept *any* new teachings from non-apostles. I repeat—there is no other way to move away from previous beliefs.

Adhering to just *this* truth protects against loss of any others!

Many now lack the faith to fully believe that God guided Mr. Armstrong to the degree, and in the extraordinary way, that the whole Church once believed. But they would not doubt this if they had *proven* what he had taught—and this includes that Christ only teaches truth to His Church through apostles.

Think! This is almost certainly one of the reasons that Christ asked, “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke

18:8). Of course, this question references the period just prior to His Return. The only people who could possibly be candidates for either having or losing faith would be those in His Church. He knew the world was not in the equation. Jesus obviously understood that conditions in the last days would cause large numbers to lose faith in how He had successfully guided and blessed His Church for so long—and how He led it into the truth. How short is the human memory!

When Mr. Armstrong told the Church repeatedly that the all-powerful, living Christ was guiding him—that what was being accomplished in the Worldwide Church of God was not the product of a human being—most *saw* all that was taking place, and *believed* he was right, some having *PROVED* it. Mr. Armstrong died, time passed and faith waned. Now, many are no longer even sure that he *was* an apostle or, if he was, they are unsure what this meant to the Church.

Receiving Those God Sends

We return to the subject of false prophets and false christs. There is an opposite side to Christ's warning to not receive such men. There are, of course, those God *HAS* sent—those who *should* be received. Many have forgotten this all-important distinction, having first forgotten that God would not send someone without ensuring we could know that he came from God. Remember, the word *apostle* means “one sent forth”—from God! If God sends a man, He would obviously want it *known* to His other servants so that they can support that man.

Just before His crucifixion, Christ told His disciples, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever *I send* receives Me; and he that receives Me receives Him [the Father] that sent Me” (John 13:20).

This represents a supremely important *TEST* for all of God's servants in every age. To receive those whom God sends is to receive both Christ and the Father. Conversely—and obviously—to *reject* or *ignore* those Christ has sent is to reject or ignore Christ and the Father!

A longer passage amplifies this point, making absolutely crystal clear just how important this principle is to God. It is found in Matthew 10:40-42. We will examine it one verse at a time: “He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me” (vs. 40). This portion of the passage is almost identical to John 13:20.

But it does not end here. The next verse reveals there is more at stake than meets the eye—more than just obeying Christ's instruction to receive servants that He has authorized or sent: “He that *receives* A *PROPHET* in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's *REWARD*; and

he that *receives* A RIGHTEOUS MAN in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s REWARD” (vs. 41).

There is, quite literally, something in it for you and me—if we discern whom God has sent from whom He has not. A very real—and eternal—reward is at stake. Notice the next verse: “And whosoever shall give to drink unto ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his REWARD” (vs. 42).

Ponder this. Just giving a simple drink of water, *in the name of a disciple*, brings an absolutely certain reward from God. Here is why. *Whatever* we do for God’s true servants—even those holding the most elementary “office,” if you will, of “LITTLE ONE”—Christ considers having been done directly to Him. Notice: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of *these My brethren*, you have done it UNTO ME” (Matt. 25:40).

This last passage introduces the need to always receive the true *brethren* of Christ. Of course, unlike apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc., this is much harder, and sometimes impossible, to discern. In fact, that is the whole point of this extensive passage in Matthew 25. People might not always discern that they were receiving one of Jesus’ “brethren”—His “little ones.” But Jesus takes note of brethren’s conduct toward even “the least” of His sheep.

What is the point? Just this: How important is it to God, then, that we fulfill the command to receive an *apostle* when God has sent him? Since an *apostle* is “one sent forth” *from God*, woe unto those who ignore John 13:20, Matthew 10:40-42 and Matthew 25:40! Soon, with Mr. Armstrong, this will be seen to carry an even greater connotation.

I cannot stress enough how serious this is to Christ, who attaches your *willingness* to receive one He has sent to whether or not you would receive HIMSELF and THE FATHER. Do not kid yourself that anything less than this is at stake! Grasp this. A very specific reward is assured to anyone who understands that he is merely giving a *drink of water* to a disciple in the name of a disciple. What then of an apostle?

Of course, some do not care what God says about this matter. They seem to receive those whom they wish and reject those whom they wish without consideration for what God instructs—or for whether God has sent a man.

“Though one rose from the dead”

Actually, this is one of the main points in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, which reveals the extent to which some people’s thinking be-

comes entrenched, unwilling to reconsider a wrong position they have taken. At the end of this story, when the rich man realized that he had blown his salvation, he urged Abraham (obviously figuratively), then in the kingdom, to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren of what the rich man had rejected. Abraham responded, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29).

The rich man, thinking that one resurrected from the dead would carry more weight, urged Abraham to reconsider (vs. 30).

Abraham’s response carries a thunderous warning to all those who reject—in whole or in part—the authority that God placed in His apostle Herbert W. Armstrong. Notice: “And he [Abraham] said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, *though one rose from the dead*” (vs. 31).

It is extremely hard to move people who have set their minds. Based on this parable, I recognize that this book, written by one whom most will see as speaking presumptuously, and certainly not sent by God, will likely not move a great number of brethren. (And it may only move a very few ministers, if any.) But, because Christ inspired it, it *will* move some. I hope *you* will reflect on what the rich man did not understand about the stubbornness of human nature—about how people can recognize what Moses and the prophets taught, but will not be moved to take personal action in their lives—even if one returned from the dead to exhort them!

Let’s now explore further the enormous irony I mentioned. How astonishing that people will receive false and compromised leaders, false prophets and false christs, directly contrary to Christ’s personal warning (to those in the end time) not to do this. Yet, when a truly great servant of God died, at the end of a phenomenal 52-year ministry that reached beyond 250 million people, the vast majority who knew this great leader have now largely rejected how God used him—in favor of the very people Christ warned us to reject! Astonishing!

How times have changed. There was once a time, not long ago, when over one-third of all the heads of state on Earth—kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers and chancellors—received Mr. Armstrong as “An Ambassador Without Portfolio.” He was given special honors, awards, gifts and treatment—by *carnal* world leaders, men who had no idea what the Church once understood his role to be. Now, scores of thousands—who once *did* understand—have rejected all or many of his doctrines, his policies, the traditions he taught, his character, and even, in many cases, that he was an apostle. They also reject his extraordinary, remarkable, truly historic fulfillment of prophecy!

All of this sets the stage to see the even greater need to receive ONE SENT—who in this case was *more* than an apostle! What does this mean?

Leaders Unaware of Mr. Armstrong’s Role

Let’s continue with a very large step beyond the understanding that truth is revealed to the Church through apostles and how to recognize when one is sent. Actually, in addition to rejecting *this* understanding, people must, if they are to change doctrines—any doctrine—also reject the understanding that a final Moses (Mal. 4:4) has come.

Some background: Nearly all who left the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) unwittingly absorbed and carried, hidden in their “baggage,” false doctrines taught to them by the apostates.

It was a certain renowned “Dr.” in Pasadena who long believed and privately taught to any who would listen that the Two Witnesses would be the final Moses and Elijah. In fact, most today have no idea that Herman Hoeh, now deceased, believed this! During the apostasy, this man went on to accept an avalanche of *other* false doctrines. Although *he* never made it out of the WCG (but is said to have quietly led the underground “resistance” there until his death)—his false theory *did*! Certain ministerial “followers,” Harold Smith chief among them, still privately expound his “wisdom” from their homes in the splinters and slivers. In turn, these followers have trained their own disciples in his false counter-theory.

Ask: Would God use a largely apostate evangelist—no matter his long seniority, ordination dating to 1952—to reveal Mr. Armstrong’s role?

This counterfeit idea notwithstanding, the books of Malachi and Matthew foretold that a Moses figure would come, ahead of a final Elijah. Malachi 4 verses 4-6 read, “Remember you the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” The Elijah figure is more familiar to most than is the end-time Moses. But, in the modern age, this prophecy has been fulfilled! My extensive three-part sermon series on the subject, “First a MOSES, Now ELIJAH—130 Proofs!” brings irrefutable evidence.

If Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Moses, then all the truths that he taught must be retained—held fast! The implications of his fulfillment are tremendous! (The sermon series examines them.)

Though some debate its meaning, most will not deny that God states of Philadelphians that they “hold fast” to the truth. But no one in the

splinters understands the enormous Moses fulfillment—and teaching—and the implications that flow from this command.

However, many hundreds of God's people *do* have a balanced approach to Mr. Armstrong's role *and its implications*. These people do not ignore the obvious facts—the mountain of PROOF that is available about who he was. They neither follow a false prophet nor believe endless crazy prophetic ideas. They understand the Work is not over until the Tribulation. Those in this category also do not slander and attack confused brethren on this or any other matter. They do not reflect the unsound, unlearned, untrained, unbalanced, unteachable and *ungovernable* attitudes obvious in so many who profess to follow Mr. Armstrong—usually most evident in those who stayed in PCG for a long time.

Kissing His Tomb

Of course, most splinter leaders consciously or unconsciously assist in the deception of many brethren because they continually state, “We love Mr. Armstrong.” Get this. The WCG false leaders still assert that they “love Mr. Armstrong.” Like the Pharisees who hung flowers on the tombs of the prophets they had killed (Matt. 23:29), they regularly “kiss his tomb” for political impact. For that matter, the Pope and every modern television evangelist would surely say, if asked, that they too “love Mr. Armstrong.”

Not even the devil would attempt to deceive you by starting with the words “I *hate* Mr. Armstrong,” or even “I don't like Mr. Armstrong.” Most splinter leaders often add, “He was a fine man,” or “He did a fine Work,” or “He was, or probably was, an apostle”—before they invariably go on to explain why he was “wrong” about something(s). They understand that their chance of swaying you (and their own organizations) into their wrong thinking and/or new doctrine is much better if they appear to respect and generally agree with Mr. Armstrong. Therefore, they subtly follow the classic practice of “damning him with faint praise.” Obviously, their tactics are working.

God's enemies, and others who compromise His truth, always attack His greatest servants. But those at least within the “church” at large usually do it craftily, while asserting they are not—stating that they “respect what he accomplished.”

Every splinter leader wants to put his own signature on his group. These men do *not* want to appear “unable to grow.” They *do* want to be seen as men of vision—“able to grow.” They also *never* speak about how Mr. Armstrong taught that *only apostles* can bring doctrine into the

Church. Think hard about this as you observe them! These men have not been willing to continue receiving Mr. Armstrong as sent from God as an apostle, possessing sole authority to convey truth to the Church.

The Great Unspoken Motivation

Consider the man or men whom you now follow. Keep your focus on doctrine—and on how God would pick the leader under whom He would gather His faithful flock.

Most leaders willingly—and conveniently—teach certain popular false doctrines to keep people attending with—and *tithing to!*—their organizations. They well understand the financial consequences of rejecting widely accepted errors, such as wearing makeup and doing away with third tithe. In this way, they allow “*truth* to be evil spoken of” and “make merchandise” (II Pet. 2:1-3) of God’s people to retain their tithes.

These leaders will answer for their actions! (I sincerely hope they are more blind and deceived than they appear.) But make no mistake—these men are committed to their positions. If any doubt this, try actively opposing them by *warning* affiliated brethren to abandon their heresies and to leave their organizations. All who do this will soon learn their fate! But ministers who do this will have God’s reward if they are not hirelings (John 10:11-13). But take note: Many verses reveal that more than just ministers have a responsibility in this way (Jms. 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1-2; Jude 22-23; Dan. 11:32-35; among others)!

Many thousands can no longer even distinguish those who have compromised and disqualified themselves, and worse, cannot distinguish those *sent by Satan* from great servants SENT BY GOD!

Read very carefully Hebrews 5:13-14, regarding mature Christians spiritually “discerning good and evil.” Then ask yourself what happened to so many who were once so sure of what they now cannot even recall, let alone discern.

“But I Saw Government Abused”

Before examining some statements about where—and to whom—Mr. Armstrong said that THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD was re-established, it must be recognized that both the Moses fulfillment and the one true Church and Body of Christ doctrine are directly connected to this foundational teaching.

Sadly, many were victims of administrative abuse and injustice even when the WCG was on track. I certainly was. Wherever human beings

are involved, there is always imperfection. Sometimes this imperfection means people get hurt. But if they are seeking God, and correctly focusing on developing His perfect character, their thinking remains clear and they recognize that even Christ “learned...by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8)—and that loving God’s Law will overcome all offenses (Psa. 119:165).

They also recognize that they must remember God’s other instruction when this occurs: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, *suffering wrongfully*...if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you *take it patiently*, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example...” (I Pet. 2:19-21).

Over time, most began to forget the importance of right government in the Church. Almost from the time Mr. Armstrong died, his successors in Pasadena put down and denigrated God’s government, making it into something that was harsh and terrible—unless they *needed its authority to persecute* those they could not compromise or control for wrong purposes. I tasted more than once the extreme harshness of their rebellion against what God intended His government to bring to the Church—and their deceit used to make their new way appear more “loving.”

Ministers (and I heard this often) were almost browbeaten into avoiding the use of government in even the most serious matters having to do with Church discipline locally. They were continually told that almost any use of government was “being a sheriff and not a shepherd.” This very phrase became a mindless cliché, repeated endlessly by people who had not a clue what God taught about the subject or what they themselves were talking about. Another phrase, “We should never run people’s lives” (this is true), virtually came to mean that God’s ministers should never—or only very rarely—correct His people or tell them that they were wrong about *anything*. Serious offenses were openly tolerated as members quickly learned how to “blow the whistle” on their “sheriff” pastors. After all, what could God’s worst enemies know about the blessings of a government that largely existed to protect the truth?

Certainly, the misuse of government repulsed a great many people. But, would you abandon Sabbath observance because certain people misuse and abuse the truth about this weekly blessing? I have seen people steal God’s tithes, but I have never used this as a license to ignore *my* responsibility to tithe correctly. If people misuse and abuse the biblical principles of proper childrearing, are all who witness this then licensed to be permissive parents? Should marriage be thrown out because half of all married people get divorced?

Since when does what other people do *incorrectly* dismiss our Christian responsibility to do those same things *correctly*?

Because we may be able to say, “I saw government abused,” does not mean there exists no further obligation to practice it as God intended. Be careful you do not blame *God’s system* for what *Satan’s agents* did—or still do. This is truly “throwing the baby out with the bath water”—and you are the one who will get hurt if you make the wrong distinction in your judgment. Carefully discern this. Do not blur the fact that *men*, not the SYSTEM, were in error. Also be careful that you are not unconsciously saying that the system, which produced so much wonderful fruit—and brought *you* to God’s truth, Work and Church—was not of God!

Government Re-established Only in Philadelphia

Mr. Armstrong was not ambiguous about how the government of God was made plain to the Church during the Philadelphian age. He pulled no punches, as the following statements reveal. Read them most carefully:

“I did not know it as a young man, late teens, 20s and into my 30s, but God was guiding my life from birth...Jesus Christ, through His written Word, opened my mind to the PRIME BASIC TRUTHS He wanted me to have in starting me out as His servant...God’s TIME had come!...I did not seek these basic foundations of TRUTH of my own volition! Jesus Christ revealed them...He was preparing one called and chosen by God, even against that one’s will, for an important service in RESTORING THE LAW AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD to earth—even in the comparatively small Worldwide Church of God. He was *preparing one* whom HE conquered and brought to repentance and faith, *for this great END-TIME commission!*”

“*The History...of the Worldwide Church of God,*” GN, Apr. 1980

“Jesus QUALIFIED to restore God’s government—to set up the KINGDOM OF GOD, ruling over the earth, administering the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. Jesus’ Gospel Message was the GOOD NEWS that he would (at his second coming) RESTORE the government of God through the KINGDOM OF GOD. That was the true GOSPEL! That Gospel was suppressed within 22 years (Gal. 1:6-7), and was not proclaimed to the world until THIS CHURCH began proclaiming it—within the United States beginning 1934, and going worldwide beginning 1953—precisely a century of time cycles after it had been suppressed!

“Have WE, through this Work, RESTORED anything? Indeed we have! We have RESTORED the TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST—

through us JESUS CHRIST has already begun RESTORING the KNOWLEDGE of what had been taken away—the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. Through us the living Christ has been preparing for his SECOND COMING for the PURPOSE of RESTORING ALL THINGS!

“NONE OTHER has RESTORED the knowledge of the fact GOD’S GOVERNMENT was established on earth, and then DESTROYED and taken away by the Cherub Lucifer (Satan) and his demons.

“Jesus did NOT restore God’s government at his first coming. Instead, he proclaimed the GOOD NEWS (Gospel) of it. He was crucified for the SINS of the world, he overcame Satan, he qualified to establish and rule God’s Kingdom, THEN HE ASCENDED TO HEAVEN.”

Co-worker letter, Aug. 24, 1982

“The GOVERNMENT of God has been restored to the Church, and the GOVERNMENT of God has been placed in the Church. You read that in Ephesians 4 and I Corinthians 12. Christ is the head of the Church and under Christ in the administration of the GOVERNMENT are an apostle or apostles, then evangelists, then pastors, then all are called elders, all ministers all the way up clear down to the lowest. So then there are teachers and elders both speaking elders and preaching elders, deacons and deaconesses. And the Church is restored in that form of GOVERNMENT. The Sardis Church even didn’t have the right form of GOVERNMENT.”

Sermon, Dec. 17, 1983

Remember. Philadelphians hold fast doctrinally to what they were taught, *without exception*. Since Mr. Armstrong taught (correctly) that “government is everything”—and that it was “placed” in the Church for those of Philadelphia—it should go without saying that wherever Philadelphians are gathered, one should expect to find the exact same form of government in place that Mr. Armstrong taught. It should be clear that if any *other* form was there, it would violate Christ’s description that Philadelphians hold fast “what they have.” Any doctrinal compromise becomes a disqualifier. How much more with so great a doctrine?

We have a tremendously important and thorough book that brings back the full understanding of God’s government in His Church. Titled *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties*, it serves as a companion alongside *THE TRUE CHURCH* and “*ANOINT YOUR EYES.*” It covers the working details in a much greater way than possible here, including ample proof Mr. Armstrong “got it right” in the way he taught God’s government.

Who You Follow

Are you prepared to refute the above statements, reasoning they no longer have application because *false leaders* held the power to *permanently destroy* God’s government in the Church FOR THE REST OF THE AGE? Or do you not think God’s government *was* ever re-established for the Church?

The committee leading UCG believes that God has not raised up one man to follow. They repeatedly declare that if He had, they would follow him—and that if God does, they will yet follow him.

Such hypocrisy!

Who is kidding whom? Many questions arise—for them and for you: Have they sought that man? Have they examined the fruit of any possible candidates in their thinking? Do they know what to look for? Where do they think this man will come from? If they are eliminating various possibilities—ministers or organizations—are they doing this on the right basis? Do they concern themselves with, or *ever* think about, the doctrines he would have to be teaching—and how many they would have to change to follow him? Do they realize that this man could not—and would never—compromise government as they do? Is there a working plan in place for how to close down UCG (and COGwa) and follow him when he arrives? I speak as a fool.

Most important, have they sought God’s guidance to find this leader, perhaps collectively praying *and fasting* in their search? Then, have they considered that God would never condone their “waiting” for such a man under a completely *unbiblical* form of government? Do these men actually believe that they will suddenly be willing to come under the authority of one man again after so many years of following leadership by “consensus”—where they had a vote and “voice”?

Again, who are they kidding with such incredible hypocrisy?

No serious person—one who really thinks this through—could possibly believe the elected bunch professing this is actively doing ANY of these things! Like the researchers seeking a cure for cancer, these people know if they actually find one they will be out of a job. Do not let this committee deceive *you* into believing that you can safely trust them to let you know when they have located this man. They are not looking for him. They have no plan or process in place to find him—and are not about to devise one! (We could say humorously that it is surprising they have *not* appointed a committee for this purpose since they have one for everything else!)

Blindness has covered their eyes. But they are without excuse. Like so many today—if these men were even looking—they would be inclined to

seek one whom men speak well of, even though Christ said, “*Beware* when all men speak well of you.” Will you follow them, or men like them? Is their shallow, phony, self-serving “promise” good enough for you?

Be sure that YOU are not looking to follow one who “played the game,” rose to the top, and has the approbation of men.

The splinters and slivers today have lost track of God’s government. Sardis had also long since lost sight of correct Church government by the time Mr. Armstrong came into contact with them. They also had become disagreeing, divided and competing! This is but one more proof that only the sixth era—PHILADELPHIA—sandwiched between these two eras, experienced the marvelous restoration of God’s wonderfully unified government.

Hierarchical Government?

Let’s consider some other points. Several organizations do have varying forms of hierarchical government. But this does not mean they have the government of God. There are at least two reasons for this.

First, some do not really understand what hierarchical government is. They seem to think it can involve *ultimate* control by a COMMITTEE, where the leader can be removed by a majority vote of a committee (also itself elected). This is not even *hierarchical* government—let alone *God’s* government! It is *democratic*, pure and simple. A couple smaller groups also practice this system. They are blind to what they do, not recognizing that God, and God alone, selects and installs the one *He* has chosen. God’s leader reports to Him and none other—and if God wants to remove this man, *He* will do it. Mr. Armstrong stated, “The government of God is of necessity government from the top down. It cannot be ‘government by the consent of the governed’” (*MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, p. 49). This includes committees, small or large.

In the modern spirit of “one man, one vote,” the *entire* ministry of the United Church of God votes on budgets, strategic plans, doctrines, traditions, policies and selection of council members. This is all done in the spirit of unlimited “openness,” “transparency” and “having nothing to hide.” But this is also done to ensure that their somewhat untrusting members (and ministers!) are pleased with—satisfied by—and will continue giving their seal of approval—translate this: their *tithes*—to their “home office”!

Such leaders and brethren following them lack faith in Christ’s ability to direct His Church, beginning with one man.

This group even announces *publicly* which council members voted one way and which another, as well as revealing the names of men being

considered for high offices. Such open *division*—and FOOLISHNESS! However sincere these leaders may be in their attempt to “correct”—temporarily or permanently—the method of government they feel Mr. Armstrong erroneously installed into the Church, and apparently on his own mistaken authority, this represents an astonishing departure into confusion, division and appalling blindness. Sadly, in a remarkable parallel with Jeremiah’s prophecy (5:31), where “the priests [ministers today] bear rule by *their* means,” most of God’s people now seem to “love to have it so.”

Such is the age when “the people rule, judge and decide.”

Understand. Men are not authorized to establish a redesign of God’s form of government, and then notify Christ that He will need to modify His thinking. Most cannot even seem to remember that all “notification” works the other way—from Christ to them!

However, there is also this problem—and it is large. Some leaders *do* carry final authority over decision-making, but, at the same time, teach a whole variety of false doctrines, which they have invariably described as “growing in knowledge” or “minor adjustments” to doctrines that are “not essential for salvation.” Theirs would be a hierarchical government, but it cannot possibly derive its authority from God—carrying HIS PRESENCE in the government! This is because the real remnant of Philadelphia holds to the FULL truth (Rev. 3:11). In fact, these men have appointed themselves, and their fruits, meaning in part their teachings, show that God could not possibly have installed any of them as the leader of *His* Church. He cannot be directing such governments, or He would be working against Himself—and His truth!

Pause and consider yourself. After witnessing apostate leaders, coupled with one or more compromised splinter leaders, including the leadership of the first splinter (begun in 1989) who has used government to so terribly brutalize his flock, you are presented with a personal choice. You must either: (1) Conclude that the *system* of government led by one man was wrong, because it was capable of producing bad leaders, and, as a result, support putting power into the hands of an elected *committee* to select your leader, or (2) in faith, determine to find the UNCOMPROMISING man that God has trained and raised up.

There are no other choices. Think this through most carefully—THERE ARE NO OTHER CHOICES!

God’s government was restored to the sixth era of His Church. Mr. Armstrong taught that government is everything. No apostate leader or *any man* carries the authority (from God or anyone else)—or the power—to permanently banish or remove it from His Church. Neither can they alter its form. The government of God is found where His full, re-

stored truth is taught and practiced, where the gospel is being preached to the whole world, where the special warning is being given to the nations of modern Israel, where the flock is being properly fed and where Christ's appointed leader is found.

There can be only one such place!

What Mr. Armstrong Taught

What follows next is a single, long quote from Mr. Armstrong. The subject of how many organizations God chooses to work through at one time would be incomplete without it. It is from Mr. Armstrong's benchmark May 1974 Member letter of thirty pages. This single letter, carrying extensive proof, set the standard for what the entire Church understood and believed about government, when it was confronted with the greatest rebellion that had occurred in the Philadelphian era to that point.

Mr. Armstrong recognized that God's government has *always* been from the top down—beginning with *one man*, which means it must *always* rest in *one* organization at a time. Admit that there is no way that the leadership of *one man* can be divided among several groups. Do not be among those who conveniently believe that how leaders in the splinters choose to design their group's government can in any way alter the manner in which God governs those of the *sixth* era (all emphasis Mr. Armstrong's):

"Today some in the Church of God do not UNDERSTAND just what the Church of God really IS! Some have become confused as to whether there is ORGANIZATION or government in it—and I mean in GOD'S OWN CHURCH! And God HAS ONLY ONE CHURCH! (I Cor. 12:12, 13.) But we of 'the wise' shall understand! That understanding shall be made PLAIN in this letter."

"Many times I have told you, dear Brethren, that when God first called me, beginning in the autumn of 1926, that the living Christ brought me into His truth a step at a time. YOU have not had to learn the truth so slowly—Christ used me to do it for you. And one of the very last truths He opened to me was that of CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT!"

"Brethren, I have felt it necessary that you should know and understand these things, so you may realize WHY I did not yet fully understand the truth regarding church government and organization, in February, 1939—MORE THAN 35 YEARS AGO—when I wrote an article on church organization." [Author's Note: Many now love to quote this article to advance their own agendas.]

“There had been much confusion and argument among the ‘Sardis’ brethren about church organization. When the new so called ‘Bible Form of Church Organization’ was introduced at Salem, naturally the Stanberry people argued against it. I think we all became confused on the question. It’s like being too close to one tree to see the forest...*In both of those—Stanberry and Salem—the people voted—government from the bottom like these dissenters today.*”

“We published an article revealing new truth about church organization in *The GOOD NEWS*, November, 1952, and again in August, 1953, ‘GOVERNMENT in Our Church,’ and in November, 1953, ‘JUDGING and DISCIPLINE in God’s Church.’ As God revealed truth, His Church accepted it. And long since, we came into the FULL TRUTH on church organization and government.”

“Notice, now, the FORM, or PRINCIPLE of God’s government in ancient Israel: It’s given in Exodus 18:13-27.”

“Here is government FROM THE TOP (GOD) on down. Here is God’s own PYRAMID principle of government in ancient Israel.

“At that time the whole NATION—with church and state united—occupied one concise area. The form of organization could be administered by ONE MAN under God, at the top. It was Government from GOD. Under the Eternal God in authority was Moses. Under Moses a NUMBER of rulers, each over THOUSANDS (it could have been several thousands under each ruler). Under each ruler of a thousand, rulers over hundreds. Under each ruler of a hundred, rulers of fifties, and under each of them rulers of tens.

“It was RULE FROM THE TOP DOWN—that is, FROM GOD—it was the GOVERNMENT OF GOD! God chose Moses. Moses chose rulers of thousands, and so on down.”

“In the days of Samuel, the people of Israel rejected GOD as their real Ruler, ruling through such humans as HE chose, as at that time, God was ruling through Samuel. They demanded a MAN to be their king. God gave them Saul, who rebelled against God. Then God gave them David, a man after His own heart. Still it was government FROM THE TOP DOWN!

“That is God’s PRINCIPLE OF GOVERNMENT. It’s the SAME TODAY in His Church! He says, ‘I CHANGE NOT!’ (Mal. 3:6.)”

“As we progress through the Bible on the question of GOVERNMENT, the PRINCIPLE of government, from the TOP DOWN, is consistent. But the application, or details of STRUCTURE differs, and varies to adapt to the time, conditions and facilities. The revolvers from God’s Work confuse structural form with PRINCIPLE of government, which is ALWAYS from the TOP (GOD) down. They are NOT THE SAME.

“In the Old Testament, God chose ONE (Moses, Samuel, Saul, David, etc.) at a time, UNDER GOD, because Israel was ONE nation in ONE location or area. ONE at the top of the human level, under God, with others under him, was all that was required to administer the PRINCIPLE of government FROM THE TOP DOWN.

“But in the first century of the Gospel Work in the New Testament, God was sending the Gospel into MANY COUNTRIES, over wide areas. So He organized His Work into TWO principal divisions, or areas—ISRAEL and GENTILES. They were widely separated geographically. Communication was virtually nil, except by personal contact. Transportation was by foot, horse or muleback, or by camel or elephant, or sailboat. If Peter were the sole human head under Christ, it might take him weeks to communicate with the man next under him in Rome, if he were in Jerusalem. So God worked directly with TWO in separated areas.”

“With such communication and transportation facilities available today, Christ requires only ONE, once again, directly under him. Several times I have questioned whether Christ would ordain one or several more apostles, but always on counseling with evangelists, their response has been a decisive and absolute ‘NO.’”

“...the GOVERNMENT OF GOD [is] organized from the TOP DOWN.”

“Now let’s look into New Testament teaching to see how this is POSITIVELY REVEALED.

“I quoted from Galatians 2:7-8 about how Paul was assigned by Christ to head THE WORK to the Gentiles.

“Now notice Titus 1:4-5 and 2:15—Paul wrote to Titus (UNDER PAUL), ‘To Titus, mine own son after the common faith (even as those under me in THE WORK today, are MY own sons, directly or indirectly, in the Lord), ...from God the Father (first in rank) and the Lord Jesus Christ (second in rank) our Savior. For this cause left I (next in rank—to Gentiles—under Christ) thee (under Paul’s authority in the Work) in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (under Titus who is under Paul, who is under Christ) in every city as I had appointed thee.’

“No authority in the Church? What did God MEAN when He says in His Word, ‘OBEY them that have the RULE over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account (as I know I shall) that they may do it with JOY, and not with grief: for that (causing those over you grief) is unprofitable for YOU. Pray for us (THOSE OF US GOD HAS SET IN AUTHORITY TODAY) for we

trust we have a good conscience, in all things, willing to live honestly’ (Heb. 13:17-18).

“No government in God’s Church? Then WHY did God inspire this to the Thessalonians? ‘And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are OVER YOU in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves’ (I Thes. 5:12-13).

“One of the things SATAN works overtime in injecting into any mind that will let it enter, is RESENTMENT OF AUTHORITY. GOD’S authority is administered in LOVE—and actually as one SERVING those under His authority for THEIR GOOD and out of loving CONCERN for them. That is the way I try to use what authority God has delegated to me, and I try to teach those under me to use it in the same manner—as a servant, not one lording it over those under him—as JESUS gave us an example. Satan DESPISES government, except as HE himself harshly and in hate employs it.

“But what does God say about DESPISING GOVERNMENT?”

“‘But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and DESPISE GOVERNMENT. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption’ (II Peter 2:10-12).

“Brethren, THAT’S GOD’S WORD, not mine!

“Now notice I Corinthians 12: In this chapter God is showing that in THE WORK of the Church—proclaiming the Gospel to the world, and feeding the flock, there are different ADMINISTRATIONS, different OPERATIONS, in the Church, and for these, God has given various spiritual GIFTS, or empowerments, by His Holy Spirit.”

“So in the Church, God has set differences of ADMINISTRATIONS. For example, we have today the Division of Church Administration (CAD), or, Executive Administration over ministers and churches. There is the Educational Administration, or Executive direction over the Colleges and Imperial Schools. There is Publishing Administration, Broadcast Administration over radio and TV, etc. This of necessity requires organization. The exact pattern or STRUCTURE may vary according to conditions, needs, etc., but the PRINCIPLE of the organization MUST BE THAT OF GOD’S GOVERNMENT, from the TOP, God, then Christ, on down, as CHRIST has directed and chosen.”

“The very fact that God has endowed different members in His Church with additional spiritual gifts, added to their own natural talents and abilities, in itself shows emphatically that there is definite ORGANIZATION in His Church, and that the ORGANIZATION must flow from a chain of authority, according to the PRINCIPLE which GOD (our legislative branch), has set—that is, AUTHORITY FROM THE TOP DOWN. That is the PRINCIPLE. The OPERATIONS refers to functioning according to the practical application of the PRINCIPLE of government given us by GOD.

“The ADMINISTRATIONS in the Church refers to executive performance and managerial responsibilities, NOT to policy-making. In other words, adapting the method of functioning, according to the PRINCIPLE which GOD (the Policy Maker and Law Giver), not we, has laid down.”

“Now WHAT is this chapter (I Corinthians 12) showing? That the Church is ONE—and ONE ONLY—and has many members. That there are different Administrations and different operations (verses 5-6). That there are different spiritual GIFTS (but ONE SPIRIT—verses 4, 7-11). Christ is the Head of the Church, called ‘the Body of Christ,’ having many members for many functions. To show many functions, it is compared to the human body (verses 12-26). Then, we read of the respective offices in rank (verses 27-30).”

“So, as to RANK of offices of executive administration, and operational functions, ‘And GOD hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (languages)’ (I Cor. 12:28).”

“Notice now! GOD says—the Holy WORD OF GOD says: ‘And GOD set some in the church, first, apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers...’ That’s what GOD says. But [a] leader of the theology of the dissenters from God’s Church says, ‘BUT I THINK it is far better to call these titles, rather than ranks.’ He THINKS his way around the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, and the AUTHORITY which CHRIST has delegated.”

“GOD SAYS, first, secondly, thirdly. But HE THINKS his way around GOD’S WORD! Brethren, GOD’S Church dares not handle the Word of God so carelessly, so deceptively.”

“In the world of the unconverted, those in authority do exercise lordship over those under them. Christ said it should NOT be so with us. But He did not in so saying abolish all authority or rulership. He PUT RULERSHIP in His Church. He DELEGATED authority. What He was

teaching His future apostles, is that we in GOD’S GOVERNMENT should NOT bear rule IN THE SAME HARSH AND UNLOVING MANNER as the unconverted in the world.

“Let’s get this point CLEAR. It’s basic. Misunderstanding at this point has caused some to leave God’s Church, and perhaps even God’s salvation and gift of eternal life!

“Notice what Jesus taught... [in] Mark 10:42: ‘...ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...but so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,...’ But no one can say Jesus had no authority.

“Years ago, seeing this, and not considering the many, MANY Scriptures charging some in the Church with authority, rulership, saying to ‘rebuke’ the unruly, etc., I took the above scriptures to mean there is no authority in the Church. I did not want to exercise authority. I was still NEW in God’s truth (this was over 40 years ago). So, in the early days of the parent Church of the Philadelphia era, at Eugene, Oregon, I allowed ‘wolves in sheeps’ clothing’ to come in and sow the seeds of discord among brethren. It resulted in splitting the church in two—possibly turning half my flock onto the way that leads into a lake of fire! God had His own way of REBUKING ME SOUNDLY, making me see this in its true light. Jesus here is talking about THE MANNER in which the authority Christ delegates is used. He is NOT saying there is NO AUTHORITY.”

“...in the same speech where Jesus taught against ‘lording it over’ those under one’s authority [Luke 22], He delegated to them authority of KINGSHIP, sitting on twelve thrones.

“I have had to correct some under me in God’s Work on this very point—the manner in which authority was used. Those of us in God’s Church are not YET perfect. We must OVERCOME and GROW in grace. *But the remedy is not to take all authority which Christ has delegated OUT of the Church, but to learn to administer it IN THE MANNER Christ has taught.*”

“The parallel instruction on the RANK of authority in the Church is Ephesians 4, beginning with verse 11: ‘And he (Christ) gave some,...’ The RSV translates it more clearly: ‘And His gifts were that some should be apostles,’ etc. Continue, ‘some prophets, and some evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for THE WORK of the ministry (proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world), for the edifying of the body of Christ...’”

“God has ONLY ONE CHURCH on earth, which He directs in the doing of His Work—not TWO churches—not MANY denominations and sects, and ‘groups.’ ‘But now are they many members, YET BUT ONE BODY’ (I Cor. 12:20—see also v. 12, 13). ‘For by one Spirit are we all (not part of us) baptized into ONE body’” (all emphasis his).

Brethren Letter, May 2, 1974

This is a powerful statement—and the entire letter is worth reading. Mr. Armstrong leaves no doubt about God’s pattern of government. Take careful note that he never stated leadership through “one man” was only applicable if there was a living apostle. He simply never taught this. And note well Mr. Armstrong’s last paragraph! We will revisit it in detail in the next chapter.

Mr. Armstrong neither designated nor ordained his successor an apostle, and the complete above-quoted letter describes many that God used who also were not apostles (judges, kings, etc.). Without checking, some blindly assert the “We-have-no-apostle-today” argument as the reason they no longer must follow one man—all the while claiming to have a “hierarchical government” (where a board can remove a leader that it no longer wishes to follow). This is a baldly dishonest representation of what Mr. Armstrong taught, offered by men unwilling to yield to the one that *God* has chosen—and also unwilling to carefully examine whether in fact that man could *be* an apostle.

How careful will you be in this regard?

We could ask, regarding such groups: What is their point? Why not just say they *disagree* with Mr. Armstrong on government, since they disagree with him in so many other areas? They reinvent and distort Mr. Armstrong’s plain statements about God working through one man to divert attention from *other* false doctrines they openly teach or tolerate.

Make—FORCE—your mind to come to grips with this!

Chosen—Never Elected

Where *God’s* chosen leader is not present as the human leader of an organization, and a board or eldership has selected the *spiritual* leader, that leader has, in fact, accepted the authority of the board over him. He has no right to claim that the same board cannot remove him—particularly since he cannot possibly claim that *God* installed him as the leader of the church he presides over—or that he solely reports to and takes direction from God. It would be utterly dishonest for a man to claim that *God* installed him into leadership, when it was a board or commit-

tee of men who cast ballots placing him into office over the organization he “leads”!

This is the very premise used by the “leader” of one of the bigger splinters today, who rebelled and left UCG because it no longer endorsed his leadership, and removed him as President in 1998. He went on record as saying, in effect, “Since the board installed me *twice*, this means I was *God’s* choice.”

Ridiculous! But upwards of 2,000 people initially followed this man!

The leader of *God’s* Church—the man that *God* has chosen—would NEVER allow himself to be voted into office by a group of *any* kind in the first place.

God’s leader is always placed into office by Christ *after* he has been carefully trained and prepared—*after* he has endured numerous trials and tests, designed to ensure that he would never compromise, with either the truth or the Work, once God installs him into office! This training process, of necessity, ensures that God’s selected leader must lead an organization coming from the humblest possible beginning—where the fruits of growth, works and truth expand around and under him, after he began essentially *alone*—as Mr. Armstrong did. He cannot rise through the ranks of an already-existing organization run by committee without always having to derive his authority from the committee’s—instead of from God’s lone chosen leader’s—decision to hand him the top position.

What committees of men can give, they can also take away!

Any large organization, one *beginning* with hundreds or thousands of people, and involving many ministers, like UCG or COGwa, would automatically face the difficult question at the outset of “Who is in charge?” Of necessity, because it started *this* way, such a group would have no choice but to *elect* a leader. Think this through, recognizing that God’s chosen leader would *never* participate in such a process. (Of course, once again, UCG justifies its rejection of God’s method of selection, in place of its own, by continuing to mindlessly assert that God has not yet made clear His choice for them to follow. But I ask one more time: Who among them is looking to see if God has sent another chief shepherd today?)

I repeat: *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties* is of titanic importance to those who really want to know the *why* of all the confusion and chaos of the Laodicean age. The chapter here merely introduces the subject. The reader *must* study and grasp the contents of that book. It is unlike anything you have ever read before on this subject, and recaptures the truth of God’s government that so many have lost.

I implore you to carefully consider the spiritual logic of what Mr. Armstrong understood when he left Sardis with only thirteen brethren joining his family of six. This represented truly the humblest of beginnings, yet it began an organization that eventually grew to enormous size, and had a global impact beyond imagination. This was because of the miraculous *power of God* working through the man that *He* had chosen and sent. Be careful of what you may overlook in the message this sends!

This leads directly to a related subject that must be addressed and clarified at this point.

ONLY ONE CHURCH

The TRUE CHURCH and BODY OF CHRIST doctrine has become terribly confused in the minds of great numbers of people who thought they once clearly understood it. How this happened is truly another “whodunit” within the overall mystery described in the INTRODUCTION.

In the past, God’s people all accepted the simplicity in Jesus’ statement, “I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). Because God and Jesus Christ always keep their promises, Jesus did this. The Church believed this scripture and all brethren understood that it was solely fulfilled in the Worldwide Church of God, under Mr. Armstrong’s leadership. However, we *always* simultaneously recognized that there were probably a few people remaining in Sardis who were converted and had the Holy Spirit. But all of this changed. Why? What happened? Why do so few any longer believe that God works solely in one Church—ONE UNIFIED ORGANIZATION?

Why have so many forgotten that Christ is not divided?

The following question now towers over the collective splinters: Is there just one true Church—the *only* place where Christ is leading (though He still has many scattered lukewarm sheep [recall Daniel 12:7] in a variety of groups and organizations who have not returned to His Church)? Or, is Christ’s leadership of His Church now split—DIVIDED—between competing, disagreeing groups, seemingly *all* carrying His authority and approval? In other words, is there still a single unified true Church led by Christ, or are there now *many* “true churches” available, all led by Christ?

This book would be incomplete without careful examination of this subject, though it is covered from additional perspectives in other books and sermons. Of necessity, how Christ governs His Church and the one true Church doctrine overlap. They cannot be separated, and the way it is covered in this book will demonstrate this.

Not Where the People Rule

Recall that the forms of government practiced by the people and groups of the seventh era are distinguished by Christ in the very name He chose for this era—Laodicea—as being a people excluding His leadership. Remember that, though they *are* His people, in a weak and deplorable condition, Christ cannot be leading them, partly because of what we have seen *Laodicea* means. Christ understands He is not ruling, and could never rule, people who think *they* are in charge!

God only works in one organization at a time. People who doctrinally disagree, and whose organizations God is not leading, will continue to scatter in more and different directions throughout the last days. Amos 3:3 makes clear that the natural result of disagreement is that people cannot walk together. God can only work in the one organization willing to follow His “whole truth and nothing but the truth”—and only in those who *permit* Him to lead through His chosen leader.

Do not let yourself be confused where Christ is *not* confused—He is not *forcing* His leadership on those who have rejected and excluded it!

God Works in One Organization at a Time

We have learned that Mr. Armstrong taught that the government of God was only revealed in the modern age to Philadelphia, which walked *together* because it agreed with God, Christ and His apostle. *That* was—and still is—the only place where people are *actively* holding fast. *That* was—and still is—the only place Christ is working—unless He is divided (I Cor. 1:13).

There are no other possibilities!

Be honest. God cannot ever actively work in the government of more than *one* organization at a time, through more than *one* chosen leader—or Christ IS divided. This is the lesson of what Christ, Paul and Mr. Armstrong plainly understood and taught, and this book, with the other *Splinter Explanation Packet* books and CDs, contains the proof.

Christ stated that the devil understands that a divided house cannot stand (Matt. 12:25-26). Surely Jesus Christ is at least as smart as the

devil. Surely He also understands that He can only work in ONE organization—through ONE man, as Mr. Armstrong taught—at a time. The splinters, however, are divided, and this is because of error. But where Christ is working, it is *not* divided by different beliefs (I Cor. 1:10-11). Forgive me for being repetitive, but this must be clear. I am trying to say it in as many ways as it can possibly be said.

Understand! The Catholic church has always claimed to be the one true Church. But this never caused God's people to reject the doctrine, merely because they—as imposters—claimed it applied to the Roman church. Why do so many reject this doctrine now? It seems to be that they are simply tired of so many different organizations claiming it applies to *themselves*.

Here is one more great irony. Some people reject the one true Church doctrine, having become cynical because so many others believe that it no longer applies to *any* group. Others reject it because, equally cynical, they see that *so many* claim to fulfill it.

Which is it?

The answer is that neither is true! The fact that many reject the old understanding or that many claim it for themselves proves nothing and makes neither camp right. Therefore, one must carefully focus on and discern the difference between organizations that *claim* to be without compromise and the one Church that truly *is*.

One additional question, related to the doctrine, lingers: Some have asked, “How can Christ have a Philadelphian *Church* and a Laodicean *Church*, and yet still lead only *one* true Church? Are not the Laodiceans God's people, too—are they not *also* His true Church?”

This is not difficult. Remember: The Greek word for “church” is *ekklesia*, simply meaning “the called out ones.” Certainly, all Laodiceans have God's Spirit and keep the commandments (Rev. 12:17). These are, in fact, true brethren—called out ones! But, like Sardis, many are not yet again part of the one true Church, Body of Christ and New Testament Temple—where Christ, through HIS GOVERNMENT, is present, leading and working. This should not be hard to understand. The Laodiceans *are* His people. They have His Spirit. Half will be saved. But those who will be saved are not *yet* where He is working, and some of these will not be protected during the Tribulation, because they never address their spiritual condition. (Of course, anointing their eyes would change this.)

Since *Laodicea* means “the people rule, judge and decide,” it is obvious *why* all of the splinters have rejected many of Christ's other teachings (besides government), given to Philadelphia. But those with God's Spirit in the splinters (Rom. 8:9, 14) *are* Christ's people, scattered *outside* the

Church and Body where He is working. This is because they will not anoint their eyes and allow Him into their lives, so they can be cleaned up from their wretched, spiritual nakedness and escape coming punishment! God’s Spirit will leave them, and a punishment worse than the Tribulation awaits these.

The Spiritual Body Is Not a Corporation

Many who now *reject* what Mr. Armstrong taught about Christ’s one Church have found a way to assert that they *agree* with his teaching. Here is how they do this.

It is well known that Mr. Armstrong taught that God’s Church, which is a *spiritual entity*, was not synonymous with the CORPORATION known as the WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, INC. Of course, this teaching is absolutely true. Looking back, we now realize it was even more true than we could have then believed.

If approximately 75 percent of those who attended the WCG were possibly never converted—*never* had God’s Holy Spirit—they obviously were *not* part of Christ’s spiritual Body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). But they *were* affiliated with the Church corporation, and *thought* to be members of the Body of Christ. In other words, anyone (and there were probably over 100,000 like this) could be part of the Church *corporation*, but not necessarily part of the *true Church*. This much should be clear—and generally *was* clear in the minds of most converted people who heard Mr. Armstrong say it more than once. Perhaps others never thought it through.

Here is how Mr. Armstrong’s teaching, consistent with the Bible, was changed into license to attend any group of one’s choosing while considering himself part of the “one true Church”—and part of the “Body of Christ.” Many people today, in effect, assert that *circumstances now dictate* to Christ that He must work in MANY DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS—wherever people are led by God’s Spirit!—since the spiritual Body of Christ is not a corporation! (Even though Christ is the same “yesterday, today and forever.”)

How convenient!

Do you see the problem? Do you see where such people have blurred the truth of what we all once understood? Mr. Armstrong never said you could be *outside* the Worldwide Church of God, where Christ was working and leading, and be part of the true Church—then (and still) Philadelphia—or part of the Body of Christ. (Later in the chapter, you will read his statement explaining this.) He understood that one *could* become con-

verted, because he *always* knew that some “few names” in Sardis had God’s Spirit—“had not defiled their garments” (Rev. 3:4)—but would eventually have to be led to Christ’s Body.

While no corporation or organization can claim to be synonymous with all those who have the Holy Spirit *at any given moment*, this is not at all inconsistent with the understanding that Christ only LEADS ONE organization *at a time*, and those who are in His Body are *all* part of that ONE organization. You already saw several quotes from Mr. Armstrong, on pages 25 to 28, stating this.

Let no deceiver, driven by personal agenda, tell you otherwise!

Let’s examine just a *few* verses to see why Mr. Armstrong taught that God only works in one place at a time. We will see he was honest with the Word of God. His previous quotes reference some of these passages.

When the Church Began

Acts 2 records Jesus fulfilling His promise to build His Church, and this happened at the moment the Holy Spirit was poured out in A.D. 31 on all those present at Pentecost. This first glimpse of the Church, after its birth, offers an extraordinary insight into what it was supposed to look like for the next 2,000 years. Consider this well.

Verse 1 records that everything that follows in the account, including the receiving of God’s Spirit, was only possible because “they were all with ONE ACCORD in *one place*.”

Next, notice the very first thing recorded to have happened immediately after 3,000 people were baptized the same day: “And they continued steadfastly in the *apostles’ doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (vs. 42).

Two points emerge. People held to—“continued in”—the “apostles’ doctrine,” not anybody else’s. This is a huge statement—and one of the greatest reasons Mr. Armstrong understood that truth only comes into the Church through apostles. (Also see Ephesians 2:20, among others.)

But there is another monumental point introduced here—the people also “continued...in...fellowship.” They were “together.” Verse 44 makes this clear: “And all that believed were *together*...” This is the only reason that the rest of the verse could state that they “had all things common.” To do this, they had to be together, walking in *one* Church—in *one* organization.

Verse 46 firmly ties the knot. Notice: “And they, continuing daily with ONE ACCORD in the temple, and breaking bread *from house to house*,

did eat their meat with gladness and SINGleness of heart.” Once again, everyone was eating meals together, while of “one accord” and with “singleness of heart.” Certainly this *would* have produced the “gladness” spoken of here, because God says, even in the Old Testament, “How good and how *pleasant* it is for the brethren to *dwell together* in UNITY” (Psa. 133:1)! Of course, Satan understands this, and has convinced God’s people that they can be divided and still be the true Church—and that Christ must lead them as they are.

In contrast, we have just reviewed *Christ’s* very first snapshot of His Church. Are you beginning to get the full picture—from the Old Testament and the New—and that the devil would seek to paint a very different picture?

Addressing Division in Corinth

The Corinthian congregation had nearly every conceivable spiritual problem. The first, and perhaps greatest, was that it was plagued by division. After nine verses of introduction in his first epistle to Corinth, Paul immediately cuts to the difficulty, revealing the only way that the Church of God, wherever it is found, is supposed to function.

Notice: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you ALL *speak the same thing*, and that there be *no divisions* among you; but that you be *perfectly joined together* in the *same mind* and in the *same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10).

In just this one verse, in FIVE separate ways, Paul makes abundantly clear—for all with “eyes to see”—that the Church the living Jesus Christ is leading enjoys complete *unity*. No honest mind can possibly draw any other conclusion from this passage. Carefully reread the phrases in italics.

Almost immediately after, verse 13 begins with the rhetorical question: “Is Christ divided?” The only reason it is not followed with the word “no” or something similar is because the answer is so obvious. Considering what he had just written, Paul knew that the thrust of his question was equivalent to asking, “Is grass green?” or “Is the sky blue?” When people ask rhetorical questions, no one actually responds, because the answer is so obvious. In Amos 3:3, even the question “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” is left unanswered for the same reason.

It is obvious they cannot!

Why are so many brethren no longer able to answer such easy questions as “Is Christ divided?” with a resounding “NO!”? The reason, again,

is that deep blindness, in the most basic points of spiritual understanding, has settled over the majority of Spirit-begotten people alive today.

Only One Body—and What This Means

Remember also that it was in this same letter to the Corinthians that Paul had to write, “For God is not the author of *confusion*, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (14:33), followed by “Let all things be done decently and in order” (vs. 40). I ask again, “Why?” Why have people forgotten such basic scriptures? True “decency” and “order” would be IMPOSSIBLE if God’s Church were divided into several organizations, let alone hundreds.

Why have so many seemingly forgotten the entirety of I Corinthians 12, which is basically a thirty-one-verse explanation comparing the *physical* human body—and all of its *connected* parts (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, etc.)—to the Body of Christ? Is it because Paul’s plain meaning has been “spiritualized away” by most brethren—something we once thought was only done by the world’s churches? We will see that many *have* spiritualized this chapter away. The obvious meaning here is that *any* part of the body (either human or Christ’s spiritual Body) will *die* if it is severed away—no longer *connected* in its God-designed place. As the Creator of the human body, He would know.

Recall Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18. These verses plainly state that Christ is “the Head over all things to *the Church*, which is *His body*” (Ephesians) and is the “Head of *the body, the Church*” (Colossians). They prove that Christ’s Body and His Church are one and the same—and that He Heads both in ONE. Both “Church” and “Body” are qualified by the entirety of I Corinthians 12. In other words, Christ’s Body reflects the unified integration of the human body, making clear that *all parts* of it work as ONE within the one true Church!

Let me repeat for emphasis. Perhaps one of the most important books I have ever written—*The True Church – One Organization, or Many?*—makes clear the colossal importance of being absolutely sure one is connected to Christ and to the power of God’s Spirit. This means finding and being part of His Body, *the place—the organization—where He is the Vine*, and, as Mr. Armstrong taught and the Bible teaches, only the branches *there* are connected to Him, and thus able to access more of His Spirit! This book is loaded with stunning proof from the mouths of the Protestants, apostates and the splinter leaders that they NOW all teach the exact same thing—directly opposite to what Mr. Armstrong taught and to what the Bible teaches.

A Classic Example

Before we are ready to examine—and appreciate—what Mr. Armstrong taught about the true Church and Body of Christ, an example of how confused and wrong-headed the splinters have become is probably best illustrated by looking at what the senior “presiding” evangelist who leads LCG teaches.

In his booklet supposedly identifying the whereabouts of the true Church today, this man reveals what could only be called a stunning loss of understanding and vision. Notice carefully each of his four quotes, and how this leader tries to validate outright Protestant teaching by invoking Mr. Armstrong’s authority. The first two statements set the stage and the final one drives home the error. As you read, ask yourself what your organization teaches (emphasis mine throughout):

“It is important to note that while God’s true Church is one spiritual organism, the Bible shows that *it is normal* for the Church to exist in several *different corporate ‘fellowships’* or *‘branches’* at the same time.”

“To be in the body of Christ, you must be fully surrendered to God and be led by God’s Spirit... Yet down through the ages, there have been *many different Church of God fellowships*—‘branches’ of the true Church—that sometimes coexisted.”

“The Worldwide Church of God became, by far, the largest group of true believers who surrendered their lives... Even during this time, however, there existed the aforementioned groups of the Seventh Day Church of God. Mr. Armstrong often acknowledged that these different fellowships were ‘branches’ of the true Church.”

“We understand from the Bible and from history that the Church of God is the ‘body’ of Jesus Christ—the body of believers in the genuine Truth of the Bible... Within the *greater body* of Christ... Where those people are gathered into *different corporate fellowships*, there will be *differing strengths* and *varying emphases*. But outflowing love... should be present in converted members of God’s Church, no matter where they live and to which particular fellowship they belong.”

By no stretch does this represent either the teaching of the Bible or what Mr. Armstrong taught God’s people about who and what Christ’s Church is. There is simply no such thing as a “*greater body of Christ*,” involving different corporate fellowships, with differing strengths and

varying emphases. Yet, thousands who once knew better are now falling for such appalling deceit—and IGNORANCE!

Let's ask: Is it possible that LCG's leader has merely *forgotten* the truth—even one so colossal—and slipped back into the beliefs of his well-known Methodist youth? We will revisit this question later in more detail.

Carefully read the next quote from the United Methodist Church about how they see Christ's Church, and note the phrases in italics that line up almost perfectly with what you just saw:

“The *branches* of Christ's church have developed *diverse traditions* that enlarge our store of *shared understandings*. Our avowed ecumenical commitment as United Methodists is to gather our own *doctrinal emphases* into the *larger Christian unity*, there to be made more meaningful in a *richer whole*.”

Considering such almost identical language used, can there be the slightest doubt that the above splinter leader has reflected his straightforward Methodist/Protestant theology?

Mr. Armstrong Taught the Whole Body of Christ Is Together in One Organization

We are now ready to consider the first two of many statements from Mr. Armstrong defining the Body of Christ, as well as its purpose. The first quote makes clear that the Church and Body are not divided in any way, that it cannot be comprised of various groups—“corporate fellowships” or “branches.” (Other quotes from Mr. Armstrong come later.) Notice even the very title question Mr. Armstrong gave to his article in this first quote:

“Jesus Christ is going to marry GOD'S CHURCH—called THE BODY OF CHRIST. Now is that Body united, organized on a united and firm FOUNDATION, or an assortment of 'loner' individuals and various 'groups'?”

“The only PURPOSE of the Church is to CARRY ON THE WORK WHICH CHRIST STARTED! It is now the BODY in which the Holy Spirit is working. And God set in the Church, to ORGANIZE it, apostles, prophets, pastors...

“The CHURCH is the BODY OF CHRIST. And Jesus pictured Himself as THE VINE, and we of His Church are the BRANCHES on that vine. Notice it—study it—in John 15. Jesus is not SEVERAL SEPARATED VINES—He is *one vine*! The members of the BODY OF CHRIST are the BRANCHES!—but *not separated, isolated* branches. ALL ARE JOINED TO THE ONE VINE—the BODY OF CHRIST.

“Separated ‘Christians,’ or ‘groups’ are branches *broken off* from the VINE—the BODY OF CHRIST!

“The Father is the Husbandman—the Vinedresser. Every branch of this grapevine (the Church) that does not bear fruit for the Kingdom, the Father prunes it—cuts it off—that the organized, united vine may bear MORE FRUIT.”

“*IS GOD’S CHURCH COMPOSED OF MANY SEPARATE ‘GROUPS’?*”, GN, Dec. 18, 1978

This statement from Mr. Armstrong is impossible to misunderstand. God’s Church is unified in only ONE ORGANIZATION. His next statement gives some background as to why the Bible uses the term “Body of Christ”—and explains Christ’s GREAT OVERALL PURPOSE for His Body:

“God started His Gospel WORK—proclaiming the Gospel (good news) of HIS KINGDOM—through the individual human BODY of Jesus. But after His resurrection, Jesus sent the same HOLY SPIRIT on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, and thereafter, to enter into the COLLECTIVE BODY of those constituting GOD’S CHURCH.

“The CHURCH, then, is the COLLECTIVE BODY Christ uses as HIS INSTRUMENT, empowered by God’s Spirit, to carry on GOD’S WORK. Jesus Christ heads and directs it from heaven!

“But WHAT is the divine MISSION of that Church? What is its PURPOSE? The answer is to do the WORK OF GOD, which Jesus started and now continues through His Church.

“Wherever God’s true Church is—the ONE Church that is CHRIST’S—it will be preaching THAT GOSPEL to the whole world—over all continents—today. For we are near the END! That is the Gospel of the living Christ! It is the GOOD NEWS of the coming KINGDOM OF GOD to RULE THE WORLD!

“But wherever that ONE true Church is, it will be named *the Church of God*...But that is not all. Many have appropriated God’s name, but are not proclaiming the KINGDOM OF GOD...

“That true Church is preaching the imminency of the coming of CHRIST as King of kings and LORD of lords, to RULE all nations for a thousand years on earth.

“There is only ONE such Church!

“It is doing THE WORK OF GOD. It is, as Jesus said it would be, a ‘little flock,’ persecuted, despised by the world.”

“*Personal*,” GN, Aug. 1983

Once again, as usual, Mr. Armstrong leaves absolutely no room for confusion. He makes most plain that the PURPOSE of the Church is to do the Work of God—announce the kingdom of God (the true gospel) around the world—under the direction and leadership of the “living Christ.” This then could only be directed by Him from *one* headquarters.

We must next examine a combination of several related topics: the Body of Christ, the “Work” being done *in the splinters* and whether Jesus is part of the gospel. We will then tie all of this to which spirit—I repeat, which SPIRIT!—has now come into play in these organizations! Finally, we will connect all of this directly to the need for one to “anoint his eyes” to receive more of God’s Spirit—and exactly *how* it was that this Spirit has so diminished in the minds of so many thousands that they can no longer see as they once did.

Prepare to be stunned—and, hopefully, deeply motivated to do something about what you will now learn!

The Protestant Body of Christ—and the Splinters

A new question has arisen in the splinters: Just what *is* the gospel? What did Mr. Armstrong teach is the gospel? Most today—having been conditioned to believe the apostate “gospel” that focuses exclusively on the personage of Jesus—have *merged* His role *with* the kingdom of God, creating a new kind of *hybrid* “gospel.”

It is important to take some extra time at this point to make very plain the clear distinction between the role of Christ and what is the true gospel. Much more is at stake here than meets the eye—and most in the splinters are now being badly fooled on the very CENTERPIECE of the entire Bible! It is critical that the reader understand how all of this is connected to where and with whom you should be found doing God’s Work—and why so many are low in supply of God’s Spirit.

Only the Kingdom of God!

The New Testament is most plain on the subject of the true gospel and, prior to the apostasy, all of God’s people were very clear on this. In scores of places, the gospel is referenced—defined!—as “the *kingdom* of God,” “the *kingdom*,” “the *kingdom* of Christ and of God” or “the *kingdom* of [not *in*] heaven.” Nowhere is the gospel described as “Jesus,” “Christ” or “Jesus Christ.”

All these various “kingdom” phrases are consistent with what Mr. Armstrong taught throughout his 52-year ministry. And you will notice in

his statements found throughout my book *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* that not once did he reference Jesus as part of the gospel—NOT ONCE! Neither did his booklet *What Is the True Gospel?* I challenge the reader to find even one book, booklet, article, letter or sermon where Mr. Armstrong EVER suggested that the Person of Christ even *might* be part of the gospel. In fact, he both stressed and taught precisely the opposite. Of course, Mr. Armstrong well understood Christ’s role as Savior, High Priest and Captain of our salvation, as well as all of His future titles and roles.

Mr. Armstrong was absolutely emphatic on the monumental difference between the *Messenger*—Jesus Christ—and the *Message* that He brought—the kingdom of God (His coming, world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT). Of course, many have tried to say that the term “the gospel of Christ” is a gospel *about* Christ. This is simply FALSE—because “of” merely connotes *possession*. The message about the kingdom of God is Christ’s gospel—and this is all very basic understanding from the past. (The reader would benefit by listening to my four-part sermon series “The Gospel—Kingdom *and* Christ?” You will never again see Christ as part of the true gospel.)

Christ’s Role Is Separate

Take warning! The idea that Jesus Christ is, or is part of, the gospel is entirely Protestant thinking. The attempt by the big splinters to bring Jesus into the gospel is not only wrong, but it derives from a much greater danger—that of “another Jesus,” born of “another spirit” (II Cor. 11:3-4). Even this very passage cited here describes the Corinthians as having fallen into belief in “another gospel” *and* “another Jesus.” If Jesus *is*, or is part of, the gospel, why did Paul list these as two distinct problems in Corinth (and that these were both connected to a third problem, that of following “another spirit”—connected to the Protestant “body of Christ”)?

For instance, UCG states this in its media philosophy statement: “Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God is a divine commission given to the Church...The gospel message, which includes God’s offer of the gift of salvation...” Its “gospel” booklet speaks of the apostles as having gained “enhanced” understanding of Christ’s message—His gospel—about the kingdom.

But the role of Jesus Christ is separate—distinctly different!

Similarly, LCG describes the gospel this way: “The Gospel of Christ is the ‘Good News’ of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s sacrifice, and of the soon-coming Kingdom and government of God.”

Another Jesus—Another Spirit

Again, this “gospel” is very, very different from what Mr. Armstrong taught in his booklet, and what you have seen in his statements throughout my other splinter books. First, take a moment to read Galatians 1:6-9, and the curse (stated twice) connected to bringing “another gospel.” Then pause and grasp the additional seriousness of *what else* doing this means—the grave danger of what is actually being brought into the Church with this revised “gospel.” You MUST understand WHY God places a curse on those who pervert the gospel—those who blur or confuse His “Genesis to Revelation” announcement about His soon-coming WORLD GOVERNMENT, under Christ and the saints.

Next then, now turn to II Corinthians 11:3-4. I repeat: This passage explains and connects the world’s different, false “another Jesus” to “another gospel” about their “Jesus,” and all of this, in turn, is connected to “another *spirit*.” We saw earlier that the apostle John labels this alien spirit the “*spirit* of error” (I John 4:6). This is the SAME SPIRIT guiding all the churches of professing Christianity!

Understand the extreme gravity here. Understand why it is VITAL to get this point clear in your mind.

This very different, but very REAL, “another *spirit*” directly introduces—and is importing into UCG, LCG and COGwa (along with other groups)—the Protestant harlots’ counterfeit definition of the body of (their) “Christ.” (You may wish to take time to carefully read our booklet *Which Is the True Gospel?* to understand how the apostles consistently taught the role of Jesus *alongside* the gospel of the kingdom—not as something that was part of it. That booklet covers a number of New Testament passages explaining how the apostles preached the role of Christ *only in conjunction with* the kingdom of God.)

Comprehend. Where the wrong spirit has entered, the wrong “Jesus” (with his false doctrines) will always follow. And, vice versa, where “Jesus” has been added to the gospel, a wrong spirit will always follow. Either leads to the other—and both lead to another most serious problem!

Extreme Danger!

Another critically important element ties in here, and is connected directly to where Christ is leading His true Church and Work. Both of these big splinters (with many others) teach Christ no longer works exclusively in one organization—leading only ONE unified, organized, uncompromising

Church. Since the apostasy, many then almost find themselves forced to believe that Christ’s Church—the same as the biblical Body of Christ, as seen in Mr. Armstrong’s statements—now consists of *many* “fellowships,” “branches” or “communities of believers.”

We have seen that this is totally contrary to I Corinthians 1:10, 13 and 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:2-16, John 15, Matthew 12:25-30, and to what Mr. Armstrong taught. It is this substitute idea that asserts, in effect, that Christ and His Body are *now divided* among many groups. Grasp this! This is exactly what the “harlot” daughters (Rev. 17:5) believe and taught to the WCG apostates. The apostates, in turn, taught the Protestant “Jesus” and his counterfeit “body” to the splinter leaders before they fled the apostasy.

Here is what the reader must recognize: The Protestant world believes in a *different* (counterfeit) “body” of a *different* (counterfeit) “Christ,” emanating from an entirely *different* (counterfeit) “SPIRIT”—*not* the Spirit of God. All of these churches are led by the “spirit of disobedience” that is identified in Ephesians 2:2—and shown to be sent from the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4)!

To summarize, when the splinter leaders accepted the apostates’ “harlot” teaching about the “body” of *their* “Jesus,” the large splinters unknowingly set themselves up to be thrown OUTSIDE the *true* Body of Christ and directly into the *false*, Protestant, counterfeit, *divided* “body of Christ” idea. All of this, in turn, set the stage for the entirety of God’s Church to enter what became the badly *divided* Laodicean age in the wake of the apostasy.

The reader should pause and reread the last sentence to get it crystal clear in the mind before continuing.

What the Protestants Can Read

Remember, Paul taught the Corinthians that “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” and “For the body is not one member, but many” (I Cor. 12:13-14).

Of course, the Protestants are able to read this passage, and others about the Body of Christ. But here was their problem: They had to come up with a teaching compatible with the divided, competing and multiplying picture of denominations that is the Protestant world. They had to reconcile the idea of *one* “Body of Christ” with the reality of *hundreds* of Protestant denominations, and more coming all the time! Within this overall understanding must come the reminder that the Protestants are led by the spirit of the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4). They would conclude

whatever this “god” led them to conclude—and it would not be what the Bible teaches.

Grasp this. The alien spirit that John and Paul spoke of—which is the leaven (I Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9), cancer and gangrene (II Tim. 2:17) that Paul referenced in his epistles—is truly the COUNTERFEIT SPIRIT through which Protestants’ counterfeit baptisms place *their* members into *their* re-engineered and substitute “body of Christ.”

Tapping into this spirit—SATAN’S SPIRIT—the spirit that leads the entire Protestant world (with all Christendom)—is what *quickly* destroyed the WCG. Now understand! Because virtually all of the splinters have thrown out the truth Mr. Armstrong taught about Christ’s Body (and, of course, much more), this SAME SPIRIT has been permitted to enter and is now *slowly* destroying the splinters, some faster than others.

I reiterate that it is most critical to recognize that the *spirit of error* will only grow stronger and more pervasive wherever it has been permitted to enter. Mr. Armstrong strongly warned against letting the devil into the Church even “a little bit” (as he put it), because he would “push open the door since he is stronger than we” (again, his words). This has happened in the big splinters, among others! (Again, the reader is strongly urged to listen to the “Body of Christ” sermons to get the fuller picture that no one else has explained. I repeat: The PROOF given in them is astonishing, and includes *many* detailed, crystal-clear statements from the Bible, Mr. Armstrong, the Catholics, the Protestants, the apostates—and straight from the lips of the leaders of the splinters. At the end, you will be forced to decide whether or not you will act on what you learn!)

It is important to understand again that I am not saying that all of the brethren in the splinters now no longer have God’s Spirit. Many still do! The problem is that TWO DIFFERENT SPIRITS—God’s and Satan’s—are now at work in the splinters. Where Satan’s spirit is present (as leaven or cancer)—beginning with the “door being thrown open”—God’s Spirit will tend to diminish and eventually disappear, with the spirit of Satan ultimately taking over completely. Another Jesus, another gospel and another *spirit* are taking the splinters directly BACK TO THE WORLD!

This is the oft-repeated message of 2,000 years of New Testament Church history—and, I repeat, “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Remember, the *true* Christ’s sheep know—can recognize—the *true* Christ’s voice, and can distinguish it from a *strange* voice spoken by “another Jesus.” Get this straight! The spirit of the true Christ, who taught the only true gospel, would never direct the “church” and “work” of those bringing *another* gospel, always derived from *another* spirit, which in-

variably introduces *another* Jesus, with *another* counterfeit “body of Christ.” He also would never lead an organization that has openly permitted the “spirit of error” to compete with His leadership.

(Our website offers a sermon titled “Another Jesus.” The listener will be absolutely stunned to find out that *this* “Jesus” has been known by *many names* throughout history, and is many thousands of years old—long preceding the true Jesus Christ of the New Testament!)

Read and reread all that you have seen here until it becomes crystal clear—until it is impossible to misunderstand what is at stake in the choice of which organization you enter. Remember, the TRUE Christ is not divided—meaning there is only one TRUE Church of God! Until you find that Church—the one and only unified Body of Christ—you cannot “plug back in” to the living Christ who heads it—AND ONLY IT! Lacking this reconnection, you simply cannot replenish the Spirit of God—now partially lost, and running out of your lamp. This prohibits you from anointing your eyes to regain sight! All such people cannot permanently keep even a small measure of God’s Spirit.

What could be more important?

In many respects, the middle section of this chapter ties the entire book together! It explains WHY Christ is standing *outside* knocking on the “door” of where each person resides (Rev. 3:20). The meaning of this passage is that, in fact, He is inviting all of His people back into His Body—inviting them to resubmit themselves to Him as “Head” of that Body—to receive more of His Spirit and Word of TRUTH in their lives—to participate in His true Work—*IF* they will receive His COUNSEL to anoint their eyes.

The Purpose of the Ministry

Ephesians 4 raises the question of *growing* in unity, and with it the role of Christ’s faithful ministers, and how they are to help in this process in keeping Christ’s Body unified.

The chapter opens with Paul “beseeching” the brethren in Ephesus to “endeavor to keep the UNITY of the Spirit...” (vs. 3) with the reminder that there is only “ONE body, and ONE Spirit” (vs. 4). The purpose of the ministry is introduced in verse 11, where the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and other teachers are mentioned.

Verse 12 begins to describe their function—what each office is supposed to do. For several verses, the continual theme is *unity* within the Body of Christ, mixed with *truth* spoken in *love*—and therefore the need to avoid the *wrong* kinds of doctrine brought by the “sleight of men.”

Notice carefully this extensive description of the duty and work of faithful ministers: “For the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the BODY OF CHRIST: till we all come in the UNITY OF THE FAITH, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the *fullness of Christ*: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every *wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and *cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but *speaking the TRUTH* in love, may GROW UP into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ. From whom the WHOLE BODY *fitly joined together* and *compact-ed* by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of THE BODY unto the edifying of itself in love.” (vs. 12-16).

Consider all of the elements in this passage, including again the need to “speak the truth,” and to do this “in love.” That is the only way brethren—“the saints”—can be “perfected,” as they are “fitly joined together and compacted.” There is no room for hundreds of groups (or even two or three) constituting Christ’s Body to fit this and all of the rest of what we have read. How tragic that so many cannot “grow up”—cannot hold to the truth in the face of “cunning, crafty” deceivers, who *have* continued to be able to toss thousands of unwitting brethren “to and fro...with every wind of doctrine.”

Learning to Defend in Unity

Paul exhorted the Philippian brethren about unity in the faith. In chapter 1, beginning in verse 15, he warned of “some” who would “preach Christ even of envy and strife” and “of contention” (vs. 16), for the purpose of troubling and “adding affliction” to Paul. Instead, Paul’s response was “I am set for the defense of the gospel” (vs. 17), followed by an admonishment to the brethren to “stand fast in *one spirit*, with *one mind* striving TOGETHER for the faith of the gospel” (vs. 27).

These are powerful words for those living in an atmosphere of widespread division, and are one of the greatest reasons that I so stoutly defend truths that others now ignore, or even attack. Like the Philippians, we in The Restored Church of God are striving to practice what Paul admonished, recognizing that we are to be “in nothing terrified by our adversaries” (vs. 28). Take a moment to read the rest of verse 28 to see what is in store for those who seek their own agenda, becoming opponents of all who are “striving *together* for the faith.” We have already taken note of another passage revealing what God has in store for His adversaries.

A fascinating bridge, connecting *dokimos* to the Philippians’ struggle with disunity (coming from some there who were preaching Christ “of strife and contention”), springs from verse 10 in the same chapter. Paul urges the Philippians to grow in love “that you may APPROVE [*dokimos*] things that are excellent; that you may be *sincere* and without offense until the day of Christ.”

The importance of this tie between being approved by God and both the love of God and brotherly love will be addressed again later.

What Christ Said at His Final Passover

Just before He was crucified, Jesus gave two vital instructions to His disciples—one in the way of teaching and the other by means of a prayer.

In John 15, Jesus gave the well-known example picturing Himself as the “Vine” and individual Christians as “branches” (vs. 1). Even though He explained, “*You* [the disciples and every individual Christian] are the *branches*” (vs. 5), we have seen that senior ministers now teach that various *organizations* are branches of the one true Church.

This is a plain perversion of what Christ taught—and Mr. Armstrong always taught strongly and directly *against* this idea! The purpose of the passage is to explain that individual Christians must be connected to Christ to grow.

But, so that none could misunderstand what Jesus meant by this, it is clarified by His prayer found in chapter 17. Beginning in verse 11, Christ begins to address how the disciples, and all brethren who would come after them, were to relate to one another—how they were to function: “Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, *that they may be ONE, AS WE ARE.*”

This passage calls for an extraordinarily high standard of unity that Jesus intended should be present in His Church—to be “one, AS WE ARE.” Dare any suggest that the Father and Christ do not dwell together in *perfect* unity, reflected by I Corinthians 1:10?

The John 17 passage continues in verse 21, after Jesus mentions again that He is praying for all those who would believe on “*their* word”—the spoken word and teaching of *apostles*. Notice how often He uses the word “one”: “That they all may be ONE; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be ONE *in Us*: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be ONE, even *as We are ONE*: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made *perfect in ONE*; and that the world

may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me” (vs. 21-23).

Where in this passage does Christ give license for *multiple* organizations—“churches”—to appear in His name? Where in this description is there room for hundreds of divided, competing groups, in disagreement over teachings—and diminished in the all-important impact of taking the announcement of the kingdom of God to the world, and the warning to modern Israel?

The answer: Nowhere! There is not a razor’s edge of difference between the thinking of God and Christ—and this is the *standard!*

Yet, terrible disagreement is exactly what has happened today. While leaders often remark how “sad this is,” and that it is “a shame the Work is divided,” the reality is that they have forgotten Mr. Armstrong’s long-standing emphasis on the need to identify the CAUSE, in this case, for all of the terrible *effects* of division now plaguing the Church. This book identifies the CAUSE of these awful effects. And only by “anointing your eyes”—using the carefully-described, biblically-outlined exercise—will you ever see and root out the blindness in yourself that is spiritually crippling thousands of God’s people today.

Explaining the cause of why so many thousands believe that the Church is now divided would be incomplete without an explanation of where—and *by whom*—thousands were fooled into *disbelieving* the plain words of the Bible. Prepare to be shocked—and maybe embarrassed.

How Did Thousands Come to Believe as They Do?

Let’s state again for emphasis. The idea that Christ’s Church—His Body—is split up—divided—among many organizations is pure 100 percent *Protestant theology*, born in the minds of the Reformers who rejected the idea that the Catholics constituted the one true church. Let’s prove this.

If your pre-calling background is Protestant, you probably recall such soothing, inclusive phrases as “There are many routes to heaven,” and “There are many spokes on the wheel to salvation.” Precisely as the Protestants, most people residing in the large splinters now believe God’s *Church* (not just His people) is scattered into many groups holding different beliefs. Those same people once believed the opposite—what the scriptures we have just reviewed state. And most of these same people have no real idea—no recollection—of what changed their thinking—or when it happened. They have forgotten *who* taught them their present understanding—and that it is a mainstream, bedrock Protestant doctrine!

Then let’s ask: How were thousands fooled? Who taught them what they now believe?

Over 200 separate heresies are now taught throughout the splinters. (I list nearly this many in *Surviving “Perilous Times.”*) A great many are pure Protestantism. I have explained throughout our splinter material that the leaders took to their new positions much of what the Protestant WCG apostates taught them. There, in the splinters, these leaders are teaching anew these *same old wrong ideas*, and, therefore, the apostates *still control* the thinking of thousands of brethren who feel they left all their wrong doctrines and thinking behind. They have unwittingly adopted the Protestant view of Jesus’ Body and His Church—the view of those the true Christ calls “harlots” (Rev. 17:5). The LCG leader’s booklet, quoted earlier, proves this.

The WCG false leaders must truly be laughing up their sleeves!

None of the WCG leaders’ false teachings are more classic—and dangerous!—than the Protestant counterfeit now commonly substituted in the splinters for the Bible teaching about the true Church and Body of Christ.

Let’s review what the apostates taught on this subject. It was statements like this first quote that deliberately blurred and twisted Mr. Armstrong’s teaching into little more than Protestant “harlot” theology. Will the soothing words of this false apostle, and others with him quoted here, sound reasonable to you?

“As you know, in my speaking and writing I have often commented that we cannot limit where and with whom God works when it comes to other Christian churches.”

“...the true Church of God is *not limited* to any corporate entity nor any human organization.”

“The true Church of God consists of converted people, all people who have the Holy Spirit. That is a point Mr. Armstrong frequently stressed. As he explained, it is not...the incorporated organization that constitutes the Church of God. It is the people in whom God dwells by his Spirit that makes up the Church, the Body of Christ.”

“Therefore, we should understand that we do not form all there is of the true Church of God.”

“God has called us to lead people to him, not to ourselves.”

“*We preach the gospel so people will come to Christ, not so they will come to us.*”

“God works where he pleases, and *all converted people everywhere make up the true Church of God.*”

“It is *not* correct to say that any particular church organization, including *ours*, is, of and by itself, the true Church.”

Joseph W. Tkach, Letter to Ministry, PGR, Apr. 26, 1994

“People who decide to leave the Church because they have not come to understand changes in the doctrine should not be treated as enemies.”

“If they choose to go someplace where they can be with people who believe as they do on their points of difference, that is up to them, and that does not make them our enemies.”

“*Mr. Armstrong set the example* in that way decades ago when he continued to have a friendly relationship with the Church of God (Seventh Day).

“There were instances when our members even attended congregations of that church when there was not one of our congregations available.”

“If their motivation is selfish, that is, if they are seeking status and recognition, *regardless of where they decide to attend* they will still have to deal with that selfishness before they can have a positive relationship with God – before *their increased level of service will be meaningful.*”

“Personal from Joseph W. Tkach,” WN, Nov. 17, 1992

Question: “That sounds very, very noble and everything, but [Herbert Armstrong] had a sense of divine call...I had the understanding that he understood the WCG...as a special organization in an exclusive way...”

Snyder: “Well, he certainly wrote along those lines. But I would say that the current position of the Church is that we are not an exclusive body by any means...”

Interview with Michael Snyder, WMUZ radio, Detroit, Michigan, Dec. 17, 1991

“Another thing that I’m being accused of, that I no longer believe this is the true Church of God. I believe it with all my heart. You are my witnesses. And I’ll add another factor in, too. We cannot limit where God chooses to work.”

Joseph W. Tkach, “A Point of Light,” June 12, 1993 sermon, Columbus, Ohio, played in all churches

“There is no question that we are God’s true Church. The point I have made is that we are not all there is to God’s true Church. *There is a*

monumental difference in those two statements.” [Author’s note: Even Mr. Armstrong’s successor understood the “monumental difference” between what Mr. Armstrong taught and his view.]

“There is only one Church of God, not many. That one Church is made up of every person who has the Holy Spirit, *regardless of where they are, when they lived, or what organization they belong to.*”

Joseph W. Tkach, letter to WCG field minister, Spring 1994

“The Bible...does not support any believer’s attempts to become exclusive (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14).”

*Joseph Tkach Jr., “Church Administration,”
PGR, Jan. 11, 1994*

“I believe that Mr. Hulme stated in the letter you enclosed, that any person who has the Holy Spirit is a child of God and therefore part of the Body of Christ, including all converted persons *in all denominations*, and that the membership of the Worldwide Church of God does not comprise the entirety of the Body of Christ. On the other side of the coin, I believe there are people in the Worldwide Church of God, as well as in all other denominations, who are not, ‘born from above’ as evidenced by their obvious lack of commitment to Jesus Christ.”

D. Register, WCG Pastor (now the man who trains the ministry in the largest splinter—COGwa), Letter to P. Arn of The Watchman’s Expositor, Nov. 12, 1993

“We believe that the Church (the spiritual Body of Christ) includes all persons who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, regardless of what denomination they may *fellowship with* currently.”

“Faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes a person a Christian, *not the denomination he fellowships with*. We have always acknowledged that there are truly converted Christians who do not recognize the Sabbath.”

David G. Hunsberger, WCG PCD, Mar. 1, 1994

“God has commissioned us to lead people to Jesus Christ, not to ourselves.”

Joseph W. Tkach, PGR, Jan. 11, 1994

“The point is, *God is bringing his people to Jesus Christ, not to any particular human organization*. The criterion for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, not membership in a particular denomination.”

“What makes *any* church a valid church? Faith in...Christ. God does not give us special favor for being different or for being unique. He saved us, *just like everybody else*, by his grace through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Joseph W. Tkach, Letter to Member, Feb. 9, 1994

“It is obvious, from the fruits, that some Sunday-keeping Christians have the Holy Spirit.”

Joseph W. Tkach, letter to WCG field minister, Apr. 12, 1994

More of What Mr. Armstrong Taught

This constant stream of repetitive false statements seemed, over time, to wear out and subsequently *condition* thousands of God’s people who so obviously absorbed the apostates’ plainly *unbiblical Protestant thinking* on this doctrine before fleeing the WCG.

The devil did his work well, having even convinced thousands of God’s people that it was *Mr. Armstrong* who taught them what they now believe. Incredible!

Will you see through this?

Here is just a tiny, additional smattering of what—and how much—Mr. Armstrong taught regarding the truth about the one true Church and the Body of Christ, the only place where Christ is leading. These four statements are on top of the two others given earlier in this chapter and in Chapter One. Perhaps take time to reread all those for the full picture, after reading the following statements. The third quote, cited in part a few pages earlier, is repeated here in a larger context for emphasis. Pay special attention to the first quote, focusing on the italics (my emphasis):

“Can one who does not know of the true organized Body doing God’s Work, and therefore is outside of it, be a member of the true Church which Christ built? The answer is yes—for it is possible for one to have truly repented, believed, and received God’s Spirit—and be following that Spirit as far as he sees and understands—who does not know of the organized Work Christ is using today. *But surely God’s Spirit in him would lead one, in due time, into his part in the organized Body the living Christ is directing.*”

“The answer is YES—I have known of a few. But in every case, either they came INTO the organized spiritual organism Christ is using in the real Work of God—or, when their eyes were opened to further light and

truth, they rejected it and LOST the Spirit of God. And this was amply demonstrated by the fruits.”

“*Just What Is the Church?*”, p. 4, 1970

“Brethren, do we not find ourselves taking for granted that the churches in what is called ‘Christianity’ are also God’s churches—that WE are just *another* of the many denominations, the only difference being that we hold to some different doctrines?” [Author’s note: This is the classic Protestant view so many have accepted in the splinters, although believed and practiced within a “Churches of God only” setting.]

“*That is simply not true!* We in GOD’S Church are *not* just one of all these churches.”

“I have mentioned how the early Church GREW and MULTIPLIED in those God added to the Church. But soon the persecution came. Soon the false preachers came, with the *different gospel*—a *different spirit*. They came fomenting a *spirit of criticism*—of DOUBT! They came saying Jesus’ *true apostles were preaching WRONG DOCTRINES*.” [Author’s note: Carefully reread this last paragraph, remembering all that you have just read.]

“*Why Did God Put You in His Church?*”, GN, May 1974

“Some have left God’s Church saying, ‘I have not left Christ—I’ve only left that organization. I worship Christ in my own way.’”

“Will these ‘loner’ individual ‘Christians,’ or these many little isolated ‘GROUPS’ constitute part of the wife made ready?”

“The very eternal LIFE AND DEATH QUESTION right now is: ‘Just WHAT is the wife that has made herself ready? Is it one united, organized, compacted, Spiritual organism—all speaking the same thing—all joined to the one Vine and bearing fruit—all in the organized Church built upon the FOUNDATION of the apostles and the prophets, with Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone, having grown into a BUILDING—a Holy TEMPLE, in the Lord, fitly FRAMED TOGETHER and *compacted* in that which every joint supplieth? OR, will it be a conglomeration of disunited ‘GROUPS’ and denominations and a number of isolated individual ‘CHRISTIANS,’ who have followed Christ in their own way?’”

“And again, Jesus said, ‘He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not *with me* scattereth abroad’ (Matthew 12:30).

“Again, ‘He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth’ (Luke 11:23). Those not WITH Christ, *WHERE HE LEADS* IN HIS CHURCH, are scattering and against Him.

“But consider FURTHER...”

“Jesus Christ is going to marry GOD’S CHURCH—called THE BODY OF CHRIST. Now is that Body united, organized on a united and firm FOUNDATION, or an assortment of ‘loner’ individuals and various ‘groups’?”

“The only PURPOSE of the Church is to CARRY ON THE WORK WHICH CHRIST STARTED! It is now the BODY in which the Holy Spirit is working. And God set in the Church, to ORGANIZE it, apostles, prophets, pastors...

“The CHURCH is the BODY OF CHRIST. And Jesus pictured Himself as THE VINE, and we of His Church are the BRANCHES on that vine. Notice it—study it—in John 15. Jesus is not SEVERAL SEPARATED VINES—He is *one vine*! The members of the BODY OF CHRIST are the BRANCHES!—but *not separated, isolated* branches. ALL ARE JOINED TO THE ONE VINE—the BODY OF CHRIST.

“Separated ‘Christians,’ or ‘groups’ are branches *broken off* from the VINE—the BODY OF CHRIST!

“The Father is the Husbandman—the Vinedresser. Every branch of this grapevine (the Church) that does not bear fruit for the Kingdom, the Father prunes it—cuts it off—that the organized, united vine may bear MORE FRUIT.

“When there are some in the Church who cause division or sow the seeds of discord, God says, ‘...mark them...and AVOID THEM’ (Romans 16:17; see also II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15). The Church will bear more fruit when the dissidents, those who obey not the Work, those who cause division and discord, are PRUNED OFF!”

“IS GOD’S CHURCH COMPOSED OF MANY SEPARATE ‘GROUPS’?”, GN, Dec. 18, 1978

“In an effort to mislead and draw away God’s people *and tithes*, the misleading idea is now being circulated that this MAN (not Church) also preaches the Gospel. So, why not *divide your tithe, sending half to the man and half to God’s* CHURCH—or else send it alternately to each.”

“1) The tithe is GOD’S tithe, *not yours*, and is to be sent to GOD’S CHURCH, where Christ, alive and well, is actively working, directing and blessing.

“2) God has only ONE Church, and that Church has a few hundred local congregations worldwide, all a PART—and an integral *working* part—of the ONE spiritual organism, the Worldwide Church of God... Jesus Christ does not HEAD, guide and work in any competing man *or* church. Christ is NOT DIVIDED! Christ’s Body is led on earth, UNDER HIM, by His chosen apostle whom HE appointed and used in BUILDING His

Church in our time. God’s TRUE church is performing the FUNCTION of the Church—carrying Christ’s Gospel message to *all the world*.

“3) The *man* who wants half of God’s tithe *does not speak the same thing*.”

“No, brethren, he does NOT preach the same Gospel. He was attempting to water down God’s true doctrines and oppose its doctrines and its apostle and to become the *self*-appointed head of God’s Church.

“That’s why he was DISFELLOWSHIPED from God’s Church. He was NOT speaking the same thing. GOD’S CHURCH cannot speak with an UNCERTAIN SOUND!

“4) This man is NOT a Church of God. A man can incorporate himself, under man’s law, using the NAME of a Church—and he came *as close* to the name “Worldwide Church of God” as possible, TO DECEIVE and mislead brethren into thinking he is THE SAME CHURCH. Any “Tom, Dick or Harry” can incorporate himself, with the signatures of a couple other men as “directors” in the name of a church. BUT THAT DOES NOT make him a church!”

“...stating clearly which is GOD’S Church. It is:

“1) Where God’s TRUTH is. Not with one disfellowshipped for trying to water down that TRUTH.

“2) Where God’s true Work is going out to the WHOLE WORLD.

“3) Where Christ’s chosen apostle is.

“God’s tithe is to be PAID to GOD’S Church, where CHRIST is working. Jesus Christ does not work in two “churches,” one competing against and trying to draw members from the other. Christ is NOT DIVIDED!

“God does not have two churches—only the ONE Church that Jesus Christ founded in A.D. 31...”

“CHRIST IS THE LIVING HEAD OF ONLY ONE CHURCH—NOT TWO,” GN, Dec. 18, 1978

No honest person can possibly miss the clear meaning of Mr. Armstrong’s consistent and conclusive statements. There is only one organized, unified Church, synonymous with the Body of Christ, teaching the truth, doing the Work, led by the apostle, all under Christ’s lead. These are all Mr. Armstrong’s definition of the one true Church of God—and we will see that all of this is still true today.

Refuting Objections

Throughout, and more specifically in this chapter, I have tried to refute the many objections to sound doctrine that have arisen regarding the

one true Church. In early 2000, I made a list that included fifty separate reasons—EXCUSES!—why people no longer believe this doctrine as it was originally taught. I have probably not heard them all, but I may have come close.

Some say that they do not want to split up their family—or “My husband is the head of the home and he must decide where we attend.” Others say things like: “I am waiting for a sign from God to leave my group”—“Restored is too small to be right” (Restored is not small)—“I can serve more people in my large group”—“All the groups cannot be wrong” (but neither can they all be right)—“People who are rigid about doctrine seem to be angry, accusative, intolerant and judgmental” (sadly, this has occurred in some cases)—“Staying in a bigger group means I can be part of a bigger Work” (but Restored is clearly doing the biggest Work)—or, conversely, “The Work is over so we can attend anywhere”—“I need a live speaker, not a tape” (we have live speakers)—“We want to meet in a hall, not a house” (we have halls wherever necessary)—“I want to be where there is a bigger paid ministry, or more ministers” (this describes The Restored Church of God)—or, conversely, “All full-time ministers can no longer be trusted”—“Because the Church is scattered, we all now look to God, and no ministers are necessary”—“I am lonely and cannot handle isolation”—“I will only follow a well-known evangelist”—etc., etc.

Regarding coming to Restored: Other objections have to do with me personally—a personal rejection of me as the one Christ would have chosen and sent to continue His Church, Truth and Work. There are any number of these.

Obviously, there are an additional host of reasons that people use, which reflect a *permanent* refusal to ever again believe the truth about what Christ’s Church and Body is. This book will certainly not help such people, nor was it really written for this purpose.

Finally, some believe that the prophesied Daniel 12:7 scattering is God’s will—that He actually no longer wants His people unified. Of course, this is ridiculous. God foretells many terrible things will happen—false prophets and false christs will arise, so will the final beast and false prophet, Gog and Magog will attack the saints at the end of the millennium, Satan would deceive the whole world, the world will fight Christ at His Return, the last days would reflect Noah’s day and Sodom and Gomorrah, among others. Also, God prophesies adultery, lying, stealing, covetousness, and many other kinds of sins will grow much worse today.

Certainly, none would suggest that *these* things are God’s will simply because He foretold them!

Obviously, God knew that the scattering would occur because He understood the conditions that would prevail in the wake of the apostasy, prior to Christ’s Return. This certainly does not mean that He *wants* His Church scattered—*contrary* to all the verses that we have reviewed. Yet, some now use this reasoning as an excuse to reject God’s government, His true Church and Work—and then, of course, any other doctrines they wish to overturn.

Here is the problem. Why would anyone who *sees* himself as having *already* stood up for the truth feel a need to *anoint his eyes* and go searching for a supposed “one true Church”? This is the greatest impediment to most people having the willingness to apply Christ’s command. You *must* be willing to examine what you have unconsciously absorbed, and which reasons you now fall back on to justify your position. No one can do this for you. Only you are aware of the factors, few or many, that are affecting your thinking.

What has been covered in this chapter about the ONE TRUE CHURCH and BODY OF CHRIST doctrine barely scratches the surface of all that could be said. However, there is enough here for you to be able to “approve things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10), and reject what is clearly wrong—IF you are absolutely sincere in your determination to SEE again what so many can no longer see.

For the final time, I urge all who want to understand the fullness of this subject to start by carefully reading *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* Also read *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* This book works in conjunction with a chapter titled “Measure the Temple” in *THE WORK OF GOD* book.

THE CHURCH, TRUTH AND WORK CONTINUE

The all-powerful Jesus Christ promised that His Church would never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18). He has again kept this promise. His government, the reconstruction of all of His truth in writing and the full Work of God is all back in place once again. In order to accept that this has happened, you must be convinced that God has raised up another leader to continue what started 2,000 years ago. Obviously, many of you *do* believe that God has or will select one more leader, but you have developed your own set of criteria for who this could—or could not—be. Hopefully, by now, many of your objections have been addressed. However, you may still have others, and they may center on me personally.

The next several sections of this chapter were difficult to write. God's leaders are always to remain "little in their own eyes." Mr. Armstrong understood that God had selected him for a great task—and he unabashedly identified himself as having been *chosen* for his office. At the same time, he remained humble. Though some *now* attack him on this point, very few during his lifetime accused Mr. Armstrong of having an elevated opinion of himself. Having spent many hours together, both in person and on the phone, I never perceived anything remotely close to a spirit of vanity driving his actions. Mr. Armstrong knew who he was and who he was not.

Realize that *meekness*—similar to humility—is not the equivalent of *weakness*. Moses is a wonderful example of how even the strongest of God's servants can be "very meek, above all the men which were upon

the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Moses and Mr. Armstrong knew God was using them, but this did not automatically make them arrogant or filled with pride. However, when God chooses a man, if he is righteous as he should be, then he had better be as “bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). And if he fears God, he will have and demonstrate “strong confidence” (Prov. 14:26).

I certainly want God to find me with these qualities, and it should also be reflected in a willingness to accept a decision that He has made. Of course, I could not “carry the water” of either Moses or Mr. Armstrong—and I know this! But neither can I be afraid to acknowledge what God has done, simply because *people* will accuse me of pride, vanity, arrogance or presumptuousness. To pull back, because I fear such accusations, would leave me open to *God’s* accusation that I have rebelled against His decision. That I *do* fear.

A New Leader Chosen

God has selected a new leader for the remnant of Philadelphia. Just as Mr. Armstrong would not apologize for God’s decision to use him, neither can I. Perhaps the biggest single reason (and I suppose there may have been several) that God selected me is because I never sought this office—never dreamed for a split second that God could have this position in mind for me. (If I am accused otherwise, that is someone else’s error.)

With all of my faults and weaknesses, only God knows why I could be useful as His tool. But this much I can say—I never once looked in the mirror, in the nearly twenty-eight previous years I had served in Christ’s ministry, and said anything akin to, “Behold, I am God’s answer!”

I never did. Prior to being fired from the Global Church of God in the spring of 1999, the fact that God had selected me for a special purpose had not occurred to me, even once. Only at *that* time—a few weeks before God established The Restored Church of God—did I begin to look back at my remarkable training and experience, and conclude that God had been preparing me for a very long time. And this only occurred to me because I could no longer find a senior minister or even one trained minister who was fully holding to all the truth I treasured.

When I was finally forced to look back at my years of preparation and experience, one of the things I saw was that I had been, in part, trained personally by Mr. Armstrong during the first 15 years of my ministry (after marrying his secretary in 1971). I recognized that I had been prepared to be able to continue the Work as he had done it. Also, I was familiar with

how he thought in a host of ways that would be invaluable to anyone who was thrust into what I had to do. I remembered he had repeatedly said that he would “walk across the street and start over” if necessary.

This meant that I had no excuse for not being willing to do the same. While the amount of work necessary to press on was beyond comprehension, my training was in place from Mr. Armstrong, and I was only left with whether I would follow through as he would.

In addition, God had caused me to travel an extremely difficult course, as He does with all His leading servants, in preparation for the time to gather all those of God’s people—those with His Spirit—back to His Church after the apostasy. I did not appoint myself. No one else came along—and believe me, I searched for someone who was not compromising!

Of course, many will never accept God’s selection. This is true even among those who still feel that God only works through one man at a time. If they do not “anoint their eyes” *first*, they will not—actually *cannot*—look with the right criteria in mind.

Once again, consider for a moment the well-known thinking of the twelve-man, elected committee that leads UCG, having the largest total number of people who survived the falling away. Recall that their leaders have adopted democratic government, where the elected committee then votes on who should be their leader for a set “term of office.” They justify such appalling confusion—where the tail wags the dog—by stating, “God has not raised up a single man, as with Mr. Armstrong. If He did, we would follow him!”

God *has* selected His leader, but they do not follow. Why?

Blind Splinter Leaders

To appreciate their “churchview,” take a glance back to the final years that the leaders of this organization remained in the Worldwide Church of God. This includes the period through the spring of 1995 (many ministers who went with *other* groups also left at either the same time or only slightly earlier). These men compromised, appeased, politicked and played along, while at the same time being perfectly willing to sit in the presence of the false, pagan, manmade, trinitarian god for 2½ years! Facts are stubborn things. And the facts of history are that most of these men *accepted* this false god, and only *later* reassessed their position to one degree or another.

Again, having absorbed dozens of false doctrines and ideas to which they had grown accustomed, these ministers left at the last pos-

sible moment, when they saw the sheep leaving without them. They saw themselves about to permanently lose their paychecks if they did not immediately *follow* thousands of tithesayers out of the WCG. But, not wanting to appear to be *followers*—and horrified that many who were leaving were either joining or contemplating joining one of the two large, established, more doctrinally conservative splinters of the time—they quickly jumped in front of the departing flock, claiming to be their *leaders*.

However sincere these men may be—then or now—recognize that they have a long history of deep, profound BLINDNESS! Of course most of them will never follow me as I follow Christ (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Of course they will not recognize where and through whom God is working. Of course they will not give up their power, authority and influence. And of course they spin stories about me, as do so many others, to frighten as many brethren as possible into remaining frozen where they sit—because this keeps the tithes rolling in.

Many of these leaders also enjoy a relatively good relationship with the leaders of the other organizations, because the beliefs of the big splinters are much more *generally* similar than these leaders are willing to admit. However, because none of these leaders are willing to give up their individual seats of power, certain organizations that could otherwise probably be combined remain separate.

(Again, the reader will want to listen to my sermon “The Synagogue of Satan Identified—and Marked!”)

Those Not Prepared

Understand that I am not trying to attack these men. What is quietly taking place behind the scenes, if you really knew the facts, is precisely the opposite of this—and their attacks on me started long before any of us left the WCG. I am relating certain events so that you can understand how virtually ALL of the splinter leaders think. They all share a deep and complete *blindness* that prohibits their ability to see how much truth they have lost—and where the one smaller organization is that has not compromised any of it.

God carefully and thoroughly trains His servants over a long period of difficult coursework. *His* choice could never be one of the “golden boys”—the “beautiful people.” These are the men who generally attained high office through political dexterity and smoothness, and by rarely taking tough stands or making difficult, unpopular decisions—unless it personally advanced them.

I have known many men who are supremely gifted at “walking the halls of power” and only rarely offending any of the many constituents that they felt they must please, if they were to continue in office—and to continue advancing. Such “leaders” would *automatically* draw large numbers of followers simply because they are “name brands”—and because they have such smooth, comfortable personalities, good at telling people what they *want* to hear instead of what they *need* to hear. These are many of the same men who were, and still are, able to secure enough votes to be installed into the referenced twelve-man committee. I sincerely pray that you can see this. It is more true than most could ever dream.

Ask yourself: Why do so many people look for one to follow among those who played along and sat silent with little or no resistance *for years* while Mr. Armstrong’s successors slaughtered scores of thousands of God’s people—*their brethren*? Why do so many want to be led—again!—by such weak *non-leaders*? Why would anyone want to follow *followers*, let alone a second time? Yet, so many do.

But again, before God can use the man He has chosen, all of the man’s coursework, suffering, training and experience must be in place. Understand the following: Mr. Armstrong could *never* have picked the one God would use as his true successor. If he had, God’s purpose for the apostasy—to test which brethren in the Church loved His truth and way of life—would have been thwarted. God’s people would also never have gone on to face the second choice (or step)—and TEST—now upon them.

Fix this firmly into your thinking!

Mr. Armstrong’s Final List

Some have boasted that they were on Mr. Armstrong’s final “short list” to become the next Pastor General upon his death. In fact, Mr. Armstrong *was* considering perhaps four or five men at the time he settled on a successor.

Since a *faithful* man could not possibly be part of God’s thinking for that next stage of His plan, anyone bragging today that he was one of the “finalists” in late 1985 for the role of Pastor General should feel most *uncomplimented* by the fact that he was even under consideration. After all, he would have been under consideration *by God* (of course, not by Mr. Armstrong) for the specially-appointed role of throwing out the truth, ending the Work, slaughtering much of the flock, shrinking the corporate church, dispersing the assets and setting in motion the final, great spiritual test for God’s people!

Understand. God was leading Mr. Armstrong’s mind directly *away* from anyone who might be even a little bit faithful!

But *eventually* God would have to make *His* choice known for those waiting to return to His Church so they could potentially leave the Laodicean condition. Self-appointed, compromised, cowardly leaders—blind to the age, lacking true training for the job, and seeing God’s choice as a rival—would have to denigrate this man. Their blindness, and the general nature of how they conducted their ministry for years, prohibits them from understanding my leadership style. After all, they have proven they never understood *Mr. Armstrong’s* leadership style!

You must see this!

A Matter of Rebellion

Look for a moment at Samuel and Saul. There is an obvious parallel here. *God* had picked Samuel as judge over Israel. The *people* of ancient Israel wanted someone more attractive—more acceptable to the world’s standards of a leader’s profile (in Israel’s case, a king). God told Samuel that the people had not rejected him. In their request for a human king, they had rejected *God’s* rule over them, as Israel’s true King.

This is what is at stake today. But, as with ancient Israel, most will never see what they are doing in this light.

This matter does not come down to a personal choice or some kind of spiritual “popularity contest.” You must locate the government of God and do this by examining what men teach and the Work that they are doing.

The litmus test of who the human leader of God’s Church would be could never be defined by how many of his self-appointed rivals “speak well of him.” As a matter of fact, with both Church history and scripture as the standard, receiving very much of such praise can actually become a kind of *disqualifier*, revealing the man to have been a pleaser, compromiser, appeaser-type of personality. Christ said to “beware” of these.

Before taking their own “stand” in UCG, most of these ministers, including some of the other splinter leaders, attacked me from their WCG pulpits when I was fired in early 1993. (Actually, after they had privately expressed to me concerns similar to mine, years before they were willing to leave the WCG, some of the very men who turned me in went on to be the top *leaders* among the big splinters.) I was willing to stand completely *alone* at that time, as a field pastor, when they were not yet even willing to stand *with a group*—so they could continue to

enjoy safety in large numbers in the apostate WCG—for several more years!

Finally, how many Sardis ministers spoke well of Mr. Armstrong after he left their fellowship and was forced to indict their doctrinal understanding?

Confronting the Question

If you are to return to God's Church, and escape the Laodicean condition, you must directly confront the issue of whom Christ has chosen to finish His Work. You must confront what my accusers say about me—and process your way through *why* their accusations about my character could never have happened any other way.

Ask: On what basis could they understand one who loves doctrines they do not love—and in some cases cannot even *remember*? How could they comprehend a coursework of training, experience—and much suffering—that they never experienced? On what basis could they appreciate one who tried to make the difficult decisions they generally avoided? How could they understand one who has been persecuted for real leadership when they generally, in most but not all cases, spent decades appeasing and placating—"pastoring"—so many of what we now know were just troublesome, divisive, rebellious—UNCONVERTED—former "brethren"? (Remember again, 75 percent of the WCG were probably not converted.) The answer is because their goal was to have Headquarters and others speak well of them.

I tell you on God's authority that this is no exaggeration! These men have long proven that they understand little or nothing of *true* leadership.

Misunderstanding Leadership Succession

Here is another point. You must also see through the illusion of many who believe that someone must be *handed* a "baton" *from a successor*—like *Catholics* believe is passed from pope to pope—for the man to be God's choice. Though ridiculous, and not what Mr. Armstrong taught—or experienced—this thinking is surprisingly common, primarily in those who followed the first splinter leader!

False leaders seized control of the Church. They were hardly going to hand any kind of a baton to a faithful leader. The baton, as such, is given by God and held by whomever *He* selects—the one who is led to reach over and pick it up out of the ditch. Mr. Armstrong was not passed

a baton by anyone in Sardis. (Remember, he taught that God’s government was not present in Sardis—it had not yet been re-established in the Church.) He left the *fifth* era because ALL of its leaders were compromising when he would not. In my case, for *identical* reasons, I have similarly disassociated from the splinters where so many of the *seventh* era still reside.

Today, the brethren of various organizations, in effect, *own* the ministry, though most have never recognized it as such. They actually “rule” the ministry in a certain way, because they can leave whenever they wish, if things do not go as they like—taking their tithes to another competing group! Their choices are many. Most ministers today will never be willing to reject the practice of appeasing and placating people (now that organizations are smaller, there are fewer tithes to go around). These ministers usually find themselves choosing, conveniently, to label their *appeasement* as “growing in love” or “being more tolerant” or “being inclusive” or “responding to their needs.”

God labels them “lukewarm” (and, in some cases, outright “enemies”).

When the Sardis era transitioned to Philadelphia, Christ had to raise up an absolutely uncompromising leader, and *then* begin regathering His people. Only *at that point* could the *second step* of the *separation of eras* occur.

Remember, people of potentially two conditions left the WCG—those with and without His Spirit. Christ must separate them *from each other*. So, He *next* raises up a leader. *Then*, He gathers those determined not to *compromise* back to a condition of unity. (Understand though. Many who return to God’s one Church may never fully leave the Laodicean condition, or will slip back into this condition upon returning to the Church. The Laodicean condition is still dominant right to the end.) As explained, the Church must be unified *before* flight to safety for some, and punishment in the Great Tribulation for others. Christ *must* keep His promise to call and work with each sheep in the decision-making process (John 10:3-5).

No “baton” passes in smooth and immediate succession, because this cannot be done instantly. It requires time. This extra time is also intended to reveal—through continuous testing—how many brethren would continue to endure, waiting for Christ to reconstitute His government, Church and Work—and how many would give up and quit. While many *have* thrown in the towel, deciding, “*Men* lied to me so I no longer have to obey *God*,” many others did patiently wait for the all-powerful, living Jesus Christ to keep His promise that His Church would not die out!

Unlearning Catholic Thinking

Many get confused over the fact that a number of years passed from the probable starting date (1986) of the Laodicean era—technically, it began when the MAJORITY of *actual* brethren had taken on Laodicea’s characteristics—and the appearance of Restored in May 1999. Again, similar to Catholic thinking regarding popes, they have come to believe that a “Philadelphian baton” must be *directly* handed from one man to another. The Bible simply does not say this.

The *two-step* separation process, because people of potentially two but still co-mingled conditions left the WCG together, requires extra time for God’s test to play out. This period serves at least two purposes. The first has to do with what the brethren must learn and the second has to do with what the new leader would have to learn: (1) God must know how many would patiently endure, learning their own lessons during this period, while waiting for Christ to keep His Matthew 16:18 promise. (2) It may require time for God to train and install His leader, allowing His Church and Work to be fully reorganized.

The Leader Learns and Is Tested

Another question arises, and it is mammoth: How could the Philadelphian leader fully understand all that the two-step process entails unless he had to endure it himself? He would have had to have been humbled by many sore trials, sufficient that he would not have sought to *install* (translated vault!) *himself* into office as so many have. He would naturally have been inclined to seek a faithful leader senior to himself. I certainly did.

Understand also that the leader whom God plans to appoint almost certainly requires *extra* training, and has his own lessons to learn. He may not be *immediately* ready for his new role. I did have to receive many kinds of additional training and endure suffering—some borne of my own foolishness—en route to extensive lesson-learning. Like Mr. Armstrong, I benefited from certain leadership positions I was given. This extra time, over the more than six years after I was fired from the WCG, forged, tempered and prepared me in other ways too numerous to recount! It also prepared me to teach the apostasy’s lessons to God’s people.

The Bible is filled with accounts of God’s servants having to undergo suffering and learn lessons. Mr. Armstrong’s extensive autobiography has many such stories, as he slowly disassociated from almost dead Sardis. For those who want to know more about my background, others

of our splinter books give a little more detail. (My two-volume Biography may interest you.)

The man whom God uses does not have to begin the very first group or organization that emerges from the WCG. The first man might simply have been a self-seeking rebel looking to be “first out of the gate” to establish himself—PCG’s leader. The one who leaves first does not automatically carry a torch stating that he is God’s selection as the Philadelphian leader who will finish the Work. Also, this would abrogate the second test, which this book has described so carefully.

All the groups that formed from the WCG were Laodicean, because the Laodicean age had arrived. This did not allow for a tiny little “Philadelphian remnant” to be tucked among the splinters from the beginning, with the group magically finding each other—though many claim as much. Actually, when truly understood, because this is the Laodicean age, any group that formed *directly* from the WCG is *automatically* eliminated from being Philadelphia. This also applies to their leaders.

This is why a SECOND step is required for those determined to follow God’s Spirit and return to His Church. No one remained Philadelphian by the Bible’s standard, and the fruits show some if not many have in fact lost God’s Spirit. All must anoint their eyes. Christ allowed for no exceptions. Read and reread this until you understand the full process!

Just as some people unknowingly took on the *Protestant* thinking toward the one true Church and who leads it, and must unlearn their error, others unwittingly took on the *Catholic* thinking toward leadership succession, and must similarly unlearn it!

Do you see this? Can you *recover* from having absorbed either of these positions?

What Are You Saying?

Pause and think about what you are saying if you reject my leadership as God’s selection to lead His people to hold fast to the truth and finish the Work. Since you *could* be rejecting the one whom *God* has chosen, you had better have a good reason that you are prepared to tell Him regarding why you did this. Your reasoning almost certainly has to be summarized by one of the following:

(1) You believe that supposed “Philadelphians” and Laodiceans remain co-mingled in the groups they attend until the Tribulation, with all of God’s people never having to take a stand for the truth and return to His one Church. If you choose this position, you are saying that God’s government has disappeared, and there is no longer one true Church—

that you do not have to look for or return to where the full truth and true Work are. Mr. Armstrong would never endorse this thinking—and did not when faced with the same decision with Sardis.

Your only other options are: (2) “Mr. Pack is stuck in the past, because Mr. Armstrong was wrong on key points and *our* leaders have ‘outgrown’ him,” or (3) Mr. Armstrong *was* right about biblical government beginning with one man and about all of God’s people walking together in unity, but *another* “better” minister will arise who is willing to spend up to 20,000 hours (including my late wife’s typing) rewriting and restoring the truth into well over 6,000 pages of literature—and the seemingly endless work I have been willing to do by myself. And then another 5,000 to 10,000 hours were spent preparing the “splinter” literature. (Incidentally, just one of the *other* tasks I face alone is producing the about 150 video broadcasts—plus 230 audio broadcasts—placed on our websites for people learning the truth for the first time. Then there are calls, emails—and so much more.)

I have learned what Paul meant when he said that he would “spend and be spent” for the brethren (II Cor. 12:15)! Yet, when he had to make statements like this, he was accused of boasting by the very people who had been so willing to “suffer fools gladly” (11:16-33).

Do you think there is even time for another man, if he started *now*, to complete the task and still finish the Work? I ask those who believe the “another man will come later” illusion:

Where is that man NOW? Who are even *candidates* to fulfill this responsibility?

How many men do you think there are today, who at this point must still be hanging back in the shadows, that might suddenly appear and be willing to routinely work 80-hour weeks (and more, the later they start) to redeem the lost years?

How much more spiritually weak will God’s people be in one, two or several more years (and realize this was written in early 2003) when someone else *might* be willing to initiate and present them with another organization, 6,000 pages of rewritten literature and so much more?

Were this to happen, why would significant numbers follow this man *then* when they will not come to the light of truth *now*—and will not follow a similar man *now*? (Because he is a “name brand”?) Then, how is this man occupying himself *today*? After all, at some future point, he would have to explain that many *more* years of his inaction!

Then there is the tougher question of whether there is sufficient *time* for another organization to form and get established, if it happened *later*,

after more years pass, leaving even less time for the faithful flock to be gathered and the true Work of God to be restored, let alone completed.

Think on these things! Force—FORCE—FORCE—yourself to address them!

Do not kid yourself. There are no “mighty men” waiting in the wings. No “evangelist” is coming (only four or five in the splinters remain from Mr. Armstrong’s time, most now *very* elderly) to gather the faithful sheep and finish the Work, after first rewriting the full truth he has not yet (many years after the apostasy) even been willing to *start* to produce. Christ’s guidance is not divided. God has already raised up the only leader who, however imperfectly, was willing to wade in and take on such staggering tasks.

Although we began slowly—like Mr. Armstrong in the early time of testing during his Oregon years—what is happening now at our headquarters can only be described as phenomenal. We are continually hiring more staff and have plans in place that almost boggle the mind, when one considers our current size. The only area in which we lack is that we are *not* wealthy—*not* “rich and increased with goods”—like the large splinters. These groups all sit on enormous budgets, yet accomplish relatively little because they lack the zeal, efficiency and unity of purpose that we enjoy. To witness our staff at work for just one day would bring back memories of the 1950s and 1960s!

The fruit of Christ in this Work is most apparent!

Another Apostle

By now, the reader understands what has been explained to be my office, that of apostle. It is not the purpose of this volume to cover this in detail, but at least a very brief explanation should be presented here for how to know if this is true—for how to know when this office has been given.

Mr. Armstrong explained that there is only ONE WAY to know if Christ has given a man—any man—the office of apostle. That is by the fruits. Here is what he wrote in 1955:

“Until the past very few years there was no real evidence that God had set anyone in the office of apostle in His Church today. *Men* cannot elect or place in office an apostle. And the only way men can *know* when God has set one in that office is BY THE FRUITS.”

“*Six More Ministers Now Ordained,*” GN, Feb/Mar 1955

Of course, there came a point when Christ revealed—and it *was* by the fruits—that He had given me the office of apostle. This is explained in very careful detail in the sermon series “21st-Century Apostle,” part of

the *Splinter Explanation Packet*. (Realize the series was delivered in the beginning of 2005, or what has now become an early vantage point.) The reader will want to thoroughly examine whether I have been GIVEN this office or have TAKEN it to myself! The sermon series “*Watchman to Israel—Messenger to Laodicea*” offers more insight. You are encouraged to “prove all things” in this matter (I Thes. 5:21).

Here is one additional statement from the same article from Mr. Armstrong that was presented to me—and the one that revealed what I had to do. Mr. Armstrong was explaining how he came to know, in late 1952, that he held the office of apostle:

“But in the light of events, the fact of how God has set up His Church today has become self-evident to all. It is GOD’s doing. If one does find, unexpectedly, that God has set him in such an office, there is only one choice—he must accept it with full humility, realizing personal lack, and surrendering the self totally to GOD as an instrument in HIS hands, relying wholly upon God for guidance and every power and need.”

I have done what Mr. Armstrong explained, and done so being well aware that detractors, accusers and others will eagerly attack what Christ has done. All of that is beyond my control. But acknowledging God’s decision *is* within my control, and no man can refuse such an appointment!

Here is one more statement that was quoted earlier in the book. It explains the meaning of the word *apostle*, and what this office means to the Church:

“The word *apostle* means ‘one sent forth.’

“The New Testament Church of God received all its teachings, practices, customs, FROM THE APOSTLES, with Peter chief over all the others.

“Yet the apostles were the teachers, who instilled in the Church the BELIEFS, TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS of the Church. And all members of the Church were required by God to BELIEVE and SPEAK THE SAME THING!

“THERE WAS NO DOCTRINAL BOARD! The teachings of the Church did not come from a COUNCIL of ministers and/or lay members, who voted on what to believe.

“Right here, MARK WELL THIS POINT: GOD PUT HIS TRUTH INTO HIS CHURCH THROUGH CHRIST AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES!

“NOTE THIS! The Church of God is built on the FOUNDATION of the apostles and the prophets...

“I have shown you...that Peter was LEADER of the apostles—and that the Church received its teachings and doctrines FROM THE APOSTLES!

“So now let it be MADE OFFICIAL—by Christ’s present-day apostle—that this binding and loosing PLAINLY, CLEARLY was given to Christ’s chief APOSTLE—not to lower-rank ministers ordained by his authority—not by the CHURCH as a body—but by the APOSTLE!

“JESUS CHRIST is the living HEAD of this Church! HE built it through His apostle. And He, CHRIST, still rules SUPREME in the one and only area on earth where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered today!”

“How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs,” GN, Nov. 20, 1978

The last paragraph of the above statement summarizes how God’s government works in His Church. It becomes a picture of how The Restored Church of God functions. As has been explained earlier in reference to Mr. Armstrong, and it is deeply humbling to say this, God’s people are left to decide whether they will receive or reject “one sent forth” from Jesus Christ to His Church!

There are no other choices.

Referenced earlier, *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties* covers all of the offices (ranks) and responsibilities of the New Testament ministry in much more detail than can be covered here. The picture from Mr. Armstrong’s quote is thoroughly filled in by that book.

“Anywhere But Restored”

Recall for a moment how, when we were first called into the WCG, many of our relatives said, “Go to any other church, but just don’t go with that Armstrong church.” This may have happened to you. History is repeating itself, with many in the splinters saying, “Go with any group—but don’t go with ‘that Pack church.’ Haven’t you heard about The Restored Church of God [this also usually with me in mind]?”

God is gathering His people, including all He will protect, into The Restored Church of God. *We* are the people of zeal and brotherly love—those holding fast in the face of enormous persecution. *We* have been and *are* bearing the heat of the day *now*. This is not true because I say so—it is true because the facts of history and prophecy bear it out.

So does our fruit.

There is no one else. *Every one* of Mr. Armstrong’s top “lieutenants” have sold out or compromised and gone to sleep. Many others have died. Their behavior has been cowardly and absolutely shameful. Those I con-

sidered great servants of God now shake like leaves in the wind. May God have more mercy on them than they have had on His flock!

You *must* ascertain *where* God's leader is—meaning where *God Himself* is working. He *has* reconstituted His government—AGAIN. If you do not come, having a concern about government—or anything else—as the excuse, you do not love the truth you pretend to love. If you did, you would run barefoot, over broken glass, through fire, to jump deadly snakes and swim through alligators to get to it!

At this point, a previous quote from Mr. Armstrong needs to be repeated for its *reapplication* to you. As you read it a second time, keep yourself in mind, asking how strongly you are persuaded that you do not have to find and yield to wherever is the one place on Earth that God has once again restored His government, also under “one sent”:

“But when I was challenged, before I learned about the Holy Days or anything, I was challenged on the point of God's law and of God's GOVERNMENT! The whole thing was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Satan took away was GOVERNMENT. The thing that Christ is coming to restore is GOVERNMENT. And what He raised me up for was to restore GOVERNMENT *in His Church!* And the *whole test* of the challenge in the first place after God had softened me by other things that will be recorded in this book [MOA] was the point of GOVERNMENT.”

Rely on God, April 6, 1985, Sermon

Government in Restored

Notice that the above statement came from a sermon titled “Rely on God.” It certainly does require real FAITH to believe that God works from the top down. Betrayed people—those whose trust has been violated one or more times—do not easily trust again! All of God's people once knew that the devil is the author of doubt about *everything* that is of God. Comprehend again this reality. The greatest aspect of Satan's assault on the Church was his nearly universal success in destroying the trust that brethren all once had in God's ability to lead them through His chosen leader and headquarters. Where faith was once strong and also nearly universal, doubt has entered—and become nearly as widespread.

I heard one man state, “I'm not going to follow a Napoleon on a white horse.” I understand his mistrust. He had been badly burned, several times, but this cannot be used as an excuse to reject *proper* authority—to carelessly dismiss the restoration of God's benevolent government over His people.

As explained, many believe the apostasy was spawned by the *system* of government that Mr. Armstrong taught, rather than by the *men* who infiltrated it. They think it was a *false system* that permitted false leaders to capture the Church—or corporation. This is ridiculous logic, causing people to exchange a *good system* with *bad leaders* for a BAD SYSTEM with BLIND LEADERS. Which is worse?

Winston Churchill once declared, “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for *all the others*” (referring to dictatorships and monarchies, etc.). Of course, this is *not* true, *if* God’s Spirit is present and directly guiding in that *hierarchical* government! Christians *never* copy the Protestants, recognizing democracy leaves God out of the picture—and that it never worked effectively in Sardis.

Jesus said, “For the children of *this world* are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8). Even in “this world,” no successful corporation *of any size* is run by a committee. Mr. Armstrong despised committees. In the Church, councils and boards holding final authority are just nice words for *committees*!

How It Works

Understand! The main reason that elected government does not work in the Church is that God cannot, and will *never*, lead a system of Church leadership and governance other than HIS OWN! This would be tantamount to changing the gospel, which, at its core, is a message about *hierarchical government* led by God. The gospel is about *God’s government*—how He will rule earth through the *right form* of GOVERNMENT! People who do not understand this cannot enjoy the blessings and benefits of properly *practicing* it.

God’s form of government has always been *from the top down*. No church, leader or committee can change His system, and then, *by simple assertion*, declare that God is working through him or them!

Make no mistake—either God rules, or the people do! It must be one or the other. It cannot be both.

The Worldwide Church of God, under Mr. Armstrong, practiced government led by one man. As an apostle, Mr. Armstrong outranked all other ministers. This office authorized him, as Christ’s chosen agent, to introduce doctrinal truth and make corrections in our teachings—and to have all final “say” in the Church, including the institution of traditions (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6).

No one of lesser rank can claim the exact same authority and, for a time after Mr. Armstrong’s death, Christ did not raise up another *apostle*

to guide the Church in the same way. It could be said that Mr. Armstrong, because he could rule on all *doctrinal* matters, practiced one-man *rulership*—under Christ’s rule, of course. Since his death, God’s form of Church government is possibly best described as one-man *leadership*.

Therefore, under Christ, I choose to describe this by saying there is one *leader*—not *ruler*—in the Church today. (Yet, this leader certainly must “rule” on a host of matters.) While this leader is not authorized to change the doctrinal foundation put in place through Mr. Armstrong, he also cannot be removed by men as the human head of the *spiritual* Body of the Church.

But consider. Any leader, truly called, prepared and chosen of God, would always listen carefully to his counselors—and he would seek to have as many trusted wise men around him as possible. Proverbs states variously that either the multitude of counsel or counselors brings “joy” (12:20), “wisdom” (12:15; 19:20), “safety” (11:14; 24:6) and “purposes...are established” (15:22). Government from the top down is not synonymous with a dictatorship. (*THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD* book has a chapter about the function of the Advisory Council of Elders.)

This said, when Mr. Armstrong was alive, as required by law, there was a *corporate* board (separate from the Advisory Council of Elders, which of course The Restored Church of God also has), which *technically* could have removed him from his office in the *corporation*—but all of us would have considered this spiritual rebellion had this happened. However remote, this could, because of the way man’s corporate laws are structured, still happen again. But no committee, council or board can remove a man from the spiritual office into which CHRIST installed him! If men maneuvered to remove this man from the corporation, he would still be the human leader of God’s Church.

As mentioned, our website, and the above book, carry various sermons explaining God’s form of government. They show that God has always worked through servants *HE* selects, not those whom *people* choose or elect.

The Church Is Our Mother

The plain teaching of the Bible is that the true Church is the SPIRITUAL MOTHER to God’s people. Four verses, when placed together, confirm this. The first two are enough to prove it, but the third drives the nail home. As mentioned, the leaders of UCG and the leader of LCG no longer believe, and therefore no longer understand, this most rudimen-

tary doctrine. And I could not convince the latter to reconsider his position. Yet, so many important elements of God’s Plan flow from this knowledge.

First notice Galatians 4:26: “But JERUSALEM which is ABOVE is free, which is the *mother* of us all.” While this scripture states that God’s people have a Mother, it does not explain what “Jerusalem...above” means. Now notice how Hebrews 12:22-23 makes this plain:

“But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the *general assembly and CHURCH of the firstborn*, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

“Jerusalem above” is obviously “heavenly Jerusalem,” identified as the “general assembly and CHURCH of the firstborn.” The majority of God’s Church is represented by this heavenly Jerusalem figure, housing, as it were, the spirits (the spirits in men – I Cor. 2:11) of all those true Christians who have ever lived—all those past faithful of every period who have been in God’s Church (I Thes. 5:23).

Next, Revelation 12:1, describing a woman *in heaven*, long understood to be the true Church, connects these two passages: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a WOMAN clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The twelve stars are the twelve tribes of ancient Israel, a key to identifying the 144,000.

Initially, the woman of Revelation 12 who gives birth to Christ in verse 4 was the Old Testament “Church in the wilderness”—*physical* Israel (Acts 7:38). By verse 6, it is apparent that this same woman is now depicting New Testament *spiritual* Israel—the Church. The Church of God has long known this!

In one other passage, II John 5, the same apostle John who recorded Revelation references a “lady.” The context reveals this lady to be the true Church, and further confirms the truth of this central doctrine.

As with the *human* family, only the true mother of her children is authorized to feed and rear her children. Of course, in a world cut off from God, counterfeits, kidnappers, substitutes and surrogates often take the place of what the true mother was ordained by God to fulfill. In the same way, only the *true* Mother—the one *true* Church—is authorized by God to feed His faithful flock!

Does this help you understand another BIG REASON you should be very careful not to assign to anyone but your *true* Mother the task of feeding you? Inspired and empowered of God, she is the one most concerned about you receiving a proper diet.

Get this doctrine straight. And understand *why* it should not be surprising that, in today's Laodicean environment, some are also losing sight of such an important biblical teaching—and pattern!

Feeding Her Children

The Restored Church of God understands this vital doctrine, making plain the true Church's responsibility to "feed the flock of God" (I Pet. 5:2). Pastoring over 10,000 sheep cemented this firmly—and permanently—in my mind.

The apostle Peter recorded this passage—the same Peter who had to learn in a painful exchange with Jesus how important it was to Him that His ministers "feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17). After three repetitious questions by Jesus, Peter got the point. The living Jesus Christ directly connects the ministry's love for Him (Jesus) to whether or not it will properly feed His flock—"If you *love* Me, feed My sheep."

The Restored Church of God is absolutely committed to this responsibility. And we have prepared a staggering amount of "food," more than at any time in Church history, for God's people. Brethren here literally struggle to keep up with all that is available to them.

Let me paint a picture of why I say this.

Each week, we send sermons and *Announcement Bulletins*, with occasional Bible studies, to every congregation or scattered member in the world. All who are hosts and all who cannot meet with others receive a very detailed *Host Information Manual*, answering questions about local Church administration. This permits the Church to function "decently and in order."

We have reached our final total of what turned out to be something over 100 books and booklets. In addition, we have scores of reprint articles, with more appearing continually, 750 form letters—this on top of about 250 more that serve mostly new people from the world, but, in many cases, the internal needs of the Church (jury duty, immunization, anointing, Sabbath observance, etc.). A 30-lesson Bible study course is also in place.

Several hundred sermons are also readily available for our members. Our website carries all of this in a truly vast—and constantly growing—Member Services section. (Incidentally, we are also currently serving people in six languages—English, Spanish, French, German, Dutch and Afrikaans.)

In addition, besides *The Real Truth* magazine (32 pages in full color), which is similar to the original *Plain Truth* and produced monthly,

we have another bi-monthly, four-color magazine called *The Pillar*, which is provided for all members of the Church.

We also have a beautiful, bi-monthly, four-color youth magazine, *Ambassador Youth*, in addition to rewritten versions of all seven levels (twelve lessons) of the original *YES Lessons* (now called the *Children’s Bible Lessons*), automatically sent to all of the Church’s youth. With seven volumes of *The Story of the Bible* completed, we have finished this series. We also produce spring and fall *Feast Activity Books* for all our small children. The Church that embodies the Elijah fulfillment—foretold to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” and vice-versa—must never forget this responsibility is ongoing.

On the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, when the New Testament Church began with 3,000 baptisms, Peter declared just before they took place, “For the promise is unto you, *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). From the very beginning, Christ’s Church has had an ongoing God-ordained responsibility to never forget that His promise is also “to our children”—that they also can “save themselves from this untoward generation” (vs. 40).

Restored is meeting this responsibility in a big way!

In addition to annual conferences held at Headquarters, for our growing number of ministers and deacons, we have an extensive and growing *Leadership Development Program* (LDP) in place for others who might grow into leadership roles.

But Ambassador Center (our college) plays the most central role in preparing ministers and other leaders. Restored also has almost two dozen Feast sites around the world and provides for those scattered few who are too far from any of our sites.

All of what is described here is being achieved from our world Headquarters complex in Wadsworth, Ohio (outside Akron and Cleveland), and is done by a staff of over 70 people, with more soon to follow. This entire staff, without previous Ambassador College experience or full-time background in the Work, has been trained to handle requests for literature or sermons with a *one-day*-turn-around time and to do a host of other things that a worldwide organization requires.

Again, The Restored Church of God is determined to feed the flock of God so well with so much that the sheep can, figuratively speaking, “barely walk.” Each member decides how much he or she wishes to “consume.”

God’s Church is fully in place, fulfilling all obligations and responsibilities—FIRST and SECOND commissions—commanded in the Bible!

No One Else!

Once again, no other organization or leader will come. It simply will not happen. God and Christ are not divided! While other illegitimate “mothers” will certainly appear, attempting to claim God’s children, God would never raise up one Church, under one leader, with a plan to later replace it with another larger but identical organization, led by a more “attractive” man. Human children do not have two biological mothers, and God’s children cannot have two or more true spiritual Mothers. God is not the author of confusion, and this would be SUPREME CONFUSION for brethren trying to figure out what God intended them to do. God is fully able to make up His mind about how and where to reconstitute His Church and Work well in advance of carrying out His Plan.

But let’s play “just suppose.” If God *were* to “change horses in mid-stream,” imagine what the people in the first smaller group—who had borne the heat of the day in such a massive “labor of love” (Heb. 6:10) to rewrite God’s truth—would think when they learned they were supposed to just “hand over” everything *they* had done to the new “attractive” leader and brethren following him who had not been willing to take a stand, let alone assist, earlier. The very idea is ludicrous and is something God would *never* do.

Yet, many now wait for this exact thing to happen!

Jesus Christ is gathering His flock here, in The Restored Church of God. This is not true because I say it. It is true because the *facts* state this—if you just at least have eyes to see this much. The sheer vastness of what we have in place to feed the flock is further evidence of God’s decision—to all who will anoint their eyes and LOOK!

An Appeal to Leaders

It is important to offer an inset here. As we have seen earlier, Mr. Armstrong spoke constantly of organization and structure within the Church. This is absolutely necessary in order to stabilize and feed the flock, and to baptize those new people whom God is calling. A word to all elders and deacons who could yet help lead and stabilize God’s flock before the age ends: Will you intend to take a stand with all this understanding, but never do it? Will you *qualify* or *disqualify* yourself as a leader at the end of the age? History—and God!—will record which leaders shrank into little men and failed to fulfill their role, and destiny—and which stepped forward and accepted their true burden of responsibility.

I will be blunt: God’s flock in Restored could use your help—*IF* you are also willing to anoint *your* eyes and be truly faithful!

When the age of Philadelphia began, Mr. Armstrong and only one faithful local elder from Sardis (Basil Wolverton) were all who cared about doctrinal precision. The Laodicean era should be expected to be similar. A few faithful pastors, elders and deacons, from different organizations, having purged acquired wrong thinking from their minds, *are* joining us. We truly welcome such faithful and humble men and their families. We are honored to have those who will zealously assist us in our supremely important task!

The Role of Local Church Elders

On a related note, with the development of the apostasy, there has arisen a variety of local church elders who now lead their own groups. This is a clear and egregious violation of the government of God as practiced under Mr. Armstrong. When correctly understood, this becomes an *addition* reason, once you have done your research to find God’s government, that you, as a local church elder, need to come under the authority of the senior minister who leads it.

Local church elders and local elders were never considered *full* ministers in the WCG. Many forgot or never knew this. Yet, hundreds of ordination certificates testify to the fact that Mr. Armstrong did not consider these men to be ministers, but rather *local church* elders. He only considered preaching elders and above to be *full* ministers. Any who doubt this should ask any elder or minister to show his original WCG certificate(s). The wording and authority are plain! I have my first two certificates, both signed by Mr. Armstrong, stating the clear difference.

Let’s say this in another way: All ministers are elders, but not vice-versa. Mr. Armstrong did not authorize local church elders to either approve *or* perform ordinations. Neither could any office below apostle give *final approval* for ordination to *any* rank (explained momentarily). This was recognized policy for decades and integral to the Church’s understanding and practice of God’s government. However, while most or all ordained men should have known this, most brethren probably never did.

Because local elders or local church elders are not empowered to either *train* or *ordain* a ministry to care for the flock, recognize that *Christ could never lead His Church through one!* Yet, several claim to lead the one true Church. They are terribly deceived men! I know because I have dealt with a number of them. These men reject the very government of God they often claim to most perfectly uphold. (Regardless of what his

feelings may tell him, any man who has been ordained by another local [or local church] elder is *not*—under any circumstances—a valid elder in God’s sight!) Not even evangelists carry this authority, unless delegated by an apostle to do so.

Mr. Armstrong approved *all* ordinations, and explained this to the Church. Here is what he said as early as the mid-1950s:

“Christ is the *living* HEAD of the Church!

“HE sets the apostle in office. But we do find historic example in the New Testament of the apostle setting in office evangelists, pastors and teachers, and even delegating to the evangelists the responsibility of ordaining pastors and other elders, and deacons.”

“*Six More Ministers Now Ordained,*” GN, Feb/Mar 1955

Confused Men

There is an irony about certain local church elders of whom I am aware. Again, they claim to *most properly* uphold the understanding of God’s government—that it only exists in their tiny little “true Church.” They may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong!

Why? That they are trying to lead the Church—any church—as local church elders, demonstrates that they have *lost* the most basic understanding of how God’s government guides His Church. Consider. Of necessity, these men *must* work alone—or, *without God’s authority*, ordain others to help them. The same is true of pastors and others.

Once again, such ordinations performed by these men are actually INVALID! Christ’s true ministers would always be given their offices *by Him* through His unified government from inside His one Body.

In addition, understand that these men could not be authorized by God to continue His Work of taking the gospel to the world or the Ezekiel warning to the modern nations of Israel *by themselves*. Grasp this fundamental point. Their function was so obviously always intended to be “LOCAL.” In *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, Mr. Armstrong even described *pastors* (Preaching Elder or Pastor rank) as functioning “locally” or as “stationary” when preaching the kingdom of God. Besides this, local elders have not been *trained* to either do the Work or pastor God’s overall flock!

If these are *your* circumstances, you cannot effectively—and bear no authority to—serve God’s flock alone. And we welcome all those truly *faithful* elders who recognize what this means. (All of this and much more is very carefully explained in *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties.*)

God’s True Work Ends Only at the Tribulation

Mr. Armstrong never wavered from his belief that the true Work of God would be done until the Tribulation—and that God’s servants would never waver in continuing it. Mr. Armstrong knew that only *this event* would bring the “night” that Jesus spoke of “when no man can work” (John 9:4). While many believe the Work essentially ended with his death, Mr. Armstrong understood otherwise—and said so repeatedly! Although I address this subject in far greater detail in *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!*, and quote Mr. Armstrong extensively there, here are a very few of his statements, spanning a 32-year period, showing that the true Work of God is far from over.

Read most carefully:

“I am now in my 94th year. God may grant that I continue in this very limited manner to direct the work for some time, but the occasional heart pains that I have endured have made me feel the necessity of letting our coworkers know of the condition as it is.

“Remember, this is the work of the living Creator God.

“I thank God that He has organized this present work of his so thoroughly that regardless of the outcome of my present illness, the work will continue right on to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ... Christ is the Living Head of this work, and He will continue guiding those He has chosen right up to his Second Coming, which grows daily nearer at hand.”

Brethren Letter, Dec. 23, 1985

“This is my first letter to you in 1986, and could very well be my last. It may be that the Work God has given me to do is complete, but not the Work of God’s Church, which will be faithfully doing God’s Work till Christ, the True Head of this Church, returns.

“Remember, brethren, this is not the work of Herbert W. Armstrong... or any man. It is the Work of the Living Creator, God...The greatest work lies yet ahead.”

Last Co-worker Letter, Jan. 10, 1986

“Brethren, if we are to continue to grow—and to grow SPIRITUALLY as well as in numbers—we must remember that the PURPOSE of the Church is, first, to GO INTO ALL THE WORLD and preach Christ’s GOSPEL. The FIRST commission to the Church is just that. Anyone who looks on

that Great commission of Christ as ‘Armstrong’s private work’ is just not a member of GOD’S Church. Anyone who does not have his whole heart in that work IS NOT A MEMBER OF GOD’S TRUE CHURCH, and has no right whatsoever to attend or fellowship in any of its local congregations.”

“*Why Local Assemblies?*”, GN, March 1954

“We CANNOT AFFORD TO BECOME LUKEWARM! We cannot afford to let our minds drift from the intense NEED for this very special mission of this particular time in world history, so shortly before Christ’s coming and HIS KINGDOM!

“Now about the Work itself.

“Few understand just what IS the Church. There are so many churches in the world. People just take churches for granted. But more than 1,953 years ago, Jesus Christ said, ‘I will build My Church.’ Few know WHY He built it—for what PURPOSE. The purpose, primarily, was dual:

1) to proclaim to the world the Gospel Message God sent to mankind by Jesus as God’s Messenger (Mal. 3:1) of the coming Kingdom of God,

2) to call and prepare a chosen people...

“I have NEVER SAID I expect to live until Christ comes.”

Co-worker Letter, March 19, 1981

“Brethren, this world is being destroyed for lack of knowledge of and from GOD, as we read in Hosea 4:6. Through my personal visits, and the PLAIN TRUTH magazine, on TV and radio and through other literature, we are proclaiming that knowledge in POWER and AUTHORITY. Some listen. It is God’s last witness against those who do not. BUT WE MUST DRIVE RIGHT ON UNTIL CHRIST COMES!”

Co-worker Letter, Nov. 18, 1984

“Brethren, time is running out on us. When this great European power emerges, our great Work will be just about over. The day shall have arrived when ‘no man can work,’ as Jesus said (John 9:4).

“NOTHING ELSE MATTERS NOW. We must sacrifice and devote our all that is reasonably possible to GOD’S WORK in these closing days.”

Co-worker Letter, July 16, 1982

The Work Continues Today

I have repeatedly referenced the importance of the Church today continuing God’s *only* Work. However, Jesus also commanded the apostles to

make disciples of all nations and to “teach them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

This passage is the central reason why any “Work” that an organization does today is *not* authorized and blessed by God unless it *is* teaching “all things” that Jesus taught the apostles. These hundreds of doctrines set the standard for *what* Jesus referred to in Matthew 28—which carries over to the Matthew 24:14 Great Commission that God’s Church is to finish prior to the Tribulation!

The true Work of God *will* be found teaching “all things” restored to the Church!

Already mentioned, we have almost 150 of *The World to Come video* broadcasts now in place, with new ones being produced every month. There are also hundreds of *World to Come* broadcasts in audio. I have already described the return of *The Plain Truth* magazine, now known as *The Real Truth*.

The Worldwide Church of God never had more than about 65 to 70 books and booklets in place at one time. Again, we have over 100, covering all of what was covered in the past, with many others covering prophetic topics and other subjects that have grown greater in importance now that we have reached the twenty-first century. We probably already have many more reprint articles, also written to those learning the truth for the first time, than were ever available at any one time in the past. (Our worldwide *The Real Truth Newsstand Distribution Program* [NDP] reflects the *zeal* of our brethren in a way that is not common in the other groups I am familiar with.)

Evidence Obvious

Another reason that I can say we have more written material in place for God’s Church has to do with books such as this one. It is one of ten, totaling over 2,000 pages, which the Church’s previous circumstances obviously did not require to be written. Someone had to be willing to take on this extra challenge. It should be its own enormous statement to you that *one man* was willing to do what all of the splinter leaders *put together* did not even *begin* to do—or even see the *NEED* to do! I hope you will not be dismissive of statements that can too easily be labeled “bragging” or “horn-tooting,” when they were said from a shepherd’s heart trying to help people because no one else would do it! (Being selected to fulfill Revelation 3:14 left me with the God-ordained *duty* to prepare this material.)

In relation to the previous section, this material is a further testimony to how committed—how *convicted*—our staff is to never forgetting the

ongoing responsibility to feed God's flock, inside and *outside* The Restored Church of God!

Some have said, "When a lot more people go there and they are bigger, then I will go, too." Consider what such people are really saying: "When I see a lot more people with more faith, more strength, more commitment, more zeal and more love of the truth than I have go there first, I will go too!" Of course, in the end, few, if any, of these will ever come.

Still, some others may want to see us on radio and television *before* they will come. How silly! Of course television is happening.

Forgetting that Christ did not command His disciples to make "*subscribers* of all nations," still others were upset because we were originally unable to afford sending hardcopies of our rewritten literature and magazines (designed for those learning the truth for the *first time*) to people in the splinters who will not take a stand for the full truth they already know. Besides, *everything* we produce is instantly available on our websites free of charge. (I explain much more about our hardcopy policy, and why it has been able to continue to evolve, in Chapter Fifteen within *THE WORK OF GOD*.)

There are many others whose thinking regarding the Work is completely backwards. While they are *not* willing to hold fast to true doctrine, they are strangely inflexible in their insistence upon previous *methods* of doing the Work. Rather, end-time Christians are told to hold fast to doctrine and tradition at the same time that they should be willing to adapt, with the extraordinary advancements in technology, to the *most effective methods* of doing the Work. The goal of the Work should always be finding the very best ways to reach more people—and more quickly. Also, efficiency and cost-effectiveness are vital for the group that is small. How many of us would have learned the truth if Mr. Armstrong had felt bound by the methods of the first-century apostles? Then certainly we are not bound to the methods he used in the twentieth century.

I recognize that various "works" are being done by the four or five biggest splinters. Obviously, with many who have God's Spirit still present in these groups, there will remain an interest in putting forth *some* kind of paltry effort.

This said, you may be in a small splinter that is not taking either the gospel to the world or the special warning message to the nations of modern Israel. If so, you are growing cooler *beyond* the lukewarm stage—and you are slowly FALLING AWAY completely! Your *feelings* may tell you otherwise, that you think yourself "doctrinally sound" and "holding fast," but they are wrong. You are *not* holding fast. Wake up to

your position—and at least join a large splinter where some kind of “work” is occurring until you figure out where you should be! Recognize that, no matter your other beliefs, your condition is actually worse than those in the organizations who *are* at least attempting a little effort with *some* of the truth!

Remember, based on what Mr. Armstrong taught, little groups not taking the gospel to the world are not even considered God’s people.

On a side note, some have asked what it means that PCG, led by the man claiming numerous offices of God and Christ, has come to hold the literature of Mr. Armstrong. Apparently, according to his announcement to this effect, its leader planned to at least somewhat alter it, and has already, and use it as a steppingstone to furthering the outrageous, ludicrous “prophetic” junk he claims to be “new revelations” from God. He has already deleted part of *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* to permit himself to hold the office of prophet, and as an administrative office, which are both directly contrary to what Mr. Armstrong wrote in the section that this man deleted.

Since most recognize that his “revelations” come from the “god of this world,” it must be understood that Satan has merely handed Mr. Armstrong’s literature from one of his organizations to another. (I do not speak of true brethren there who must and will yet flee from him to save their crown.) Recognize that as this literature *is* altered, and now associated with a leader who has forsaken the true God, Satan has it exactly where he wants it. He knows that he can do much more damage with it if a false prophet/false christ *uses* it, than if it remained largely hidden in the WCG “copyright closet.”

The apostates were shrewd to sell it to an organization that will so discredit it.

Tithes Belong to God

This is an additional reason God’s people must be careful to discern *where* God’s *true* government is at work. Tithes and offerings belong to God, to where *He* is working—where *His* Work is being continued—where the Mother is feeding her children. This is where the full truth, the true gospel and the Ezekiel warning are being preached. That describes *this* Church and the Work being done *here*!

Think very carefully about what you are doing, and how you will answer Almighty God when He asks why you decided to affiliate where you did, and why you sent *His* tithes to support what He was not directing.

Mr. Armstrong often reminded the Church that God will hold individuals accountable if they give what belongs to Him to those who do not represent Him!

Mr. Armstrong also repeatedly said that God's people were called in this age to do the Work. While many now sneer at his view of this priority, it has remained true. This is something else that you must SEE about your personal responsibility in this age. The more faithful brethren who come with us, the bigger the Work that can be done before "the night comes when no man can work" (John 9:4).

When Zeal Is Lacking—Accusation

I have explained that we have rewritten thousands of pages of literature revealing God's truth to those He is still calling in this age. This brings to mind a fascinating twist to the reasoning of some that must be explained at this point, because some people believe—LCG advocates loudly assert this—that doing the Work first, *before* the literature was in place to teach new people, reflects a greater zeal than what Restored has done.

Rewriting all the literature of the past—and more—in about 4½ years, was the most staggering and difficult task one could ever undertake—*times ten!* I have never been involved in anything so arduous, challenging and continuously exhausting. Other organizations understand this, but are too selfish and lazy to undertake it—even if they were to divide the work among several writers. In addition, having abandoned many truths the Church once taught, these groups see no *need* to rewrite it. (After all, they are blind.) How wonderfully convenient "doing the Work first" becomes. In the name of "zeal for the Work," many successfully hide their selfish slothfulness—and the false doctrines they hope others will not notice!

Some of these very people then have had the gall to slander us as being "lukewarm" in our approach to primarily doing the Work *after* we first rewrote the literature and got our staff and structure in place. Of course, this is a cross we have to bear. But then those with such character should be expected to attack others who are *willing* to do what they are *too weak and lazy* to do. Their inaction also leaves them with much time to assess and critique all others. Instead, they should be deeply ashamed and repent of practicing slothfulness, selfishness, heresy, accusation, division and deceit, evident in carefully crafted statements designed to misrepresent The Restored Church of God.

God will "reward them according to their works" (II Tim. 4:14).

There is one final irony to this deceit. While some crow about *their* willingness to do the Work, they originally asserted that Restored does not or will not do it at all. Sadly, some still believe them, and have not investigated this for themselves. We certainly were *not* willing to subordinate the *all-important* full truth to doing the Work WITHOUT ANY LITERATURE! The many reasons behind the decision to rewrite the literature *first* is explained in detail in the chapter titled *The RCG Strategic Plan* within *THE WORK OF GOD* book. Once again, as critically important as fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20 is, it was less important than first re-establishing the COMPLETE TRUTH—to be made available to the world and the Church. (We have been giving out tens of thousands of items *per day* to both for a long time.)

Some may think, and even hope, that this matter cannot be understood so simply—but it can!

Though we have never been in a “race” with the various splinters, recognize that Restored is so far ahead in production—and size of work!—that others could never catch us, even if they had the will to try, and they do not. Whatever my weaknesses are—and I certainly have some—fear to fulfill Ezekiel 33:1-9, Isaiah 58:1 and Matthew 24:14, and unwillingness to work unending hours, are not among them. Nothing—NOTHING!—is going to stop The Restored Church of God from finishing the Work of God as the only true successor of the “Moses” ministry completed by Jesus Christ through Herbert W. Armstrong!

I AM determined to run through fire barefoot over broken glass and jump deadly snakes, if that is what is needed, to finish the Work and fight for ALL of the doctrines of God—and for the *brethren* who still love them! People of sixth era thinking must exhibit a spirit of ZEAL—and this is found in Restored.

Having been part of God’s Work for over four and a half decades, I have *never* seen more zeal and enthusiasm to do it than what our staff demonstrates daily. They seem to labor with almost no concern for the clock. God’s presence is powerfully evident in the exploding energy that all seem to have been given to complete the massive Work that must be done.

I hope you will take the time to reread II Corinthians 5:7, and will not be tempted to despise “the day of small things” (Zech. 4:10) because Restored is not as “big” an organization as the largest splinters. The wonderful age of Philadelphia is over. Laodicea is permanently dominant. This said, we are, however, bigger than the Radio Church of God was in the mid-1950s, when Mr. Armstrong had been preaching for over twenty years!

Brotherly Love—and the Love of God

God says that He “is love.” Only by “being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17) will one be able to “COMPREHEND...what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (vs. 18) of God’s Master Plan. Yet, this passage goes on to show that *having* love is the path to also “*know[ing]* the love of Christ” (vs. 19). While this may seem strange, it is not.

All those who wish to *understand*—to “know”—the love of God must *practice* it. Review Psalm 111:10, I John 5:3 and Romans 13:10. This love is intrinsic to everything that God does and that a Christian is to become. This love of God works with and is complemented by *brotherly love*.

All that happens in the last days to God’s people was carefully planned by the God of love (I John 4:8, 16). He intends to do absolutely everything in His power to jolt every one of His people—who all remain free moral agents—back to reality, so that they will make the RIGHT choice, with their eternal life (and future protection) on the line.

In his second epistle, Peter explained, beginning in chapter 1, verse 5, the aspects of character that one must build to ensure that he has made his “calling and election sure”—and that he “shall never fall” (vs. 10). The eight qualities listed there are vital, and could be a series of personal Bible studies for those who are serious about building them. After building *faith*, *virtue* (character), *knowledge*, *temperance*, *patience* and *godliness*, the Christian is told to add “*brotherly kindness [love]*” (vs. 7), before going on to build the final quality—the *love of God*. Verse 8 assures that those who have these things abounding in them will never be considered “unfruitful.”

It is fascinating to note that verse 9 states that anyone who does *not* build these things—including godly love and brotherly love, my focus here—“is BLIND, and *cannot SEE afar off*, and has *forgotten* that he was PURGED from his old sins.” Obviously, and you have seen why, this passage carries even greater meaning in our time. Notice that sight is linked here again to being *purged*—and blindness to having “forgotten” this.

Paul told the Hebrews to “Let brotherly love *continue*” (13:1). This becomes God’s instruction to His Church today—instruction to those who wish to be considered of the sixth era. Truly, as Peter wrote, many today *have* forgotten the importance of practicing real, vibrant, active BROTHERLY LOVE between one another!

How often did Mr. Armstrong stress the need to build this quality, coupled with the love of God, best described as practicing the way of “give” vs. the way of “get”?

Where those of the sixth era are found, real brotherly love will be evident in abundance. Recall that Philadelphians are known for many things (Rev. 3:7-13), but the attribute God uses to identify them—for *all time*—is *this* quality. Speaking specifically about the love of God (*agape*), recall again how Paul wrote that we could have “all knowledge” (and that would certainly include all *doctrinal* knowledge, since it is a large subtotal of *all* knowledge), but if we “have not love we are *nothing*” (I Cor. 13:1-3).

Grasp this! In theory, one could actually achieve doctrinal *perfection*, and yet his life could still add up to absolutely NOTHING! Which do *you* think is more important to God—love or knowledge? By now, it should be obvious that I would never de-emphasize the importance of doctrinal steadfastness as the only proper *starting point* for identifying the Philadelphian era! However, I do want to reiterate what Paul said it means if we do not have both brotherly and godly love for others. Without these, we are completely *worthless*—of NO USE in God’s sight!

In The Restored Church of God, we strive to ask God regularly to help us renew this greatest of all character attributes. Remember, God says that He “IS love” (I John 4:8, 16) and is the “giver of every good gift and perfect gift” (Jms. 1:17). It is evident that He is giving this love to the people in The Restored Church of God. Though not perfect, you would have to see the wonderful brotherly concern within the brethren of Restored to believe it. It is almost beyond what can be described!

Once again, over and over throughout his ministry, Mr. Armstrong stressed the importance of OUTGOING CONCERN, which was his way of emphasizing love. He continually contrasted the way of “give” to the way of “get.” This outgoing concern should receive the greatest emphasis in the people *known for brotherly love*. This is another reason they keep their focus on continuing the only Work that will really help their fellow-man!

The death of Mr. Armstrong is the point from which our beliefs—and understanding of God’s love and brotherly kindness—must spring. This is the last moment the Church was, technically speaking, “on track.” There is no denying this, or the problems that spring from ignoring it.

Leaving Wounds and Attitudes Behind

Everyone has picked up practices, beliefs and ideas, perhaps unconsciously, that now prejudice them against brethren in other groups who walked different paths after the apostasy. The fact that some do not *know* this does not change it!

Do not miss this fact!

Many have picked up *attitudes* prevalent in their particular organization. Each of us could probably write a book on why our organization was the best to have come through. We would all be *wrong!* Christ is gathering people from *all* the groups. Since the apostasy, people have walked *many*, sometimes very convoluted, routes to where God's Government, Truth, College, Work and Church have been reconstituted.

Some organizations (PCG and offshoots) literally *train* their members to become "attack dogs," teaching them to slander, accuse, attack, blast, and lambaste all the "evil sinners and Laodiceans," not as "perfect as we are or the organization we are in." This has almost become a form of "killing" (spiritual murder – I John 3:15), thinking that one is "doing God service" with such actions (John 16:2).

On the other hand—and here is the other side of the coin—we are unwilling to tolerate endless, or even any, false doctrines by overriding them, as do most of the splinters, with the Protestant emphasis of "just having love." (Recall the LCG leader's definition of where the Body of Christ is found.) We live in an age when Christ said His people would experience "hatred, betrayal, offense" and "lawlessness" (Matt. 24:9, 12) to such a degree that "the *love* of many [brethren] will grow *cold*."

We are determined to actively *fight* this terrible trend, tragically devouring so many of God's people!

Christians copy and imitate Jesus Christ! They, through their conduct and words—which spring from their *thoughts*—reflect and exude the life of Christ! We all know that Christ did not give His life for our sins so that He could turn right around and pick us apart. What would be His point? He would be countering His purpose to *cleanse* our sins and imperfections. It would make no sense for Him to say, "I love you and I died for you and now I'm going to pick you to pieces." Christ never does this and neither should the people of brotherly love!

In The Restored Church of God, we are striving to leave wounds behind, recognizing that events of the last many years left many injured, and in most cases no longer able to view people, ministers or the Church in the same way most once did. In time, God will heal *anyone* of wounds and bruises, whether received from offenses and betrayals by ministers or brethren.

Such injuries may be keeping you from loving people as you once did. Determine to "forget those things which are behind" and to "press toward the mark..." (Phil. 3:13-14). But, to recover from your wounds, you must also first be able to RECOGNIZE them—you must *locate* your

battle scars, wounds and hurt feelings, and strive with God’s help (John 5:30; Matt. 19:26; Phil. 4:13) to overcome them—to RECOVER FULLY! This is what we are trying to do in The Restored Church of God—and the fruits are evident throughout this Church.

Finally, those of brotherly love are also required by God to try to help those languishing in confusion and looking for the full truth. You may review the sermons “Known for Brotherly Love” and “Should Christians Avoid Proselytizing?”, found on our website.

Also, just referring this book to family and friends is of immeasurable importance!

Where the Burden of Proof Lies

Something most crucial must be understood at this point. I cannot overstress its importance. Contemplate it carefully!

The burden of proof that we are the one true Church and sole Body of Christ rests with neither The Restored Church of God nor me. It is not our responsibility to prove to you that God’s government is here, and here alone. This is *your* responsibility!

Consider. Restored teaches the full truth, precisely as we all once believed it. It is doing the same Work, exactly as the Church once did it—and this is all being done under the government of God, as the Church once understood and practiced it. All of the EVIDENCE, FACTS and PROOF necessary to know these things are abundantly clear and can be found to demonstrate that these statements are true. Our beliefs, traditions, practices and commission are identical to what Mr. Armstrong taught and did—and what the Bible teaches—and you can PROVE it.

The burden of *disproof* also rests with *you*. It is up to you to decide whether Mr. Armstrong was wrong about the doctrines he taught. *You* must decide if he was correct when he taught that the government of God had been restored to the Philadelphian era, which understood that God was only actively leading, and working through, *one* organization at a time—the Worldwide Church of God, when Mr. Armstrong was alive.

We know and have proven who we are. We know what we believe and by whom we were taught it. We hold no illusions about the Work still before us. If you are unsure of these things, then *you* must set out to resolve what is still unclear in your mind about where you should be. *You* must anoint your own eyes with the Spirit of truth. *You* must be zealous and repent—and return to all that you once believed and practiced!

Take the mystery out of the burden of proof that clearly rests with YOU. It is not our job to convince you that we are who we say we are. By our fruits you CAN know us (Matt. 7:16, 20). It is *your* job to prove we are NOT who we say we are—and NOT where you should be—and to be prepared to stand before God, ready to justify your conclusion!

For the reasons given (there are more), it is absolutely *impossible* that Christ is actively leading, as His one unified Body, any of the splinters, large or small! Many there no longer even believe who and what the Church is as Mr. Armstrong taught it, having accepted the re-invented Protestant mish-mash on this subject. I repeat: This falsehood is now either directly or tacitly taught by most splinter leaders, because of their blindness to how the Daniel 12:7 “scattering” could ultimately *only apply to Laodicea!* (Of course, restated for emphasis, others teach the Catholic succession idea, tying the true Church to receiving a *baton* from someone necessarily out of the *first* group to leave the WCG.) All of this is thoroughly covered in *THE TRUE CHURCH* book.

Christ has reorganized His Church and government here. Yet, many state, “But every group claims to be the one true Church.” Actually, this is not true. However, again, *some* do falsely make this claim. But you can *automatically eliminate* all those who *reject* this doctrine as candidates for fulfilling it! This is because God would *never* forcefully superimpose His undivided government and the understanding of the true Church and Body of Christ on an organization that will not teach them, does not believe them—and has REJECTED them! This narrows your search.

You must be able—and willing—to process through the alternatives, and correctly discern the true Church from all imposters. Remember, Satan counterfeits *everything* of God. Of course he would counterfeit the organization that believes in and *is* the one true Church!

Determine to be found without excuse, in identifying the only place where God’s CHURCH, TRUTH, WORK and GOVERNMENT continue.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!

You are responsible for your own salvation. We discussed how the Bible teaches all of God's people to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). You must continually remind yourself that it is "*God which works* in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (vs. 13).

If you are to successfully anoint your eyes and if you are doing this seeking to return to His Church, you must greatly increase *how much* of God is working in you, through the power of His Holy Spirit of truth. God will not perform this exercise for you. But He will continually give you more of His Spirit if you ask for it in your pursuit. Notice: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that *ask Him*" (Luke 11:13). And with the Spirit of truth comes more power (II Tim. 1:7).

Though God's Spirit will lead you (Rom. 8:14)—and more strongly once you have obtained more—it will never drive or force you to do anything. You must *engage* it—and actively *exercise* it. These are Christian basics, and they are the path out of the BLINDNESS that has swallowed so many today. And they are the path back to God's Church.

Only by personally taking responsibility for your life, knowing that if "Noah, Daniel and Job" were facing the same decision today, they "would only save *themselves* by *their* [personal] righteousness" (Ezek. 14:14), you also can save yourself—and *only* yourself (Acts 2:40)!

Paul told the Corinthians then, and you today, to "WATCH you, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men*, be STRONG!" (I Cor. 16:13). Before

David died, he charged Solomon with similar words: “Be you STRONG therefore, and *show yourself a man*; and keep the charge of the LORD your God...to *walk* before Me IN TRUTH with all your heart...” (I Kgs. 2:2, 4).

I charge you now: Square your shoulders and address your future!

Stop Excusing Yourself Because of What False Ministers Did

This age of the Church has produced many who specialize in playing the “blame game.” Large numbers of people feel little or no personal responsibility for what has happened to them since Mr. Armstrong’s death. They see themselves largely as blameless, innocent *victims* of any number of possible *perpetrators* whom they are only too willing to name. It is as though they think that their conversion and progression toward salvation was in great shape until “evil men took over the Church.”

They could not be more wrong. Laodicean tendencies threatened the whole Church and consumed almost all of it. Just thinking that you are an exception means it is 100 percent certain that it swallowed you *completely*.

As perhaps never before, brethren today have learned to shift the blame to others because of what is happening in society. In the world, people who get lung cancer from cigarettes blame and sometimes sue the tobacco manufacturers. People who kill in a rage blame temporary insanity. Other killers blame society or their bad childhood. The victims’ relatives also blame the gun manufacturers. People who drive drunk blame the bartenders for letting them get behind the wheel. Addicts blame the easy access to drugs for their substance abuse. The increase in youth violence is generally attributed to Hollywood and video game manufacturers (partly true), instead of parents taking their fair share of the blame. Now overweight people who cannot control their appetites blame the fast-food industry for their “addiction,” and often seek huge “damage” awards through the courts.

All of this has conditioned you and me to blame others for what is *our* fault—and *our* responsibility to change. We must recognize that we all live in the age when there are no longer any *perpetrators*—unless it is somebody else—but rather only “innocent victims.”

Because of what happened in the Church, some blame Mr. Armstrong’s successor for “destroying their life”—or “the Church.” Others blame those around him. Some others blame the senior ministry at Pasadena for allowing him to get away with what he did. Still others blame their splinter leaders for at least partially betraying them one or more additional times. Some blame their local pastor for failing to warn them

of the danger. Some blame the membership for going along, and for continuing to send their tithes to Pasadena, thus preventing the WCG from total financial collapse. Others blame the devil—and some even blame God for all that has happened to them. Of course, a certain number blame Mr. Armstrong for picking the successor that he did, or for teaching the “wrong system of government,” which they perceive is the reason all of this was able to happen. Still others blame the collective ministry in the splinters because “they can’t get together” and “work this thing out”—they are “keeping the brethren separated.”

There is certainly plenty of blame to go around. Ministers *have* played a role in what happened at the end of the age. Terrible evils *have* been committed, and a lot of people *will* answer for their part in them. God’s vengeance is real (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). Many verses reveal that His justice—previously described as His “judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27)—will strike a number of unsuspecting people very suddenly, and severely—and probably pretty soon. None of us have to worry whether this will happen. God says it will—and it will!

While certain ministers and others have done awful things to God’s flock, stop blaming *them* for action *you* will not take. Again, what *they* did is over. You cannot change it—and you cannot avoid the decision that you now face.

The question is neither “When will God punish the guilty?”, nor “What are *others* going to do?”, but rather, “What are YOU going to do?” YOUR salvation is at stake.

God long ago planned that this trial would come upon His people (II Thes. 2:3). *He* authored the overall test all now face. Just as God hardened Pharaoh’s heart to perform His own great purpose with the tiny nation of Israel, *He* no doubt guided certain people into positions in a way that *His* overall purpose would be fulfilled. Like actors on a stage, various men played certain roles in the great trial that GOD brought upon the Church—to test all of His people at the end of the age to see who loved the marvelous, wonderful truth He had placed into His Church.

Choices and the Spirit of Compromise

I mentioned that I have pastored many thousands in my ministry. Most of them professed to love God’s principles, doctrines and law—as long as tough choices were not *personally* applicable to them. This is one of the greatest lessons that I learned over a long ministry, working with every conceivable kind of human personality and human problem.

I have learned that most people will not make hard choices. It has been my sad experience that when faced with even the clearest decisions between right and wrong, most lack the basic strength necessary to make the “tough call.” This is particularly true if it means having to admit that they have been wrong. Having grown up in a world filled with the spirit of compromise, most people have no difficulty justifying or rationalizing their actions—or inaction. We discussed why this is at the root of so many having been willing to compromise doctrines they once professed to have proven.

Of course, ultimately, basic human nature plays an enormous role in whether or not people will submit themselves to God for His washing and cleansing. Romans 8:7—“the carnal mind is enmity against God [and His] law”—takes on greater meaning *and effect* when the amount of the Holy Spirit in a person has diminished. The more this has happened, the more the carnal mind revives—and thus, the more it resists anyone telling it that it needs to change. Yet, in years past, we were all told repeatedly that “God will not save anyone He could not rule.” We were also reminded, and it was inseparable from the last point, that God will never give positions of rulership over nations—composed of His future sons—to people who had not learned to *rule themselves*.

An examination of the Greek word *krateo*, translated “hold fast” in Revelation 3:11, reveals insight into what Philadelphians must actually do with “what they have” (doctrinally). It means “to use strength, to seize, retain, keep, lay hands on and take, hold fast.”

This presents a graphic picture, revealing a very active, literal “hands-on” approach by the one determined to “seize” and “take hold of” what was stolen from him (John 10:10). I cannot say strongly enough what God intends His people to understand about their *individual* responsibility in this matter! You and you alone must *RULE* your conversion.

I had to face the decision of whether I, as Christ’s minister, would violate Titus 1:9, which describes my *individual* responsibility of “*Hold-ing fast* the faithful word as he has been taught.” In this case, the term “holding fast” (*antechomai*) applies differently. Here, it means: “To hold oneself *opposite to* (ante), to adhere, to care for, hold fast and support.” This is because the context of the verse describes faithful ministers standing *against*—“opposite to”—false teachings referenced in the following two verses in the context there.

I have tried to do this in my ministry—so that you have assistance in your attempt to do the same, which is to fulfill Revelation 3:11. Still, the final decision of what you will do is solely in *your* hands. Take a moment to recall what Hebrews 10:23-27 says is at stake for those who do not hold

fast “so much the more, as you [they] see the day [of Christ’s Return] approaching” (vs. 25).

At this point, another element of human nature must be addressed. It presents perhaps the *greatest* danger to those who may sincerely *intend* to do what is right, yet fall short.

Dealing with Deception

During the 60s and 70s, Jeremiah 17:9 was quoted in the Church as often as Romans 8:7. They were generally thought of as the “big two” of human nature, with Jeremiah stating, “The heart is deceitful *above all things*, and desperately wicked: who can *know it?*” Recent history has shown that a great many people who apparently once knew this no longer “know it.” But the warning is still there.

Every human being is a potential victim of deception, coming from three sources, all day every day. Besides the almost minute-by-minute struggle with the deceitfulness of our own hearts, there is this complicating factor, prophesied to be a big problem in the “last days” for God’s people. Notice: “But *evil men* and SEDUCERS shall grow *worse and worse, deceiving*, and being *deceived*. But *continue* you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them” (II Tim. 3:13-14).

There is simplicity in Christ—and in this scripture—for those who are willing to believe the PLAIN WORDS of the Bible. I learned the truth from God through Herbert W. Armstrong. Do you still feel this way about *your* calling? Then “continue you in the things which you have learned”!

Earlier, we talked about the danger that the “very elect,” if not on guard, can be deceived by false prophets and false christs. Let this warning, coupled with what Jeremiah (17:9) and Paul (Rom. 8:7) wrote, sober you when you stand before a mirror trying to decide what you should do. The potential for being deceived, including self-deception, is staggering. The potential for “doing a number on yourself,” telling yourself that you SEE, when you are almost certainly either nearly blind or totally blind, is enormous!

Some have come to believe the “very” elect cannot be deceived. This is preposterous. Consider! Christ’s Matthew 24 warning to His disciples raises a great question. Again, what is the *point* of warning His disciples about false prophets and false christs *if they cannot possibly be deceived?* Think about this. Christ says, “Behold, I have told you *before*” (vs. 25). This means He had *previously* warned them about this danger. Why give multiple warnings if there *is no danger?*—if deception is *impossible?*

It insults God to suggest that He made free moral agents unable to be deceived, making His warnings pointless! This faulty reasoning parallels classic, long-time Protestant thinking of “once-saved-always-saved.” Just substitute this with “once enlightened, can’t be deceived.”

People of such thinking are easy pickings for the multiplying and ever-worsening seducers surrounding them!

Those who suggest the elect cannot be deceived do not understand their Bibles. Such people are *already* desperately deceived—and their deception *proves* the truth of Christ’s words. His reference to potential deception (“if possible”) is no hollow warning. Actually, this is one of the greatest of all warnings in the New Testament—and its context in Matthew 24:3 puts brethren TODAY most squarely in harm’s way!

The Corinthians were divided partly because they were allowing heresies to enter the ranks of the Church. II Corinthians 11 is an entire chapter warning about the impact that false apostles—“seducers”—were having on that congregation, and how brethren were unknowingly absorbing the teachings of false apostles to the exclusion of the teachings of a *faithful* apostle (Paul).

The chapter begins with Paul expressing concern that the brethren did not see how easy it was to possess the truth and then be seduced into false teachings: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent BEGUAILED Eve through his *subtilty*, so your minds should be corrupted from the *simplicity* that is in Christ” (vs. 3).

This passage stands as stark testimony to how people can, through subtle seduction, lose doctrines that once seemed simple, clear and unmistakable to them—before their minds had become corrupted.

Paul exhorted the Philippian congregation to practice what some today must now do—“*Forgetting* those things which are behind...*press toward* the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (3:13-14). Most stop reading this familiar verse at this point, neglecting the critical verse that follows—God’s promise to clear up (“*reveal*”) all unclear areas of our thinking. God will do this for you if you practice the verses that precede it. Take a moment to read this inspiring promise.

The Bible states that Satan has “deceived the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). This passage is much more profound than meets the eye. There are over 7 billion people alive today, and then there are the previous billions, which Satan has successfully deceived over the last 6,000-years. Anyone capable of deceiving tens of billions of human beings is *very good* at what he does. Satan has honed his craft for millennia. Although his popular “Christian” doctrines are always pretty much the same—because he is gen-

erally *unoriginal*—the picture revealed by world history, and Church history, is that the devil is extremely good at his “vocation.”

Apparently, believing his methods *shallow*, most have sold short “the DEPTHS of Satan” (Rev. 2:24), just as they have “the WILES of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Sadly, so many have foolishly believed themselves impervious to extensive deceit. As a result, Satan stole many brethren’s understanding as easily as taking the proverbial “candy from a baby.”

Now reconsider for a moment how successful the apostates were with people who had supposedly *proven* the truth. How many times did these men tell the Church that they were *not* making changes, when they were? Three-quarters of the membership bought this simple, outright lie “hook, line and sinker,” until it was too late to recover from the tangle of confusion that had entered—and blown!—their minds. Believe me. I have tried to work with people who seemed to sincerely *desire* to recover, but who found the supreme effort necessary to do this to be just too great. They simply could not “recover themselves from the snare of the devil” (II Tim. 2:26).

Unwittingly taken in by the apostates’ methods of deception, the splinter leaders have also absorbed their *tactics* and, just as they copied some of their doctrines, they copy—and practice—THESE SAME TACTICS among God’s people now. Most seem only too happy to let their leaders get away with it—AGAIN!

If *any* non-apostle comes with *any* new doctrines, he is a deceiver. No matter his logic, sincerity, smoothness, the attractiveness of his person, selected verses used, or any other factor, HE IS A DECEIVER!

It has been my experience that the *second* greatest power in the universe, besides that of God, is the power of deceit! But remember, if you will RESIST the devil, “he will flee from you,” opening the way for you to “draw near to God” (Jms. 4:7-8).

City of the Valiant Set on a Hill

Now for a powerful prophecy in Jeremiah. It describes conditions in the modern nations of Israel, and needs to be introduced here. After describing how so many people “bend their tongues like their bow for lies,” Jeremiah continues what is actually a lamentation over conditions he sees in our age: “They are *not valiant* for the TRUTH upon the earth...and they will *deceive* every one his neighbor, and will not speak the TRUTH” (9:3, 5).

What an apt description of the societies in which we live. But it has also become almost equally true in the Church. Most people have be-

come too *weak* to take a valiant stand for the treasure of truth we all once held. Overwhelming, all-encompassing deceit, coming from every side, has confused, and, in many cases, worn out and totally *defeated* so many of God’s people. This need never have happened if they had kept their eyes open—if they had continued to ask God (Luke 11:13) for more of His “unction”—the “anointing”—His “Spirit of truth.”

They—and you—could have been, and still could be, part of the following picture.

Recall Edward Gibbon’s description of ancient Philadelphians as “valiant citizens defend[ing] their religion.” The powerful parallel for us is unmistakable.

We saw that, when put together, Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 describe God’s Word and Spirit of truth as the razor-sharp, two-edged sword (actually, Hebrews 4:12 states it is even “sharper” than that) the spiritual citizenry uses to defend their city.

Let’s expand the picture.

Christ said that true Christians are “the light [truth] of the world” and are a “city...set on a hill” (Matt. 5:14). Obviously, this is much more true of Philadelphia than shameful, naked Laodicea. Now notice an inspiring statement recorded by David in the Psalms: “You have given a *banner* to them that fear You, that it may be displayed because of THE TRUTH” (60:4).

When properly understood, *truth* is also literally the God-given flag—the “banner”—flying over the elevated city of Philadelphia inhabited by those defending it valiantly for (and with) that same truth.

Solomon adds another dimension to this picture—one that applies directly to Philadelphians who must always be ready to wield the *sword* of truth under the *banner* of truth. Notice: “That I might make you know the *certainty* of the WORDS OF TRUTH; that you might *answer* the WORDS OF TRUTH to them that send [Heb: “are sent”] unto you” (Prov. 22:21).

Like ancient Philadelphia, any modern *elevated* city (one “set on a hill”) would be much more clearly visible to those whom *Christ* has “sent” to it because they heard HIS “voice of truth” coming from the city fighting and *enduring* under the only correct banner.

We are not confused about what *our* role is among God’s people at the end of the age—or that there are others who will come to think (and “see”) as we do, and join us!

Rebuked and Chastened in Love

We have spent much time describing that God, through Bible study (and other means), corrects His people. When Christ tells them to “anoint their

eyes...that they may see” their deplorable spiritual condition, He follows this strong correction with the reassuring explanation of *why* they must do this.

Notice: “As many as *I love*, I REBUKE and CHASTEN: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19). The motive for all of God’s correction—chastening—is *always* love!

Proverbs 3:11-12 urges people not to “despise” God’s chastening, always given in love: “My son, despise not the CHASTENING of the LORD; neither be weary of His *correction*: for whom the LORD *loves* He corrects; even as a father the son in whom He delights.”

Of course, being corrected is no fun—and the stronger and more comprehensive the correction, the more painful it is to receive.

God, like all parents who love their children, disciplines *His* children when they need it. Since Christ is the Head of the Church, this becomes His responsibility. The hope is that God’s children will receive the correction and “straighten up”—as my mother used to tell me more often than I wish to remember. For decades, however, modern childrearing has been based on the idea that discipline, especially *strong* discipline, is something only an abusive parent—one who does *not* love his children—would employ.

How far the world has gone from the ways of God (Isa. 55:8-9)!

The passage in Hebrews 12:5-12, which discusses how to receive correction, begins by paraphrasing Proverbs 3:11-12, but uses stronger language. Hebrews is actually a closer parallel to what Christ says to Laodiceans. Notice how Paul warns the Hebrews that they had forgotten this principle, perhaps having taken on some of today’s condition: “And you have *forgotten* the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the CHASTENING of the Lord, nor faint when you are REBUKED of Him: for whom the Lord *loves* He CHASTENS, and SCOURGES every son whom He receives” (vs. 5-6).

Everything about correction hinges on how one *receives* the chastening and rebuking, sometimes administered to the point where it feels like a *scourging*. Read Paul’s words in the next two verses: “If you endure CHASTENING, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father CHASTENS not? But if you be without CHASTISEMENT, whereof *all* are partakers, then are you BASTARDS, and not sons” (vs. 7-8).

This makes *receiving* Christ’s correction—and ALL correction from God—most serious!

Do not allow yourself to become angry at God for what He has allowed to happen to His Church in the final years before Christ’s Return. He must complete the task of preparing the firstfruits before Christ comes

again. His perfect love for all of His people requires Him to do everything possible to save them (II Pet. 3:9; I Pet. 2:4). Their awful condition will force Him to use His last resort if they do not accept His chastening and rebuking—done in great love—NOW.

If you are *not* in God’s one organized Church, He is trying to correct you in the strongest possible way to get you there. Verse 9 goes on to say that some brethren give more respect (“reverence”) to a *human* father than they give to their *spirit* Father in heaven. Such people are in danger of being called “bastards” by the very God they mistakenly *think* they serve. Those who “think they stand” should “take heed lest they fall.”

How many will choose *severe correction* over being a BASTARD? Conversely, how many will choose to “bastardize” their calling through willful blindness *after* admonishment?

The world now sees God’s Church as no more than a fractured, squabbling little cult. This terribly dishonors Christ, who has been shut out of the lives of most of His people—people who are giving His entire way of life, His Church and His Work a bad name. The unwillingness to repent of a condition so shameful that it has brought reproach on God and Christ is the single greatest reason Christ will spew them into the only place that will save half!

Understand. Christ loves ALL His people—even those foolish and blind enough to walk around naked, bringing shame on both themselves and His way of life! He proves this by His willingness to speak sharply to them in His Word and through His servants. He knows that all those who *are* willing to receive His correction will be stories with a happy ending: “Behold, HAPPY is the man whom God CORRECTS: therefore despise not you the CHASTENING of the Almighty: for He makes sore, and binds up: He wounds, and His hands make whole” (Job 5:17-18).

Be Zealous and Repent

Christ’s formula for those who would recover from blindness is summarized in just two actions: (1) Be zealous, and (2) repent. Once again, there is simplicity in Christ. The entire process actually begins with ZEAL. Recapturing *this* is the first step to breaking free of the lukewarm condition gripping those who have been content to remain blind.

Nothing short of a declaration of war against your condition, carried out with tremendous ZEAL, will restore you. Then, if you follow the rest of the principles revealed in this book, you will automatically be led to the next stage—deep, profound, sincere, heartrending REPENTANCE for

having departed from God into such a horrible, wretched, miserable spiritual condition.

This includes every minister, elder and leader who reads this book!

Be careful that you are not dismissive of these words, which are merely a reflection of what Christ declares about the vast majority of those with His Spirit today. I am not exaggerating for effect! Of course, neither is Christ.

The Seven Steps of Repentance

Probably the best and most comprehensive passage in the entire Bible for understanding all of what true repentance involves is found in II Corinthians. Read it carefully, focusing on the *seven steps* to full, complete overcoming and change. You will notice *zeal* is among them:

“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage from us in nothing. For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death. For behold this selfsame thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what CAREFULNESS it wrought in you...what CLEARING OF YOURSELVES...what INDIGNATION...what FEAR...what VEHEMENT DESIRE...what ZEAL...what REVENGE! In all things you have approved [strengthened, exhibited] yourselves to be clear in this matter” (7:9-11).

The seven aspects of repentance described here are *sequential* (they appear in SMALL CAPS), and for true repentance to be present, *all* of these elements must appear.

A brief explanation of one’s actions during repentance, leading to *permanent* change, is helpful.

First, one becomes much more “careful” about sin. Next, he takes more time to “clear himself” before finding himself “indignant” at the effects sin brought upon him. This inspires “fear” of doing it again, which leads to “vehement desire” to do better. Naturally, the next logical step is “zeal” to carry this desire out. Once this is done, such people have gotten complete “revenge” on the sin that overtook them.

Do you see how this works, and the critical role of ZEAL within the final stages of the process? It is the catalyst that drives the person through the last step to godly revenge—overcoming the sin. But ALL SEVEN STEPS are God’s formula to achieve permanent change!

Carefully ponder these seven words and phrases. Meditate on their application in your own life. Then pray about them fervently and often. They carry enormous meaning for all who care about true, full repentance.

Remember again that Christ promises to “draw near” to all who “draw near to Him.” Revelation 3:20 shows that He will enter the lives of those who *act* on His chastening and rebuking. That is His promise—and Christ always keeps His promises!

Awaken From Sleep!

We have established that the parable of the virgins depicts ten Laodicean “women” who had *all* gone to sleep. Their drowsiness sprang from the fact that Christ—the Bridegroom in the parable—“tarried” longer than *they* decided He should have before arriving in advance of His wedding.

Of course, most brides *would* be concerned if the groom showed up late for their wedding. But, with extra time on their hands, and still uncertain when the groom would arrive, *all* of the virgins gave up their vigil, and “slumbered and slept.”

When the “cry” went out that the groom was arriving in the middle of the night, each virgin must have previously thought it reasonable that she could safely go to sleep at least until morning. (Remember the parable is an analogy designed to teach us vital points.) In any event, they would *never* have gone to sleep—even for a minute!—if they thought that they would ultimately *miss their own wedding!*

This warning, of how the greatest number of God’s people are asleep in the last days, is not the Bible’s only reference to this problem.

Remember, Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13 are parallel chapters describing conditions in the Church at the end of the age. Each describes the need to “watch”—which requires EYESIGHT to do—with Mark identifying *sleep* as the reason some ignore this command. Four times, from verses 33 to 37, which close the chapter, the warning to God’s people is “watch.” These verses almost methodically list all hours of the day and night to do this, to be ready for “when the Master of the house comes.” Verse 36 carries the warning, “Lest coming *suddenly* He find you SLEEPING.”

Most have not understood one of the Bible’s most fascinating teachings—that of what Christ meant when He described Himself as being “revealed” to His Church in Luke 17:30—and how this dramatic moment connects to those who are “taken” and those who are “left” at the moment of the “1,335 days” milemarker (Dan. 12:12) before Christ’s Return. Matthew 24:37-44 speaks of this same moment and of Christ “coming” in this same setting. The Bible says so much about these events—what they are, when they occur and in what sequence—that I have given an eight part sermon series that those who have heard it said they could not stop until they had listened to the whole series twice.

At some point in the future, the Church will be, quite literally, “suddenly” out of time. Are you prepared to risk being caught short in this way—because you want to pull the covers around you in order to remain cozy, comfortable and asleep in your warm “splinter bed”?

Many Warnings

There are still more passages warning of the grave danger of going to sleep on the Christian watch. Paul told the Romans what he could have been telling us: “*Now it is high time to awake out of SLEEP...The night is far spent, the day is at hand*” (13:11-12).

How true this is for all God’s people today. But will you heed? Verse 13 continues by equating the awakening process to cleaning up one’s conduct—one’s Christian *behavior*. Notice: “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in *rioting* and *drunkenness*, not in *chambering* and *wantonness*, not in *strife* and *envying*.” These are all CONDUCT problems totally unacceptable to God!

There is not enough space in this book to describe what could accurately be called the “apostasy of conduct” that has also befallen the majority of God’s people. This “other” end-time falling away—from right Christian *behavior*—is supported by many New Testament verses. Of course, when one loses sight of the truth of God’s way—when one no longer loves *all* of the truth—he certainly will not, as has been explained, be *living* it. Practicing the latter is much more difficult than merely cherishing *beliefs* held in the mind (such as the *action* of paying tithes vs. *believing* God is not a trinity or *obeying* the Ten Commandments vs. *recognizing* one is not born again in this life, among numerous others).

This is one of the reasons Christ warned, in Matthew 24, about how some of *His people* would become “evil servants,” declaring “my Lord delays His coming” (vs. 48). This surely describes the way that many have come to think today. Sadly, verse 49 describes the breakdown—the appalling degeneration!—of Christian conduct that results from this relaxation in thinking, because one thinks he has *more time* than he does.

Notice what the evil servant does: “And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the *drunken*” (vs. 49). It is interesting that Christ says He will deal with such people as “hypocrites” (vs. 51). Surely the worst form of hypocrisy is claiming to be a *true* Christian, claiming to carry the name of the true Christ—while verbally beating up (“smiting”) other brethren. And surely Christ’s description of those falling away is that of people who have a major problem with HYPOCRISY!

While *claiming* to be real Christians, they are not *living* the Book!

We have discussed the importance of fulfilling Luke 21:35-36—to “watch and pray always” in order to escape what lies ahead. The context establishes why most people cease to do this, and these find themselves taken in the “snare” (vs. 35) that will soon catch the “whole world” by surprise: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with *surfeiting*, and *drunkenness*, and *cares of this life*, and so that day come upon YOU unawares” (vs. 34).

The “falling away” of people’s conduct and behavior is being described here by Christ. The degeneration of character into such spiritual decadence could not be possible if people were staying close to God on a daily basis, and regularly examining themselves, as they should—and if they were a part of God’s Church. Of course, if people were also not properly watching as they should—because blindness and drunkenness had destroyed their sight—the time of Christ’s Return *would* certainly come upon them “unawares.”

I do not intend to make a pun when I state that one could hardly read a more *sobering* warning of the consequences of ignoring Christ’s warning about such un-Christian behavior.

Now let’s examine more verses that tie “*waking up*” to “*cleaning up*” spiritually—and the connection to recognizing how spiritual *drunkenness* overtook the entire Church. So far, *three* passages have referenced this.

How the Whole Church Became Drunk—and Went to Sleep!

Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they knew “the times and the seasons,” and understood “perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (I Thes. 5:1-2). He then reminded them, and God’s people today, that “You are all the children of *light* [but light is of no use to people who are blind], and the children of the *day*: we are not of the *night*, nor of *darkness*” (vs. 5). This sets the stage for the warning: “Therefore let us not SLEEP, as do others; but let us WATCH [requiring eye-sight] and be *sober*. For they that SLEEP sleep in the night; and they that be *drunken* are drunken in the night” (vs. 6-7).

The reference to being drunken was, in effect, to remind the brethren that “only *drunks* need to sleep it off.” Truly, in this age, a lot of God’s people have turned into *spiritual drunks*. Drunks are dull of thought, slow of speech, unable to register their surroundings as they should, illogical, unable to walk straight and too relaxed for their own good. This eventually causes them to drift off to sleep.

It was spiritual drunkenness, largely produced by the fact that many people used God’s Church as a giant, nonstop *party* for years, and this

caused them to close their eyes and drop off to sleep. We now know that most were obviously in it (or, over time, came to be in it) for the “good times,” and, spiritually speaking, the “alcohol” flowed freely. (All too often, this became a literal problem as well. I know—I saw and dealt with it.)

Be honest with yourself and acknowledge what God’s Church became for so many, as it grew to the globe-girdling size that it reached. There was literally something for everyone, and something was almost always going on. As a result, enormous numbers stopped thinking about the need to pray, study, fast, meditate, exercise God’s Spirit—and copy Jesus Christ in building the perfect, holy, righteous character of God, en route to awesome rulership in God’s kingdom.

Instead, they focused on when was the next picnic, dance, potluck, basketball and other sporting tournaments, Y.O.U., Y.E.S. or singles activity, fund-raising project, senior citizen dinner, track meet, Spokesman Ladies’ Night, talent show, S.E.P. youth camp session, snow party, deacon/elder meeting, get-together, etc. (Yet, Church Bible Studies were cancelled long before anyone felt the need to reduce any of the kinds of activities mentioned here.)

Though these things were not wrong of themselves, collectively, they became a huge distraction that literally blinded scores of thousands of people from God’s true purpose at work in their lives. This was able to happen because, with so much of their time stolen, people had stopped practicing the Christian basics—meaning they stopped living the Book (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). Intoxicated with activities, they went off to sleep. They simply had forgotten the sole purpose for WHY THEY WERE BORN—that God had put them on Earth to build His character and to be born into His very Family! While most would have said that such an astonishing “memory loss” could not happen, it did!

After the apostasy, like so many addicts, most brethren went to, and continue with, organizations that could best feed their *activity addiction*—that could best continue the familiar feeling they enjoyed of still being “churched” as they once were.

Obviously, the big splinters have been able to continue many of these things in a way the others can no longer experience—and enjoy. This is one of the biggest reasons that many will remain so reluctant to leave their big place to fellowship. No one wants to leave friends, family and the “good times” of fun, fellowship and an endless cornucopia of activities behind.

Like Paul, at the outset of many of his exhortative letters, I beseech you to see these things as they happened—and to see their connection to the arrival of the Laodicean age, which affected YOU!

Will you do this?

Wake Up and See the Light

Paul also reminded the Ephesians to produce “the fruit of the spirit in all goodness and RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH” (5:9). He continues in verse 14 by explaining, in the most graphic terms, what, once again, he could easily be saying to God’s people of our time: “*Awake* you that SLEEP, and *arise from the dead*, and Christ shall give you *light* [truth]. See then that you walk *circumspectly* [looking around—watchful—and this requires healthy eyesight], not *as fools*, but as wise, redeeming [buying back] the time, because the days are evil” (vs. 14-16).

Obviously, as you have seen, having a problem with spiritual sleepiness is not unique to this age. But certainly *our* “days” are the most evil the world has ever seen. And they will only grow *much* worse.

Did you notice the phrase “and arise from the dead” in the final passage? For some, trying to wake them up *is* like trying to “wake the dead.” If you have ever tried to awaken one sleeping this deeply, you know how futile it can be. (Believe me when I tell you that I have tried this many times throughout my ministry, with those who *were* asleep spiritually.)

Did Paul describe *your* spiritual condition? Are you of those walking “as fools” today? Almost certainly, and if so, you must awaken yourself. I can only jostle you—shake you with this book—but you must rouse yourself from sleep. Jump up! Stretch! Throw cold water on your face! Blink your eyes to begin clearing your *vision*! Get started! Waste no more time! Apply zeal! Buy back—“redeem”—the time you have lost!

Take responsibility for the condition you find yourself in. Start down the road, one step at a time, to *full* recovery and spiritual productivity in God’s Church and Work! Like the prodigal son, you must repent, *return* to what you had—and to the condition of the sixth era from which you have drifted. Do not continue as a fool asleep.

The only time God describes sleep in a good or positive context is when His saints have died, and become “asleep” in Christ. If this has not happened, in other words, if you are still alive, then you are *never*—NEVER—allowed to fall asleep spiritually!

Once awake, determine—PROMISE YOURSELF AND GOD—that you will not ever fall asleep again!—and that you will keep your eyes unceasingly on the TRUTH!

FOLLOWING THE TRUTH

In late 1992, I came to realize that my days in the Worldwide Church of God were numbered. Prior to my termination, I spent about ten weeks trying to decide, and working toward, what would be my final sermon to the 500 brethren I served in Akron, Ohio. What should I cover?

I finally settled on a plan to cover the single word “truth,” as it is found throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. As I delivered the sermon, I covered dozens of scriptures, hitting this one word from every possible angle that God revealed to me a different usage for “truth” within its context. The end result was I have never used more verses in one sermon.

Though I had preached about the truth before, this in-depth research was a unique, eye-opening experience that changed my life and ministry forever. After merely mentioning the word *truth* scores of times throughout this sermon—straight from Scripture—I was fired less than 72 hours later as a DIRECT RESULT!

I learned the sobering—and chilling—lesson of how much people can hate God’s truth while professing to love it. The sermon had not named or attacked anyone. And I chose not to even mention anything about Headquarters, specifically. Each scripture was covered in a list straight from the Bible, and I simply told the congregation of their obligation to obey—at all costs—this very long list of God’s instructions about this subject. Nevertheless, various “leaders” and others almost ran from the hall in their eagerness to see me cast from the Church.

I am eternally grateful for what I learned, *and* for having been terminated. The events of that time started in motion a process that lasted for twenty months. Let me explain.

Must Always Follow the Truth

Shortly after my termination, I began to realize that the Bible had much to say about the supremely important responsibility that every true servant of God has to follow THE TRUTH no matter what! During this time, when I saw so few brethren and ministers willing to take a stand in the face of the holocaust engulfing the Church, I knew that I was missing something in God’s Word—perhaps something that had never before been taught to the Church—that we as God’s people did not yet understand.

I soon discovered what it was.

Reflect for a moment. All of God’s people and ministry once believed that the very thought false leaders could capture the visible corporate sheepfold was incomprehensible—literally inconceivable. Strangely, despite the well-known pattern of Church history, this was something the Church had come to believe simply could not happen, and was actually thought to be *impossible*! Of course, we learned otherwise. But here was the problem. Prior to this, because we thought such capture impossible, no one had ever taken the time to examine the Bible, let alone *teach*, what God’s people should do in such an awful crisis. It was as though we thought that God tells His people what to do in every *other*—and *LESSER*—kind of spiritual problem and difficulty, but that His Word was devoid of instruction for what to do when the *worst* kind of trial possible strikes the whole Church simultaneously.

Believing that God could not have ignored such a titanic understanding in His Word, I set out to discover what He expects His people to do in the event that enemies have seized His organizational structure.

Why You Must Leave the Splinters

Over the next 20 months, through October 1994, I learned that the Bible is actually full of instruction, exhortation and DIRECT COMMANDS about what to do in the face of false leaders and/or false doctrine. In the strongest possible terms, God explains that the person who loves and has proven the truth must follow it no matter the price. (I also discovered that Mr. Armstrong had said more about this than I thought.) Each time my study reached 30 more points—“reasons”—I delivered another sermon.

Eventually, it became its own great testimony to the condition of the Church toward the truth that most WCG members did nothing and, spiritually speaking, died where they sat.

What follows is a brief synopsis of certain points, extracted from my “90 Reasons to Follow the Truth” sermon series, which apply here. Given when I was trying to show people in the Worldwide Church of God that they had to leave Laodicea (remember, this is what we generally all believed the WCG was, and would remain, prior to December 1994), they have, once again, similar application to all of God’s people scattered today. (Actually, at natural points throughout this book, I have already woven in a number of these 90 reasons, without referencing them as such. Have you noticed?)

Understand that the few points listed are summarized in the briefest manner, and hearing the sermons is the only way to grasp the fullness of all that the Bible covers about following the FULL RESTORED TRUTH, no matter the price personally. Some are also grouped together for convenience. As you read, recognize that *you* must ponder the application of each verse or principle to grasp *why* it means you must *leave* the circumstances of your splinter to obey it. Open your Bible and read along:

I John 2:19 – This passage has an inverse application to its normal use.

You will be forced to go *out from* your organization if you are not “of” it.

John 17:17 – Since God’s Word is truth, and it sanctifies us, we must go to and assemble where the (full) truth is found.

John 8:31-32 – Similarly, the *full truth*, not any organization, sets us free.

II John 7-11 – This passage warns that “if any come” bringing another doctrine, “receive him not into...your house.” If your organization teaches error, stop “receiving” it into your house.

I Timothy 3:15 – The Bible’s only recorded definition for identifying the Church is that it is “the pillar and ground of THE TRUTH.”

Matthew 15:14 – The “blind following the blind,” landing them *both* “in the ditch,” has profound and obvious application for all blind Laodiceans following blind leaders.

I Timothy 6:3-5/II Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6 – We must *withdraw* from those who depart from established truths or traditions.

Ephesians 5:5-11 – We are to “have no fellowship with darkness,” explained as anything apart from “truth.”

Matthew 6:24/ Kings 18:21 – We can neither “serve two masters” nor “halt between two opinions,” and “a doubled-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Jms. 1:8). One must leave such confusion.

Galatians 5:7-9 – Wrong doctrine is compared to *leaven*, which always spreads until it *fills* its host.

II Timothy 2:16-21 – Similarly, false doctrine is likened to *cancer* or *gangrene*, which always spread until they *kill* their host.

Jude 3-4 – Returning to “the faith once delivered” is in the context of doctrine, not just faith in God.

Romans 16:17 – *Brethren* are the ones instructed here to “mark” those that cause division or teach wrong doctrine, and “avoid them.” This requires action—movement away from the error.

Titus 3:9-11 – Heretics are to be “rejected” if they do not repent—and this cannot be carried out if one returns weekly to the *same organization* teaching the heresy.

Acts 5:29 – We are to obey God rather than men or leaders who ignore or alter His Word.

III John 1-4, 8, 11-12 – Christians must “walk in truth,” be “fellowhelpers to the truth” and “follow not that which is evil.” Obviously, we cannot follow those bringing false doctrine.

II Peter 2:22 – To follow along back to the old (generally Protestant) way of life is compared to “sows returning to wallow in the mire” and “dogs to their vomit.” Who would do such things?

II Peter 3:16-17 – To follow those teaching false doctrine is described as being “*led away with the error*”—*away* from God’s Truth, Church and Work.

I Samuel 15:23-24, 26 – The Bible defines *rebellion* as rejecting God’s “words”—His truth (John 17:17). Those who stay where this is happening, doing so under the guise of “following government,” are actually *rebell*ing against it.

Proverbs 13:20, 14:7 – These passages contrast “he that walks with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” with “*go from the presence* of a foolish man, when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge”—obviously, right knowledge or truth in this case.

Romans 2:8 – We are commanded to “*obey* the truth.”

II Timothy 1:7/James 1:8 – Those with the spirit of a “sound mind” cannot remain this way very long if they stay in a doctrinally *unsound* environment.

More Basic Principles

The following points are better described as principles, because they do not derive from any *single* biblical passage, but rather come from clear

biblical principles and correct spiritual logic. I include them here because many thousands of brethren have considered, understood and benefited from them when they heard them in the above-referenced sermons:

- All with God’s Spirit—certainly this would include all those who wish to remain Philadelphian—have to leave the lukewarm temperature atmosphere of Laodicea or, like any object in a room, they will either retain or eventually take on the same temperature.

- Sheep grazing on poisoned grass (all those in the splinters) will *eventually* ALWAYS die. When—not whether—this happens only varies based on the strength of the poison.

- Remaining with those who are compromising the truth makes one an *example* to others of compromise, complicity and weakness. This application is obvious—Christ would never permit His people to do this.

- Assuming that you still believe the true doctrines that your organization no longer teaches, and that those being called to the truth for the first time—“prospective members”—should have the opportunity to learn *all* of what you once did, ask yourself: To which organization would you direct them? Would you send them to a place you know is teaching doctrines they are to come out of? Force yourself to be brutally honest with these questions. It will actually reveal to you where you believe that *you* should be!

- Use Mr. Armstrong’s own words, quoted here verbatim from one of his last sermons, as your standard: “You reject me as Christ’s apostle if I am not honest with the word of God.” Will you apply this to your leaders?

There are many more principles and analogies that the Bible reveals about *why* God’s people must take action when faced with heresy in any form or amount. Also, a couple of the above principles may not represent an absolutely perfect parallel, with precise application to circumstances today. (All analogies have limits.) But, when put together, they paint the obvious big picture—and demand ACTION from all who honestly assess themselves under their light.

Word of Caution

I have learned deeply what Paul meant when he said, “For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Rom. 8:36), but that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus” (vs. 39).

I know what it means to *live* verse 36. Merely because of the power of the Internet, if for no other reason, I may be one of the most perse-

cuted ministers ever. I have been accused of committing a whole assortment of sins and wrongs I could not even dream of doing, let alone actually carry out. While I have battled for God’s truth my entire adult life, suffering in ways that are hard to describe, I have been astonished to watch people remain afraid to come with us solely because they believed murderous accusers, alleging that I was doing hideous things, either in my private life or here in the headquarters office of Restored.

The unconscious conclusion of some who have considered us may best be described in this way: While I am supposedly leading an evil, corrupt *personal* life, I have been able to “hit upon” the best possible “marketing plan” to fool everybody: Present myself as an uncompromising minister of God.

If this were actually my thinking, I would be one of the most stupid people on Earth! Nobody—NOBODY!—would endure the attacks I suffer “all the day long” if he were not personally *living* this way of life! Of course, I am not perfect. But neither is anyone, including servants of previous ages greater than I.

I came from a successful family, and later inherited my father’s business. If I was “in it for the money,” as some allege, and so many seem foolish enough to believe, I would *never* have sold my father’s business (and far below its worth) to my son, and I would have left the ministry in order to make MUCH more money than the salary (and *without* benefits, fleet car or big expense account) that I draw—and worked a lot fewer hours per day, besides.

Mr. Armstrong often said, “If you want to know about us, ask us, not our *enemies*.” Our enemies have much to say about us—and me. While we do not answer our accusers, we do try to inoculate others to their tactics. Seeing through the deceit and slander of Satan’s agents, so that you can process your way back to the one true Church of God and back to the full truth, is a big and very real part of the Church’s test at the end of the age.

I can only pray you will recognize this!

“Unruly Mouths”

There are many “unruly mouths” today that God will one day “stop” (Titus 1:9-11). Several “webmasters” routinely attack almost *everything* that Restored and I do. It is as though some of them carefully comb and probe my words for “weaknesses” or “inconsistencies” in order to best spin, twist and pervert my true meaning on every point. Their sole purpose seems to be to deceive, destroy and assassinate peo-

ple and organizations in their path. But we seem to get special attention. You must see for whom they are agents.

Take a moment to carefully read *how* God identifies these people, for your recognition—in John 10:10, 16:2 and I John 3:15—as “murderers,” plain and simple.

The goal of some of them is to keep their readers from discovering the dozens of false doctrines taught by their organizations. Accusing us or me becomes a brilliant tactical diversion, effective with many. Until the Tribulation dramatically changes—and *intensifies*—the test for all God’s people, no matter their temperature, their venom remains part of the Church’s test *now*. Of course, some brethren are *passing* this test. However, prophecy reveals that most will drift along, blindly trusting their leaders, and believing accusers—forcing themselves, by default, to enter the Tribulation! (My sermon on today’s “Synagogue of Satan” explain much more about the prophesied role of those who are part of this, and their effect on God’s Church.)

Mr. Armstrong was relentlessly attacked and falsely accused throughout his life. So was Christ. We are no different. But the people of brotherly love, whose tribulation is *now* (Acts 14:22), are required to endure this, with patience (Luke 21:19), in the spirit of Matthew 5:43-48.

But our accusers would be wise to apply the good sense of unconverted Gamaliel when this renowned “teacher of the law” instructed those persecuting the apostles (Acts 5:29, 32-40). Take time to read his words, focusing on verse 39. It is possible to “fight *God*.” We can say, with Paul, that there have been various modern-day “Alexander the Coppersmiths” who have “done us much evil” (II Tim. 4:14). Again, vengeance is God’s—and He says their time will come (Luke 18:1-8).

Quickly finding that they shared neither our goals nor doctrines, some of our first “members” and staff proved to be inventive liars (or sincere but totally blind to their actions), only too willing to use the Internet to spread their evil to the largest possible audience of potentially gullible readers. Like Mr. Armstrong during his difficult Oregon years with certain leaders and members, we too had to learn certain lessons early in our development. Since that time, we have seen steady, consistent, and accelerating growth.

You are responsible for doing your own thinking—or for having been willing to allow “evil men and seducers” (II Tim. 3:12-13) to do it for you. Remember, liars always ignore correct *doctrines*—and thereby reveal their true nature. In the end, you have no excuse before God for having ignored the voice of pure truth simply because an effective liar or group of liars convinced you to believe falsehoods about the human tool

God was using. You either know and believe the voice of Christ (John 10:4; 18:37) or you do not.

Decide!

What “Evil Reports” Should Teach

An important principle, directly related to how evil reports about a faithful minister should be received, springs from a remarkable passage found in II Corinthians 6.

Paul explained in this chapter that “evil reports,” mixed with “good reports,” and charges of being a “deceiver,” though he was “true,” actually *validated* his role as God’s servant! He also described his life as full of “distresses” and “tumults” (Greek: “tossings to and fro”). My ministry testifies to these things. But these are true of every high-profile, faithful servant of God.

Take time to read this eye-opening passage in verses 3-10. It contains 28 different phrases that are inseparable from the lives of ministers God is using, especially apostles. After reading this passage, you will never view either these men’s role—or their “profile”—the same again.

Have you recognized before that charges of *deceit* and *evil reports* about a man can actually help identify him as God’s servant? Does it surprise you that Paul was considered a deceiver?—that there were evil reports about him? No doubt, these accusations turned some aside from following one of God’s greatest servants (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1). They could also turn you aside from His true Church and Work today.

Proof of a man’s life never rests solely in good reports, honor, and acceptance by society. This has certainly never been the case with anyone God was using—or even of worldly leaders. There will inevitably be accusations, slander, every kind of evil report and shame brought to bear upon God’s servants. Those led by an abundance of God’s Spirit are able to see beyond such smokescreens from the accuser of the brethren. Remember, Paul also cited such things as public beatings, imprisonment, and even a stoning to the point of death, as *proof of his apostleship!*

I admonish all who profess to be God’s children: Do not listen to rumors, gossip and talebearing—evil reports. Reject them. Understand that there are “inventors of evil things” (Rom. 1:30) abroad in the world—and throughout the splinters. Realize that Christians must often endure “*all manner of evil said against [them], falsely for [Christ’s] sake*” (Matt. 5:11-12). Recognize the great power of murderous lies and deceit, and the devil’s determination to use his agents to employ these things on God’s servants (John 8:44) to scare you away.

Once again, if you still have difficulty setting aside what you have heard about Restored or me, I urge you again to read our book *Should Accusers Be Answered?* It is comprehensive, and answers many questions. You may also wish to read our thorough brochure *Do You Know "David Pack"? – My Life and Ministry—Rumors and Lies vs. Facts and Truth*. From time to time, when circumstances called for it, Mr. Armstrong would explain the details of a situation that was either misunderstood or misrepresented. I have followed his pattern in this regard.

Without Excuse

Human beings make excuses for themselves about practically everything. The spiritually honest will admit this. Because of the great challenge and difficulty of standing up and cleaving to the truth, making the choice to do this could hardly be an exception to the natural human tendency to make excuses. So, most converted minds today make excuses for their inaction, indecision and compromise.

God wants each person to be *without* excuse. Again, a fair, just, loving and all-wise Creator would never send His people to the Tribulation for matters He had not equipped them to discern. This would be gross injustice in the worst way. But you must force yourself to consider what you are doing. I repeat: "Examine yourself, whether you be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5). As you anoint your eyes, analyze your thinking with cold, hard logic. Be brutally honest. And remember that returning to God's Church does not automatically make one Philadelphian in condition and therefore immune to entering the Tribulation.

Let me reiterate a related point, central to the mind of Christ. He would also never tell His people to "anoint their eyes" without telling them *how* to do it. Think how terribly unjust He would be if He spewed thousands of His sheep into the worst punishment of all time for being guilty of something He had never explained—never equipped them to understand. Instead of being the "Great Shepherd" (Heb. 13:20), Christ would be a *monster*. No *human* parent punishes his children without *first* telling them what will bring the punishment.

This book has explained Christ's words with crystal clarity. By now, you should have *no doubt* what will bring punishment on those who ignore Christ's command, as well as what will lead to escape.

All during my childhood, my mother sought to instill in me what are called the "Rules of Logic." While these are not perfect (humans devised them), I am thankful for her diligence, because they have often helped me cut through bad logic when I see it. Some people can justify their actions

with “logic”—more like gross *illogic*—that could only be described as a wonder to behold. The ability of human nature to manufacture excuses, stemming from natural deceitfulness (Jer. 17:9), can truly be a wonder to behold.

For instance, some have said, “Well, so and so went with Restored. That group cannot be right.” God’s answer to such shallow logic is that tares remain among the wheat until the harvest (Matt. 13:24-30)—or, in this case, at least until the time of the flight to the place of safety. There are tares in *every* group—and in larger numbers than most believe! After all, they look like wheat to all but the trained eye (vs. 27). Over 100,000 people in the Worldwide Church of God—when it was “on track”—were apparently tares! No one but Mr. Armstrong seemed to truly comprehend the magnitude of their numbers—I certainly didn’t—but it did not stop the Worldwide Church of God from being God’s Church at the time.

Do you grasp this?

Ironically, others will not come until they see certain senior “name brands” join us. This is just as illogical, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the *individual* decision one must make, based solely on the scriptural facts God presents. *God* does not need or look for “name brands.”

In the end, after being used to the *comfort* of their group’s “bigness,” many brethren are too embarrassed—too proud—to walk with a smaller organization. They prefer a wealthier splinter “city,” with more “beaches, stadiums, gymnasiums, bath houses and theaters.” They seem willing to live with the foul-tasting, inadequate “water” there. Truly, for many, “pride [will] go before... a FALL” (Prov. 16:18)—a very *long* fall!

After reading this book, these will be without excuse. They will know what they have chosen, but certainly only *truly* comprehend it when it is *too late* to reverse their decision.

The enormity of our fruit, which grows larger every day, helps strip away excuses. For those with “eyes to see,” the production of The Restored Church of God stands as a towering testimony to the fact that we have God’s blessing and inspiration. Only in *this* way could so few have accomplished so much so fast with so little. This is another loud witness to the thousands that God will leave without excuse.

Standing Before God

Invariably, excuse-makers neglect an important exercise that might help them see their actions in a different—and more true—light. They fail to picture themselves standing before God trying to explain the reasons for

their behavior, compromise, inaction and indecision. If more of God's people regularly practiced just this single exercise, in every aspect of their conduct, they would see the utter folly—and grave DANGER—of what they are blindly choosing!

As though you are standing before God's throne (literally with your pants down) explaining your actions, try the following exercise with just this brief sampling of various false doctrines:

- Explain to God why you think the false leaders of the WCG had the authority to *permanently* remove His government from those remaining of Philadelphia for the rest of the age—when Mr. Armstrong said it had been revealed to this era.
- Explain why you no longer believe the one true Church and Body of Christ doctrine as you did—and that the Protestants and apostates, *not* Mr. Armstrong, had it right!
- Explain why you think the same Work Mr. Armstrong did is finished, and you no longer need to support it or have your heart in it.
- Explain why you think your group correctly permits members to marry outside the Church.
- Explain why you think wearing makeup is permissible—when Christ's apostle thundered that it is Satan-inspired sin.
- Explain why you think birthdays may be celebrated.
- Explain why you believe non-apostles or committees *may* introduce doctrine to the Church.
- Explain why you think the Revelation 3:11 command for Philadelphians to “hold fast” is not literal.

Are you still sure that God will accept your excuses? Do you really believe that you can exonerate yourself before God by saying, “My leader(s) told me it was permissible to change doctrines”? Again, the fate awaiting those who do not take all the right steps need not include you.

You have a CHOICE about your future!

What Will You Do?

A towering question returns for one final re-examination: Where are and have been all the Laodiceans? Christ's answer is that they are still primarily all those converted minds *outside* His one zealous, uncompromising, unified true Church. If this is false, three things must *all* be true:

(1) Mr. Armstrong was terribly mistaken on a broad array of *enormous* doctrines, now *correctly* taught in the splinters.

(2) All the passages seeming to show that Christ leads only one unified Church and Body have to mean something completely *different* than the obvious, and are better understood by the Protestant harlots (whom the splinters agree with) than Christ’s apostle.

(3) Christ misled His Church—or allowed it to be misled—in numerous *crucial areas for decades* (Heb. 6:18).

If you do *not* believe these three premises, you *must* leave your present organization and come to the only place with *all* the earmarks of Philadelphia!

Think about what it would mean if our decades-long understanding of all these verses, reflected by what Mr. Armstrong taught over and over, was *all wrong*. What if he had completely misunderstood or misrepresented the truth about how Christ actually governs His Church, and how He puts truth into it through apostles? (Include in your thinking his supposed additional errors in regard to a host of *other* doctrines.)

If this were true, the net result would be that the Church of God was in near darkness, on absolutely *central* points, throughout Mr. Armstrong’s ministry—and only NOW has come into the light of much fuller and greater understanding. This would mean that the division, disagreement, competition, hostility and confusion now reigning between and within the splinters is a better and more spiritually advanced state than before the apostasy.

Are you even tempted to believe this? When presented in this way, anyone who would has probably had his eyes *gouged out*—and a train-load of eye salve could not restore his sight!

The Tendency to Procrastinate

It has been said, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Solomon recorded a fascinating and related insight into why well-intentioned people often do not follow through on their plans. It is a nearly perfect parallel with the way many will approach what this book contains: “He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap” (Ecc. 11:4).

This verse discusses a spiritual principle through use of a physical analogy. The best translation of this passage comes from an unusual source, almost never worth quoting. In this case, the *Living Bible* captures the meaning better than any literal translation: “If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”

How true!

Do not tell yourself that you do not *yet* need to make a decision—that you need not *yet* leave your splinter—that you need not *yet* re-enter the Body of Christ—that you need not *yet* come under God’s government—when halting between two opinions, or serving two masters IS a decision to do *nothing*. And remember that Mr. Armstrong often cited Psalm 111:10, warning that understanding would be *taken away* from the one given it, if he did not act quickly on what had been shown.

(Reread II Thessalonians 2:10-11 for the sobering and *frightening* fulfillment of this principle foretold for many in our time.)

Woe unto all those brethren who will not act on warnings—on what they now know!

I cannot state often enough that prophecy reveals most will be unwilling to leave the splinters and their ever-worsening condition. Some of these may even have sincerely *intended* to take action, but here is what will happen to them: They will procrastinate. Precious time will pass. Emotions will diminish. Urgency to act will wane. Memory of principles learned here will fade. Sadly, and this is very hard to imagine, some may even decide, perhaps unconsciously, that merely reading and agreeing with this book, or selected parts of it, was spiritually sufficient to recover themselves from blindness. In reality, it will have been just another, much longer “lovely song” (Ezek. 33:32) that they enjoyed. Their blindness will have remained, and so will their sins. “Strong delusion” will enter, and calamity will come.

On the other hand, suppose *you* decide that all you have learned here is *much more* than a lovely song, and you decide to leave your organization. Expect to be immediately surrounded and barraged by sincere people telling you why you are making a terrible mistake. This is almost certain to happen. Get ready for it! However, just as quickly, if you successfully resist their arguments and leave their fellowship, expect many of these same people to quickly attack and belittle you as intensely as they sought to “warn” you. (Mercifully, you will probably not be there to hear most of it.)

Some Review

We have examined what happened during the apostasy and understood that brethren of two potential conditions (eras) fled from a dead church. We have seen what Mr. Armstrong did when he faced a similar decision to leave Sardis, and how he repeatedly taught the truth about government, unity, division and compromise.

We have explained the only place to start, the danger of saying “we see” and the greatest wrong assumption—forgetting that the new era’s

arrival means we are “guilty until *proven* innocent.” We have examined Christ’s double warning to Laodicea and looked at the ancient city in comparison to the modern era.

Then we moved on to carefully explain *how* God’s people can anoint their eyes, the relationship of blindness to nakedness, before discussing what Philadelphians *can* see and examining ancient Philadelphia.

Next, we examined in extensive detail precisely *how* to receive God’s “approval”—and the need to take your temperature in the process. We explained why you must choose between three fires. We carefully examined the one true Church, the Work of God, the vital role of the full truth, the correct form of government and how God selects leaders, that these things have all been put back into place in ONE ORGANIZATION—and that *all* with God’s Spirit must return to that Church.

Finally, we have shown that you *must* awaken, accept correction, take personal responsibility and repent. You *must* follow the truth at all costs—processing your way through every hurdle, obstacle, impediment and excuse that gets in your way—and LEAVE the splinters. You were asked to practice explaining yourself to God and to carefully consider what you will do.

Some points remain.

Take a Hard Look

Earlier, we read that Mr. Armstrong described one of the great earmarks of Laodicea as teaching doctrines that are “less strictly biblical.” Many leaders and ministers today mirror this description. These men certainly *say* that their doctrinal changes are biblically-based. Who would say otherwise? Now, astonishingly, over 200 easily known, but largely unrecognized, false teachings exist throughout the splinters. How could this be?

The answer: Spiritual BLINDNESS prevents these men from *seeing* their new doctrines as false.

Look around you. Examine *your* organization. Look at Sabbath services, activities, socials and gatherings, where happiness and peace seem to prevail. For a moment, put aside the fun and enjoyment of fellowship that you see, and ask yourself these two hard questions:

- (1) “Are we *holding fast*?”
- (2) “How many of us are truly *washing, cleaning and purging* ourselves in God’s Word, seeking daily more of the *anointing, the Spirit of truth*?”

Grasp this. The longer you stay, the more the law of *spiritual* inertia—that “objects in motion tend to stay in motion and objects at rest tend

to stay at rest”—comes into play. Coupled with the natural group instinct or “lemming effect”—to stay with the crowd—over time, inaction takes on a life of its own. May this sober and frighten you!

Interspersed among my words, Mr. Armstrong has shouted warnings to you throughout this book. At its conclusion, it is appropriate to include this short, simple final statement of fact from him:

“Next, when our Great Commission is in God’s sight completed, we are to be taken...to a place of protection from the Great Tribulation [Rev. 12], which in itself is the furious wrath of a mad and infuriated Satan (verse 14). While we are in this place of safety three and a half years, the two witnesses shall be preaching to the whole world, protected from Satan. But Satan in his mad wrath will then make war with the REMNANT Church. This has to be the Laodicean era of the Church (verse 17).”

CW Letter, Jan. 20, 1981

One Final Frightening Passage!

In light of Mr. Armstrong’s statement, now pause for a moment to reflect on an extraordinary passage, found in Revelation 16:15. It is Christ’s last, direct Scriptural WARNING—seemingly *out of place* in context—to all who once knew and believed the full truth. It befits the book’s conclusion.

Open your Bible and turn to the passage. Christ is clearly speaking to ALL of His people at the end of the age:

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that WATCHES, and keeps his *garments* [on], lest he walk NAKED, and they see his SHAME.”

Before continuing, reread the verse.

The Greek words used here for “watches” and “shame” are different, and even stronger in meaning, than the Greek words used in Luke 21:36 and Revelation 3:18 also translated in those verses respectively as *watch* and *shame*. (“Naked” is the same as in Revelation 3:18.) Closely examining these two words yields absolutely fascinating depth and insight into Christ’s message.

Note this well: The word in Revelation 16:15 for “shame” (*aschemosune*), found in only one other place in the New Testament, carries the *specific* connotation of the *genitals* being exposed as the CAUSE of the shame! It derives from a root word literally meaning “indecent exposure.”

Christ’s intended meaning here cannot be missed—and it is obviously tied to *everything* you have learned in “ANOINT YOUR EYES”!

Further, Christ uses the stronger word *gregoreuo* to be translated “watches.” This is because its meaning carries an additional element of *dire consequences* for the person failing to do this. This word is best translated: “give *strict* attention to, be cautious...” but its full meaning specifically goes on to convey “to take heed lest through remission and indolence some *destructive calamity* suddenly overtake one.”

It will become most clear *why* Christ uses this word *here!*

Let’s now examine the colossal point that this understanding sets up by noting the unusual *location* of the verse: It is placed within the description of the unspeakable horror occurring during the DAY OF THE LORD, within the pouring out of the sixth and seventh vials (or last plagues) on a *rebellious* mankind. Is it an accident that verse 15 is actually sandwiched directly between two *connected* verses introducing the upcoming battle at Armageddon? By this point, the preceding verses in the chapter have already graphically detailed each of the climactic, earth-shattering SEVEN LAST PLAGUES: grievous sores—oceans, rivers and springs turning to blood—fire and heat from the sun scorching men—darkness coupled with excruciating pain, etc.

Let’s understand! Christ knew that all who read Revelation would have a picture of these plagues firmly in mind by the time they come to His stunning *exhortation* in verse 15, intended to strike them like a thunderbolt because of the passage’s CONTEXT! It is as though these words are to be Christ’s final, most sobering and powerful warning to His people—His last attempt to jolt them from falling into *complacency* and BLINDNESS, which would force them to so unnecessarily endure the most terrible worldwide punishment of all time—the *Great Tribulation* for the wise virgins, and the *Day of the Lord* for the foolish ones!

Those who stay in the Laodicean condition and ultimately reject Christ’s Revelation 3 warning are being told emphatically—in no uncertain terms—13 chapters later—exactly what to expect if they ignore—actually *rebel* against—His instruction to ANOINT THEIR EYES, even in the Tribulation. The Day of the Lord and horrible death await them!

We have seen a final warning from Mr. Armstrong. Now we have also seen, quite literally, *Christ’s FINAL WARNING to His people.*

Keep It Simple

Stay basic. Do not complicate God’s Plan—or His Word. Two groups exist at the end—one small, unified, doctrinally pure and of clear thinking—the other large, divided, scattered, compromising and confused.

One group has all God's blessings and protection and one receives neither. It is this clear—this simple!

No “white knight” is coming to sweep us back into Mr. Armstrong's arms or to bring back the golden age of Philadelphia—when everything was so much clearer and easier.

I personally know many, if not most, of the evangelists and leading ministers in the splinters (including connection to several through marriage). There is no one else. God's chosen servant has spoken to you in this book. The Bible commands, “Cry aloud and spare not” (Isa. 58:1). I have done this.

Have you heard? Will you heed?

I now understand why Mr. Armstrong felt that he did not write *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*. He knew what he recorded was from Christ and that it was probably a summary of Christ's message to the sixth era through God's messenger to that era (Rev. 3:7). I feel the same about all that *you* have just read. I could not have written this book (and others to the splinters) and know that it is not my work. Rather, like *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*, it is a DIRECT MESSAGE from Christ to His people through a human instrument.

I explained earlier that the messenger (Greek: *aggelos*—“angel, messenger, one sent”) to the seventh era could not speak or warn from *within* it. All there are BLIND. Unlike Mr. Armstrong and the five messengers of Revelation 2 and 3 before him, this human instrument must speak from *outside* the era to which he is sent. Obviously, he must be able to SEE! But those with God's Spirit will come to where they can be worked with—or they will lose God's Spirit.

This book has been Christ's VOICE calling you to REPENTANCE—and SAFETY. If you ignore its words, you are without excuse! As Mr. Armstrong wrote of those who will not believe the prophecies of punishment foretold to come on America and Britain, “You may scoff now, but you will not scoff later.”

I repeat: While this warning will move *some* thousands, other greater thousands read our books and booklets every day, without taking action to join God's Church and the *true* continuation of Philadelphia to help finish the *true* Work of God. They remain stuck at the “lovely song” stage. After reading this book, how many will finally choose to “anoint their eyes...that they may SEE”?

Every one of God's people once understood how Mr. Armstrong's book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* was God, through His servant, warning *physical* Israel that they were headed for the Great Tribulation—if they did not repent. This book is His servant warning

spiritual Israel that they are also headed there—and the foolish virgins to the lake of fire—if they do not repent!

You have been warned in no uncertain terms! Take charge of your life. Remember why you were born. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Alert your friends to this book. Now turn and reread it, this time more seriously!

ANOINT YOUR EYES that you may SEE—AND ESCAPE!

Other Splinter Explanation Packet Literature

THE TRUE CHURCH – One Organization, or Many?

Jesus Christ built His Church nearly 2,000 years ago—and promised it would never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18)! Is this Church and Christ's Body still a *single* unified organization? Or, after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986, and the prophesied “falling away” (II Thes. 2:3), did it split into *multiple* organizations, groups and scattered individuals? Christ is not divided, but can circumstances divide His Church and Body? Do—or can—the actions of men make this possible? The Catholics, the Protestants, the WCG apostates and the splinter leaders all have clear teachings on this subject. What did Mr. Armstrong teach—and does it align with the Bible? This book presents facts, history and the proof of Scripture. It brings PLAIN ANSWERS!

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD – Understanding Offices and Duties

The Church of God—the biblical Body of Christ—is not divided, and is the only place where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is present, the only organization Christ leads. He has placed *offices* and assigned special *duties* within His Church. All of the splinters have rejected God's government! This has led to mass confusion about these God-ordained offices and duties. What *exactly* is a deacon?—a local elder?—a preaching elder?—a pastor?—an evangelist?—a prophet?—an apostle? What about “teachers”? Who are the “messengers” to the seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3? What do they do? Where will the Two Witnesses come from? How does the “watchman” of Ezekiel 33:7 function in *this age*? How do all these work and serve, and in UNITY? Who holds AUTHORITY to ordain today? Are splinter ordinations valid? Which office(s) can “bind and loose”? Can anyone add truth or traditions to the Church? Who is authorized to make Church-wide administrative judgments? Who supervises all congregations? This vital book answers all of these questions—and many more!

THE WORK OF GOD – Its Final Chapter!

Herbert W. Armstrong ANNOUNCED the kingdom of God to the world and proclaimed the special warning to the modern nations of Israel for 52 years! Did he teach that his death would end this commission, believing both duties to be his own “private work”? How did he instruct his successor? Does “the kingdom shall be preached in all the world” (Matt. 24:14) before the “end come” still apply? What of “go...and TEACH all nations...ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20)? What about “prophecy again” in Revelation 10:11? What is the gospel? Is Christ part of it? Did Mr. Armstrong teach—or does the Bible—that God's people should give to relief organizations and disaster victims? What did Jesus say? Also, what about “local” or “personal evangelism”? Why has The Restored Church of God rewritten *all* the literature of the Worldwide Church of God? What was our STRATEGIC PLAN? What are our two OPERATIONAL PLANS? What does prophecy say about the final Work of God?

WHY THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD? – Should You Join?

There are over 300 offshoots of the Worldwide Church of God. Most believe there are much too many groups—and already “something for everyone.” Was another really necessary, particularly when many are trying to “get the groups together”? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” This short book introduces The Restored Church of God by answering the most basic, commonly asked questions about us. We have carefully produced this material for all who want to understand the Worldwide Church of God apostasy—and what to do about it!

SHOULD ACCUSERS BE ANSWERED?

Christ described our time as the age of hatred, betrayal, offense and lawlessness (Matt. 24:10-12). Many today use and promote innuendo, rumors, outright lies and other forms of

deception to confuse and divide God's people, and defeat their confidence in Christ's ability to govern His Church. When presented with such information, what do—what will—you do? Christ said, "If they have persecuted ME, they *will* persecute YOU!" This means attacks, sometimes vicious, are a fact of life for God's people. The true Church and especially its leaders stand squarely in Satan's crosshairs. It will receive the brunt of persecution *prior* to the Tribulation, when Satan will turn on the "remnant" of Laodicea (Rev. 12:17). Certain questions arise: Should accusers be answered? What spirit motivates them? Did Jesus answer His accusers? Mr. Armstrong was attacked throughout his ministry. Did he answer accusers? Should I? What did Mr. Armstrong teach about this? What does God's Word say? This book reveals the answers—and is the policy statement of The Restored Church of God about persecution and accusation, and our response to them.

SURVIVING "PERILOUS TIMES"

Civilization has entered the "last days"—II Timothy 3:1. The context through chapter 4, verse 4, reveals that "perilous times" have come upon both the world *and* the Church. There are now many kinds of deception and "sleight of men" (Eph. 4:14) being foisted on unsuspecting and gullible brethren. This volume addresses some of the worst of those deceptions, and assists in helping you survive them all!

THERE CAME A FALLING AWAY

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God for 52 years, teaching hundreds of true doctrines. He proved them from the Bible and told us to do the same. His successors changed them *all*. Do you think *some* changes were right? Do you realize ALL were wrong? Have you recognized them? Here they are!

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