

SURVIVING
“PERILOUS
TIMES”

by David C. Pack

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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!

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of the apostasy in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), approximately 75 percent of the membership fell away from the entire truth of God. The remaining 25 percent, who fled and survived, scattered into many disagreeing organizations, forming at different intervals during the falling away. The fact that so many of the members completely departed from the hundreds of true doctrines taught to the Church during Herbert W. Armstrong's 52-year ministry, is a great testimony to the tremendous power of deception. That the 25 percent could not agree sufficiently to be able to assemble together—in one organization—reinforces the fact that additional deception, confusion and division afflicts these “survivors.”

This is not a book with six chapters, covering a single subject, but rather it is a *reference book* containing six *related articles*. Each in some way pertains either to wrong teachings now circulating in the splinters or to dangerous spiritual trends and conditions, and to false leaders whose methods of deceit are afflicting God's people with outrageous false thinking. By now, if you read the rest of the *Splinter Explanation Packet*, you should be able to recognize that the kinds of dangerous pitfalls swallowing God's people are many.

As a result, as circumstances dictate, later editions of this volume may be amended to include additional articles, explaining future problems and false teachings that have not yet surfaced among the splinters. This has already happened several times. Therefore, the title *Surviving*

“*Perilous Times*” overarches six topics, presented in the form of separate articles.

No one article reflects the overall purpose or goal of the book. Each is intended to address a different, crucial issue that has remained unanswered, unaddressed or unexplained—or explained incorrectly—within the splinters resulting from the break-up of the WCG.

The first is an article initially published in late 2000, now listing nearly 200 false doctrines within the splinters, demonstrating how the pervasive “spirit of error” is now quietly fighting for dominance in these organizations, just as the New Testament warned it could (I John 4:6). As a result, false teaching is spreading—again, exactly as the New Testament warned—like cancer and leaven! What is occurring today in the splinters parallels and has actually far surpassed the liberal period of the mid-1970s in the WCG, when the Church was so obviously recognized *then* to be terribly off track!

The second article explains the real story behind why false leaders in the Worldwide Church of God allowed women, in November 1988, to begin wearing makeup once again. The great majority of women in the splinters have followed their lead and now use cosmetics. What happened here? How?—why?—did so many women buy into such an obviously wrong practice—one that Mr. Armstrong thundered would only be reversed “over my [his] dead body”? This story has been largely untold, with simplistic answers and clichés having been offered to distort the truth about this return to false understanding.

The third article addresses the current popular belief that the wedding supper with Christ will take place in heaven. While this idea is silly, it has become widespread enough that it had to be examined in a systematic and thorough way.

The fourth article, very extensive, was originally produced in August 2012. It addressed the new teaching by the Living Church of God (LCG) that the “falling away” of II Thessalonians 2:3 is a coming WORLDWIDE REBELLION led by the man of sin. Roderick Meredith and LCG now teach that this apostasy was *not* fulfilled in the WCG in the late 1980s and early 90s. This event is no longer seen to apply to God’s Church beginning a generation ago, but rather is a FUTURE “rebellion/revolt” against God. You will see what the Protestants teach about II Thessalonians 2:3, along with exactly what Mr. Armstrong taught and what the Bible teaches. This is a much more important article than meets the eye.

The fifth article—“Dining Out on the Sabbath—What Does the Bible Teach?”—represents another major false teaching that has become widespread in the splinters. Many have now come to believe that it is

a sin to eat out at a restaurant on the Sabbath—that this is God’s great “test” today. The severity of this problem is similar to the wrong ideas surrounding the wedding supper issue. If you have not already heard of this thinking, sooner or later you will.

The sixth article, “How Does God Reveal Truth to His Church?”, explains the overall process by which God used Mr. Armstrong to bring truth to His Church in the twentieth century. As with so many other truths, many brethren are now blurring, or even reversing, their understanding of two crucial doctrinal advancements that Mr. Armstrong made in 1974: (1) circumstances that correctly permit divorce and remarriage as it applies to the Church, and (2) changing Pentecost observance from Monday to Sunday.

Now, incredibly, many hundreds who once understood the plain truth of these *necessary* changes have now convinced themselves that it was Mr. Armstrong who departed from “divinely revealed truth”—generally seeking to use against him his own statements made prior to the change. This thinking attempts to insert *Mr. Armstrong* as the true author of the apostasy, which is then deemed to have begun in 1974, having merely *accelerated* in the 1990s until it engulfed the whole Church.

Strangely, these people often find a way to assert that they are “supporting” Mr. Armstrong and “standing up for the truth”—while they are doing neither. (Our booklet *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage* and article “How to Count Pentecost” more specifically address these subjects. Any who are troubled by foolish contrary ideas, now circulating throughout the splinters, should take time to study them carefully.)

The book concludes with an “Epilogue,” which presents a special insight into the prevailing thinking of the Laodicean age. Prepared by a team of ministers, including me, it takes a careful *below-the-surface* look at ways that the thinking of brethren and ministers has been altered in the change of eras.

Two of the articles—Two and Six—had other primary writers than myself, although I was very involved. There were also perhaps six or seven additional men in each case assisting in research.

ENDLESS FALSE DOCTRINES

How *Most* Are Still Being Fooled!

False teachings—old and new—continue to fool most brethren in ALL the splinters. How many are *you* aware of? How many is *your* group teaching? Have *you* accepted or practiced them, either consciously or unconsciously? If so, which and how many are they? What will *you* do about them? Will *you* WAKE UP?

This section includes a comprehensive list of the false teachings existing, to one degree or another, within the splinters. Some are actively *taught*—others passively *tolerated*. Some are taught in one or a few groups—others in many or most groups.

Keep in mind that this is a “mixed” list of doctrines, comprised of ideas that have been *spawned within* the splinters and of others that first appeared in the WCG, but were carried as baggage, knowingly or not, *into* the splinters! *There Came a Falling Away* lists 280 doctrinal changes that *all* sprang from the apostates. But every one of the teachings on this list now exist in the splinters.

Understand! This is not a complete list of *all* current false teachings. I have had to combine and/or omit some, because we cannot keep up with the explosion of new doctrines and ideas now appearing everywhere. Assembling a complete list would be *impossible*—particularly for one person. Even if possible, it would only represent a snapshot in time, quickly outdated by newer heresies appearing almost daily within ALL the groups.

Paul likens heresy to leaven and cancer. Leaven always spreads until it *fills* its host, and cancer always spreads until it *kills* its host. This said, most are probably aware that it is no longer possible to track the rapidly increasing number of organizations and groups, let alone the false ideas they are crafting. Therefore, the list here is not exhaustive. Of course, some false doctrines are so absurd, it is unnecessary

to include them. For example, one minister teaches that Job was not self-righteous. I have not included such things for obvious reasons. Another group ordains women. This alone disqualifies it as even marginally Christian. Including these kinds of changes would dignify them—and the groups that teach them—wasting time, and unnecessarily extending the book.

A Critical Quote

The following is an excerpt from *There Came a Falling Away*. As that book developed through its many editions, I was forced to address the question of which changes to document and which to exclude. I settled on a number of 280. This statement has application, once again, for this new list.

I have avoided assigning an order of importance to *this* list. Here is why:

“By the time I wrote the appendix to the Seventh Edition of this book (June 1995), the list of doctrinal changes included had reached 280. There were over 25 other false doctrines that I decided to omit because everything in life has a limit. Although other changes have been made in the years since, I had to ask: What would be gained by making more editions—at great time and expense—to a book already proving overwhelmingly that an apostasy had occurred? At what point is enough, enough? Sufficient evidence had been presented to readers to convince even the most ardent ‘doubting Thomas’—if one had even a slightly open mind.

“However, various critics arose who *generally* agreed with the book. Many people had different ideas of what it should contain, how long or short it should be, which might be the best quotes to prove this or that point, etc. Eventually, decisions had to be made about what to include, and someone had to make them.

“The ‘buck stops here,’ with me.

“Some have suggested that certain changes included are picky or trivial. I disagree. But, if this were true, the problem would have been identifying of which it was true. Removing them or categorizing them as ‘less significant changes’ is fraught with problems. In effect, I would be assigning God’s truth a value, and would receive two-sided criticism. On the one hand, some might say, ‘I think such-and-such change should have been included among the more trivial changes.’ On the other hand, others might say, ‘How could you put change such-and-so among the smaller, more trivial ones? It’s *big*.’ Experience has shown

that no two people agree on what is ‘picky’ or what is ‘big.’ You are left to decide which are smaller and which are bigger.

“The WCG defended ‘small’ changes in the following way: ‘When we find that we’ve been wrong, regardless of how small the point may be...we have an obligation before God to change it’ (*Personal from Joseph W. Tkach, WN, June 24, 1991*).

“Therefore, if an idea was considered important enough to *teach* in the first place, and considered important enough to *change* later, I felt it was important enough to *acknowledge* here. Also, the WCG said that it felt dutybound to change any doctrine it felt was wrong ‘no matter how significant or insignificant it might seem to be’ (*J.W. Tkach, WN, Nov. 17, 1992*). Should I be less thorough in detailing and preserving God’s truth than they were in removing it?

“I have also noticed that those who feel certain changes are minor or insignificant, invariably AGREE with *some* of the changes and/or want to make *their own* changes!”

How to Approach the List

It is helpful, and necessary, to include some other points before continuing:

First, this list should not be used as a “billy club” on specific groups or individuals. Many scriptures explain why this is unchristian. Of course, you can *refer* people to the list for discussion—but this is much different from using it as a weapon. Christians are *for* the truth, not *against* people. I do, however, expect to be personally attacked by some for trying to help God’s people with this list.

Second, if you excuse or explain away changes here, you miss the whole point and do yourself a grave disservice! While focusing on the number or severity of errors taught by *other* organizations may make you feel better, it will not help you personally. You must carefully sift through the material, examining *yourself* and the organization that *you* are in. The reason there are so many false doctrines in the splinters is that leaders and their followers routinely explain them away. If you do this, only *you* will be hurt. Strive to read each point, asking, “What is *my* group teaching?” Also strive not to congratulate yourself, saying, “My group is not teaching *that*!”

Third, if you become, or are already, convicted that Mr. Armstrong taught the full truth, you will quickly recognize you are in a group that has compromised and/or watered it down, probably severely. You may want to ask your leaders *why* they are teaching so many different doctrines. After they excuse or explain them away, be persistent. *There*

Came a Falling Away lists 43 basic ways the apostates did this. It may shock you to see how many of these methods *your* ministers and *your* leaders employ. Expect clouding of the issue, intimidation, attacks on your character—or mine—and accusations of rebellion. Expect psychological tricks and terms in unsatisfactory “explanations.” For example, the apostates told those who were resistant to *their* changes that they were “unwilling to grow,” and thousands fell for it. You will almost certainly hear this again.

Fourth, some will ask why I have not taken time to “counter” all of the following heresies with extensive explanations. This would be both impossible and ENDLESS! It would tie up my ministry and our staff for the rest of our lives! Experience has also shown that *most* people who have truly bought into *numerous* heresies will not give them up—even when proven wrong. With the devil then having tied up my time, I would have been unable to rewrite God’s truths, and God could not call more people in this age into His *full truth* and way of life. (And we do not apologize for stating that we alone teach and *publish* it!)

Let me illustrate how long it could take to counter even a single false doctrine. One very popular “teacher of prophecy” declares, “There is no coming captivity for the modern nations of Israel.” By his own admission, this is “massively different than Mr. Armstrong.” He believes “Israel has been in captivity for 2,700 years.” Reasonable people—those who know even a little of prophecy—understand how ridiculous *and dangerous* this idea is. But this *giant* heresy is taught in a complex, convoluted manner—to the end that it deceives many more people foolish enough to entertain it in the first place. It would take many hours to prepare a sermon or article thoroughly debunking it. Even then, I would probably have wasted time, because few recover once they are captured by the “excitement” of this kind of extreme “new growth and understanding.” I can only tell people to reread *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* for proof Mr. Armstrong gave of the fallacy of this thinking. You may also wish to read our book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

Fifth, I long ago realized that the living Christ was fully capable of guiding His apostle to establish truth in His Church. This statement alone brings out the latent resentment, hatred and venom existing in the splinters toward Mr. Armstrong. After proving God’s doctrines, he often told us to prove them from *our* Bibles. However, so many today seem to believe that they should “grow beyond Mr. Armstrong’s limited understanding,” and *this* feeling spawns and drives many false teachings within the splinters.

Those who go back to the mid-70s remember many doctrines being watered down. A quick examination of the most “doctrinally

sound” groups reveals that they are *much* more compromised, liberal and watered down *today* than was the Church during the infamous “liberal years” of the mid-‘70s! At that time, Mr. Armstrong *roared* for over three and a half years as God used him to put the Church “back on track” (mid-1978 through 1981). Recall that this process required him to disfellowship many ministers.

With many ministers and splinters having departed *further* from the truth *now*, no honest person can doubt that Mr. Armstrong would disfellowship them today, wholesale, as he did before. Merely permitting or endorsing the use of makeup (by deceitfully claiming that Mr. Armstrong approved it in “moderation”), would bring *disfellowshipment* by him. *This* is another reason so many in the splinters resent—and even quietly despise—Mr. Armstrong!

Sixth, individual groups are not directly named in this list. The teachings are only *generally* grouped, according to the splinters accepting or spreading them. I do not apologize for the fact that people will be able to *discern* which groups are silhouetted—profiled—within this list. While I did not take the extra time to name them, I certainly have not spent time shuffling the list to *protect* organizations from identification. The perceptive reader will recognize his organization!

Seventh, in one area of the list, many verses are cited as “proof” of much “new prophetic understanding” by one group leader. While this section is long, it could have been *much* longer. Again, everything has a limit. Take time to look up at least some of these verses to better appreciate how terribly mangled is the thinking of anyone claiming such “new understanding.” The leader of the Philadelphia Church of God is guiding the changes reflected in this portion of the list.

Eighth, there are perhaps three overarching questions that apply to most of the beliefs on this list. One or more of these next questions serves as an automatic lead-in to each item. They are summarized in the following way: (1) Is *your* organization teaching or tolerating...? (2) Have the *leaders* in your organization taught or accepted...? (3) Have *you* accepted or tolerated...?

Recognize that a few teachings are identified as “policy” changes. But consider that nearly all policy has its roots in both doctrine (I Tim. 4:16) *and* tradition (II Thes. 2:15; 3:6), which are both to be held fast (Rev. 3:11). Some few points will require commentary and author’s notes, and references are found in bracketed italics.

Pay particular attention to the first *four* errors. They are all-encompassing in effect, and the introduction of the first *two* has had a devastating impact on true doctrine as a whole. Their acceptance opened the

door to the rest of the list! As you read, recognize that only ONE Church neither accepts nor tolerates *any* of these ideas!:

(1) The government of God has been discarded. God’s government has disappeared from the Church. The *apostates* “scattered (shattered)” it.

(2) Christ no longer works in one unified, organized Church. His Church—the same as the Body of Christ—now consists of many “fellowships” or “communities of believers.” [*Utterly contrary to 1 Corinthians 1:10, 13 and 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:2-16, John 15 and Matthew 12:25-30, this theory asserts, in effect, that Christ and His Body are NOW divided.*]

(3) All correct doctrine (truth) does *not* come through apostles—i.e., God can use *non-apostles* to reveal new doctrine (truth) to His Church!

(4) Mr. Armstrong was not the Elijah who “restored all things” to the Church. Former teaching has given way to two popular notions:

(a) The two witnesses will be Elijah and a second Moses, or (b) the commission of the Elijah may have been fulfilled by Christ. [*Author’s Note: While the Church’s former understanding is included here as a matter of historical record, this has been supplanted by the crystal-clear, irrefutable truth that Mr. Armstrong actually fulfilled a GREAT-ER prophetic role—that of the end-time Moses, to be followed later by another who would be the final Elijah (Mal. 4:4-6). My sermon series “First a MOSES, Now ELIJAH—130 Proofs!” brings a massive—and conclusive—body of evidence on this subject.*]

(5) Mr. Armstrong finished the commission of preaching the gospel to the world and the special “Ezekiel Warning” to the modern nations of Israel. The fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20 basically ended January 16, 1986, at Mr. Armstrong’s death.

(6) The Work is now *personal*—getting ready for Christ’s Return and the Wedding Supper. Since supporting a work no longer applies, the Christian should give tithes and offerings to “worthy causes” and assist with “disasters and relief efforts,” generally trying to help mankind.

(7) Church traditions may be changed at will (see II Thes. 2:15; 3:6).

(8) The gospel is now best defined as “the gospel of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and forgiveness *and* the kingdom of God.” Some believe there is also a separate “gospel of peace.”

(9) Church government is *not* hierarchical, with God working through one chosen leader.

(10) Top ministers may be selected by voting (after announcing their “*candidacy*”).

(11) As a result of this practice, headquarters is now more correctly called “home office” in one splinter, in effect, because no one wants

to think of it as headquarters and the field ministry directs and selects leaders.

(12) People no longer need a ministry to direct, lead and oversee them.

(13) Ministerial ranks have been eliminated in one major group and altered in others.

(14) Also, many *local* Church elders, leading independent groups, believe they are full ministers even though hundreds of ordination certificates, signed by Mr. Armstrong, state *full* ministers begin at Preaching Elder.

(15) There are not seven, separate, chronological New Testament Church eras.

(16) Therefore, there is no single, literal Place of Safety.

(17) Philadelphians will only gather into one group at the time of flight.

(18) The Passover service deletes reference to healing from *physical* sins by Christ's stripes.

(19) There is no such thing as physical sin. All sin is spiritual.

(20) The Old Testament Passover was on the 15th of Nisan not the 14th. Some are told they can quietly keep the 15th, as long as they keep quiet about it.

(21) This means abandonment of the Night to be Much Observed, the 15th.

(22) Mr. Armstrong's first (or pre-1974) divorce and remarriage position was correct. Some assert that, by changing it, *he* began the apostasy.

(23) Third tithe has been replaced by government public assistance programs. Also, several well-known pastors explain that third tithe is intended for use in local communities, not just in the Church. They instruct people to look around their neighborhood for existing needs, and distribute third tithe accordingly.

(24) There is no future captivity for the nations of modern Israel, because they have been in captivity for 2,700 years. [*This man asserts, "Mr. Armstrong suffered from tunnel vision" and "viewed prophecy through the eyes of what Nazi Germany did to the Jews—one tribe—and generally applied it to the last resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire." In other words, Mr. Armstrong unnecessarily warned hundreds of millions of an imaginary event! This idea devastates whole vast areas of prophetic understanding. Also, Laodicea need not worry about a captivity that will not come. Few things could please the devil more than seducing people from this proper understanding. MYSTERY OF THE AGES, U.S. & B.C. and other booklets are gutted in meaning by this and many other related teachings. This heresy continues by stating that Israel will ally with the Beast and the original captivity is still in effect (i.e., Israel is still in captivity). This idea, if true, virtually turns Mr. Armstrong into a false prophet—or*

God’s ability to lead him was so bad, He could not dissuade him from such a colossal error.]

(25) This minister also asserts that the “blessings and cursings” of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 no longer apply. [*This idea claims that they were voided by God’s divorce of ancient Israel in preparation to marry New Testament Israel. Numerous other wrong ideas flow from this. This man speaks of Isaiah 10 as though Assyria is actually just “spiritual Babylon.” Huge problems are attendant with this. The “seven times” (or 2,520 years) that passed over Israel, and ended in 1800-1803, now have completely different meaning in light of the above teaching...and on and on. It is no wonder this man states that his teachings are “massively different than Mr. Armstrong’s.”*]

(26) *Sunset* is defined by three schools of thought. One retired pastor teaches that the Sabbath begins when “three stars of the second magnitude appear on Friday evening.”

(27) Many now challenge Mr. Armstrong’s understanding of the Hebrew calendar. Some keep the Holy Days without postponements—thus on the wrong days. They assume the Sacred Calendar was *re-established* (not merely *re-calculated*) by Hillel after Christ’s death. Then, the logic is that those who “established” it were no longer keepers of the “oracles” (Rom. 3:1)—since they rejected Christ—meaning that they could not have had authority over the calendar. An example is that some people now keep Pentecost on Sivan 6.

(28) The spring and fall feasts often have no “meat [preached] in due season.”

(29) One leader claims to be the “Lawgiver” of Genesis 49:10.

(30) God’s names must be spoken in Hebrew (the “sacred names” idea).

(31) It is correct to say we are now “born from above” (or “born again”).

(32) Mr. Armstrong’s “interpretation” of the nature of God is open to question. (One leader has asserted that God may be a trinity with a small “t.”)

(33) Slight deviation from the Church’s teaching is not heresy. [*One old-time evangelist, now claiming the title of one of the Church’s “watchmen,” states, “Clearly, slight deviation from the Church’s traditional understanding should not be considered heresy—especially on matters that cannot be proven with 100 percent certainty.” His letter refers to “minor changes” and “minor areas.” Assuming God allows such changes—and He does not—who is authorized to decide what is major and minor? Certainly, God never does this. This idea may be the worst heresy in the splinters. It is a colossal change, in size and impact on Church unity. It is what keeps “Pandora’s Box” open, repeatedly splitting groups, with devastating results.*]

- (34) The Key of David is government, not Israel's identity in prophecy.
- (35) The Church is not our mother.
- (36) Varying degrees of birthday-keeping is up to each individual.
- (37) Interracial marriage may be unwise, but it is neither wrong nor sin.
- (38) Baptized people may date and marry the unbaptized.
- (39) Wearing makeup is permissible because it is merely an "administrative matter," and "Mr. Armstrong went back and forth on it."
- (40) Sabbath dress has become lax. [*See II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6.*]
- (41) It may be said that there are *five* resurrections, with three "major" ones.
- (42) People may occasionally skip Sabbath attendance (or the "assembling of themselves together") for any number of reasons.
- (43) Unleavened Bread need not be eaten on each of the seven days of UB.
- (44) Most brethren now tithe on net instead of gross income.
- (45) "Brethren" can sue other brethren. [*Ignores I Corinthians 6:1-8.*]
- (46) The Marriage Supper occurs in heaven.
- (47) The Wedding Supper starts on Pentecost (and lasts until Trumpets).
- (48) God's Church has many "branches." [*John 15:1-5 shows it is each MEMBER who is a branch.*]
- (49) Women may teach scripture.
- (50) Men may wear earrings. [*See II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6.*]
- (51) Long hair on men and short hair on women, including ministers' wives, are not addressed, deemed unimportant.
- (52) An open-door policy governs Church attendance.
- (53) The unbaptized may attend Passover and participate in the foot-washing.
- (54) Peter was not sole leader of the New Testament Church.
- (55) God may not be sanctifying children of split marriages as we thought. [*See I Corinthians 7:14.*]
- (56) Wives of ministers may obtain full-time jobs. [*This means they cannot remain 50 percent of their husband's ministry, as Mr. Armstrong always taught.*]
- (57) Christ is the "end of the law" (Rom. 10:4) does not mean "aim or goal."
- (58) New moons may or should be kept in the New Testament era.
- (59) Doctrinal dissenters may be kept in the Church and rogue ministers tolerated. [*Only those unwilling to compromise are disfellowshipped, with those carrying it out proclaiming that it is for "other reasons."*]
- (60) Preferably, seek doctors' advice before anointing (tacitly or openly done).
- (61) Conversely, it is anti-faith to *ever* seek the counsel of doctors.

- (62) Voting in local, state or national elections is a personal decision.
- (63) Some tithes may be given to the local congregation instead of to Headquarters—for building programs or other local matters.
- (64) Jury duty is not wrong, because Christians make the best judges.
- (65) Members may carry guns (one minister kept a loaded revolver under his car seat and another in his trunk, and even carried a Deputy Sheriff’s badge) and the Church should not tell “member” policemen not to carry guns.
- (66) Insurance is wrong.
- (67) Abortion is not always murder.
- (68) One must no longer leave worldly clubs and organizations before baptism.
- (69) *MYSTERY OF THE AGES* is about half, or maybe three-quarters, correct.
- (70) Christ was not and could not be tempted by sin. [*Same as apostates taught.*]
- (71) Earth is 6,000 years old, and dinosaurs co-existed with Adam.
- (72) Regulating hunting is unbiblical.
- (73) The Beast may be a computer and not a person.
- (74) Sermonettes are often Protestant.
- (75) College accreditation was good. [*Mr. Armstrong taught otherwise.*]
- (76) *Mrs. Armstrong* was a prophetess and much of what Philadelphia learned came through her dreams and visions.
- (77) More prophets and prophetesses will have dreams and visions, and may soon appear in various groups (some ministers already claim to have this ability).
- (78) Sorcerers will soon begin to persecute Philadelphians.
- (79) *Mr. Armstrong* may not have been an apostle.
- (80) The Passover is a *celebration*. [*Just as taught in the apostate WCG.*]
- (81) “Apostasia” (II Thes. 2:3) does *not* mean a “defection from truth.”
- (82) The Church did *not* begin in A.D. 31.
- (83) There were *not* 3,000 baptized on Pentecost in A.D. 31.
- (84) Christ’s Spirit is different from the *Holy* Spirit.
- (85) To leave the Laodicean condition, we must return to the Ephesian Era, not Philadelphia.
- (86) There are true Christians in false churches—even those not keeping the Sabbath.
- (87) Love is more crucial than doctrine. Just reaching out, being kind and having genuine love will unite God’s people. [*Many groups as much as espouse this, with some saying it outright.*]
- (88) Periodic attendance with other organizations helps promote unity.

- (89) Protestant “do-gooding” should be practiced in local communities.
- (90) One leader considers his book to be the “little book” of Revelation 10, and that it fulfills Revelation 3:20—Christ knocking on Laodiceans’ doors. [*Many prophetic ideas that follow (through #170) depict a doctrinal tragedy—a prophetic “holocaust”—of epic proportions, playing out in one group. I list many changes taught there, partly because all need to be warned of how far from God’s Way thousands can wander—in the name of “new revelation,” “new truth” or “growth in understanding”—once they cease holding fast to exactly what God taught through Mr. Armstrong. I hope I have properly represented these complicated, nearly impossible-to-understand teachings.*]
- (91) Revealed prophecy: “The [group name] has kept all the revealed knowledge God gave to Mr. Armstrong. All of the Laodicean groups have rejected at least part of the revelation. Therefore *God has given them no new revelation since Mr. Armstrong died! But the [group name] has been flooded with new revelation.* We are the only group that is eating from the tree of life...” (quote from leader)
- (92) The Seven Thunders (Rev. 10:3) are the seven chapters of (leader’s) book.
- (93) Malachi is (leader’s) message to the Laodiceans and Philadelphians.
- (94) “The little book and our message is to measure the Church to prove that they are Laodiceans...” (ibid.)
- (95) “Through [leader’s book] God has opened up shocking new truths concerning His end-time Church from the books of Daniel, Amos, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Revelation...Many of the prophecies...*previously believed to apply to worldly religions*, actually describe events...within the Laodicean era...” (ibid.)
- (96) Backing and supporting this message...(of leader, through his book) is one’s ticket to the Place of Safety (p. 146 of his book).
- (97) Revelation 11:1-2: Everyone that has God’s Spirit and is not a member of *this group*—is “outside” God’s temple—is in the “outer court” of the temple.
- (98) “Where is God’s temple today? It is the [group name]! Where is God’s temple treasure today? It is within the [group name]!” (ibid.)
- (99) Incredibly, all those who have God’s Spirit within the many groups, including immediate family members, are disfellowshipped and cannot be contacted by those in the “inner court.” [*This is actually derived from a horribly butchered rendering of what Mr. Armstrong instructed the Church in the 1970s.*]
- (100) The reward, “To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne” (Rev. 3:21) is *not* for Laodiceans, but rather Philadelphians.

Laodiceans enter the kingdom, but are not in God’s Temple or at Headquarters with Philadelphians.

(101) “The [group name] is our ‘nail in his holy place’ in this end time... We are reviving God’s only Work. No other group on this planet is doing God’s Work...” and “The [group name] typifies Ezra’s work in this end time. Ezra 3:3...*the altar, or the work of the [group name] ministry, is established on the right foundation...*” (ibid.)

(102) And yet, this leader declares that the primary purpose of the Church—its “work”—is now to “expose Satan and his evil.” [*In a similar butchering of the Church’s most fundamental commission, this has replaced preaching or announcing the kingdom of God to the world and warning the nations of modern Israel.*]

(103) The great multitude of Revelation 7:9, 13-14 consists of previously unconverted people who repented as a result of the Tribulation and came out of it, *having survived it without suffering.*

(104) The phrase “the sacrifice...taken away” (Dan. 8:11; 12:11) is interpreted: *sacrifice* means the church, and *taken away* means taken to the Place of Safety.

(105) “Pestilence” (Matthew 24 and other places) means racial unrest and riots. Leader also falsely predicted that the O.J. Simpson trial would produce a guilty verdict and bring race riots.

(106) Jews have been notorious troublemakers throughout history everywhere they went, bringing misfortunes like the Holocaust *on themselves.*

(107) “Prophesy again” in Revelation 10:11 means “after the Church rebelled, God commanded His very elect to ‘prophesy again’ (Rev. 10:11)” to the Church (ibid.).

(108) The “very elect” of Matthew 24:24 cannot be deceived.

(109) 19-year time cycles were merely Mr. Armstrong’s passing interest. Dismiss them.

(110) Virtually all O.T. prophets’ messages are to Philadelphia about Laodicea.

(111) Daniel 12:1—“The people taken to a place of safety are found written in the book of remembrance (Mal. 3:16)...” (ibid.)

(112) Malachi 1:2-3 shows Esau (Edom) and Jacob (Israel) are coded words: Esau is WCG Laodiceans who lose salvation. Jacob is all other Laodiceans.

(113) Malachi 2:4-6 is a prophecy of Mr. Armstrong.

(114) Malachi 2:14-16 is a prophecy about Laodicean ministers’ treachery to “the wife of your youth.” The “wife” is the Church God built through Mr. Armstrong.

(115) Malachi 3:8-9 refers to Laodiceans robbing “the whole world” by not supporting (group name) in delivering God’s message. The phrase “smite the earth with a curse” (4:6) only refers to a curse on the Laodiceans, not the earth.

(116) The “end-time Joshua” of Zechariah 3:1-9 and the “man of sin” of II Thessalonians 2:3 both refer to the WCG leader—first the father, then, when he died, his son. [*Imagine one who is supposedly a true prophet of God having become so confused about the identity of the MAN OF SIN—the final false prophet—at the end of the age.*]

(117) Daniel 8 refers to same WCG leader who “will be an end-time Antiochus. His goal will be to crush the faith of spiritual Israel—God’s Church” (ibid.).

(118) There are two abominations of desolation. The first is Antiochus Epiphanes. The second is WCG leadership. “There is also an end-time abomination of desolation, as prophesied here in Daniel 8 and Matthew 24 and Luke 21... You know that there is an abomination of desolation going on even now! Daniel 8 is discussing transgression, truth being cast to the ground—a satanic host practicing and prospering at destroying the daily—all from within the sanctuary, God’s own Church, inside the Church, a man is acting like God, magnifying himself even to the prince of the host, casting truth to the ground” (ibid.).

(119) The 2,300 days (evenings and mornings) or 1,150 days (Dan. 8:12-14) is the daily sacrifice taken away on January 16, 1986 for 1,150 days until (leader’s book) was written, on March 11, 1989. Then God began to “cleanse the sanctuary.” Several quotes follow: “Using January 16, 1986, as our beginning point makes Saturday, March 11, 1989, the end of the 1,150 days. As most of our readers know, I was fired from the Worldwide Church of God on December 7, 1989, for upholding what Mr. Armstrong taught. That was nearly nine months after the 1,150 days ended... And I had been working on the manuscript for nearly nine months! Though I do not remember the exact date God began revealing [book name] to me, it is safe to say that it was on or around March 11, 1989, God began to cleanse the sanctuary. True, it began with just me... Verse 12 says an army was given to Satan ‘against the daily.’ By him the ‘daily’ was taken away... Today the temple is the Church—so, again, the ‘daily’ in prophecy refers to the sacrifice, or Work, of the Church.” The daily sacrifice taken away, of Daniel 12:11, will be when the work of the (group name) will end. “The continual is not a physical sacrifice—it is a mind-stirring vision! This DAILY refers to a spiritual Work of God DURING ALL OF MAN’S HISTORY...” (quotes from leader). [*This is a phenomenal*

mangling of an end-time prophecy—Daniel 12:11-12—that all true Christians should watch for.]

(120) Ezekiel 9:1-11 is about the spiritual slaughter of God’s Church by an angel: “...The worst slaughter physically is in the Tribulation. But the spiritual slaughter begins in God’s sanctuary—His Church” (ibid.).

(121) The 144,000 are the Laodiceans that will die in the Great Tribulation.

(122) (Leader’s name) says Isaiah 3:16 refers to the Laodicean Churches. [*Mr. Armstrong understood it refers to the women of modern Israel.*]

(123) Related to this, this leader believes and teaches that the WCG—now a completely spiritually-dead Protestant/Evangelical church with virtually no truth—is still Laodicean, and in the category of the splinters.

(124) Isaiah 22:15-19 is a prophecy of the end-time WCG leader who succeeded “Eliakim”—a code name for Mr. Armstrong.

(125) Isaiah 28:9-14 and 40:9 are prophecies about Laodiceans and national Israel to whom (group leader) “...must deliver the good news to God’s own Laodicean Church and to all Israel.” He continues, “These verses are directed primarily to God’s own people.”

(126) Isaiah 58:1—“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet...” refers to (group name) warning the Laodiceans.

(127) Isaiah 66:3—“Today, that means God’s Laodicean Church is eating unclean spiritual food and going their own way...” (ibid.)

(128) “The Holy Roman Empire...is the abomination of desolation” (ibid.).

(129) Matthew 24:15-18—The flight referred to here is “spiritual” since God’s people will have already been taken to the Place of Safety.

(130) Matthew 24:40 refers to “two...leaders in God’s Church.” Verse 41 refers to “two separate Churches, but both of [whom] are God’s Churches” (ibid.).

(131) Isaiah 1:7 refers to “your cities are burned with fire—caused by the blacks’ rioting like the L.A. riots in May 1992...There is deep racial division and hatred in America” and the Ezekiel 5:12 reference to “A third part of you shall die with pestilence...can be defined as a plague of violence or burning or of violence and rioting” (ibid.).

(132) Jeremiah 1:7-8, 11-15 refers to (group’s) message and task in end time.

(133) Jeremiah 3:6-12: “...this means spiritual Israel, the Church.”

(134) Jeremiah 11:9-21, 13:1-10 is God’s end-time Church turning from God.

(135) Jeremiah 15:6, 9 is explained as “...this is referring to a woman—God’s Church—and the seven eras...” (ibid.)

(136) Jeremiah 2:21-28, 17:1-18, 18:11-18 and 24:1-10 are prophecies on God's end-time Church.

(137) Jeremiah 44:10-19 is God's end-time Church rejecting His government.

(138) Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 refers to "...the Laodicean Church era punished by God in the Great Tribulation..." (ibid.)

(139) In Ezekiel 11:4, "Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man..." refers to the fact that "God commands the [group] to '*prophesy against*' this Laodicean heresy!..." and 13:11 refers to "a stormy wind...*This has to be the work of God's [group] Church today!*" (ibid.)

(140) Ezekiel 16:8-18 is a prophecy of ancient Israel, but is more a prophecy of the Laodicean Church. "This is referring mainly to an end-time wife who rebels and must go into captivity" (ibid.).

(141) Ezekiel 33:33 is "A final warning message immediately before the holocaust! That message is delivered by the [group] after HWA's death" (ibid. 1992).

(142) Ezekiel 44:15-16 is explained as "This is a prophecy of what the [group name] is doing today in the midst of great disloyalty to God" (ibid.).

(143) II Kings 21:1-3, 9, 16 is explained as "God likens his example to what happened in His end-time Church...This is a shocking prophecy!" (ibid.)

(144) Ezra 9:8 is a prophecy of a Philadelphian remnant.

(145) Jude 14 means ten thousand Philadelphians will be in the Place of Safety. [*This illustrates the same utter butchery of prophetic understanding we have seen in his previous statements. Jude 14 is a plain statement from Enoch that ALL of the saints who return with Christ total "ten thousands"(plural). Read it.*]

(146) Hosea 1:1-3 is explained as "Hosea is discussing *God's own Church...in this end-time!*" and 1:4-9 is a prophecy of the end-time Church. "...They were God's people in the Philadelphia era..." (ibid.)

(147) Hosea 3:1-5 means "God's end-time Church committed adultery and whoredoms" (ibid.).

(148) Hosea 5:9 means "not only a prophecy of Britain's downfall, it is a prophecy that God's Work would continue...Today these servants are in the [group]" (ibid.).

(149) Joel 1:8 means "God is addressing His Church spiritually..." and 1:9-16 is a prophecy about the Laodicean Church.

(150) Joel 2:23-26 means "...God is still addressing His Church...a remnant of which will not be cut off...[group] receives God's spiritual

rain...” (ibid.) and verse 28 “refers only to all of the Laodiceans in the Tribulation before the Day of the Lord” and verse 29 means “...these people begin to serve God in the Great Tribulation...” (ibid.)

(151) Amos 1:1 is explained as “...discussing God’s spiritual family... The book of Amos is mainly focusing on God’s Church!” (ibid.)

(152) “‘Prophesy not’ of Amos 2:11-12, refers to the WCG’s leadership and God’s own people...of the end time...ministers God raised up and they are divided” (ibid.).

(153) Amos 3:1 is “primarily discussing God’s *spiritual family*” (ibid.).

(154) Amos 3:3 means “The controversy over a watering down of God’s truth *causes a Church split* and verses 7-8 “But God continues to reveal to the [group]...which was given God’s ‘secret’” (ibid.).

(155) Amos 7:8 means “This [group] Work is God’s final warning to the Laodicean Church...” (ibid.)

(156) Micah 1:13-16; 2:1-8 is a prophecy of God’s end-time Church—Laodicea and Philadelphia—and 1:15 refers to Philadelphia at the Place of Safety.

(157) In Micah 2:12-13, “the breaker” and “their king” is the group’s leader.

(158) Micah 3:1-3 means that apostate Church members have been “spiritually...skinned and had the flesh ripped from their bones” (ibid.).

(159) Micah 3:9 means Laodicean leaders “pervert all equity” but 4:8 refers to (leader’s name).

(160) Micah 6:1 explains that (group) is to fight and contend with Laodiceans for God’s truth.

(161) Micah 6:16 is a prophecy of WCG leaders and apostasy: “Has there been a father and a son team today that has *destroyed spiritual Israel by bringing into God’s own Church the worship of Baal...?*” (ibid.)

(162) In Micah 7:4, the “watchman” is (leader).

(163) Habakkuk 1:5 is explained as “a prophecy about [group]...” (ibid.)

(164) Habakkuk 2:2 refers to “The message [that] is going out through [leader’s book]” (ibid.).

(165) Habakkuk 2:18-19 refers to “the WCG has become a teacher of lies” (ibid.).

(166) Zephaniah 1:4 “refers to God’s Church. Verse 4 is all too descriptive of what has happened in the WCG and all but one of its branches today” (ibid.).

(167) Zephaniah 1:8 refers to Laodiceans wearing “strange apparel” and verse 9 is a reference to “..all those that leap on [over] the threshold” which is “...what is taking place within the Laodicean Church today” (ibid.).

(168) Haggai 1:7-11 prophesies of Laodicean leaders. Verse 12 references, “The [group] does represent the obedient remnant in this end time” (ibid.).

(169) Haggai 2:4-7 speaks of (group). “At times, it can appear that the [group’s] commission is overwhelming. But God tells us to be *strong... and work*” (ibid.).

(170) Haggai 2:8-9 speaks of (group). “...WE must look at these verses spiritually. All the silver and gold...is a mere pittance compared to the riches God is building in our lives,” and verse 11, “Haggai shows us that the Laodicean ministers have a law or government problem... Verses 15-17 is God addressing the Laodicean Church” (ibid.).

(171) The Day of the Lord began on October 2, 1997, and extends throughout eternity. [*Taught by above leader’s former elder, who started his own group.*]

(172) Abandonment of Matthew 18:15 as a means of solving problems between brethren. [*As much as false teachings, this and the next three points reflect a TEMPERATURE CHANGE in many groups. They may also partly reflect why so many have gone completely out of control among the splinters.*]

(173) Most ministers fear to correct and direct members, and rarely visit or counsel them.

(174) Sabbath services are very lax—people even make and take cell phone calls and youth play boardgames during services. Disorganization and starting late are widespread.

(175) Disfellowshipment for heresy and the sowing of division is no longer practiced in most groups. [*Most often, this action IS taken against those who will NOT compromise God’s doctrines. The nearly wholesale abandonment of this practice explains why so much false teaching and division exists among the splinters. Also, neglecting this practice is connected to the abandonment of God’s form of government. This neglect does, however, fit well with the idea that having love toward people spreading false doctrines is more important than preserving unity through an action that seems “unloving and abusive” to human reasoning! See changes 5, 88-90 regarding love and 7-13 regarding government.*]

(176) The “abomination of desolation” no longer refers to armies surrounding Jerusalem. One small but popular ministry, specializing in much false prophecy, then teaches, “Therefore, in the end of this age, there could be no abomination of desolation in a physical temple nor on any altar...” The leader’s logic continues by stating that the abomination of desolation happened within the WCG when it threw out the

truth. This heresy claims that the abomination is now *history*, and no longer *prophecy*.

(177) In relation to the abomination being set up, the Bible instructs Christians to “flee to the *mountains*.” The new claim is that this phrase refers to fleeing into the *splinters*. Notice how this falsehood is presented: “We have always understood that mountains refer prophetically to governments or nations. How could this apply to the scattered Church? When an abomination of desolation began to work upon the Church, God’s Church began to scatter. This scattering also resulted in the fragmenting of the government that had existed in a single organization called the Worldwide Church of God, where the Body of Christ—the spiritual organism of the Church of God—had existed for several decades. When scattering occurred, the previous government began to emerge in the form of *prophetic mountains*—new organizations, but scattered. Brethren had a kind of safety for a time from the immediate destruction that was working upon the Church as the abomination of desolation began” (emphasis ours). [*What absolute nonsense!*]

(178) Similar to the false prophet whose many changes are listed above, this same man teaches that the man of sin “is no longer prophetic in nature, but is now a matter of history for the Church—end-time prophecy fulfilled.” Ignoring the fact that Christ is to destroy this man at His Coming (II Thes. 2:8), he teaches that Mr. Armstrong’s successor was the “man of sin” and the “son of perdition.”

(179) Ezekiel 5:1-2, describing Ezekiel’s hair divided into thirds, reflecting God’s punishment on physical Israel, has actually already been fulfilled in the Church. [*In truth, only verses 3 and 4 refer to the Church.*]

(180) The first five seals of Revelation now *only* pertain to the Church, with the sixth primarily pertaining to the Church. Notice this ridiculous application: “It is difficult for brethren to grasp that the first five seals are *exclusively about the Church* and not the physical world around us. Even the sixth seal is very much about the Church because it reveals a time for the end of spiritual tribulation upon the Church and the beginning of physical tribulation upon this world.” Following are this man’s new interpretation of the seals: 1st Seal = false ministers [*instead of false religion in general*]; 2nd Seal = false doctrine [*instead of war*]; 3rd Seal = spiritual famine [*instead of actual famine*]; 4th Seal = repetition of first 3 seals on scattered Church [*instead of pestilence*]; 5th Seal = announcement that the spiritual tribulation is nearly over [*instead of Great Tribulation*]; 6th Seal = sealing of the 144,000 [*instead of heavenly signs*]; 7th Seal = beginning of Great

(Physical) Tribulation [*instead of the seven trumpet plagues, concluding with Christ's Return*]. On the same subject, followed by his own thoughts, he claims the interpretation of the 5th seal was wrong in the past: "Now we come to a seal that has been deeply misunderstood—an interpretation that has been in error."

(181) The same man states that "We are so very close to the opening of the final seventh seal. When you read this, that seal may have already been opened with God's two end-time witnesses already doing their work—just prior to the return of Jesus Christ." [*You figure out what he is trying to say.*]

(182) One of the large splinters claims that "Philadelphians" must receive a "second" spirit, described as "Christ in us." This ignores Paul's warning in II Corinthians 11:4 about "another Jesus" and "another spirit." [*Receiving this spirit supposedly achieves a higher level of conversion. This idea is particularly dangerous, since it directly invites an ALIEN spirit—demons—into the mind.*]

(183) Ezekiel 34 (in conjunction with Jeremiah 23 and Zechariah 11) is used to refer to the Church and not the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This idea continues by stating that the phrase "there is no shepherd" means that you do not need to follow God's government or *any* ordained ministry, because the *entire* ministry can no longer be trusted.

(184) The largest splinter now believes that Christians are "born from above." While they have not yet used the term "born again," they speak of conversion as a type of "new birth" or "rebirth."

(185) Correspondingly [*exactly like the Protestants*], this splinter has gone on to describe conversion as primarily a *specific event* culminating with baptism, rather than primarily a *process* continuing throughout a Christian's life. [*This subtly moves brethren toward the concept that conversion is a "born again" religious experience.*]

(186) Precisely like the apostates who taught them—and who obviously still influence them—the above splinter now states that when Nicodemus was told that he could "see" the kingdom of God, he was actually being told that he could *comprehend* it once he was born again. Notice this quote: "...does the word 'see' (verse 3) mean 'to perceive' and 'to understand' or does it mean only 'to see' in a literal sense? A converted individual will 'see' the Kingdom of God *in a sense* (Matthew 13:11, 13, 16). He will understand what it is. It has deep meaning to him. It is no longer a mystery to him, for he 'sees' it, *understands* it as never before."

(187) In a rare statement of honesty, this splinter states that the Church is not our mother, and thus openly admits that they cannot be the true

mother of God’s people. [*Ironically, when church groups reject their role as mother of their brethren, they exclude any possibility that they can, in fact, BE the true Church and the mother that God intended it to be.*] Notice this group’s candor: “For example, the place of the mother is conspicuously absent in the analogy of the new birth. Christ is the ‘firstborn among many brethren,’ but who was His mother in the spiritual sense in this analogy? Some believe the Church is the mother in the analogy. However, there is no scripture that refers to the Church as the mother and the Church certainly could not be the spiritual mother of Christ. The Church is referred to as the bride of Christ...not the mother.” [*This teaching denies the Church’s long-held understanding of Revelation 12, revealing that Christ was born of the Old Testament “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38)—physical Israel. It also denies Galatians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:22-23, which reflect spiritual Israel, described from Revelation 12:6 to the end of the chapter. Mr. Armstrong’s born again booklet went to great lengths to tie the Church’s role as our mother to the true understanding of how being born again is ENTIRELY connected to the resurrection of saints at Christ’s Return. Grasp how heresy works like cancer, always spreading to engulf other doctrines! If one is born again at conversion, the role of the Church as a mother carrying begotten children UNTIL BIRTH must eventually be cast aside. Similarly, as already mentioned, the conversion process, pictured by a child DEVELOPING in the womb, must eventually be replaced by the Protestant idea that conversion is largely a religious experience. Keep watching, because people believing these things must eventually go on to believe they are saved in this life and that Christ kept the Law for them.*]

(188) Healing does not always involve forgiveness of sin. Notice what the largest splinter teaches: “We can not conclude from scripture that all illness results from sin...With this understanding from scripture, we conclude that healing is not always the result of the forgiveness of sin...It should also be noted that if all healing is the forgiveness of sin, then one should be made physically whole at the moment of baptism or else we have to conclude the baptism to be invalid.” [*The last statement is particularly ludicrous, because it denies that there are obvious, permanent PHYSICAL EFFECTS from sin. These can result from either physical or spiritual sins committed by previous generations, sins committed in one’s earlier life or committed after baptism. The latter are also not automatically removed because one ALREADY IS baptized.*]

(189) Holy Day offerings are to be given three times (derived from “three seasons”) a year, not seven.

List May Expand!

As more false teachings appear, we may continue to periodically amend this list, and we have already done this several times!

Truly, the Laodicean condition *is* “lukewarm...wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:16-17). You must recognize how awful this condition is if you are to “hold fast” and keep “your crown” (vs. 11).

Finally, now that you have read the list, I repeat: Only ONE Church neither accepts nor tolerates *any* of these—or any other—false ideas!

MAKEUP: WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CHURCH!

Many have asked about the story of Mr. Armstrong's decision to disallow makeup in the Church. This was one of the first doctrines (November 1988) the WCG apostates changed. Lacking the facts—the real story—most of the splinters have unwittingly believed these false leaders instead of Mr. Armstrong. This article reveals what really happened in 1974, 1981 and 1988, now forgotten in the splinters.

This article was once the APPENDIX to our booklet *The Truth Hidden Behind Makeup*. While it is not directly part of that doctrinal teaching, that booklet originally seemed incomplete without this additional material. This is because some have attempted to rewrite Church history, even claiming what you will read here never happened.

Here are the facts—the TRUTH—of what *did* happen in God’s Church.

1974, 1981 and 1988

In 1955, Mr. Armstrong wrote an article “Why the Church Ruled on Makeup” in *The Good News* magazine. This established the Church’s official doctrine on the subject and led to an extensive booklet, in 1964, *Truth About Makeup*. (Our booklet represents what his taught.) The teaching of the Worldwide Church of God did not change from 1955 until 1974.

In 1974, a controversy arose over a minor misunderstanding of a quote from *Clarke’s Commentary*, referencing Isaiah 3:16. Mr. Armstrong was presented with the evidence of this error. He acknowledged it, and wrote a brief note correcting it as he was boarding a plane for a trip overseas.

This is how he described what occurred: While he was gone, others added to what he wrote and formally changed the Church’s doctrine on

makeup—essentially without his knowledge, but under his signature. He was away from Headquarters most of the time (traveling around the world), and the rest of the time he lived in Tucson, Arizona. This, coupled with his diminished eyesight, caused this deception to escape his attention until November 1981.

When he saw what had happened, Mr. Armstrong roared to life and reversed the annulling of the Church’s long-standing and correct teaching on makeup. Apologizing, he did this on November 16, 1981, in an extensive article titled, “How subtly Satan used MAKEUP to start the Church off the track.” It appeared in *The Worldwide News*, the WCG’s member newspaper. (He simultaneously addressed makeup in numerous sermons and Bible studies, which are excerpted in the inset.)

Mr. Armstrong did not equivocate in his article. He explained what happened in 1974, apologized to the Church for his part in it, and forcefully corrected the last major doctrinal element of liberalism—that of the use of cosmetics—that had remained unaddressed in the Church from the mid-1970s.

Some now claim that Mr. Armstrong never actually reversed the change of late October 1974. You will see that he did. They do this because either the passing of time has dulled their memory of major events, or they need to be dishonest with history to suit a larger agenda, including a personal refusal to remove makeup.

Enter the Apostates

Mr. Armstrong died on January 16, 1986, four years and two months after correcting the Church’s error on use of makeup. Subsequently, false leaders were able to seize total control over the Worldwide Church of God and lead it into full-blown apostasy—eventually throwing out virtually every doctrine of the Bible, thus completely departing from the true God. True to the long pattern of Church history, most in the Church willingly, even eagerly, followed them away from God, copying—instead of learning from—the pattern of ancient Israel!

Exactly seven years later, in November 1988, the apostates, copying the liberals of 1974, again reversed the Church’s teaching on makeup. When this happened, having learned nothing from the past, most women in the Church were seduced as easily as they had been in 1974. Like Eve, they entered the trap of beauty and vanity and returned to the practice of painting their faces.

Here is part of how the new WCG leader deceived the Church:

“[Mr. Armstrong] relaxed that position in 1974, and reversed that relaxation in 1981. This helps us see that the answer does not rest on clearly defined biblical instruction.”

“But the Bible...certainly does not label cosmetics as sin. It is not the thing—cosmetics—that is sin, but the kind of use to which the thing may be put.”

“When a woman is focusing on her sexuality [Author’s note: He referenced Jezebel and other whores as proof of his premise] in an effort to attract a lover, she is likely to use makeup in an effort to enhance her appearance. (In our society this may also be true of men, though makeup for men is not yet commonplace.)”

“The point is that we strive to see that any use of cosmetics fits within the biblical principles we have outlined.”

“Now I know that a few may find great fault with me for this decision. That is one of the burdens I have to carry in the job God has placed upon my shoulders. But I do not believe that God would have us continue to place this unnecessary stumbling block (and that is what it is to many new converts) before His people.”

“Personal from Joseph W. Tkach,” WN, Nov. 14, 1988

The psychology and reasoning in this article were wonderfully smooth and seductive—and most effective. The only thing lacking was the final soothing reassurance to women about returning to use of makeup that “thou shalt not surely die!”

There is no excuse for any to claim ignorance of what the Bible, the Church and Mr. Armstrong always taught. I include myself, because, like Mr. Armstrong, I also fell into the trap and had to admit it later.

It is silly to assert that Mr. Armstrong never corrected the Church’s error in 1981. If this is true, why did the apostates reverse his decision in 1988? Certainly no thinking person would believe that they reversed a position that DID NOT EXIST! This assertion is either born of fantasy or outright dishonesty, hoping for mass amnesia among the membership.

During the early 1990s, as the apostasy developed and worsened, certain leaders left the WCG and formed various splinters—each adhering to its own combination of truths taught by Mr. Armstrong, mixed with seductive doctrinal lies taught to them by the apostates. Forgetting the message of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, every group selected its own mixture of truth and lies.

As with other doctrines, the question arose among the splinters regarding what to do about makeup. Ignoring the facts—what really happened—most conveniently decided that Mr. Armstrong “went back

and forth on it,” or “kept changing his mind on it,” or “never really reversed 1974, anyway.” This allowed women to resume using makeup without guilt. That so many were willing to quickly return to the pattern of the world and harlotry made it more comfortable for others to follow suit.

Splinters Appease Women

Over 95 percent of the women who were in the WCG now seem completely unconcerned that they follow a doctrine taught to them by false leaders who are *agents of Satan!* Of course, the leaders of the splinters were only too happy to accommodate the desire of women, and participated in the apostates’ seduction by telling women exactly what they wanted to hear!

In this way, the splinter leaders directly assisted the apostates—they still do, in many regards!—who originally guided the Church and those same leaders into this abominable practice!

An additional problem is that these leaders either fear their wives, who have notified them that they will not remove their makeup—or they fear the many women who will leave their organizations for the same reason, taking large amounts of tithes with them. Weakness and compromise—almost invariably a by-product of cowardice—are terrible things!

Here is WHY. Some of these same leaders recognize that Mr. Armstrong did, in fact, make the change, but suggest that he did it with ulterior motives. This is ludicrous and they know it!

The reality is that *those who claim this have ulterior motives*—and God tells you what they are, IF YOU WILL BELIEVE HIM. They do it to either retain or obtain the tithes that they would lose if they told women to take off their makeup. II Peter 2:2-3 is your proof!

There is no doubt that some women sincerely believe the leaders who are deceiving them about the history of this doctrine. I can only hope that they will awaken to the practice that they have returned to after reading the facts.

The Facts From Mr. Armstrong

What follows is a series of key quotes from Mr. Armstrong’s already-referenced 1981 *Worldwide News* article. I hope all who were once in the Worldwide Church of God, and who still care about the truth, will find and read this article in its entirety.

I have carefully excerpted portions of it, relating Mr. Armstrong's statements in the story flow of how he wrote them. They require little additional comment. There is a space between separate quotes and all emphasis is his.

“Do you think that same wily Satan could not deceive people in God's Church today? Of all the people on earth, WE are the very ones he wants most to deceive. He has the rest of the world deceived already. And remember a deceived person does not know he is deceived—else he would not *BE* deceived!

“Yet Satan did get to our wives today! They certainly had no evil motives, even as mother Eve had none. Had they not repented and accepted Christ, and come into the Church? There were no evil motives or intentions. They, too, saw ‘no harm in it.’ They, themselves, would ‘LOOK GOOD’ to the world. Makeup on the face would be ‘pleasant to the eyes.’

“And it was intellectual to follow intellectual liberals in the ministry (NO LONGER) who reasoned that this little detail and that little point could be interpreted to see ‘no harm in it’—and after all, if we don't see any harm in it, isn't it all right to do what the world does?”

“How cleverly, without our suspecting it, did Satan influence leading ministers to derail the Church in many ways!

“Some of us have weakened. Some of us have been caught off guard. I am human like all of you, and I was caught off guard and without at the time realizing it, ALLOWED this liberalism to creep stealthily into God's flock! I now repent of that and the living Christ leads me to do what He inspires me to do to correct it and get this holy Body of Christ BACK COMPLETELY ON THE TRACK. For we have not been fully back on the track even yet!”

“But the Church in the 1950s, still GROWING in knowledge as well as in numbers, ruled on makeup based on specific scriptural ‘do's and don'ts’—as we then interpreted them. Actually we came to the same right ruling. A very few women argued a bit, but I remember specifically of none who rebelled and left the Church. As near as I could observe our women were happy to leave their faces as the Master Designer made them.”

“In early fall of 1974, my son caught me on the run as I was leaving for Tokyo and Manila, where I held a big campaign. It was a time when certain ‘scholars’ among our leaders were engaged in ‘doctrinal

What Mr. Armstrong Taught About Makeup in Sermons and Bible Studies

After Mr. Armstrong corrected the Church's teaching on makeup in 1981, he consistently preached that he meant exactly what he said. For those who wish to believe that his *Worldwide News* article of November 16, 1981 did not "really" reverse the Church's error on use of cosmetics, we have included just five subsequent sermon and Bible study quotes as additional proof of what he taught.

Read each quote carefully, and ask yourself if Mr. Armstrong was serious or did not really believe what he wrote in his 1964 booklet, or his 1981 decision. By itself, the first quote removes all doubt about where he stood. This sermon contains his once-famous statement that makeup will return to the Church "over my dead body." I only wish that his transcribed words could carry the same thunder with which he delivered them:

"[Satan] has deceived a lot of the women in this Church. They couldn't see anything wrong with it [makeup]. Well, 'to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.' So some of our women just have not known.

"Well, I want to make it plain. And it isn't something that I am going to study and research more. That's already been done and this is a decision. And this is final! And it isn't going to be watered down any further in this Church! Unless it's over my dead body, let me tell you that.

"You know, God could have compromised. He didn't have to sacrifice His Son. He had the power to forgive our sins without Christ's sacrifice. You know that? But we would never have had character and we never would have become God...He could have given us eternal life and let us go our own way and we'd have been unhappy and miserable forever and ever and ever. But God so loved the world He GAVE His only begotten Son rather than compromise one ten trillionth, millionth of an inch with His Law and with sin. He just didn't do it."

Sermon, "What God Expects From Us," Nov. 7, 1981

"I want to wake you up! I want to get you back on the track—on God's track! Because we've been off on Satan's track...I'm going to spend what little time I have trying to get you people back on the track..."

"I myself made a mistake along the way, and I let that subject be the one that started Satan's ball rolling to get liberalism into God's Church. After that came a falling away in such things as divine healing, the keeping of the Sabbath and how we keep it, and any number of other very important things. We began to get liberal, we wanted to compromise these things...

"...I don't think any woman with paint on her face is going to rise to meet Christ in the air...

"...Why do women do it? They think it makes them more pretty. Lust of the eyes—they like to see themselves in the mirror. And they think other people are going to think they are more beautiful than God made them. Vanity, pure and simple—wanting to be like the world...

"...Now this thing all has to do with an attitude. Sin is the transgression of...love toward God—exalting God instead of the person...A woman paints herself up to exalt herself. Don't tell me she doesn't! She does it because she wants to be like the world. She wants to go along—sheep instinct...

"...The paint on a woman's face is going to pass away. It isn't going to last. You'll never get into God's kingdom with it. No one in God's kingdom is going to have to paint a face.

"I'll tell you why.

"Your face is going to shine like the sun. Why dull it with a lot of paint? No, they won't do it, no, or want to...

"But some people want to say, 'Isn't it alright?'—'Isn't it okay under this circumstance?'—'Can't we get away with it?'—'How close can we go to Satan's way? Isn't Satan's way better, after all, than God's way?'

"Now painting your face is Satan's way, brethren. No getting around it. Don't tell me it's God's way. God never told anybody to do it. You think Satan's way is better?"

"...Some say, 'Well but, what is the husband going to think? An unconverted husband—we have to consider what he thinks. Maybe the wife should wear makeup if he wants her to.' I can't understand why any man would want his wife to wear makeup. But some do. I don't understand it. I never did—I never did. I don't see how paint on a face makes that face any more beautiful. And when I kiss, I don't want to kiss a lot of paint or lipstick. Either one. I just don't."

Bible Study, "Philippians 1 and 2," Oct. 1981

"In the 3rd chapter of Isaiah, it talks about women painting their eyes and their faces. They tried to tell me, when we had some liberals in the Church about four years ago, that some of them had researched

that and the original Hebrew didn't say what I thought it did. So, it was 'all right for women to wear. Can't we just fudge a little bit, and let the women wear a little makeup?' And I actually yielded to that and I'm ashamed of it.

"I apologize before you now that I did. And I wrote...that if you would use it modestly you women could use a little bit of makeup.

"I'm sorry that I did that. I repented.

"God is not in that and God was not speaking through me when I said that. Now I correct it."

"...It isn't God that puts makeup on your face, women."

Bible Study, "The Sin Question," Nov. 26, 1981

"I've had some things to say about makeup lately...I've had some letters [that] say, 'Well, Mr. Armstrong I want to show you a woman's point of view on this.' You know my reply to that?"

"I am interested not in a woman's point of view. I'm interested in God's point of view. Now if a woman's point of view is different from God's point of view, THE WOMAN HAD BETTER CHANGE HER POINT OF VIEW! Do you agree with me or don't you? Or do you think the woman's point of view is better? Or the man's point of view? Or the child's point of view? Oh no, I want God's point of view. It's quite different."

Bible Study, "Philippians 3," Nov. 1981

"Women can't see what's wrong with painting their faces.

"Women won't admit [that] it's vanity that makes them do it. They won't admit it's because they want to be like the world and want to look like other people. They won't admit that. [They say] 'Oh no, I don't want to be like the world.' Oh yes they do, or they wouldn't do it. She's ashamed not to be like the other women in the world. That's why she puts it on her..."

"...Brethren, I won't compromise. If you want to compromise, go join one of these factions that have gone off from us, that are liberal... if you want to go Satan's way instead of God's way and pretend that you'll be in the kingdom of God—pretend you are in God's Church..."

"...Is this a little thing? Yes, but it's a great big thing in principle. It's a big thing in principle, and there are many of you women sitting right here that are keeping paint off your faces just because I said you have to, and your heart isn't in it. And you better get your hearts right with God. You call me God's apostle, you better listen to what I have to say. And you better quit kidding yourself, because time is short."

Sermon, First Day of Unleavened Bread, April 16, 1985

This final quote shows Mr. Armstrong's view of doctrinal compromise. Others could be included to show the same thing in different words.

Of course, some will say that the issue of wearing makeup is too small to be of consequence to God. Therefore, one final quote has been added here to confirm Mr. Armstrong's view of compromise on those matters some wish to call "twigs."

I am not suggesting that makeup is a small matter, because it clearly is not! Recall that Mr. Armstrong said, "Is this a little thing? Yes, but it's a great big thing in principle." You must decide if you agree with Mr. Armstrong's assessment of wearing makeup.

In the end, those who seek to ignore the correct teaching must first reduce its importance by calling it a "twig" or "non-basic" or "non-fundamental" or "not essential for salvation," etc., before they can take the second step of dismissing it altogether.

If you hear makeup referred to as a "twig" or "inconsequential," remember that *God* never called it a twig or inconsequential. Neither did Mr. Armstrong:

"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.

"[God] 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!

"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

research.’ I had not realized until later that most of them were actually researching to try to prove Church teachings were in error, rather than to discover truth. I admit now and repent of the fact that, not realizing the real motive, I approved this doctrinal research team.

“My son said this team had found we had the wrong meaning on four such detailed specific scriptures, and the use of makeup was OK.

“Those who know me best know I have a single track mind. That is, I can concentrate deeply on one subject at a time, but when my mind is on one subject, I often do not really ‘get’ something said to me.”

“Satan masterminded this in such manner that it all APPEARED under my signature, as if I fully approved all that followed my signature—when in fact I never saw it until the day before yesterday. It was subtly handled and KEPT FROM ME.

“I *did not*, and never would have approved of what Mr. [name] without my knowledge published under my signature.”

“But by this maneuver of Satan, the people of God’s Church started off the track.”

“I say ‘started off.’ For watering down of God’s truth on healing, the Sabbath, many more vital doctrines followed in its wake.

“But, as Satan maneuvered to start ALL HUMANITY off the track in the garden of Eden, so in these latter days, he maneuvered to use the women of God’s Church to start the END-TIME Church off the track. And the whole Church was deceived! [Author’s note: It was, in fact, the changing of makeup, in 1988, which was one of the earliest changes that started the Church back off the track the second time!]

“At the time my son came to me with the report that the Adam Clarke commentary was in error on Isaiah 3:16, my mind was primarily on other things, and I made a hasty decision without fully weighing the matter. I have come to realize this. I HAVE DEEPLY REPENTED OF IT. I now correct it before the entire Church.

“Brethren, let’s get one thing straight at this point. Jesus Christ chose and has been using a HUMAN instrument to lead you. Will you blame Jesus Christ for that? *HE* is infallible. *HE* makes no mistakes. But WHO among you could He choose as HIS instrument to lead you who is already supernaturally divine and unable to make mistakes?... He has used me, in spite of a few mistakes, in BRINGING ALL YOU INTO HIS BODY, THE CHURCH. He revealed HIS TRUTH to me and through me to YOU! And now He is using me in CORRECTING a mistake...”

“Jesus Christ through me has been GETTING US ALL BACK ON THE TRACK, ready for His return to earth as the KING of KINGS, and the Lord

of Lords. The Church, as HIS BRIDE to be spiritually MARRIED to Him, is to rise to meet Him in the air as He descends. Women of the Church, do you think Jesus Christ will say to me, ‘SEND A PROCLAMATION TO ALL WOMEN IN THE CHURCH TO PREPARE FOR MY COMING. TELL THEM TO GO TO THEIR DRESSING TABLES, PLUCK OUT THEIR EYEBROWS, PAINT IN NEW ONES HIGHER ON THEIR FOREHEADS, AND USE COSMETICS TO MAKE UP THEIR FACES TO MEET ME IN THE AIR’?

“No, dear people, I don’t think He will have me make such a proclamation. But rather: Wash the dirt off your faces! CLEAN UP your faces!

“Now JESUS CHRIST, through His chosen apostle, is going to RULE on this question once and for all!”

“Now apply GOD’S LAW to makeup. WHY do women use makeup? To please and glorify GOD? No. God is Master DESIGNER as well as Creator. The world seems to think God did not design women’s faces properly, and they try to do a better job of making up their faces than GOD did. Does makeup PLEASE GOD? His Spirit says to me, IT IS DISPLEASING to Him! (And, like the apostle Paul, I think I have the ‘mind of Christ.’) To EXALT God? No, rather to exalt SELF, which debases God.”

This is how Mr. Armstrong concluded his article:

“Women do not use makeup to PLEASE GOD today—for I can tell you ON HIS AUTHORITY it is NOT pleasing to HIM!

“Satan used human reason and makeup and WOMEN to START the ball of LIBERALISM AWAY FROM GOD and TOWARD SIN to rolling in the Church beginning October, 1974.

“Finally, I repeat, sin, spiritually, is self-centeredness, self-exaltation, desire to be beautiful, vanity, coveting, desire to GET and TAKE, to exalt the self, jealousy and envy, competition, oft-resulting violence and war, resentment and rebellion against authority. These are the PRINCIPLES of spiritual SIN. Christ is GETTING US BACK ON THE TRACK!”

Amazing Human Nature

Human nature is amazing, and sometimes even a little humorous to observe—if it were not so tragic. Referring to Mr. Armstrong’s statement that makeup would only return to the Church “over my dead body,” I have had two different women tell me, “Since Mr. Armstrong is now dead, I can wear makeup.” Incredible! Truly, as Jeremiah said, “The heart *is* deceitful above all things.”

Such human reasoning certainly does prove that if a woman is determined to wear cosmetics, she will find a way to sell the idea to herself.

However, no person who truly wants to please and obey God can doubt the facts of this article. They CAN reject, ignore or twist those facts to suit their own purpose, but they cannot deny them.

Be prepared for persecution if you have the courage to take off your makeup. It will take even more courage to tell others, or for leaders to teach their organizations (Dan. 11:32-35). This is because few issues seem to bring out the hate and murderous slander in people more than does telling them that the use of cosmetics is a sin. I have more than once seen and felt the wrath of women confronted with this decision.

In addition, just the thought of our original booklet’s arrival several years ago brought an attack from one man. He was so angry at what he thought it might contain that he did not even wait to read it. Incredibly, he found a way to label as “Laodicean” (lukewarm and lacking zeal) those who have the courage and zeal that he and the leaders of his splinter lack. God help him and others like him, because Proverbs 18:13 applies.

What Will You Do?

But what will YOU do? When Christ told some who “believed on Him” (John 8:30) truth that they did not want to hear, they got angry and sought to kill Him. Christ responded, “But now you seek to kill Me, *a Man that has told you the TRUTH...*” (vs. 40). Will you attack either Mr. Armstrong or me because this article and our book have told you the truth? If you do, you will only hurt yourself, now and eternally. It is your crown that is now at stake, not mine. Very carefully think through your reaction.

Will YOU dismiss, forget, ignore or twist the plain proofs that you have read here?

Will YOU allow dishonest, deceitful ministers to seduce you into continuing the habit of painting your face and the attitude of pride and vanity that accompanies it?

Will YOU permit your pastor, like Satan, or your human nature, from Satan, to deceive you into believing that you owe it to yourself to be more beautiful than God made you?

Will YOU fulfill the similar proverbs of George Santayana and George Hegel—that “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” and “We learn from history that we do not learn

from history”?—or will you be a rare exception, no matter what your friends, relatives and associates think?

The Church has reached the Laodicean age. The reason this is the *dominant* attitude at the end is that *most* start with the assumption that Laodicea is “somebody else—somewhere else.”

Are you *certain* it does not include you?

Are you *certain* that using makeup is not one of the tests of whether it does, since the dominant number now ignore what all once practiced in regard to this teaching?

Are you *certain* you want to follow leaders Mr. Armstrong would obviously disfellowship?

Are you *certain* there is safety in numbers?

Are you *so certain* that God’s great end-time servant was wrong that you will not “hold fast” (Rev. 3:11) what YOU ONCE BELIEVED?

Will YOU follow the ways of this world, the mistakes of ancient Israel, the methods of Egyptian prostitutes, the lead of the apostates and the splinter “leaders” who taught you to return to wearing makeup?

WOULD YOU STAKE YOUR CROWN ON YOUR DECISION?

THE WEDDING SUPPER IS NOT IN HEAVEN!

Roderick Meredith, with other leaders in the Living Church of God (LCG), has now come to believe the long-rejected idea that the “marriage of the Lamb” and the “wedding supper” will be in heaven. Started in 1981, this theory has grown and become more widely accepted among many in the splinters since the mid-1990s. LCG leaders have now pushed it upon their membership. But the Bible does NOT teach that the wedding supper is in heaven! In fact, this idea is IMPOSSIBLE. Here is the proof.

After reading this article, you will never again believe the marriage to Christ and the wedding supper are in heaven. You will also wonder how *anyone* could believe they will be—never mind that “evangelists” could have fallen for it. But these are the same “evangelists” who got sucked into the Protestant view of the “falling away” of II Thessalonians 2:3 being a future worldwide rebellion against God led by the man of sin, as will be seen in Article Four. They are the same “evangelists” who also copied and now subscribe to the popular evangelical Protestant belief in a *seven-year* agreement, beginning with a three-and-a-half-year covenant/treaty signed between the Beast and the modern Mid-east nation of Israel—incredibly, these “evangelists” can no longer discern in Daniel 9:27 the difference between *Jesus* Christ and the *anti*-christ.

They are the same “evangelists” who have also slipped into the widely accepted Protestant position taught to them by the Tkaches (*not* Mr. Armstrong or the Bible) that the Body of Christ, headed by an undivided Jesus Christ, is today made up of *many* disagreeing “branch” organizations—and that it is no longer ONE UNIFIED ORGANIZATION. They are the same “evangelists” who have forced *their* “Jesus” into *their* gospel.

But then again, they are the same “evangelists” who have largely rejected Mr. Armstrong’s authority, along with MANY of the “less attractive” doctrines he taught and proved straight from the Bible.

Coming Wedding Supper

The Bible foretells the “marriage of the Lamb,” followed by “the wedding supper,” after the saints in the First Resurrection are born into the kingdom of God as Spirit members of the God Family. That these plainly prophesied events occur, and right *after* the First Resurrection, is not subject to debate, since the Bible explicitly mentions them. What *is* debated among people of wrong thinking has come to be their *exact time and location*.

Herbert W. Armstrong spent little if any time emphasizing *when* and *where* the wedding supper would take place because God’s Word does not make these questions important. (It is plain, however, *when* and *where* it will be.) He clearly understood that what is most important for God’s people is to live in a way that will ensure our *presence* at this event—yielding to God and building His holy, righteous character, and holding to all of His truths. Neglecting to live God’s Way and letting His truth slip away eliminates any need for concern about details of a marriage and supper ONE WILL NOT ATTEND! Again, THAT IS IMPORTANT. But knowing *every detail* of its location or exact timing is less important. Whether you *reject* the facts—the truth of God’s Word on this subject as you see it—also becomes important.

Grasp this! Getting caught up in *any* false doctrine, including absurd theories on the marriage/wedding supper, directly affects whether you will be there! You need not be deceived. Careful study of the Bible completely eliminates heaven as a possibility of the wedding supper location.

Birth of a Theory

The idea for a heavenly wedding supper was born around Pentecost 1981, and began with a pastor, Harold Smith, then in East St. Louis, Illinois (now in Washington state). This man leads a prophecy-oriented tape ministry. I personally told Ministerial Services at Headquarters (and Mr. Armstrong was made aware) that he had preached this theory without permission.

As an historical aside, I became involved in this matter in Buffalo, New York, in about 1982 when one of this man’s “disciples” preached this idea there while on vacation in Buffalo visiting his parents. I called Ministerial Services and was assured that the author of the idea would be reprimanded, and the visiting minister sent a written apology that I

read from the pulpit. Note that Harold Smith is the same man who first preached Dr. Herman Hoeh's private belief that the final Elijah would be one of the Two Witnesses. It is not surprising that Rod Meredith and Dick Ames have leapt deeper into Harold Smith's arms on the matter of the wedding supper.

False Doctrine Develops

Like so many other false ideas lying dormant in minds that had been told to put them away, with Mr. Armstrong now gone, the wedding-supper-in-heaven concept began growing in momentum shortly after his death. Although the apostate leaders were not the first to introduce the idea, they did not restrain its return, but subtly capitalized on it to help condition WCG members to accept "going to heaven" theology. It meshed perfectly with their doctrinal agenda.

The pattern of the apostates, with the spirit of the devil guiding them, was, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, to use this kind of subtlety for importing bigger carefully crafted Protestant doctrines into the WCG. Their ideas were introduced in staged increments—until most brethren bought into their concepts and allowed themselves to be led back completely into this world's false Christianity.

After the apostates presented the full-blown theology of "people going to heaven when they die," there was no more use for this transitional doctrine of "the wedding supper being in heaven" in the WCG, but the issue continued looming larger for some who remembered the excitement generated when it first appeared.

The idea *resurfaced* in the splinters around 1995-96, again from Harold Smith, who at that time became a Global Church of God (GCG) minister. Global's leader, Rod Meredith, tried hard to rein him in before the group split in late 1998, but failed. The heresy spread. Ever greater numbers began to sign on to this false concept beyond the 1990s.

More recently, in mid-2012, the Living Church of God, Meredith's corporate continuation of Global, has now adopted this idea as an OFFICIAL TEACHING. Incredibly, Rod Meredith has now collapsed into the very heresy of which he once sought to rid Global. That other LCG ministers are said to have "vetted it" is its own sad statement about how far they have fallen with their leaders. May some of them wake up before it is too late.

I sat in the GCG Council of Elder meetings—every one of them—where this (with other related Smith ideas) was discussed and rejected.

Rod Meredith (and the whole Council) once stood firmly against it, well aware that it was wrong—and long understood to be so. Yet today an article by Richard F. Ames titled “The Saints Will Stand Before God’s Throne in Heaven,” in the Sept-Oct 2012 *Living Church News*, presents this doctrine, repackaged with several supposed “proofs.”

A Proper Focus

Before this speculation took hold, emphasis had rightly been on *qualifying* to be part of the First Resurrection. Mr. Armstrong wisely avoided much speculation on what the saints would be doing *immediately after* being changed to spirit.

Proponents of these errors actually believe that God’s Word is *not* explicit on where the saints go *immediately* after the First Resurrection. It is true that a very tiny bit of time elapses between the First Resurrection and “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14-16; Zech. 14:1-2), when Christ and His saints vanquish the armies gathered to oppose His Return. These are just two of MANY SPECIFIC EVENTS that occur in rapid-fire fashion in the climactic 24-hour period known as “that great day” (Rev. 16:14). You will soon learn more of the truly fascinating details of this.

However, every detail of the immediate duties of these newly born Spirit beings is *not* revealed. The Bible simply does not contain *every element* of “who, what, where, when, why and how” that the new members of God’s Family carry out when they arrive into that Family! The apostle Paul recorded, “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (I Cor. 13:12).

But the Bible does say more about the first day of our salvation than most have realized. Again, you will see this.

Let’s understand a little more. There are certain things—some are details—that God has chosen not to reveal: “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). We are held accountable to act on knowledge and understanding God *has* revealed to us. To excessively speculate about what He has *not* revealed is an exercise in futility—a waste of time!

Many among God’s people of the seventh era have become confused on a host of prophetic events, as well as the sequence in which they fall. The *speed, sequence, timing* and *magnitude* of oncoming prophetic events are being/have been lost to thousands. Many just cannot any

longer recall—keep straight—within prophecy *what* happens *when*, as well as *where* and to *whom*—and *why*. The wedding-supper-in-heaven theory is but the tip of the “prophecy confusion iceberg.” But it has played its own role in causing people to become even more prophetically disoriented—while focusing them on “gnats” when they are surrounded by a herd of prophetic “camels” they can no longer see clearly. While falsely claiming to be following the admonition to “grow in grace, and... knowledge” (II Pet. 3:18), as was done with the new LCG “falling away” heresy, the seducers leading LCG have their members kneeling in the sand, bent over, examining a prophetic “gnat”—*fictional* at that—when an on-rushing stampede of prophetic “camels” is about to TRAMPLE AND CRUSH THEM TO DEATH!

This article clears up confusion and exposes the many false teachings surrounding the subject.

Convoluting Thinking and Teaching

Keep in mind that the reasoning employed by these deceivers is terribly convoluted. In order to uphold their position, they must twist, spin and butcher numerous prophetic details and other passages. In a sense, the reader will find they build a house of cards that folds under scrutiny. Countering their errors requires us to first present their faulty ideas, before proceeding to debunk them using plain scriptures.

As you read, keep Isaiah 28:9-13 in mind. This passage admonishes that the truth of any scripture is usually revealed by other scriptures, because the Bible is written “precept upon precept...line upon line...here a little, and there a little,” so that those whose minds are not opened to understanding will stumble in their quest for solutions. Those who are “weaned,” or spiritually mature (I Cor. 3:1-2), are to seek the truth by following this passage, allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

Because the maze of individual false teachings that constitute this overall heresy is so complex, a lengthy and detailed rebuttal has to follow. Believe me, I would rather not put in the work of writing nearly 14,000 words. But to help God’s people it is worth it. This means first covering the subject as it developed over 30 years ago to see how it “grew legs”—and to understand all that LCG seemed to not know about (but could have) when they fell into their conclusion. What LCG asserts today forms the last section of the article, largely useless without the foundation of the first sections. To be *fully* inoculated against the theory, the reader must take the time to read the *whole article*!

Dick Ames’ article did not attempt a lengthy, sophisticated approach to LCG’s heresy. Rather he threw out a few shallow thoughts, and jumped to the end-game—declaring almost by simple assertion, “The wedding supper is in heaven.” To really take apart and reject the falseness of this idea requires a more thorough approach, one that helps the reader see from *every perspective* how truly wrong is the idea. It also makes clear why *more is at stake* in getting this teaching right than first meets the eye. There is a duty to bring this thorough approach.

Finally, again understand. This article covers a difficult subject—one made much more difficult than it ever needed to be because of the *many* convolutions of thought invented to propel it. If the first half of the article seems difficult to understand, be encouraged, recognizing we are trying to simplify something made *unnecessarily complex*. Be patient with the manner in which the topic is addressed. The fog lifts most in the article’s *second half*.

One Direct Reference—Two Parables

The wedding supper, which follows the marriage of Christ to His Church, *only* appears in Revelation 19: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (vs. 7-9).

This passage constitutes the one—the *only*—*direct* reference to this glorious upcoming event!

Let’s now review passages *related* to the wedding supper, and how these scriptures are interpreted by some in the splinters. The wedding supper appears in two parables. While God’s Church has *always understood* that the purpose of parables is *not* to make a doctrine more clear, but rather to *hide* the meaning from those not called at this time (Matt. 13:10-17), there is some meaning in these parables.

Consider Luke 14:16-24. This parable speaks of a great supper, and seems obviously to reference the *wedding* supper. It is hard to see Luke 14 in any other context. The focus there is that, because many failed to comprehend the tremendous *honor* offered them, the invitees dismissed the invitation to this awesome occasion. They fell into excuse-making for declining to attend. The master of the house was

justifiably angry, and sought substitute guests to fill the empty seats. Those originally invited were banned from *ever* being involved. There is powerful meaning today for those who think it “no big deal” to slip into this, that or the other false doctrine or doctrines, and still hope to attend.

Do not miss the point. Do any think that even one true Christian would overtly state to God, “I do not want to come to Your wedding supper. I do not want to marry Jesus Christ”? Of course not! It is other things that seduce them—subtly confuse them—into declining what they thought they had continued to accept. GET THIS! As with Deuteronomy 30:19—where God sets “life and death” and “blessing and cursing” before His people—everyone thinks they are choosing life. No one thinks they are *choosing* death. It is how people *live* and what they *believe* that ultimately “chooses” LIFE—or “chooses” DEATH!

Luke 14 primarily pictures the Christian calling. The wedding supper almost certainly merges into its meaning, since being called and chosen eventually leads to that event. The parable has special meaning to those called in this present age—the firstfruits. Sadly, most fail to recognize the parable’s profound meaning, and the seriousness of their calling.

The Second Parable

Luke 14 is often considered a summary of Christ’s more extensive parable in Matthew 22:1-14. This parable certainly does not state, or even remotely imply, that the wedding supper occurs in heaven. The main emphasis is that many people are called to be in God’s kingdom, but few in the end respond to their calling. Few will commit to developing righteous, godly character (symbolized by wedding garments), thus few are deemed worthy by God to join the supper.

As in Luke 14, many guests took their invitation lightly, making excuses for their absence. But Matthew 22 includes another element—guests who conspire to kill some of the king’s servants. This is a sobering thought: some initially called (invited as guests) could resort to murdering the king’s (God’s) faithful (true) servants! *Hate*(ful attack) is also murder.

After alternate guests were called to replace those who declined, yet another element is introduced: One replacement guest lacked a “wedding garment,” and had to be cast out. If this parable references a wedding *in heaven*, no human being could “crash it.” Only those who had qualified and become spirit could ascend to be present. Those who misinterpret the parable in this way miss the point.

Some try to explain the presence of the man without a wedding garment by saying he must have been a demon—one with access to heaven (Job 1:6; I Kgs. 22:20-23). Were this true, God would be calling a wicked spirit “friend.” And, you will learn later that, by this point, Satan and his demons will have already been bound, anyway.

Also, Revelation 12:7-13 shows that Satan and his demons will have been “cast out into the earth” at a point some years before the Church is even taken to a Place of Safety—well before Christ’s Return. Demons are not allowed back into heaven after this event: “neither was there place found [for them] any more in heaven” (vs. 8).

Predictably, when hemmed in with logic and scripture, the proponents of the wedding-in-heaven theory retreat to additional theorizing. In this case, they like to respond, “This is a parable. It can’t parallel what will take place in *every* respect.” They *must* say this because otherwise the parable *disproves* their position.

Certain spiritual principles of the Christian calling, which lead to being part of the First Resurrection and this great feast, are evident in the parable. Appreciating our calling and never making light of it, as well as supporting (rather than attacking or opposing) God’s servants and representatives, is crucial. Intense preparation and having a “clean wedding garment” is also crucial. *Qualifying* involves making oneself “ready” (Matt. 24:44; Luke 12:40)—worthy of that honor.

These are the lessons to take from these parables. They do not show the marriage or wedding supper to be in heaven.

At the Seventh Trumpet

To fully appreciate the context of the wedding supper, let’s ask: “*When* will the First Resurrection take place?” First notice I Corinthians 15: “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all *be changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*: for the trumpet shall sound, and *the dead shall be raised incorruptible*, and we shall be changed” (vs. 51-52). Our change to incorruptible spirit occurs at the last trumpet. This is basic. Now I Thessalonians 4: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and *with the trump of God*: and *the dead in Christ shall rise* first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vs. 15-17).

Both passages plainly show the resurrection occurs at the last trump, at Christ's Return. This is impossible to miss.

Matthew 24 reveals more: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a *great sound of a trumpet*, and they shall *gather together His elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (vs. 30-31). Here, Christ appears in the clouds and sends His angels to "gather" the elect—both the saints in the grave and those surviving at the Place of Safety. This again ties the resurrection to the last trump.

The Trumpets Summarized

To establish *when* the seventh trumpet sounds, we need an overview to appreciate the order of events.

In Revelation 6, the *first four seals* (often called the "four horsemen of the apocalypse") are introduced, followed by the *fifth seal* (the Great Tribulation and martyrdom of the final era of God's people) and the *sixth seal* (the heavenly signs, accompanied by a great earthquake).

The *seventh seal* appears in Revelation 8: "When He [Christ] had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets" (vs. 1-2).

The seventh and final seal consists of the seven trumpets or trumpet plagues. The first six of the trumpets are discussed in chapters 8 and 9, summarized here as Mr. Armstrong and the Church have always understood them:

- (1) A third part of trees and vegetation is burned up
- (2) A third part of the sea becomes blood
- (3) A third part of the rivers and freshwater becomes poisoned
- (4) A third part of the light from the sun, moon and stars is diminished
- (5) The First woe: Revived Roman Empire attacks former Communist bloc of Russia and China
- (6) The Second woe: Former Communist bloc nations and others counterattack the revived Roman Empire

The seventh trumpet occurs next. This is first mentioned in Revelation 11:15: "The seventh angel sounded; and there were great

voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

Remember I Thessalonians 4:16: “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” What the angel appears to shout is recorded in Revelation 11:15.

Grasp this key point: The *seventh trumpet* includes the *seven last plagues*, collectively known as the *third woe*. Again, the seventh trumpet (“the *last trump*”) is the time of the First Resurrection.

By covering the verses preceding Revelation 11:15, we can see how these events come together.

We pick up the account of the Two Witnesses in verses 11-14: “And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up here. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly.”

(A leading proponent of the wedding supper in heaven asserts that the archangel’s voice in I Thessalonians 4:16 is the instruction, “Come up here” [Rev. 11:12]. This is absurd, as these words are obviously directed “*unto them*”—the two witnesses just raised back to *physical* life. This is not spoken to all nations, nor even just to all the saints.)

Note that the Two Witnesses are resurrected *before* the seventh trumpet sounds (announcing the First Resurrection). Theirs is a *physical* resurrection: “...the spirit [Greek: *pneuma*, which can also be translated “breath”] of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet” (Rev. 11:11). The “spirit of life” is equivalent to the “breath of life,” spoken of in Genesis 2:7: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life*; and man became a living soul [Hebrew *nephesh* or ‘breathing creature’].” This is not new, but rather something the Church has always known.

Their resurrection contrasts to this one: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:52-53).

After the voice directs the Two Witnesses to “come up here,” Revelation 11:12 shows that “they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” Just as Enoch and Elijah were taken away to another location for protection, the Two Witnesses must be taken away in the same fashion so they will not be killed again. They likely briefly join the living saints awaiting the First Resurrection soon to follow. Otherwise, the Bible does not specify where they go. But the time between their *physical* return to life and the seventh trumpet appears to be *very* short. Verse 14 announces that “the third woe [which is the seventh trumpet] *comes* quickly.”

Thus, the *First* Resurrection at the seventh trumpet occurs *after* the Two Witnesses’ resurrection.

The Seven Last Plagues or Vials of Wrath

Recall that the seventh trumpet begins the seven last plagues. Now we examine these. Revelation 15 introduces seven angels in heaven preparing to pour out the seven last plagues upon Earth. Chapter 16 continues the sequence of events: “I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth” (vs. 1). Here is a summary of the seven last plagues:

- (1) Grievous sores upon those who have the Mark of the Beast and worship its/his image (vs. 2)
- (2) The seas become blood (vs. 3)
- (3) The rivers and fresh waters become blood (vs. 4)
- (4) Heat from the sun scorches the earth (vs. 8)
- (5) Plague of darkness over the Beast power (vs. 10)
- (6) Armies gather at Megiddo to battle against Christ (vs. 12-16)
- (7) Final plague, great earthquake and hail—completes wrath of God: “It is done” (vs. 17)

All of the last plagues are catastrophic upheavals, as the full wrath of God is poured out. Revelation 14:10: “...the wrath of God... is poured out *without mixture*” (Greek: *undiluted*). Moffatt translates Revelation 15:1 this way: “the last plagues...*complete* the wrath of God.”

Notice distinct difference in these plagues from the trumpet plagues, which primarily reflect God’s *measured* wrath occurring in thirds—one-third portions. The seven last plagues are God’s *full* measure of wrath on those continuing in rebellion.

The sixth of the last plagues shows the armies gathering for battle, but the battle itself is not mentioned here. Special attention to the sixth plague is brought by examining Revelation 16:12-16. Armies of the kings of the east cross the dried-up Euphrates in verse 12. (This is an entirely different event, at a different time, than is recorded earlier in Rev. 9:13-16.)

The passage continues by describing demonic powers summoning the kings from all nations to mobilize their armies and modern military weaponry against the arrival of Christ and His armies, to prepare for the Battle of that Great Day of God Almighty. Verse 15 is an inset, Christ’s general warning for God’s people to be prepared and urgently watching for His Return. Verse 16 shows the location where the armies gather, in the Jezreel Valley near the hill of Megiddo. (This battle is falsely called the Battle of Armageddon. To correctly understand it, you may read my article “What Is Armageddon?”)

Take note. Those teaching that the wedding supper is in heaven assert that the seventh and final last plague occurs *BEFORE* the Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty. Since Revelation 16 does not specifically mention the battle, they turn to other passages describing it to prove the battle takes place *after* the seven last plagues. (We will review some of these passages later.)

Some may wonder why the battle is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation 16. One reason is that the topic of this passage describing the seven last plagues (or vials of wrath) is confined to *summarizing* each plague. To explain the battle in detail would require a disproportionate amount of space, thus the battle is covered in detail in later scriptures.

To presume the battle would follow the seventh and final last plague is *utterly illogical*. Consider what takes place during it: “The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, *It is done*. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a *great earthquake*, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a *great hail* out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great” (vs. 17-21).

After such a colossal earthquake, which will cause the cities worldwide to collapse and islands and mountains to disappear, the conglomeration of armies would hardly be able to pick up their equipment, much less fight a battle! If this were not enough, a great hail, with hailstones weighing as much as 120 pounds each, would not help matters either. Perhaps some of the heavily armored tanks and half-tracks might withstand the hailstones, but the remainder of the army would not fare so well. Rocket launchers, missile launchers, laser weapons and other modern high-tech equipment could not weather a barrage of massive hailstones and still be operative. This final burst of God's wrath is so decisive that it is ludicrous to think that a fighting force could withstand such an onslaught and still be able to join ranks and fight a battle. In fact, the voices that come out of heaven as this final plague begins sum up the matter with the words, "IT IS DONE." The last vestiges of man's resistance to God are squashed with this plague. This also ends the Day of the Lord.

It is *impossible* that a battle could immediately follow this plague!

More basic logic: If the seven vials represent God's fullness—completion—of wrath against all human resistance, why would a final battle that truly is the culmination of God's wrath take place *after* the seven last plagues? In other words, after these seven events, such a battle would be unnecessary. More foundation has now been laid.

When Does Christ Stand on the Mount of Olives?

Let's continue building the backdrop of events surrounding Christ's Return. As mentioned, in chapter 16 of Revelation, we read of the mobilization of the armies to fight Christ, but a description of the actual warfare is not included there. Zechariah 14:1-5 provides more detail of the battle and helps clarify the order in which these events occur.

Verse 1 mentions the Day of the Lord coming, which is the context of the time we are discussing. Then in verse 2, we read of the gathering of the armies of all nations near Jerusalem for battle, just as we read in Rev. 16:12-14. Verse 2 also shows Jerusalem under attack by these armies. In verse 3, we read of the LORD (the Eternal, who is Christ) going forth and fighting against these armies "as in the day of battle." And in verse 3 the battle is in progress. Verse 4 shows that Christ's feet stand *in that day* on the Mount of Olives. In the same *one-day timeframe*, therefore, the earthquake takes place.

In summary, Zechariah 14 reveals that the Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty has been concluded by the completion of the seventh plague.

How Some Twist the Sequence of Zechariah 14:1-5

In Zechariah 14:3, we read, “Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.” Some take the phrase “as when He fought in the day of battle” and apply it specifically to Joshua’s long day in Joshua 10:12-14. The miracles that occurred during that 48-hour day *were* incredible. Here is verse 14: “There was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.” The reason the revisionists refer to Joshua’s long day is that large hailstones fell at that time and are also prophesied to fall during the seventh last plague. By asserting a parallel with Zechariah 14:3, the seventh last plague is then made to sound as if it had already occurred before Christ engaged those gathered to resist His Return.

This is an attempt to make a connection between two entirely separate events that have no bearing whatsoever on one another! The sequence of the battle in Joshua simply does not parallel the events of the seventh trumpet. Though hailstones fell *before* the battle during Joshua’s long day, this does not mean the hailstones of the seventh last plague must occur *before* the Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty.

This reinterpretation of Zechariah 14:3 requires fancy theological footwork and irrational leaps in logic to change the basic chronology of events.

Verse 4 shows that Jesus Christ shall stand on the Mount of Olives on the same day of the battle. The Mount will split in two during the great earthquake, which occurs after His arrival. Noted above, this earthquake is the greatest in all history.

Another vital point to show Christ will stand on the Mount of Olives close to the time of the seventh of the last plagues is found in Revelation 14:9-10: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels [who return with Christ—Matthew 25:31], and *in the presence of the Lamb* [also including the saints].”

This shows that not only are these individuals to be consumed by fire, but anyone bearing the Mark of the Beast shall drink of God’s wrath “in the presence of the Lamb.” Christ will indeed be *present* on Earth

as the final plague fulfills the wrath of God—HE WILL NOT BE IN HEAVEN, OR AT THE WEDDING SUPPER! If He did not stand on the Mount of Olives until *after* the seventh plague was fulfilled, then the verses above would be inaccurate.

When all relevant verses are assembled, comparison with Joshua's long day is exposed as a smokescreen to alter the correct sequence of events. Accept the *plain meaning* of Scripture to avoid being deceived by subtle maneuvering.

Are the Saints Present in Heaven During a Daniel 7 "Coronation Ceremony"?

The details of Daniel 7 are often misunderstood as representing the saints appearing before the Father in heaven to receive positions of authority alongside Christ. Let's more closely examine what this chapter truly reveals regarding the saints receiving their reward.

Wedding-supper-in-heaven theorists correctly observe that Christ *comes to the Father's throne* to receive dominion over Earth. However, mirroring Protestant theology, they then conclude that the saints must also come to heaven to receive their reward in what they term "The Coronation Ceremony."

The next verses explicitly show that *Christ* was brought directly into the presence of the Father to receive *His* dominion. Christ's coronation is in Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man [Christ] came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days [the Father], and *they brought Him* [Christ] *near before Him* [the Father]. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The word "came" in verse 13, where Christ comes to the Ancient of Days (the Father), derives from the Chaldee term *metah* and implies "being found present." It also means "to come" or "to reach."

Verses 21-22 show that "the Ancient of Days *came*, and judgment was given to the saints." In this case, the word "came" derived from the Chaldee term *athah*. Here, it means "to arrive" or "to bring." The context of verses 21-22 shows that the Ancient of Days (in this case, Jesus Christ) "arrived," in the sense of *intervening from heaven* on behalf of the saints who were being prevailed against, or subdued, by the symbolic horn.

Since the "horn," representing the papacy, was prevailing against the saints (collectively all of them over a 2,000-year period) until the

Ancient of Days “arrived” to give judgment to them, they were obviously on Earth—the saints could not possibly be subject to the horn’s oppression if they were IN HEAVEN!

To conclude that the saints receive dominion from the Father in the same manner as does Christ requires another extreme leap in logic. This series of verses does not remotely imply that the saints were ever brought before the Father’s presence, before *or* after they are given dominion (their reward). The misguided “teachers” of the wedding supper theories believe that “The Coronation Ceremony” is then immediately followed by the wedding supper *in heaven*. False.

The truth of when and where the saints receive their reward comes clear in another of Christ’s parables, beginning in Luke 19:11: “And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.”

Then, in verse 12, Jesus began explaining His own role: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to *receive for himself a kingdom*, and to *return*.” This verse parallels His appearing before the Father to receive His dominion—a coronation that *precedes* Christ’s Return to Earth.

Next, before Jesus left them, He gave His servants assignments: “He called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come” (vs. 13).

In verse 15, Christ returns: “And it came to pass, that *when he was RETURNED*, having received [past tense] the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.” The sequence of events here is IMPOSSIBLE TO MISUNDERSTAND! Honesty is the only thing necessary to see the truth.

Verses 16-17 describe Christ rewarding His servants according to their works: “Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities.” This parable plainly shows Christ brings each man’s reward *with Him* at His Return.

IT DOES NOT OCCUR IN HEAVEN! Just read Revelation 22:12: “Behold, I *come* quickly; and *My reward is with Me, to give every man* according as his work shall be.”

Another verse confirms this: “Behold, the Lord GOD *will come* with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, *His reward is with Him*, and His work before Him” (Isa. 40:10). The whole Church once knew this spoke of Christ, Who returns to appoint rulership according

to how much His servants have applied themselves and grown—and, it should be added, *avoided all forms of heresy!*

Referring to related scriptures often clarifies uncertainty with a particular verse. Those who neglect to do this, and instead choose reckless speculation, become entwined in confusion.

The Triumphant Return of Christ

Christ's Second Coming, the most critical point in all history, is too important to cover in Revelation 16 as a mere sub-point of the seven last plagues. Thus, John was inspired to record a separate, detailed description.

Revelation 19:11-16 describes the triumphal entry of Christ: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns [being brought to the saints]; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Before continuing, recognize that Scripture does not document every aspect of what happens to the saints *immediately* after the First Resurrection. However, it is obvious they meet Christ in the air (I Thes. 4:17), and since they will at that point be God Beings, they will certainly have the ability to go anywhere in the universe, including the third heaven. Also, Scripture reveals that *all* aspects of the Seventh Trumpet—all of the seven last plagues—occur in *one day*. More detail on this comes later. But since there is the mistaken belief that nine days elapse between the First Resurrection and when Christ sets His feet on the Mount of Olives, some conclude that the resurrected saints go to the third heaven immediately and to the wedding supper. (The saints could—in theory—go to the third heaven after being changed, or anywhere else, if that were God's Plan, because they will be able to travel anywhere in the universe instantaneously. But the wedding supper occurring at this time is *not possible*, as we will continue to prove.)

Those who teach that the wedding supper is in heaven believe that it occurs during the seven last plagues. Revelation 15:8 is used to sup-

port this thinking. They claim that the statement “no man was able to enter the temple, till the seven plagues...were fulfilled,” means that the coronation, the marriage and the wedding supper are taking place during this time.

This makes no sense for several reasons.

First, the scripture simply does not state the saints and Christ, and the Father, are closeted in the temple during this time. This is just not there. Would the Bible be silent on such a GIANT EVENT if they were? Of course not!

Second, we already read Revelation 14:10, which explains that the wrath of God is “poured out...in the presence of the Lamb.” This could not be true if Christ is in the heavenly temple.

Third, we saw the Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty takes place during the conclusion of these plagues. How could Christ and the saints be in the temple, while *at the same time* fighting those who oppose His Return?

Fourth, could anyone honestly believe this wonderful, joyous celebration takes place at the very time God is completing—fulfilling—“without mixture”—His wrath upon rebellious humanity? *Reread this question.*

Now consider the most urgent issue pressing upon Christ and the saints between the resurrection and the battle, which, again, occurs in the same day.

In Jude 14, it reveals the saints constitute part of the armies (with the angels, Matthew 24:31) returning with Christ: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.” Psalms 149:5-9 speaks of the warfare the saints help carry out: “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: *this honor have all His saints.*”

Since the saints are to some degree to take part in this great climactic battle (Rev. 17:14 shows them to be present during war with the Beast and False Prophet), *some* preparation may be necessary before joining such an event. Being changed to a Spirit being will be a quantum leap in understanding and capability, but a degree of preparation might still be required for this duty. Malachi 4:2 shows Spirit beings are capable of growing and learning—obviously true of the Father and Christ.

Christ and His saints have to be concerned with Satan using this great battle as an opportunity to bring about as much destruction on

Earth as possible. Measures must be taken to restrain them, as the enemy is subdued. God “destroys them which destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18).

The upcoming battle would take precedence over the marriage and wedding supper, which would naturally occur *after* the final victory is secured. Even dispensing of rewards to individual saints might be delayed until *after* the battle. Nowhere in the Bible do we find a celebration occurs in advance of achieving victory. THIS WOULD MAKE NO SENSE!

Think about the implications of the wedding supper occurring while Satan is still influencing humanity and ravaging the earth. Similar to the fourth point above, ask: Would Christ and His saints be in heaven celebrating while Satan is still wreaking havoc on Earth?

The Marriage of the Lamb: Within the Context of Revelation 19

Let’s continue examining false “logic.” We saw Revelation 15:8 is used to assert that the saints and Christ are cloistered away in the temple. Yet they ignore chapter 16, which describes the seven last plagues. The humanly revised sequence of events jumps to the beginning of Revelation 19. Again, some twist the timing, teaching that the wedding and the following supper take place *before* the battle described in the second half of the chapter.

The theorists observe that Revelation 19:7-9 references the marriage and wedding supper before the account of Christ’s Return and the final battle, in verses 11 to 21. First verse 6: “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent *reigns*.”

At the time of this praise in heaven, Christ is *already* reigning on Earth. The term used for “reign” (or “reigns”) is the Greek *basileuo*, which means to rule as a sovereign or king. An *imperfect* verb tense (denoting something impending in the course of time) is not implied. When the angelic beings praise Christ, HE IS ALREADY REIGNING!

This “voice of many waters” continues in verses 7-9: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb *is come*, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Let’s analyze “for the marriage of the Lamb is *come*...” Does this mean the marriage ceremony is already in process at that time—or, does it mean that it is an impending certainty yet to occur?

Here, the Greek verb for “come” can, and often does, apply to the *imperfect tense*, which can denote a continuous event or something that will happen in the future.

The intended meaning of the word “come (or comes)” is revealed by comparing it with Rev. 11:14: “The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe *comes* quickly.” “Comes” is identical to the word “come” found in Rev. 19:7. In both cases the Greek term is *erchomai*, and pictures an *impending event*—one that has not yet occurred! At the time this is voiced in heaven, the marriage has *almost* arrived, but is *not yet* in process.

Having already established that, at this point, God (Christ) was already reigning (vs. 6) and that the marriage was an event to take place in the immediate future (vs. 7), it is not possible that the marriage of the Lamb and the following wedding supper could have *preceded* the beginning of Christ’s reign on the earth!

Even though the *exact hour* of the wedding supper is not explicitly disclosed, when it does occur, Christ will already be reigning *on Earth*.

Does Christ Return at Pentecost?

An inset: Many proponents of the wedding supper in heaven theory believe Christ returns on Pentecost, not Trumpets or at any other time. (Understand that LCG does not appear to yet go this far. But what we are about to cover is all part of the foundation they chose to stand on without understanding how faulty was every brick within it.)

Since Revelation is not specific as to what happens to the saints as soon as they are resurrected, these advocates assert that this is made clear in Leviticus 23—claiming this is “the key” to understanding the subject. It is not.

The fact that the firstfruits in God’s Plan were symbolized by the *two wave loaves* and presented to God at the time of Pentecost leads promoters of the doctrine to conclude that the time of the firstfruit harvest, and hence the First Resurrection, occurs on Pentecost.

Let’s read in Leviticus 23:9-11 about the wave sheaf offering: “The LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When you come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first-

fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.”

Verse 17 commands the offering of the two wave loaves of bread, made with leavening. These represent the firstfruits in God’s Plan of salvation. One loaf is correctly understood to represent the Old Testament patriarchs, servants and prophets who constitute the Old Testament Church. The second represents the New Testament Church. Both loaves were baked with leavening, symbolizing that all God’s servants were not free of sin, although they were seeking to overcome it.

The word “wave” relating to the wave sheaf offering comes from the Hebrew term *nuwph*, meaning “to vibrate up and down” or “rock to and fro.” This term can also mean “to lift up, to move, sift, strike or wave.” Promoters of the theory stress that the term “wave” means to “lift up” and dismiss the other possible definitions. The Strong’s definition clearly supports that “wave” simply means “wave.” The theorists tie the idea of the wave loaves being “elevated” with their assumption that the saints are elevated to God’s throne at the resurrection. The creative suppositions drawn from the wave sheaf ceremony are based on translations of terms that are, at best, ambiguous.

I should have warned that some of the thinking we would encounter was awfully silly.

Advocates of these new theories do not emphasize the Law of God being given at Sinai at Pentecost, or the Holy Spirit being given on this day for the New Testament Church. Rather, they stress their idea that the harvest of the firstfruits—which they equate with the First Resurrection—together with the marriage to Christ and the wedding supper (in heaven), must all occur on *Pentecost*. This represents an entirely new twist to the meaning of the Holy Days—one NEVER taught in God’s Church when it was on track under Mr. Armstrong and during the Philadelphian age. Not only do they reinterpret the timing of prophetic fulfillments, they also relegate all these events to the *wrong day*!

To reach their conclusions, revisionists dismiss many *other* aspects of prophecy—as they do with the meaning of *other* Holy Days.

Holy Days and the Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord begins at the first trumpet, possibly or even likely to occur on the Feast of Trumpets. Forgetting the *duration* of

the Day of the Lord, they teach that it ends about eight months later, at Pentecost.

God’s Church has long understood that the Day of the Lord lasts for one full year, using the day-for-a-year principle of Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34. Also notice: “For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the YEAR of recompenses for the controversy of Zion” (Isa. 34:8—see also 61:2; 63:4).

It has also long been understood that, unlike the spring Holy Days (including Pentecost), the *fall* Holy Days represent prophetic events that are yet to occur. The Feast of Trumpets is a celebration of triumph in the future event that it pictures—the Return of Jesus Christ at the sound of the seventh trumpet, probably coinciding with the First Resurrection.

Since the fall Holy Days represent future events, it is logical that the Feast of Trumpets would be directly related to the sounding of the trumpets and the fulfillment of the trumpet plagues. Since the Day of the Lord was understood to last one full year, naturally, not all seven of the trumpet plagues would occur on the Feast of Trumpets. However, it is understood that the *first* and the *seventh* trumpet perhaps will *likely* occur on that Holy Day—one year apart.

If the Day of the Lord begins at the sounding of the First Trumpet on the Feast of Trumpets, it would finalize at that time as well—that is, the Seventh Trumpet would sound on the Feast of Trumpets precisely one year later.

To promote their heretical ideas, those who advocate a Pentecost date for the wedding supper, in effect, strip the Feast of Trumpets of its intended meaning, reducing it to a “Feast of Plagues,” thus removing the pivotal element of the Return of Christ.

Now ask: If the advocates of the wedding supper theory are in error on so many *peripheral* issues, on what basis could one hope that they are remotely correct on their CENTRAL IDEA?

“That Great Day”

The Living Church of God’s newer version of the wedding supper heresy asserts that nine days elapse between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and when Christ returns to fight “the Battle of *That Great Day* of God Almighty.” They propose that the seven last plagues occur in this period, after which Christ arrives to fight gathered armies “on or just prior to the Day of Atonement”—*after* the wedding supper had taken place away from an Earth still deceived by Satan and under destruction by God.

This idea fails the test of Scripture! Let's now examine in more detail how *all seven LAST plagues* occur on the *very same day* that Christ returns. Let's start with the Old Testament, looking for a key phrase:

"IN THAT DAY, says the LORD, will I assemble her that halts, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever" (Mic. 4:6-7).

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted IN THAT DAY...And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted IN THAT DAY" (Isa. 2:11, 17).

Jeremiah 25:29-33, 46:10 and 50:29-32 all reference the same day as do Micah and Isaiah. This is the day to focus on in this context. It is described in Revelation 16:14: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the *whole world* [think of verses we just read] to gather them to the battle of THAT GREAT DAY of God Almighty." Note the phrase "THAT Great Day." (While this is the *only* place God names this battle, the same day is mentioned throughout the Bible, but usually with the phrase "in that day" or "in the day." These all identify this final climatic LITERAL DAY, and ALL that it represents!

The Bible reveals that 21 EVENTS occur on this SINGLE DAY—"in that day." Events we have been discussing are not stretched over nine days, as LCG asserts (or four months from Pentecost to Trumpets). *Now comes the most fascinating part of this article!* Here are 21 EVENTS that ALL occur on *that great day*, some almost simultaneously. Again, they all happen on ONE DAY! May God help you understand this awesome truth, and how these events relate to YOU. *Exact* order is not always clear, but close:

(1) Jesus Christ leaves heaven with His army—the saints are *not* with him, as they are *not* resurrected yet (Rev. 19:11-14)

(2) Angels gather the dead saints to where the living ones are, at the Place of Safety (Matt. 24:30-31)

(3) The seventh trumpet sounds (Rev. 11:15-19)

(4) Heaven and God's Temple are exposed, accompanied by an earthquake and great hail (Rev. 11:19)

(5) The dead saints are resurrected and the living saints changed to spirit, meeting Christ in the air (Jude 14-15; I Thes. 4:14-17; I Cor. 15:51-52)

- (6) Babylon receives special plagues (Rev. 18:8-24)
- (7) Famine (of food and commerce) culminates in Babylon (vs. 8, 9, 11, 15, 18-19)
- (8) The Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty is fought (Rev. 16:14; Zech. 14:1-3, 12-13; Rev. 19:19; Isa. 42:13; Joel 3)
- (9) Persecuted local Jews in Jerusalem join in the battle (Zech. 14:14). *Most simply never notice this.*
- (10) Birds eat the flesh of the dead (“supper of the Great God” – Rev. 19:17-18; Zeph. 1:7-18)
- (11) The Beast and False Prophet are executed in the presence of the saints (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-20; Dan. 7:8-11)
- (12) One year of wrath *ends* (Job 14:13)
- (13) Christ’s feet stand on the Mount of Olives *in that day* (Zech. 14:3-4; Micah 1:3-4; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30 – not one, two or nine days later! Also, recall that Christ ascended from this same place – Acts 1:11-12)
- (14) The Mount of Olives splits (Zech. 14:4)
- (15) Jewish inhabitants flee to the mountains through this new valley (vs. 5)
- (16) The healing river appears (vs. 8)
- (17) The devil is bound (Rev. 20:1-3)
- (18) The saints’ 1000 years begins (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 20:4)
- (19) The saints receive their reward (Rev. 11:17-18; 20:4)—it is difficult to pinpoint *exactly* when reward is given in relation to other events, but this does occur at some point on this day, perhaps at the marriage and supper
- (20) Christ marries the Church (Rev. 19:7-8)
- (21) The marriage supper (Rev. 19:9 – Again, would the marriage supper precede the battle, with the saints enjoying a joyous occasion while armies gather? Supper is typically eaten *at or near the end of a biblical day* (sunset-to-sunset)—especially in the land of Israel, where sunset times do not vary nearly as much as in places further from the equator.)

This list holds several implications related to the wedding supper. Here are three:

- The armies leaving heaven are angels, not saints, since the saints are not yet resurrected at that point. Angels also wear clean, white linen (Rev. 15:6; also see Ezek. 9, 10).
- All events occur in one 24-hour period, which does not allow Christ to come for His people, make an immediate U-turn, and then have a multi-day wedding feast while plagues unfold on Earth below!

- A wedding supper cannot be squeezed between the saints being given eternal life at the last trump and Christ's feet landing on the Mount of Olives—again, in the *same day*!

We might ask, why would the seven last plagues be so brief, all fitting within *one day*, when previous plagues could last as long as five months? The reason: the cumulative effect of these disasters would erase plant, animal and human life from Earth if they continued. Remember, this is the FULL MEASURE of God's wrath—but He limits the *duration* of these severe plagues to preserve the lives of the perhaps 10 percent of humanity that survives into the Millennium. These plagues serve a crucial purpose in bringing satanic, unyielding and unrepentant human holdouts to their end, to be resurrected later during a very different time period 1,000 years after.

(For *much* more detail of all that occurs after the seventh trumpet, serious readers will want to listen to my sermon "Revelation—Part Two: That Great Day." It will astonish you.)

From all indications, survivors of "that great day" will gather to keep the Feast of Tabernacles soon to follow, as seen in Zechariah 14:16. The remnant of humanity would still be numb from the Day of the Lord and the trauma of wars, earthquakes and other disasters. The logistics of arranging the Feast would ordinarily be impossible, but now in the hands of Christ and the saints, it can quickly become a reality. Remember, this Feast was originally held in dwellings made of tree boughs. A feast on the heels of such traumatic times might necessitate similar temporary dwellings.

Notice how Christ tenderly deals with these weary survivors at this time: "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God...He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young...He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:1, 11, 29-31).

The point is that the marriage and wedding supper will occur *very soon* after Christ's Return—but not before He subdues human rebellion and puts in order certain issues in the list above, as modern revisionists would have us believe.

The Time of the Marriage Covenant with Ancient Israel

Another brief inset. Some claim the wedding supper will occur on Pentecost based on the *assumption* that Christ married ancient Israel on Pentecost.

This needs clarification. Some points are helpful to consider regarding the original marriage covenant between Christ and ancient Israel, which did take place about the time of Pentecost around 1443 B.C.

Three days before the Law was given at Mount Sinai, this account took place: “Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; you have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD” (Exod. 19:3-8).

Three days later, God thundered the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai—the basis of the covenant Israel was to keep. However, it was not until one or more days *after* the Law was given on Pentecost that the covenant was confirmed. This is plainly shown by the account in Exodus 24:3-8: “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD has said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and *rose up early in the morning*, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.”

The confirmation of the Old Covenant occurred *after* Pentecost—not on that day. Therefore, this cannot be used to prove the wedding will be (or start) on Pentecost.

Wearing “White Linen”

Certain others, now including the Living Church of God’s leaders, proclaim that the armies of Revelation 19:14 are saints returning from the

wedding supper. Since the armies are arrayed in “fine linen, white and clean,” the assumption is that these white garments are their wedding garments. They are not.

These deceivers fail to realize that angels also wear clean white linen, as alluded to earlier in the chapter. Revelation 15:6 shows that the angels who pour out the last seven plagues are wearing pure white linen. The angel who appeared to Daniel in Daniel 10:5 wore linen, as well. In Ezekiel, the angel who set a mark upon the forehead of those who sighed and cried also wore this same linen attire (9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6, 7). The 24 elders at the Throne of God in heaven are also clothed in white raiment (Rev. 4:4). Even the garment worn by God the Father (Ancient of Days) is defined as “white as snow” (Dan. 7:9). It should be clear that white linen attire is *not* exclusive to the wedding feast.

Recall from the explanation of “that great day” that it is impossible for the saints to be part of this army as it leaves heaven since they have not yet been resurrected. It may *appear* the event of verse 14 occurs after the resurrection—if one reads Revelation in the order it was written. But the book is *not written in exact sequence*. (MANY examples could be cited. Think of them yourself.) Reading it in that manner leads to a host of errors. The wedding supper heresy is but one.

Assuming the saints had just come from the wedding supper, would the armies, the saints included, casually approach the battle still attired in wedding clothes? Of course not! To use this as proof of their having somehow already been to a wedding feast implies they would be *dressed differently the rest of the time*. The Bible does not state, or even imply, that this fine linen is *only* worn at the wedding feast.

Here is the significance of fine white linen: “...the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints” (Rev. 19:8). Revelation 3:4-5 states this in relation to the *meaning* of white raiment: “You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in *white raiment*...” In these verses, the white garments represent being *undefiled*, being *worthy* and having *overcome*.

Don’t forget what so many have: The Bible always interprets itself—for those who are willing to allow it.

The Setting

Proponents insist that the wedding supper *must* be in heaven because the most inspiring and immaculate surroundings are found there. But they forget the miracle God performed at Mount Sinai, recorded in

Exodus 24:9-11: “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.”

Here we see that the marriage and wedding supper could occur on the sea of glass (see Rev. 4:6) without having to be in heaven. The glory of God’s surroundings can, to a degree, be brought to Earth when necessary. The glorified Christ (with legions of angels) will be here and will be fully capable of providing what is necessary at the time of His marriage.

The Living Church of God’s “Stand Before God’s Throne” article adds to the false theory, teaching that the reference to “before the throne” in Revelation 14:3, 5 indicates the saints are in heaven partaking of the wedding supper. Verse 3 *does* describe the 144,000 standing before the “throne,” “four beasts” and “elders.” Where careless readers go wrong is assuming that these verses are *sequential* in the story flow of Revelation—*after* the seventh trumpet mentioned in 11:15 and *before* Christ comes from heaven in 19:14. Some read this as indication of time sequence, and as a result conclude that this scene must happen at that moment in the unfolding of events. But remember that Revelation is *not* written in precise time sequence—it includes a number of “inset” passages and chapters, and Chapter 14 is one of them!

Since the resurrected saints will not be constrained to Earth for the 1,100 years that precede the Father setting up His throne here, they will have free access to heaven all during that time and forever after. The scene of the 144,000 standing before the throne in heaven, though, can only happen sometime *after* all the events occur on “that great day,” when the saints are born of the Spirit—and *after* the wedding supper has already occurred *on Earth*. Also—get this!—the 144,000 are described as singing before God’s throne. Nothing else is said other than the description of who they are.

LCG also teaches that the Father will “officiate the wedding,” and since He will not come to Earth until the new heavens and new earth are established, this must then mean that the wedding and following supper will be in heaven. On the surface this seems plausible. The problem? SCRIPTURE NOWHERE INDICATES OR EVEN SUGGESTS THE FATHER OFFICIATES THE WEDDING. Rather, men with no scriptural authority to bring doctrine—“evangelists”—promote this idea, attempting to add entirely unproven, unscriptural “credence” to their false “heavenly supper” idea.

False doctrines are often spawned when men try to force Scripture to state something it does not. As an *atheist* once correctly observed, “No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says: He is always convinced that it says what he means.” Men start with a preconceived idea, and then go in pursuit of scriptures to support it, rather than simply allowing the Bible to both speak and interpret itself (the greatest rule of Bible study).

The Bible is silent on who officiates the wedding, if anyone?!—as such, so should be God’s Church! To invent an idea, and then force it into heaven to prove a preconceived assertion, is *deceit*—pure, unadulterated DECEIT!

“Straw Man Argument”

The same article states this: “Since heaven is not the reward of the saved, must we assume that the resurrected saints—born into the Family of God as His full children—will be ‘barred’ from any access to God’s throne in heaven?...we can see clearly that—just as Christ has access to the Father instantaneously at all times—the saints will be with the Lamb, even before the Father’s throne...If we are one in the Father and in Christ, we will certainly have immediate access to our Father in heaven.”

Referenced earlier, this is a classic “straw man argument.” By setting up a *straw man*—a fictional and silly line of reasoning that can be discounted—then knocking it down, the author believes he can use this hollow victory as supposed proof of some particular point.

Think. LCG says in effect: “If you do not accept the wedding supper as being in heaven, you must also believe the saints will have *no access to the Father* until His throne is established on Earth.” How silly—how false—how CUNNING!

As full members of the God Family, *of course* the saints will have access to the Father! Consider that many angels—on a lesser plane than God Beings—are present in God’s throne, and even Satan has had access (see Job chapters 1 and 2). Would God exclude his own Family? Of course not! And it has nothing to do with whether the wedding supper is on Earth! Recall Revelation 3:12, which describes the reward of Philadelphians: “Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out...” Will the Philadelphians be part of the Temple, but somehow have no access to the God who dwells there? Of course not!

That the saints will have free access to the third heaven in no way *automatically* leads to the conclusion that the wedding supper must be

held there. Crafty deceivers always tip their “hand” (Eph. 4:14) if you watch them closely enough. But you must watch.

Does “One” Mean “Always in the Same Place”?

Elsewhere, LCG’s article presents another truly bizarre argument. Let’s see it: “Notice also that Jesus’ prayer to the Father reveals that Christ’s disciples will be one with Him and the Father! ‘I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 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 sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just 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’ (John 17:20-23). If we are one in the Father and in Christ, we will certainly have immediate access to our Father in heaven.”

The leaps in logic here are just profound. God’s people were correctly taught for many years that “one” here means that the Father and Son are unified in mind, purpose and actions. But does this mean that to be “one,” you must be in the same location? Consider that when Jesus said to His Father in this prayer, “We are one”—He was *on earth*, and had not been with the Father for over three decades! This thinking is only a few shades away from the trinitarian argument that “one” means wrapped together in a three-in-one godhead. Finally, remember that this argument only comes into play if a person believes that without a wedding supper in heaven no saint can ever go there.

This passage in fact makes clear that God’s people are to be “one”—unified—*here and now*. Jesus’ real point is that the people of God are to be one spiritually (I Cor. 1:10), and in the same place, believing the same things and doing the same Work, under the same government of God, led by the one Jesus Christ—all in one organization. To believe otherwise is to reduce Christ’s prayer to a short-sighted exercise in futility, the very thing that most in the splinters do today when they teach the monstrous lie that the Body of Christ is today scattered into many groups. These same leaders are the ones actually empowering and fueling the scattering. Matthew 12:30 tells you what Christ thinks of them, and verses 31-32 tells you why many of these men (no one can know or judge how many) are *headed for the lake of fire!*

All those with God’s Spirit will eventually have to leave these men and return to God’s ONE Church, or lose His Spirit. Read John 10:3-

5. Jesus said His sheep will not follow the voice of strangers when He “calls” their “name” and leads them to safety, away from these thieves and robbers. Romans 8:9, and particularly verse 14, make perfectly clear that God’s Spirit—the Spirit of Christ in them (vs. 9)—will lead them away from the thieving, murderous destroyers (John 10:10) they are following when their name is called.

What About Luke 12:36?

Finally, for the record, we should briefly consider Luke 12:36, which could be misused to justify the idea that the wedding supper precedes Christ’s Return. It reads: “And you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return *from* the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately.”

This parable *cannot* be a reference to the wedding supper, as it would not make sense. Here is why: Verse 36 states that the “lord” returns from a wedding and *then* his servants receive him—*after he returns*. Understand. If this were speaking of Christ returning from the wedding supper, why tell His people to “open unto Him immediately” *after having already married His bride* (these very men and women)? This is entirely illogical! For Jesus to marry the Church, and *then* tell them to be ready for Him, simply does not make sense. Once the First Resurrection and wedding supper are finished, there is no need to watch for Christ’s Return and be ready to “open unto Him immediately.” The sequence of events in such a scenario simply does not work.

This parable has nothing to do with *where* and *when* the saints will partake of the wedding supper. It is simply making the crucial point that when Christ comes for His people, they need to be ready to receive Him *immediately*. Verses 37 through 40 make this clear. Jesus is telling His “flock” (vs. 32) to remain vigilant and “watch” for His coming—and all that implies—and thus making themselves ready to take part in the wedding supper.

God’s people have long struggled to harmonize various accounts and parables that describe (1) Jesus Christ being “revealed,” (2) His Second Coming, (3) His people being gathered around the world (“taken”) to a place of protection and then (4) later rising to meet Him, among other end-time events. All of this is covered in my eight-part sermon series “The 1,335 Days of the Son of Man.” You are “warned.” If you start the series, you will find yourself unable to stop until completion. But it will give you a complete foundation on which to place correct understanding of the marriage supper.

The Right Focus

The Bible declares, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having *itching ears*; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto *fables*” (II Tim. 4:3-4). Paul was speaking of our time.

Those who have been seduced by false doctrines—fables!—regarding the wedding supper have lost sight of this warning: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be *corrupted* from the *simplicity* that is in Christ” (II Cor. 11:3).

The established pattern of faulty reasoning, misguided speculation and butchering of plain scriptures provides ample evidence of the “spirit of error” (I John 4:6) leading LCG.

Careful Bible study shows that today’s wedding supper in heaven idea is easily refuted. You have seen this.

Convuluted, confused, murky doctrine built on shallow, poorly conceived ideas does not come from Jesus Christ! Whether examining the wedding supper or any other prophecy (or any doctrine), we must make every effort to focus on the things that God’s Word clearly states, rather than speculating about events where His Word is not explicit. The serious student of prophecy will want to read my thorough book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked – A Voice Cries Out!*

Also, my extensive books “*Anoint Your Eyes*” – *Christ’s Warning to His People* and *The True Church – One Organization, or Many?* explain in detail what is at stake for Christians in this age who lose sight of true doctrine. And for those who want to hear the truth of God presented with clarity, truth and authority, watch *The World to Come* program, now airing on nationwide (and eventually international) television.

IS THE “FALLING AWAY” (II THES. 2:3) A *FUTURE* WORLDWIDE REBELLION LED BY THE MAN OF SIN?

Roderick Meredith and the Living Church of God now teach that the “falling away” of II Thessalonians 2:3 was not fulfilled in the Worldwide Church of God in the late 1980s and early 90s. Rather this event is a *FUTURE* “rebellion/revolt/apostasy” against God led by the *MAN OF SIN* (same verse) and involving the *WHOLE WORLD*. Is this correct? What did Mr. Armstrong teach? What do the Protestants teach? Did Rod Meredith always believe this? What does the Bible reveal? This article is a *MUST READ!*

Former members of the Worldwide Church of God have long believed that, after Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's death, the WCG underwent the prophesied "falling away" described in II Thessalonians 2:3—"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a *falling away* first, and that *man of sin* be revealed." The wholesale changes made under the false WCG leadership after Mr. Armstrong's death caused many thousands to leave God, His government and His doctrines—the TRUTH!—either by staying put or joining Protestant churches. At the same time, many others joined a variety of doctrinally disagreeing groups, holding to differing amounts of truth, or simply went home. It was obvious and known to those with God's Spirit that the discarding of true doctrines by the WCG *was* the apostasy to occur before Christ's Return. You will see ABSOLUTE PROOF this knowledge was once known to Roderick Meredith—and all the ministers following him.

Rod Meredith *now* claims the apostasy is a FUTURE event involving THE WORLD, not a PAST and PRESENT one involving GOD'S PEOPLE. He is rewriting history. What is the truth about the prophesied "falling away," and why is understanding its timing so important? What have other LCG leaders said in support? What *sources* were used to ascertain this supposed "new truth"? Mr. Armstrong's name is being used to propel this idea as something not new. What did *he* teach regarding "falling away"? Is God's Word clear on this verse, and what can be learned from history?

This article brings answers! Prepare to be SHOCKED at the even greater—and more dangerous—level of deception coming from the leadership of LCG. What will be presented are the PLAIN FACTS about II Thessalonians 2:3—as well as the evident spirit so obviously guiding this change.

Setting the Stage

First comes a brief overview of LCG’s teaching. (We will later examine the explanation—and tactics—that Rod Meredith and others use to sell their new thinking.) Then we will examine what Mr. Armstrong taught. Finally, we will see what ALL of God’s people commonly understood about whether what occurred in the WCG fulfilled II Thessalonians 2:3. This includes what all members in the Global Church of God under Rod Meredith believed. It also includes quotes from Rod Meredith. I taught more about the falling away while in GCG than anyone else—by far. We will also see what I taught there (written and spoken)—and what Rod Meredith agreed with, and the entire ministry understood—for almost *six years!*

Here is a sample of what Rod Meredith *now* teaches. It is from the March-April 2012 edition of *The Living Church News*, and comes from an article titled “*Is It Wrong to GROW in Knowledge?*” (bold emphasis his):

“Even now, brethren, our Council of Elders is discussing a few ‘technical’ points that Mr. Armstrong could not have humanly anticipated, considering that he died in 1986, before certain prophecies had begun to be fulfilled...”

“Brethren, we do need to be careful about ‘new understandings.’ Consider some popular ideas among God’s people regarding the ‘Great Apostasy’ of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10. Mr. Armstrong understood that this rebellion involved the whole world. Indeed, the Greek word *apostasia* is more accurately translated into English as ‘rebellion’ rather than ‘apostasy,’ and Mr. Armstrong rightly understood that it connotes an uprising far broader than the consequences of doctrinal heresy within God’s little flock, involving a man of sin whose very visible and physical demonstrations of power will affect the whole world...”

“Yes, what happened in Worldwide may certainly have been a ‘type’ of the final apostasy. But it was **not** the major one described in 2 Thessalonians 2–3.”

First, Rod Meredith is so obviously inconsistent right out of the gate. He describes what “Mr. Armstrong could not have humanly antici-

pated...before certain prophecies had begun to be fulfilled...”, but then later says, “Mr. Armstrong understood that this rebellion involved the whole world.” And no correct definition of *apostasia* includes the word “rebellion.” You will see this.

Referring to what Mr. Armstrong in fact DID teach (the apostasy involves *the Church*) through use of the authorless term “popular idea” is EXACTLY what Mr. Armstrong’s successors did when they wanted to discredit his *teaching* without invoking his *name*. They knew this tactic was crucial to reducing natural resistance they would automatically arouse against their deceit. Clever seducers never forget this. (We will later examine closely a whole series of tactics employed by Rod Meredith just as did Mr. Armstrong’s successors.) Again, Rod Meredith does then go on to use Mr. Armstrong’s name (and supposed belief and teaching) to falsely claim that he always understood the *primary* “falling away” involved the world, with the Church a mere “type” of the real event. The entire quote is patently FALSE, an utter LIE—a complete FICTION—that can be easily *disproven*! You will also see this. In the meantime, a small seed must be planted for the reader to think about as we proceed. The world cannot fall away from what it never had. Neither can any individual. One must know the truth to fall away from it. Not one member or minister has ever described anyone falling away from anything other than God’s Way and truth. This seed will grow into a giant sequoia before this article is over.

The following article was published in LCG’s *Tomorrow’s World* July-August 2012 edition, written by Doug Winnail (LCG’s Church Administration Director) and titled “The Great Rebellion Against God”:

“Bible prophecy lists numerous signs that will precede Jesus Christ’s second coming, but the Apostle Paul specifically notes *two major events* that will occur just before Christ returns. He writes, ‘that Day will not come unless *the falling away* comes first, and the *man of sin* is revealed, the son of perdition’ (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Paul tells us that the appearance of this ‘man of sin’ on the world stage will be accompanied by ‘signs, and lying wonders’ performed by a false religious leader using Satan’s power (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This display of supernatural demonic power will deceive millions into following this Satan-inspired individual and the system he is promoting...”

“...Together, the political leader and the miracle-working false prophet will lead the world into a Satan-inspired system that will be totally contrary to the laws of God. This will be the ultimate fulfillment

of the ‘falling away’ or ‘great apostasy’ against God that the Apostle Paul described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Bible prophecies reveal this *is coming* in the years just ahead!”

This quote certainly does describe some events that will happen. Its error, and this is *one* of the big problems with this false teaching, is that it links the man of sin deceiving the world with the falling away that occurs among God’s people before this happens. The man of sin certainly does deceive the masses worldwide, but at least quickly notice at this point how the falling away (1) “comes *first*” and (2) is not called a “great” falling away. It is merely called a “falling away.” Within the Church it *was* certainly a big event, to say the least—and perhaps we could say a “great event.” But God through the apostle Paul does not use “great” to describe it. This word is simply added to make the scope of the supposed modern apostasy (falling away) appear larger on the world scene—as a “major event” and “great apostasy,” as Winnail calls it.

Open your Bible and read the way the verse begins. It should deeply sober you. It opens, “Let no man deceive you by any means...” Here is the reason: A falling away cannot come unless deceivers come to bring it. Hence, the overarching introductory warning about this. Here is the point: Paul is writing to BRETHREN, not the WORLD. It is *brethren* who could be fooled by deceivers—using “any means”—and thereby get sucked INTO the falling away when it would come. A paraphrase might be, “Look out for deceivers, brethren, because there is a falling away coming at the end of the age and you could get caught in it.”

We will also include a statement from Rod Meredith’s puppet used to attack others, Bob Thiel, to show how he initially quickly fell into line with the new error/thinking. But his words are better held for later.

What Mr. Armstrong Taught

So then, we should at least ask: Was the idea that “the-falling-away-is-an-all-nations-rebellion” understood and taught by Mr. Armstrong, as Meredith and LCG leaders claim? You will see that whenever Mr. Armstrong referenced II Thessalonians 2:3 he never—NEVER!—talked about a coming, future world apostasy/rebellion/revolt. I repeat: NEVER! Incidentally, Rod Meredith loves to repeat that he “talked with Mr. Armstrong for thousands of hours” through the years. While this is patently false—think it through—EVERYONE near Mr. Armstrong

knows Rod Meredith was almost completely kept away from Mr. Armstrong for the last many years of his life. I was *not* kept away, and periodically spoke with and visited Mr. Armstrong until the summer before he died. And I talked with him about prophecy at length over the last 15 years of his life possibly more than anyone, and certainly more than Rod Meredith—and Mr. Armstrong never *once* suggested or even speculated that the “falling away” was *in any way* applicable to the WORLD before the end came.

But let’s allow you to see this for yourself. Mr. Armstrong’s first quote (of six) shows how he *defined* “apostasy” and “falling away.” He is speaking about the first century departure “from God’s basic original TRUTH.” His position near the end of his life was clear, in fact, impossible to misunderstand. The second quote simply underscores the first—that “apostasy” and “turning away” (falling away) is something one does against *the truth* (italics mine, all other emphasis his):

“The apostasy and falling away from God’s basic original TRUTH started about A.D. 54, near the time Paul wrote of the Galatians turning to a counterfeit gospel (Gal. 1:6-7). That spirit of iniquity, contrary to God’s Law, was already working when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (II Thess. 2:7).

“The Church continued, often meeting secretly ‘underground,’ often fleeing, many being tortured and martyred. By 1926 when I first came among that fledgling Church, it was spiritually dead (Rev. 3:1). They still clung to the *truth* of the Sabbath, the Law of God and the true name. But much *original truth* had been lost, though it was all recorded in the Scriptures. But, even late in the first century, Jude pleaded for God’s people to ‘earnestly contend for the *faith which was once delivered* unto the saints’ (Jude 3).”

Co-Worker Letter, Herbert W. Armstrong, March 19, 1981

“God Almighty has called YOU, with me, to the most important mission on earth in these final perilous days! 1900 years ago Jesus Christ came to earth with a Message from GOD to man. He taught that Message to His Disciples, whom He ordained Apostles. For two 19-year time-cycles they were allowed to proclaim that vital Gospel Message to the world of that day. But apostasy set in. Men turned AWAY from the TRUTH and unto FABLES (II Tim 4:1-4). After 69 A.D., the true Gospel Jesus brought was never again proclaimed in any organized manner to the world.

“Instead, Gentiles came into the Church, bringing with them their PAGAN beliefs and customs. They began to call their PAGAN religion

‘Christianity.’ They continued to accept and go by the NAME of Christ. They continued to preach a gospel of their own ABOUT Christ. But HIS VITAL MESSAGE they snuffed out! All this, Jesus and the New Testament writers foretold!”

Co-Worker Letter, February 13, 1959

Next comes a powerful 1949 quote in which Mr. Armstrong is writing in some detail entirely about the *first century apostasy*. Later in the article you will see how Doug Winnail carefully excerpts the **parts in bold and underlined** to make Mr. Armstrong appear to be talking about a *future* event when you will see that he was talking entirely about the past—first century events of almost 2,000 years ago! (This was the same tactic—selective ellipsing from context to defeat true meaning—LCG used to “prove” Mr. Armstrong believed Christ’s role as Savior is part of the gospel of the kingdom of God.) What Winnail does is simply a DASTARDLY LIE. If you doubt this, or think my language too strong, keep reading. You will gain extraordinary insight into the minds of deceivers at work, and learn *why* it is so easy to deceive the unwitting and unsuspecting—those who let others easily guide their thinking without checking the facts.

Mr. Armstrong opens his letter speaking about World War II. Think of all that Doug Winnail could/should have quoted as you read. Perhaps he also did not want his readers to see how Mr. Armstrong defined the true gospel:

“Why did God let us win? Why did He give us this present armistice? For one purpose only, my dear co-workers—and it’s time we began to realize it—to allow time for the very work He has called YOU and ME to DO! To allow time for the last solemn WARNING MESSAGE to be thundered to our English-speaking peoples! To allow time to proclaim to all the world the TRUE GOSPEL which Christ Himself brought from God—the NEWS OF THE SOON COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO RULE THE WORLD TOMORROW!

“I know it’s difficult for your mind to really grasp the overwhelming meaning of that. Hasn’t the Gospel been preached in all the world, one will ask? EMPHATICALLY NO! Not the TRUE Gospel of Jesus Christ! Not since early apostolic days! Astonishing—yes, BUT TRUE! The only true Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel CHRIST PREACHED—the Message God sent to this world by Him—and that Message is the NEWS of WORLD RULE by GOD HIMSELF—the Message of the overthrow of all the governments of this world—all its nations and empires—and

by the supernatural power of God ALL NATIONS to be ruled over by the soon-coming KINGDOM OF GOD!

“But **Christ foretold a turning away from His Message.** He said MANY FALSE TEACHERS would rise and mislead nearly all. Paul wrote that this ‘mystery of iniquity’—the old Chaldean ‘mysteries’ or pagan-idol-worship of Babylon—was already working in his day. **He prophesied there would be a GREAT FALLING AWAY from Christ’s true Message.** He was inspired to write that **the popular churches would turn away from the TRUTH and believe FABLES.** John, in Revelation, was inspired to foretell that ALL NATIONS would be deceived. And so today the churches preach their OWN ‘gospel’ about the PERSON of Christ—they continually talk ABOUT Him—but they deny, and fight against HIS MESSAGE of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD in our lives now, and over the whole WORLD TOMORROW! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a message ABOUT Christ—it is a Message OF Jesus Christ—the Message God sent by Him—the Message He brought from God and which He proclaimed 1900 years ago!

“AND THAT MESSAGE HAS NOT BEEN PREACHED TO ALL THE WORLD TODAY!

“But now, after 1800 years, THAT SAME MESSAGE once again is going out in great power to the United States—and already to portions of Canada and Mexico.”

Friend and Co-Worker Letter, Nov. 11, 1949

Mr. Armstrong occasionally cited II Thessalonians 2:3 to illustrate what happened to *first century Christians* turning away from Christ and the apostles’ original gospel message. Think. The first century apostasy *in the Church* would be an obvious *type* of the II Thessalonians 2:3 *final* apostasy *in the Church*—see the parallel—because it involved God’s true servants defecting from the TRUTH and joining false churches. The end-time apostasy *in the Church* simply cannot fit as a type of a bigger one *in the world!* The parallel fails.

Now another quote from Mr. Armstrong that makes stronger his knowledge of what “falling away” always means in the Bible. He references II Thessalonians 2:3—but omits any connection to the man of sin because he knew there was none. You will see he did clearly understand the danger of “many deceivers” and *their connection* to a falling away before the end. Note this. Mr. Armstrong puts II Thessalonians 2:3 in the context of warning about these “MANY DECEIVERS” coming “today” and that “making your calling and election SURE!” is

vital. And note it is all in a “true brethren” (last two words) context. Read carefully:

“But LOOK AT THE FRUITS! The work of the original apostles BORE THE TRUE FRUITS!

“The Worldwide Church of God has always produced the GOOD fruits—ABUNDANT fruits.

“It is the ONLY Work in 1850 years that has proclaimed the true Gospel of Christ—the Gospel OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD to the world—now GOING TO THE ENTIRE WORLD!

“Prophecy says the END will not come until, also, there is a ‘falling away’ first! [*Author’s Note: An obvious reference to II Thessalonians 2:3.*]

“Jesus’ parable (Luke 19:11-24) is for OUR TIME, now! It pertains to Christ going to heaven to receive the Kingdom officially and then returning.

“You are each admonished to ‘make your calling and election SURE!’

“Today, as in the time of the first apostles, MANY DECEIVERS are gone out into the world. They will ACCUSE God’s Church and His Work. It is Satan the devil who is the accuser of the true brethren (Rev. 12:10).”

*Letter to all Ministers Worldwide,
Herbert W. Armstrong, February 22, 1974*

The next quote does mention both the falling away and the man of sin—but, even though this is from one of Mr. Armstrong’s earliest (1960) and most important booklets, he makes no mention of any *connection between these two events*. This is because he saw no connection, and neither did any other minister for over 50 years after, including Rod Meredith. Think of this quote as speaking most loudly for what it does NOT say:

“First, note Revelation 17. Here is pictured a woman. In II Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-27 and elsewhere, we learn that ‘woman’ is a symbol for church. This woman is a fallen woman—an apostate church—pictured as ruling over many nations (Rev. 17:1, 15).

“In verse 3, this false church is pictured sitting on a beast ‘having seven heads and ten horns.’ A woman riding a horse guides, controls, the horse. It does her bidding.

“Notice, verse 18, she is ‘that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.’ Notice, verse 2, the inhabitants of the earth have

been deceived by this counterfeit Christianity. Also, Rev. 18:3, she has deceived all nations.

“Next, notice II Thessalonians 2:3-4. The day of Christ—and the coming of Christ—shall not come, until there be a falling away, and a ‘man of sin’ be revealed. He exalts himself above all that is called God. As God, he sits in a temple claimed to be the temple of God, showing himself to deceive people into accepting him as God. God is our Holy Father. This final man, in a religious office, will claim the same title. This wicked man is to be destroyed at, and by, Christ’s coming (verse 8).”

*Who or What Is the PROPHETIC BEAST?,
Herbert W. Armstrong, 1960*

Mr. Armstrong’s description of the man of sin in his thorough booklet continues for many more paragraphs. He makes no mention whatsoever of any “worldwide rebellion/revolt” away from God connected to this coming figure. This would have been an impossibility in his thinking. You may wish to read at least this section of Mr. Armstrong’s booklet.

Of course Mr. Armstrong witnessed time and again during his life *individuals* “fall away.” He knew this meant they had departed “from the truth”:

“Rather astonishing, isn’t it, that people who have heard God’s TRUTH preached for many years – people who at first accepted it in the love of God, professed it, started out practicing it – should, through the years, *fall away* from the truth...[and] begin to embrace false doctrines and errors...

“What is God’s sentence upon them? Listen!

“It is IMPOSSIBLE for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted of the good Word of God...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh’ (Heb. 6:4-6). ‘Let it be a warning to ALL, and let all FEAR, and TREMBLE before the all-powerful WORD OF GOD!’”

Herbert W. Armstrong, “Why Local Churches?”, GN, March 1957

For obvious reasons, Mr. Armstrong never envisioned a *full-scale* apostasy in the WCG—no one did. But this does not mean he would have accepted II Thessalonians 2:3 as anything other than Christians

departing from God’s truth. And nothing in the above quotes indicates Mr. Armstrong saw the “falling away” as a planet-wide rebellion, or as something initiated by the man of sin.

What I and Others Taught in the Global Church of God

At the outset of my Global Church of God years, I produced an early stapled nine-page list of WCG heresies titled, “What Are the Changes?” I was the only pastor in the world who had been fired at that point, and I needed the list to keep up with the nonstop 18-hour days of talking to people that went on for three months until others came to help. Sending it could save much time. This early list came to have 154 false teachings by early May of 1993 (two months after I was fired). I made it available to any who asked, and it eventually circulated to thousands around the world. Note the only understood and accepted definition of *falling away* that I included. Rod Meredith *fully* authorized its distribution.

This excerpt is from the *Introduction* to the first list (Summer 1993):

“This is a comprehensive list of most all the doctrinal changes of the Worldwide Church of God. While some of these changes are smaller and less significant, others are huge and have a devastating impact on belief. Many changes involve numerous re-explanations of individual scriptures that could have been listed separately making this list, quite literally, almost unending. A more comprehensive approach was attempted at the risk of being called picky because it demonstrates that heresy is a cancer that eventually leavens everything it touches. If people were being killed instead of truth surely we would call this a holocaust.

“...It is probably inevitable that this list will fall into the hands of people who will set out to attack and discredit it. I claim it to be neither complete nor perfect. The list grows almost daily anyway. Clever word-gimmickry can probably successfully explain away some few of these changes. Will you let that obscure the massive scope of this *great apostasy* as you study this list? Or will you prove all things, hold fast that which is good and only follow teachers of truth?

“II Thes. 2:3 says a falling away (Greek – apostasia – ‘a defection from truth’) will precede Christ’s Return and verse 13 shows that receiving salvation is attached to ‘belief of the truth.’

“I Tim. 6:3-5 makes it clear what one must do in such historic and prophetic circumstances as these we now face. 2000 years of church his-

tory shows people of truth and courage have always been willing to take this biblical step.”

This list was the forerunner of my book *Except There Come a Falling Away*—the exact phrase used in II Thessalonians 2:3—released soon after as a long looseleaf book under this title. It is well known that this eventually circulated to many thousands throughout the splinters. Of course, Rod Meredith and Doug Winnail have the book.

As time progressed, the book grew progressively longer and eventually carried the more correct title—*There Came a Falling Away*. This is because we all knew the apostasy had largely become complete, and a title in the past tense better reflected what Paul had to put in the future tense. See this. Everybody understood this title change. (Of course, the splinters still continue adding wrong doctrines of every stripe and color.)

Realize the first 10 editions of the book were *all* produced while I was in GCG. It is currently 425 pages and The Restored Church of God has sent out many thousands of copies.

“30 Reasons” Sermon Series

The early list/book answered what the changes were, but did not tell people WHAT TO DO about them. I came to realize the need to prepare a series of three special sermons giving the answer. It would complement the book. Each sermon had a slightly different title—“30 Reasons to Follow the Truth,” “Another 30 Reasons to Follow the Truth” and “30 Final Reasons to Follow the Truth.” A total of 90 documented scriptural points and principles were presented.

Here is an excerpt from right out of the gate—Part 1, point 2 (May 15, 1993). It is explaining II Thessalonians 2:3, and represents further proof of what all of God’s people at that time believed about this passage. It also brings further proof of what Rod Meredith permitted be taught throughout the entire existence of GCG. Here are my *spoken* words (obviously italics are added):

“...Let’s understand what the falling away is all about here in II Thessalonians 2:3. ‘Let no man deceive you by any means (the context is right before the Return of Christ, that’s the context, and that’s important): for that day shall not come, *except there come a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...’ Now very simply, *this has been explained before*, but I’ll say it again, the Greek word is

apostasia and it means ‘a defection from truth,’ not people leaving a corporate church [*Author’s Note: The WCG at that time*]. As a matter of fact, when you really understand it, it’s the ones who don’t leave who *defect from truth*, and the context shows us that.”

Recall the seed that would turn into a giant sequoia. The tree is now well out of the ground. The reader should begin by now to understand the world could not *now, later* or *ever* defect from truth it never had. The world has been cut off from God—and thus His truth—for 6,000 years. It can no more leave the truth than a person can leave a house he was never in.

It has been estimated that as many as 10,000 to 15,000 people heard those tapes and left the WCG to join a splinter. Some of the top officials in GCG acknowledged that perhaps 5,000 of these initially attended Global. Probably many more than this number hold various editions of *There Came a Falling Away*. Rod Meredith in fact thanked me several times for producing the book and tapes. GCG headquarters distributed the three “30 Reasons” tapes. However, even though Rod Meredith authorized the book, he preferred that I distribute it. He gave permission because he so obviously knew what had happened in the WCG fulfilled II Thessalonians 2:3. The book’s distribution in GCG continued for almost six years.

As a small aside, the word “apostates” was routinely used among the Global Church of God ministry to refer to the WCG leaders who had brought the apostasy. My brother-in-law, Carl McNair, always spoke of “the apostates” to describe them. This term is also found all throughout my book. Even the early stapled handout included it. *Apostates* of course means those leading an *apostasy*.

Again, Doug Winnail received, but also agreed with, my book. In fact, many of you reading this probably have an early version. Perhaps you will want to review it. Others can find it on our website.

These facts of history are indisputable, and they scream of what happened. The book’s final version contained 280 documented changes. I repeat, thousands of people, many in LCG, surely still have it.

Let’s ask: Has Rod Meredith FORGOTTEN the book and sermons—which *he authorized*? There are two possibilities: (1) He HAS completely forgotten what he once believed. But when presented with this article by his advisors he will realize the magnitude of his error and deeply APOLOGIZE to his entire church—or (2) he will LIE about facts you now possess. The same with Doug Winnail. But there are still many *more* facts that he/they must deny beyond what you have read.

It is not too early to state that Rod Meredith never understood the scope of the apostasy, and thus his ongoing role within it. He never understood all that was at stake in God’s great prophesied TRIAL for His people in the end-time.

What Rod Meredith Said in 1997

On June 14, 1997, the *Associated Press* produced an article covering the apostasy in the Worldwide Church of God. It was picked up by the *Akron Beacon Journal*. At that time, I was still a member of GCG, and Akron of course was my pastorate. The article was titled “Back in the Fold” and was slanted against Mr. Armstrong and the WCG. However, it reveals what Rod Meredith told the media at the time about what he saw as the falling away, and what was our common view during those years. Contrary to Meredith’s assertions, it also reveals that many in the world DID take note of how big was the event in “the Church founded by Armstrong.” Here is an excerpt (italics mine to show how the WCG apostasy was viewed):

“...Some 150,000 other church members expected that when Jesus returned to Earth—and that was any day now—they would be among the select few taken to ‘the place of safety,’ then transformed into godlike beings ushering in the Kingdom of Christ.

“If that is where the story ended, the Worldwide Church of God would qualify as a uniquely American religious success story, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who carved out an original theology and thrived by never deviating from it.

“Instead, after Armstrong’s death *began one of the most remarkable transformations in American religious history*: The church formally declared its founder had been fundamentally wrong all along and that the historic creeds of Christianity were the new gospel. [Author’s Note: You will soon see that the subject of the apostasy has a place in “the historic creeds of Christianity.”]

“This spring, the Worldwide Church of God—once reviled as a cult in conservative Christian circles—was welcomed into the National Association of Evangelicals, *a staggering turnaround* for a group that once viewed the Catholic Church as the Whore of Babylon decried in Revelation and Protestant churches as the whore’s harlot daughters.

“*How great a change is this?* You can’t compare it to the Mormons’ decision to give up polygamy to assimilate with American culture. Instead, it would be more *like the Mormons suddenly becoming Baptists*.

“*The fallout* from admitting its members have no faster route to eternal life than other Christians has *devastated the church*. Annual income has dropped from \$200 million to \$50 million, and membership plunged almost in half.

“Three major breakaway denominations have formed, and the number of informal splinter groups could run into the thousands...”

“The people who reject the changes...consider themselves still the true church.

“‘I’m literally basing my life on that, my eternal life on it,’ says Rod Meredith, who left the Worldwide Church of God to lead the new Global Church of God...”

“...Joseph Tkach Sr. took over, and Armstrong’s teachings began to slowly unravel in the eyes of the church leaders, who *were now free to read outside theological sources* [Author’s Note: *This will take on greater meaning later.*] and to follow Armstrong’s own oft-repeated dictum: ‘Don’t believe me. Read the Bible.’

“There, they came to agree with traditional Christian interpretations of salvation by faith, and to view other Christians with newborn respect. One by one, they discarded Armstrong’s rules for Christian living, and his portraits began to disappear from church buildings...”

“In the eyes of Meredith, what Worldwide has done is *consistent with biblical passages in 2 Thessalonians warning of a great falling away*, a great apostasy as the end time nears—even in the church.”

What Rod Meredith Was Still NOT Saying as Late as 2005!

Like Mr. Armstrong’s earlier quotes, the following excerpt from Rod Meredith is telling more for what it did NOT include about the falling away being in the world and connected to the man of sin. Speaking of Pope Benedict XVI’s appointment, he writes,

“The inspired revelation from our Creator warned us very clearly about this some two thousand years ago. The Apostle Paul was inspired to write about the events immediately preceding Jesus Christ’s Second Coming. Paul stated, ‘Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God’ (II Thess. 2:3-4).

“Dear brethren, the time is coming very soon when this man will appear. He will allow himself to be exalted far above any normal human. People will actually begin to worship him as the above verses indicate...”
Brethren and Co-Worker Letter, August 22, 2005

So then, it is clear by now that Rod Meredith has plainly NOT always believed his new teaching, as he now claims. Thus, neither did Mr. Armstrong. If you still doubt the former, you soon won't. You already saw Mr. Armstrong NEVER agreed with Meredith's idea. You *will* learn soon, however, who it is that *does* agree with him.

But first, we examine how LCG's designated attack/spinmaster has responded to the new teaching.

Bob Thiel Initially Reinforces New Belief

Bob Thiel, a widely read LCG “blogger” referenced earlier, has of course publicly weighed in on the new teaching, and seemed to initially support it, having reposted (adding his own article) LCG's entire May 3, 2012 “News and Prophecy” report, under “Rise of Atheism”:

“Rise of Atheism: In the United States, atheism is growing faster than any religious group. Nearly 20% of Americans now avoid ‘organized religion in favor of a non-defined skepticism about faith.’ Many are leaving organized religion as American society becomes more secular. These church dropouts are turned off by the increasingly political nature of organized religion and by ‘Old Testament condemnations of homosexuals, premarital sex, contraception and abortion. The Catholic Church’s sex scandals also prompted millions to equate religion with moralistic hypocrisy.’ **The once ‘Christian nation’ of America is not just turning away from mainstream Christianity, but from organized religion as a whole (Yahoo News, April 13, 2012). As society moves further away from the ‘laws of God,’ the love of many—for God’s moral way of life—is growing cold (Matthew 24:12). However, religion is the tool for positively influencing the morality of society.** Noted historians Will and Ariel Durant have observed, ‘There is no significant example in history of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion’ (*Lessons of History*, p. 51). **While many believe that this moving away from outdated moral instructions in the Bible is a sign of progress, ancient Bible prophecies reveal that prior to the return of Jesus Christ there will be a great ‘falling away’ from the standards of biblical Christianity**

(2 Thessalonians 2:3). As we approach the end of this age, this trend will continue to increase.

Updated Section as of September 12, 2012

Upon reading this article, Bob Thiel carefully edited the LCG quote above on his blog. This was done shortly after it was posted, apparently within days. The portion he deleted—more than half the original LCG news item!—is now shown above in **bold, underlined font**. This part was ellipsed out because Thiel *now* declares that he did not agree with Rod Meredith. Think. He originally *further emphasized* and *featured* the segment we have shown by separately REPEATING it in *another place on his blog!* Understand! He actually *repeated* FOR SPECIAL EMPHASIS what he now pointedly disavows having ever believed! Of course, he altered his blog in *both* locations, to remove all trace of what, to any thinking reader, was agreement with LCG’s false doctrine.

After this *very quiet* alteration, Thiel went on to accuse us of misrepresenting him. Here is the irony. He falsely accuses us when we reported the truth. Why reject *LCG deceit* by employing *your own deceit*? When we learned Thiel disagrees with LCG’s leadership, we amended our article as quickly as possible with the Author’s Note you are reading. In the end, why did Thiel not just admit he first agreed with something that he now rejects? Why not just declare a change of position? All kinds of people have fallen into all kinds of false thinking at the end of the age and had to admit they were wrong.

Here is why Thiel disavowed his previous position and hid the facts. He saw the same thing we have seen since our posting—WIDESPREAD DISAGREEMENT IN LCG WITH ROD MEREDITH’S FALSE TEACHING ABOUT THE FALLING AWAY! He probably got the same avalanche of emails from LCG members that we did. He wanted to be in agreement with the large number in LCG who know this doctrine is WRONG! (Since this new subhead was included, Thiel has now also denied what he announced in several posts about receiving emails over this subject. Perhaps he will now seek to “scrub” this record as well. He wrote us with more denials of what he has publicly proven about emails our article elicited for him.)

How many wrote him? Enough to make him (1) flip-flop, (2) alter his posts to hide his first position, (3) attack us for reporting the truth—and (4) go public *against* LCG’s leadership.

Not surprisingly, Meredith weighed in on Bob Thiel, seeking to distance LCG from “their man,” but of course choosing something other

than Thiel’s “falling away” position to do this. A recent weekly Bulletin stated that Thiel is not an official LCG spokesman, and that he “has written a number of things” (postings and books) with which LCG’s leaders *do not agree*. Let’s summarize: LCG allows a lay member to write ridiculous, divisive, heretical nonsense, but remain a member. Why? Because he can periodically be “useful.” Thiel’s books are speculative, heretical nonsense about prophecy by a man working presumptuously without God’s calling, completely out of his depth. We ask again: Why would LCG permit this? Why would they look away as a *lay member* takes to himself such AUTHORITY—and for *years*? The answer: *Because its leaders produce so much ridiculous, divisive, heretical nonsense themselves—on prophecy and numerous other doctrines!* On what basis would they stop such a man when they have lost track of so much prophetic truth themselves?

MAKE YOURSELF ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS!

In addition to the “falling away” controversy, the reader has already seen the equally great disagreement that has now arisen in LCG over the idea of the WEDDING SUPPER supposedly being in heaven. We saw this is another BIG heresy suddenly newly taught by LCG.

Now back to the subject of Thiel’s post of LCG’s news item. LCG’s commentary is shot-full of false thinking. For one, the man of sin will almost certainly through his miracles lead many atheists to a belief that GOD EXISTS! The man of sin will REVERSE the very trend LCG endorses. They have it exactly backwards—but they ARE in agreement with worldly theologians. One more error: the “love growing cold” in Matthew 24:12 is *agape* in the Greek. This can ONLY reference those *with God’s Spirit* who have the fruit of *His* love. Galatians 5:22-23 and Romans 5:5, among many other verses, prove this. Read these two verses recognizing that “love” in each comes from *agape* (not *philia* or *eros*, which are *brotherly* love and *romantic* love, respectively). Certainly the world is growing colder. Who can doubt this? But it is not losing a love of God it *never had*. Think. LCG’s statement in fact *supports* the understanding that the apostasy *affects the Church*, NOT the world. It affects the place where people have the Holy Spirit—have love and can lose it. This theology is stunningly ignorant—clueless to what even Ambassador College freshmen were taught and knew.

Like me during my GCG years, Thiel could not have posted, and for so long, his next public statement unless it was LCG’s official position for 14 years (and Rod Meredith’s for this and much longer). Thiel also becomes an *additional proof* that Rod Meredith (and LCG) until

recently believed the Church’s long-held position. Originally posted in 2006, but actually updated *in 2012*, Thiel wrote the following in his article “The Philadelphia Church era,” interestingly, under the subhead “The Command to Persevere” (*italics mine*). It shows what he says he still believes:

“Herbert W. Armstrong died in 1986.

“Since his death, *there has been a major falling away from the truth*. Although this took many by surprise, Herbert W. Armstrong once publicly proclaimed in a sermon to the WCG membership that, ‘I don’t think 50% of you get it...it may only be 10% of you’ (paraphrase). Hence, he understood this.

“Why?

“Well among other reasons, the Bible prophesied it:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first* (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

“*The Bible warned that there would be a falling away* and Jesus stated that it was the Philadelphians who:

“... kept My command to persevere...(Revelation 3:10).

“Jesus told the Philadelphians to:

“Hold fast what you have...(Revelation 3:11).

“How were the Philadelphians to persevere and what were they to hold fast to?

“The obvious answer is that they were to persevere with the Philadelphia work—the work of fulfilling Matthew 24:14. They were also to persevere and hold fast to the doctrines that the Philadelphia portion of the church had.”

LCG has clearly changed—and you will soon see that what they fell into is a popular belief in the churches of a world that could not possibly understand the true meaning of II Thessalonians 2:3. Since you *can* understand, the question becomes: *Will* you see this deception for what it is? I can only wonder how many LCG *ministers* will stand up and *actively* reject Rod Meredith’s falsehood upon reading my article. (The same with the previous one on the “wedding supper is in heaven”—but also so many other false LCG ideas.) I know some will disagree—but how many will *actively* do so? That can’t yet be known. Incidentally, the reader should not doubt that LCG’s ministers have read this article. What it stirs will force some to investigate.

And too many have *already* been leaving LCG to join God’s Church for them to ignore all that is written here!

What Does the Bible Reveal?

We must now at least pose another question: Could LCG’s new teaching be correct, scripturally? Was Mr. Armstrong possibly wrong about what “falling away” always means? And, again, since you will soon learn Meredith agrees with the churches of the world, did—could—the world get *right* what Mr. Armstrong got *wrong*?

The Greek words in II Thessalonians 2:3 and other related passages bring instruction—and clarity. As you read, you will see that each scripture speaking about *falling away* involves God’s people *departing from His truth and way*—it is never about the world, in any regard. We start with the plainest verses.

First, recall the Greek word translated “falling away” in II THESSALONIANS 2:3 is *apostasia*. The correct definition of this word is “defection from truth (properly the state), (‘apostasy’), falling away, forsake” (*Strong’s Concordance*). This refers to (can *only* refer to) God’s people—true Christians, not those in the world—leaving HIS TRUTH. (Interestingly, Acts 21:21 is the only other place *apostasia* is found in the New Testament, and it speaks of those “*forsaking Moses.*”) In summary, one cannot lose money he never had. One cannot fall (away) from a ledge he was never on.

The second verse is HEBREWS 6:4-6: “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they *shall fall away*, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

The Greek for “shall fall away” is similar to *apostasia*, but not precisely the same. It is *parapipto*, and, not quite as strong as *apostasia*, it still means “to fall aside, that is, (figuratively) to apostatize: fall away” (*Strong’s Concordance*). *Thayer’s* defines it as “to fall beside a person or thing, to slip aside, to deviate from the right path, turn aside, wander, to error, to fall away (from the true faith): from worship of Jehovah.” Also, it is obvious in the context that Paul is writing (to the Hebrews) about those who once had the truth but “turned aside” from it—and fell away.

II PETER 2:15 describes those who “have *forsaken the right way*, and are *gone astray.*” The Greek word translated “forsaken” is yet another word—*kataleipo*. It means “to leave down, that is, behind; by implication to *abandon*, have remaining: forsake, leave, reserve” (*Strong’s Concordance*). The passage picks up with, “For if after they have

escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have *known the way of righteousness*, than, after they have known it, to *turn from the holy commandment* delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (vs. 20-22).

So then, falling away here is tied to “forsaking the *right way*”—after having “*known the way of righteousness*.”

All of the above passages are warnings to those *in the true Church!* Again, God’s Word is written to *His people* (you should know all the verses proving this)—and no one else, including the world at large. These verses have nothing whatsoever—WHATSOEVER!—to do with some kind of an “American apostasy”—or “whole world apostasy.” People cannot defect from what they never knew. Again, this is literally IMPOSSIBLE TO MISUNDERSTAND. I also repeat from earlier: You cannot leave a house you never entered. You cannot exit a car you were never in.

Let’s pause at this point to ask: In light of these plain verses, how could God expect His servants reading His Word to believe that the falling away of II Thessalonians 2:3 means the world and not the Church—particularly when He uses the strongest possible word there of the three we have reviewed?—the one involving *truth* (true doctrines) the world has never understood. On what basis could He *possibly* expect us to believe this—to reach and believe Meredith’s conclusion? The answer? There is none.

But more verses further prove this point.

Further Into the Greek

Apostasia is the feminine version of *apostasion* (G647 in *Strong’s*). This word means “something separative, that is, (specifically) divorce.” *Strong’s* says this word is “neuter of a (presumed) adjective from a derivative of G868.”

G868 is the Greek word *aphistemi*, and means “to remove...(actively) instigate to revolt...to desist, desert, etc.: depart, draw (fall) away, refrain, withdraw self.” Every instance of this word where it is used makes stronger all points throughout the last subhead:

I TIMOTHY 4:1: “Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...”

HEBREWS 3:12: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

LUKE 8:13: “They on the rock are they, which, *when they hear, receive the word with joy*; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”

If God intended to mean “rebellion” or “revolt” in II Thessalonians 2:3, He could have used *aphistemi*. But He also had other Greek words from which He might have chosen. Just one is *anupotaktos*. It means, “unsubdued...insubordinate (in fact or temper): disobedient, that is not put under, unruly.” But God did not choose this word, or any related word. He chose *apostasia*—meaning “defection from truth”!

Recall that II Thessalonians 2:3 begins, “Let no man DECEIVE YOU *by any means*...” How tragic that people cannot even apply the very beginning of the verse to what the verse itself is talking about! “LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU—BY ANY MEANS”! Will *you* heed God’s warning through Paul? Or will you permit yourself to be deceived about enormously important events *already fulfilled*?—and smugly believe the danger of the end-time apostasy has nothing to do with YOU, but instead involves “just the world”?

Of course, we have long realized the Bible does reveal a coming, final now almost complete worldwide breakdown of character. Paul warned, “In the *last days* perilous [or dangerous] times shall come...” (II Tim. 3:1). Here is what he describes: “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (vs. 2-4).

This time has certainly arrived!—and is worsening toward a pinnacle! Just look around. People’s conduct is changing. More authority figures are sounding the alarm that human nature is running wild—and conditions are exploding out of control! However, none of this has anything to do with a mass “rebellion/revolt” from God or His truth that started in Eden.

The notes from Ambassador College, the Epistles of Paul class, are still in my Bible today (rebound several times) in the margin of II Thessalonians 2:3. I wrote as we were taught, “Probably dual *today* of Jude and I, II and III John being the first time.” Thousands of Ambassador students would have learned much the same. The first century apostasy was a type of what happened 20 years ago—the apostasy of 20 years ago was NOT a type of an event in *Satan’s world*.

So then, if this new idea did NOT come from Mr. Armstrong, or the Bible, where DID it come from? What is—who is—the source?

Copying the Protestants

The following modern, Protestant Bible translations and commentaries closely mirror LCG’s new “understanding.” Recall LCG’s use of the words “rebellion” and “revolt.” Make yourself realize—come to grips with—how these sources become one more proof of how LCG is so obviously led by a DIFFERENT SPIRIT (all italics mine):

“II Thes. 2:3—That day cannot come before the *final rebellion* against God...”

The New English Bible

“II Thes. 2:3—Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for [that day will not come] until *the rebellion* occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”

New International Version

“II Thes. 2:3—For that cannot take place until *the great revolt* occurs...”

The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People

More modern and paraphrased translations (*many* more) refer to the apostasy as a “revolt” or “rebellion.” These three are a tiny snapshot. We could ask: If the great apostasy is a future event about a world moving into rebellion, what would they *now* be rebelling against? The world long ago—6,000 years ago—rebelled against God. Is Rod Meredith suggesting the masses are now—in some sense?—*any* sense?—“obeying God,” but will turn from Him and rebel? Ridiculous!

The Bible plainly teaches, “Satan...deceives the *whole world*” (Rev. 12:9) and “the *whole world* lies in wickedness” (I John 5:19), as well as “your iniquities have *separated* between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). To summarize, the world is today cut off from God, completely deceived and wholly wicked. Rod Meredith’s logic collapses upon the simplest analysis.

Consider this obvious fact: A world that is going to FOLLOW the man of sin could never be a source of correct understanding ABOUT him. But LCG took in more indoctrination from the world...

Now notice how three *Protestant commentaries* link the apostasy to the man of sin. The first source reads as little more than a shot in the dark. This is because, again, the world without God’s Spirit cannot understand His Word. Read carefully (again, italics is mine):

“II Thes. 2:3—And that man of sin be revealed. He shall be revealed then *in connection with the apostasy*...The son of perdition. This expression occurs once elsewhere, and is there applied to Judas, an apostate (Joh 17:12). Here it evidently has a similar application. Some power, once Christian, falls away and becomes opposed to Christ.”

People’s New Testament Commentary

“II Thes. 2:3—The apostle foretells that before the coming of the Lord, there will be a throne set up completely contrary to Christ’s glory, in which that wicked man will sit, and transfer all things that appertain to God to himself: and many will *fall away from God to him*.”

Geneva Study Bible

“II Thes. 2:1-4...A reason why they should not expect the coming of Christ, as at hand, is given. There would be a *general falling away* first, such as *would occasion the rise of antichrist, that man of sin*.”

Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary

An inset is needed about the SOURCE of LCG’s new teaching—modern translations and worldly commentaries written by deceived theologians. Let’s learn—or for some *remember!*—what Mr. Armstrong taught and warned about the dangers of *ever* using Bible commentaries in establishing doctrine (italics mine):

“In this in-depth study of the Bible, I had the use of all the biblical helps—concordances, Greek-English and Hebrew-English lexicons, commentaries, Bible dictionaries and religious encyclopedias. The latter three of these, I found, were the works of scholarly but carnal minds. In historical facts and matters of a material and physical nature, they give help in research, *but in God’s revelation of spiritual knowledge I found them of little help*.”

Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of the Ages, p. 23

The entire WCG ministry under Mr. Armstrong knew this—that we should *never* go to worldly theologians for doctrinal understanding. They also knew that he thundered to all of us to avoid such Satan-influenced

sources. He said this most in the late 1970s and early 1980s when liberals had begun changing doctrines in his absence, and when he had been away visiting world leaders 300 days a year. (In a stunning aside, LCG has now begun to send its ministers to worldly “Christian Universities” to pursue theology-related degrees. This is to further the group’s bid for academic accreditation—a pursuit that Mr. Armstrong strongly indicted and banned from God’s Church! Entering the world’s/devil’s theological seminaries is the very thing that led the Worldwide Church of God into apostasy. So obviously, the *same spirit* is leading both churches.)

While a deceived Rod Meredith now links the appearance of the man of sin (the False Prophet) to the apostasy, these events are simply not connected *in any way*. Think. Had he heeded Mr. Armstrong’s instruction, he could have saved himself and his church from being duped. The apostle Paul is stating that *two major events* WILL take place before Christ’s Return: the falling away comes *first*—and *then* the man of sin appears. Duration of time between them is *not addressed!* Since the apostasy is behind us, II Thessalonians 2:3 reveals one of the next events to watch for is the man of sin’s appearance. And since nearly 25 years have now passed since the apostasy, the arrival of the man of sin is *much closer* than most realize! Think just a little: If Paul explains the falling away comes “FIRST”—“except there come a falling away FIRST”—how can the man of sin arrive second and lead the world into what happens first?

Impossible! But so are all of the devil’s doctrines.

Recognize the hidden danger in Meredith’s teaching. He now has LCG waiting for a *future* event that does not involve God’s people instead of looking *backwards* toward an event they lived through—and that is **STILL ALL AROUND THEM**. He is setting up LCG members to be caught off guard when the man of sin appears because they will have been looking for the wrong event to happen *first*. The falling away has **ALREADY HAPPENED**. The last two paragraphs underscore the need for every Bible student to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

Consider. Like Evangelicals awaiting a fictional rapture, all who accept Meredith’s explanation of the future apostasy—all of LCG!—are being set up to enter the Tribulation. LCG members are literally being *conditioned* to patiently wait until the Tribulation falls on them like a “snare” (Luke 21:35). They have been *set up* to not look for signs of apostasy in their own lives **NOW**. And they have also been *set up* for what will be the indescribable **SHOCK, ANGER and DISAPPOINTMENT** springing from *betrayal* by trusted leaders.

Consider further. They are being told that the Tribulation will only begin after a great “falling away” occurs in the world. The result? The Tribulation will *blindsided* thousands of people with the force of a *100-car runaway freight train*! Roderick Meredith has made them oblivious to what is coming—and many can probably not be convinced otherwise.

This is exactly what the devil wants: God’s people looking AHEAD to something that won’t apply to them, rather than to something all around them NOW!

Understand. It is Satan who would seek to minimize the devastation that occurred in the WCG. A doctrine that makes light of the very REAL DAMAGE caused in the WCG apostasy would NOT be inspired by Christ, the Head of God’s Church.

Modern Protestant Movement

Finally, here is what one outspoken Protestant leader in the United States said about a large new movement/crusade recently announced that was started by world-famous Protestant evangelist Billy Graham. Named, “My Hope with Billy Graham,” it has been referred to as his “Final call” to America to turn to God. Anne Gimenez is describing Billy Graham’s effort:

“Anne Gimenez, the national chairperson of America for Jesus – The Awakening, says similar revivals have occurred in the past in America and Europe during other times of declining morality and spiritual darkness.

“I think Billy Graham’s idea is genius,’ says Gimenez, whose organization expects hundreds of thousands of people to gather at Independence Mall in Philadelphia, Pa., Sept. 28 and 29 to pray for another Great Awakening in the United States...‘We’ve been waiting for an idea that would spark America into revival and perhaps this is it.

“‘America and the world seem to be in a state of *growing apostasy* and unbelief. Atheism and agnosticism is growing by leaps and bounds. [Author’s Note: Remember LCG’s/Thiel’s posting similarly about *growing atheism*.] In history, when there is great darkness engulfing the world, there is also the opportunity for a great light to come—the gospel light. And so at this time when we seem to be spiraling downward into spiritual darkness, it is the ideal and opportune time for a great spiritual awakening.’”

“*Billy Graham: ‘Final Call’ for America to Repent,*”
World Net Daily, August 7, 2012

Are you grasping the SOURCE of Rod Meredith’s teaching—the *alien spirit* (Eph. 2:2; II Cor. 11:4; I John 4:6) so obviously leading him and his subordinates? Recognize *why* the devil wants you to believe the apostasy does not involve YOU—*why* he wants your focus away from false doctrine that can affect YOU—*why* he wants you to think that there is no threat to YOU, that there is no danger the apostasy could take YOU out of the kingdom of God.

Make your mind think about—and truly comprehend!—all that is at stake for YOU!

How the Deception Is Sold

We are now ready to examine HOW Rod Meredith and other LCG leaders are spinning II Thessalonians 2:3—HOW they get away with what they are doing—HOW they disarm and lower the resistance of their followers—HOW they get people to BUY deceit. The tactics mirror many of the 43 points (I described them as “psychological tricks”) on a list of *how* Mr. Armstrong’s successors sold hundreds of false doctrines to scores of thousands of unwitting WCG members. This list, created in 1993, can be found in Section I, pages 39-41 of *There Came a Falling Away*. The reader would do well at this point to think about Romans 16:18 as we proceed: “For they...by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

“Author’s notes” appear at certain points, usually to reference tactics used (from my “psychological tricks” list) by number and underlining. As you read, you will see firsthand the “wiles” (Eph. 6:11) and “devices” (II Cor. 2:11) of the devil’s spirit at work. Now more from Meredith’s article quoted at the outset, which began with this (bold emphasis is his):

“Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong set all of us a fine example, as many of you older brethren remember. He always tried to move forward, to grow and to improve. Many, many times he told us, in meetings and in sermons, that we should ‘grow’—not only individually, but as a Church. [*Author’s Note: Tactic #34—Mr. Armstrong would have agreed with and made these changes. Tactic #35—Mr. Armstrong changed doctrine often and we must follow his example. The apostates opened new doctrines in this fashion time and again.*] God Himself indicates that true Christians should grow. For the very last words of Scripture that the Apostle Peter wrote were exhortations that we should ‘**grow** in the *grace* and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen’ (2 Peter 3:18). [Author’s Note: *Tactic #9—We must grow in grace and knowledge or, translated, ‘change is growth.’ Tactic #8—Mature Christians will see it. Who would say he does not want to grow? Who would say he does not want more knowledge? So seductive.*]

“Sadly, some ‘Armstrong worshipers’ become upset if God’s Church shows even the slightest signs of ‘growth.’ [Author’s Note: *Tactic #41—Anyone who resists these changes is only interested in glorifying the memory of a man.*] There are a few misguided people who, when they see others growing, accuse them—or the entire Church—of departing from the guidance of God’s Apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. [Author’s Note: *Always be sure to denigrate those who hold fast.*] Yet even these misguided critics, whether or not they even realize it, are ‘changing’ what Mr. Armstrong taught in order to hold on to their imaginary idea of what he would or would not have done had he been in our present circumstances.

“Frankly, brethren, as one who knew Mr. Armstrong *extremely well* for 36 years, I know that Mr. Armstrong would be absolutely **horrified** to find that people are using *his name*—26 years after his death—to stifle our opportunity to **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Savior!

“I tell you, brethren, before God the Father and Jesus Christ, that Mr. Armstrong himself would **want us** to ‘grow’ as long as we are careful never to depart from any basic biblical Truth! And, as any honest observer can understand, we in the Living Church of God have **never** contemplated changing the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the Ten Commandments, the Holy Spirit as the impersonal power of God (not a person)—or *anything else* that is fundamental to the Truth of God! [Author’s Note: *Tactic #5—This is not a big change or the trunk of the tree.*]

“We do ‘**honor**’ Mr. Armstrong—as we should—but we do **not** ‘worship’ him in the sense of putting what *we think* were his ideas ahead of God’s word or God Himself! That would be **idolatry**! Mr. Armstrong himself would **not want this**. [Author’s Note: *The point becomes that if one does not “honor” Mr. Armstrong as Meredith does, then he worships Mr. Armstrong and is an idolater. This is all an utter lie to build his point and intimidate the reader. Joe Tkach’s subordinates did it often.*]

“Brethren, Mr. Armstrong—again, as many of you older brethren remember—**did change** regarding our practice of women wearing make-up (he let the Church go back and forth on this *three times!*) [Author’s

Note: Another utter lie!], on the way to count Pentecost, on the administration of *how we deal* with divorce and remarriage, and on **many** other points. In fact, I remember going to him in a respectful yet firm way about an **error** he made in explaining 1 Corinthians 10:27–29. [*Author’s Note: This merits a new tactic for the list, used often by Meredith regarding Mr. Armstrong. #44—We must guide poor Mr. Armstrong out of errors.*] Some of you older brethren will recall that Mr. Armstrong carried over many ideas from the Sardis Church in his early ministry. That was natural. He was sincere in doing so. Yet, as he changed on some of these ideas, he told us older evangelists a number of times, ‘Fellows, I had to come to the Truth of some of these things *one doctrine at a time*. It took me a while to get it all sorted out...’”

“Mr. Armstrong himself **never** claimed to be infallible! Yet, since we understand that he was used as an apostle of Jesus Christ, some few seem to get the idea into their heads that he could never, ever, be wrong on anything. But, ask yourself, was the Apostle Peter—the obvious **leading** Apostle of his time—‘infallible’? If so, **why** did the Apostle Paul strongly **correct** him, as we read in Galatians 2:11–16? And **why**, dear brethren, did God inspire this correction to be included in Scripture so that all of us would come to **understand** that neither Peter, nor Paul nor Mr. Armstrong were **infallible**?” [*Author’s Note: This paragraph is deceit at a SPECTACULAR level. Popes don’t even any longer claim to be infallible. What is the point of invoking such a term when all know it could never apply here—that no one ever thought Mr. Armstrong infallible? Paul correcting Peter about his CONDUCT has nothing to do with correcting Peter’s teaching on DOCTRINE. Read Galatians 2:11-16 for yourself, and recognize the red herring/deceit for what it is. The next two paragraphs, including the final one, are repeated from the beginning of the article.*]

“Even now, brethren, our Council of Elders is discussing a few ‘technical’ points that Mr. Armstrong could not have humanly anticipated, considering that he died in 1986, before certain prophecies had begun to be fulfilled [*Author’s Note: Tactic #33—A thorough investigation has been made. I commented earlier on the next paragraph.*]...”

“Brethren, we do need to be careful about ‘new understandings.’ Consider some popular ideas among God’s people regarding the ‘Great Apostasy’ of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10. Mr. Armstrong understood that this rebellion involved the whole world. Indeed, the Greek word *apostasia* is more accurately translated into English as ‘rebellion’ rather than ‘apostasy,’ and Mr. Armstrong rightly understood that it connotes an uprising far broader than the consequences of doctrinal heresy within

God’s little flock, involving a man of sin whose very visible and physical demonstrations of power will affect the whole world... [Author’s Note: *Similar to #36—Mr. Armstrong once believed the doctrine this way. Of course, you saw Mr. Armstrong NEVER believed this way, secretly or publicly.*]

“However, with the total apostasy of the Worldwide Church of God, some few ministers have tried to say that this entire prophecy was fulfilled when the Tkaches came into leadership of the Worldwide Church of God and took it into ‘mainstream’ Protestantism. [Author’s Note: *I am one of them, along with a few other faithful ministers. But only PCG ministers believe what he next ties this to...*] They claim that Mr. Tkach was the ‘great man of sin’ sitting in the house of God, showing himself that he was God (v. 4). Then—when Mr. Tkach died—they transferred this to Joseph Tkach, Jr. So, now, is ‘Junior’ the great man of sin?

“Think!

“The entire ‘falling away’ of several thousand people in that apostasy—and it was an **apostasy**—was nevertheless not even noticed by about **six billion** human beings. When *the biblically prophesied event* occurs, it will deceive **billions** of people *all over this earth...*” [Author’s Note: *Who cares if the world did not notice or comprehend the apostasy?—although we saw that it did notice to more than a little degree. Again, the Bible was written to God’s people, not the world. THIS is who God is working with. And, not knowing what God’s truth IS, how could the world grasp what happened in a Church they have long believed to be a cult filled with error? Ponder this.*]

“Other scriptures tying directly in with this, such as Revelation 13:11–18, clearly indicate that, when the final ‘man of sin’ arises, he will deceive *hundreds of millions*—or even probably **billions**—of human beings! He will be granted power to literally bring **fire** down from heaven (v. 13). ‘He *causes all*, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a **mark** on their right hand or in their foreheads’ (v. 16). As all of you should know by now, **nothing** even remotely like this happened during the small, typical ‘apostasy’ caused by the Tkaches taking Worldwide into ‘mainstream Christianity.’

“Yes, what happened in Worldwide may certainly have been a ‘type’ of the final apostasy. But it was **not** the major one described in 2 Thessalonians 2–3. It is *exciting and stirring* to realize how **massive** the coming apostasy is going to be!”

*“Is It Wrong to GROW in Knowledge?”,
The Living Church News, March-April 2012*

The last paragraph almost takes one’s breath. Does the reader feel “excited” and “stirred” by Meredith’s deceit—or shocked, repulsed and sobered? Think of the title question in the article. Who would disagree with it on its face? No one! All salesmen know the importance of getting your customer saying, “Yes”—“I want to grow in knowledge.”

Now the conclusion of Rod Meredith’s article:

“Brethren, we should not ‘shrink’ from growth in understanding. Mr. Armstrong would be **glad** to have us learn. He **always** was excited and enthusiastic when some new biblical Truth could be explained in a proper way. So I hope all of us can learn to have this *same kind* of positive attitude and approach to any new understandings we are able to come to within the Living Church of God. Remember, God’s Word indicates that He will not reveal some of these technical things about prophecy until the very **end** of the age (Daniel 12:4).

“Sadly, Mr. Armstrong was not allowed to continue until the very end. But, we are—*so far*. So, if I am able to explain to him in the resurrection how we continued ‘growing’ in grace and in knowledge, I **know** that he will chuckle and tell me, ‘**Of course**, Rod, that is exactly what I would have done if I were there at that time. [*Author’s Note: Tactic #34 again—Mr. Armstrong would have agreed with and made these changes himself. A more effective deceiver would have known to just implement Tactic #13—Say nothing and just change it.*] Good work! I am glad that we both made it here into the Kingdom of God.’ [*Author’s Note: I so well remember Joe Tkach Jr. invoking Mr. Armstrong’s name—I was already gone from the WCG when it happened—saying, ‘Brethren, I know that Mr. Armstrong is rejoicing in heaven right now that the Church has come to so much new understanding!’ This is just a cheap but effective way to induce agreement.*]

“Dear brethren, we certainly should ‘follow’ Mr. Armstrong *as he followed Christ!* That is what he told us to do! That is what the Apostle Paul was **inspired** to tell us to do regarding himself or **any** apostle: ‘**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ**’ (1 Corinthians 11:1). [*Author’s Note: But Rod Meredith is an evangelist, not an apostle.*] Let us **continue** to grow in *grace* and in **knowledge** and know that we will be **blessed** if we do this—as long as we do not depart from fundamental truth [*Author’s Note: Who decides what is fundamental? Try to find this term in the Bible. It is not there, but rather is an invented idea to get people to accept changes that Meredith (and others) deem less than fundamental. Fundamental doctrines become anything a deceiver needs them to be, and less than fundamental ones become anything a deceiver*

needs them to be.] and as long as we ‘**prove all things**’ from the Bible in an honest and sincere way. God will greatly **bless us** if we do this—and if we are *positive* and **loyal** to Christ as He leads His Church in these very things! [Author’s Note: *The last two sentences of Meredith’s article make a point I can finally agree with. If you DO ‘prove all things,’ you will reject what he is teaching, along with the devilish wiles and devices used to bring it.*]”

How cunning, smooth and deceptive! The list of tactics in *There Came a Falling Away* concluded with this warning: “These gimmicks, ploys and psychological tricks are all still used, and even more effectively, throughout the splinters.” Remember, Rod Meredith has had this book since 1993.

Make yourself take a serious look at whether you will buy into this man’s new understanding of II Thessalonians 2:3. And, to understand God’s real intent in II Peter 3:18, read my extensive article “The True Meaning of ‘Grow in Grace and Knowledge.’” Peter’s instruction has NOTHING to do with changing *doctrine*. Rod Meredith once knew this!

Finally, Rod Meredith further confirmed his new teaching in LCG’s May 10, 2012 *LCG Weekly Update*:

“Please follow through by doing all you can to build, to strengthen and *inspire* our brethren around the world...Please help them think through these ‘upgrades’ in our understanding of the Wedding Supper [Author’s Note: *We already saw in Article Three that Meredith’s new teaching on this subject is also false.*], of the timeline of final events and also the great apostasy. [Author’s Note: *If Mr. Armstrong always believed that the great apostasy involves the world and the man of sin, how can it be an “upgrade” and a “change”? Can the reader possibly miss such inconsistency? Be thankful for it. Deceivers are rarely this open in revealing their identity.*] This is a vital challenge for all of you, and I hope that you can be alert to anyone’s misunderstanding and help them—or help your local elder to work with them to come to understanding on these basic issues and help them realize that these changes are, in fact, simply ‘updates’ of our understanding... [Author’s Note: *Tactic #12—Be patient with the weaker brethren who can’t see it yet (which appeals to people’s nobler motives to accept the change).*] We have always indicated—at least Mr. Armstrong, and I [Author’s Note: *Meredith has himself and Mr. Armstrong the only two who saw this, and thus sort of invokes Tactic #40—Mr. Armstrong always secretly believed*

this change.—that the apostasy would be *much broader* than just the falling away of a few people in the Worldwide Church. [*Author’s Note: Of course you now know Rod Meredith has not remotely ‘always indicated’ such a position.*] As I indicated at the conference, over 99% of the world *never even heard* about the Worldwide Church and certainly **nothing** about that falling away. So the really **huge** apostasy is still ahead of us—as we have explained—and will affect **billions** of human beings before it is all over!”

Ask: Why must the world *as a whole* recognize the apostasy fulfilled in the Church? Does God need validation from Satan’s theologians—or large numbers of news journalists?!—that His prophecies have been fulfilled? We saw nothing indicates the falling away involves billions.

The very false doctrine that is the subject of this article takes its place as an additional tool for Meredith to get people to accept *more* new false doctrine. If apostasy does not involve or threaten His followers, but rather only the world, a great impediment against accepting more changes has been quietly stripped from people’s mental conditioning. A crucial barrier has been breached and torn down. Think how easy it now becomes for Meredith to get away with more false teaching. Watching the seductive smoothness of his tactics and deceit at work above also makes it easier to see how he has gotten away with so many wrong teachings already. Hopefully you will not fulfill Isaiah 30:10 and Jeremiah 5:30-31.

Doug Winnail Reinforces Rod Meredith

A great question arises from what you have read, but we are not quite ready for it. This next longer subhead completes the setup for this question. LCG’s ministers have begun reinforcing the new position. The following article, again, written by Doug Winnail, titled “The Great Rebellion Against God” was published in LCG’s *Tomorrow’s World* July-August 2012 edition. This is LCG’s flagship magazine—and it is largely written to the world. LCG and Winnail are in essence telling the world what its theologians are already saying. Why do this then? Also, the article shows this change is both a big statement *in* and *by* LCG, that it is not some minor “technical point,” as Rod Meredith portrayed it. Think yet again. If the teaching below represents what God’s Church has long believed, why the big ROLL OUT now? The Tkaches craved agreement and acceptance from the world. For LCG to trumpet to the

world what it already believes could only spring from the same motive. Surely you see through the deceit.

A couple sections of Winnail’s article are repeated from earlier:

“Bible prophecy lists numerous signs that will precede Jesus Christ’s second coming, but the Apostle Paul specifically notes *two major events* that will occur just before Christ returns. He writes, ‘that Day will not come unless *the falling away* comes first, and the *man of sin* is revealed, the son of perdition’ (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Paul tells us that the appearance of this ‘man of sin’ on the world stage will be accompanied by ‘signs, and lying wonders’ performed by a false religious leader using Satan’s power (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This display of supernatural demonic power will deceive millions into following this Satan-inspired individual and the system he is promoting.

“Meanwhile, the Western nations are rapidly abandoning any former pretense of nominal Christianity. ‘Mainline’ churches that for centuries upheld ‘traditional biblical values’ now champion same-sex marriage, practicing homosexual clergymen (and clergywomen), and open denial of the inspiration of Scripture...”

“...The Bible also records that specific ‘signs’ will precede Jesus’ return: increasing violence and wars, frequent floods, droughts and famines, disease epidemics, earthquakes and other natural disasters (see Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). However, a major sign will be *widespread religious deception* promoted by false religious leaders who perform ‘*great signs and wonders*’ (Matthew 24:3–5, 11, 24). The Scriptures state that the return of Jesus Christ will *surprise* the world because people will not be watching for the warning signs that will indicate that His return is near (Matthew 24:36–41; 25:1–13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6)...” [Author’s Note: *As a side point, Matthew 24:36-41 is instruction to God’s Church, not the world. This passage is a warning and description about events that will take place IN THE CHURCH. The interested reader will want to listen to my thorough sermon series titled “The 1,335 Days of the Son of Man.”*]

“...The organization led by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong for more than 50 years underwent a terrible crisis in the early 1990s, as his successors abandoned long-held doctrines of God’s Church and tried to bring the organization into ‘mainstream Christianity.’ Scores of thousands left...”

“So, could that have been the ‘falling away’ prophesied by Scripture? No less an authority than Mr. Armstrong himself would disagree with that assertion. [Author’s Note: *This is patently FALSE—an absolutely shocking*

*LIE—as is each of the several short sentences that follow.] On many occasions, Mr. Armstrong plainly taught that the ‘falling away’ mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 would be an event affecting the vast mass of human beings around the world. He wrote in a co-worker letter, ‘**Christ foretold a turning away from His message... [Paul] prophesied there would be a Great Falling Away from Christ’s true message...the popular churches would turn away from the Truth and believe fables**’ (November 11, 1949). [Author’s Note: Recall Winnail’s dishonest excerpting of these last quotes that were explained earlier. The bold underlining is mine so the reader can recall the snippets Winnail took completely out of context. The bold further below is Winnail’s.] Later, in a 1982 radio broadcast, he asked, ‘Has that falling away happened? That doesn’t mean a few people, it doesn’t mean a few radicals or fanatics. The whole world was to be deceived!’ [Author’s Note: Remember, the whole world has already been deceived. Recall Revelation 12:9. Who knows the context of what Mr. Armstrong was speaking of? Winnail gives no source other than a year—1982. You have already learned Mr. Armstrong’s teaching—and have been shown how in this quote Doug Winnail deliberately misrepresented Mr. Armstrong—carefully lied—in order to use Mr. Armstrong’s authority to drive home his point. It actually makes perfect sense if Mr. Armstrong were again speaking of the first century.]*

“Was the ‘whole world’ deceived when Mr. Armstrong’s successors split their church? Though this was a traumatic event, it affected only a relatively small number of people, and the church’s leaders displayed no powerful miracles to gain the loyalty of followers. There is no scriptural way to identify the prophesied ‘man of sin’ with either of the men who succeeded Mr. Armstrong as the head of that organization. [Author’s Note: True. We agree!]

“Notice that the phrase translated as ‘falling away’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 in the NKJV comes from the Greek word *apostasia*. Although English-speakers may be inclined to translate this word as ‘apostasy,’ and ‘falling away’ has become a commonly accepted phrasing, these are actually not the best translations. Consider how several other translations render this word: ‘the great revolt’ (*Williams*), ‘the rebellion’ (*Moffatt*), or ‘the final rebellion against God’ (*NEB*). [Author’s Note: You have seen that all of these translations are wrong!] No credible translation gives any indication that this massive global event could in fact involve just a few thousand members of one organization. [Author’s Note: He just quoted translations that are NOT entirely credible and denigrated many that ARE.] Rather, it involves an outright worldwide rebellion, of unprecedented proportion, against any semblance of belief in the God

of the Bible. Here is how the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* describes this momentous event: ‘Conditions will be ripe for people, especially those who call themselves Christian...to turn their backs on God...This **worldwide anti-God movement** will be so universal as to earn for itself a special designation: ‘the apostasy’...the presence of such an apostasy and counterfeit god **will not escape international observation**’ (volume 11, pp. 320–323). [*Author's Note: Recall Mr. Armstrong's warning about using worldly commentaries.*]...”

“This trend will continue. Within the lifetimes of most of you reading this article, two Satan-inspired individuals—a miracle-working religious figure and a charismatic European political leader—will appear on the world stage and lead the masses of humanity in rebellion against the true God. Finally, near the very end of this age, this blasphemous religious figure will declare himself to be God, commanding the allegiance of billions who will join him in a final rebellion against the returning Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

“You need to *be alert* and *watch* for these significant end-time events so you can avoid being deceived when the prophecies *come alive!* [*Author's Note: An astonishing conclusion. Readers were in fact just set up to BE deceived!*]”

In late 2011, Doug Winnail also gave a sermon titled “Lessons From America's Apostasy.” It was played in all LCG congregations in mid-July 2012 and discussed how America was built on Christian principles, but is now rejecting God. Although we have always understood America is disobeying God, this very subtle sermon prepares and conditions LCG members to look for a future apostasy in America and the world. (The nations of modern Israel *are* in big trouble for widespread and growing national sins. Read my full book *America and Britain in Prophecy* to understand the big picture—and the truth.)

A Greater Question

Now comes an inset about the great question referenced earlier: Can Rod Meredith—or anyone other than an apostle—bring “new doctrine” or “new understanding”? What did Mr. Armstrong teach about how truth enters the Church? Evangelists (and all lower offices) are *never* authorized to do this! Of course Rod Meredith will say that he is merely repeating what Mr. Armstrong said, but you now know better. In fact, he has said this came from Mr. Armstrong from one side of his mouth, and from the other that it is a “technical upgrade” and “change.”

Mr. Armstrong knew all of God’s people were to speak the truth—and in the same way. Here is what he wrote:

“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

“There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God’s Church today since the Bible for our time is complete). God’s Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31.”

Mystery of the Ages, p. 350

“But *HOW?* How does Jesus Christ put HIS doctrines into His Church? How did He in A.D. 31? How in A.D. 1933?”

“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.”

“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

Many more quotes could have been added that say the same thing.

“Another Spirit”

A once oft-quoted passage in II Corinthians 11:3-4 explains and connects the world’s false “Jesus” to “another gospel” about their “Jesus,” and all of this, in turn, is connected to “another *spirit*.” This passage has everything to do with *why* changes have come from LCG’s top leadership. 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 the world! Understand the extreme gravity here, and how it connects to this article. This different, but real, “*another spirit*” introduces—and is importing into LCG—Protestant ideas and doctrines. Remember, the *true* Christ’s sheep know the *true* Christ’s voice, and can distinguish it from a *stranger’s* voice (John 10:3-5).

I repeat: The Protestant world is led by the “spirit of disobedience” that is identified in Ephesians 2:2—and sent from the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4)! The alien spirit that John and Paul spoke of is what *quickly* destroyed the WCG. This same spirit is *slowly* destroying the splinters.

This 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 in even “a little bit,” as he put it, because, as he

also said, he would “push open the door since he is stronger than we.” This has happened and is happening in LCG, but also in all the other splinters.

The facts behind the source of LCG’s new understanding—Protestant translations and commentaries—become powerful EVIDENCE of the *different* spirit—“another spirit” or the “spirit of error”—that has entered and gripped the top LCG leadership. It also explains why so many in this group report that “Something is wrong here,” without being able to identify what it is. Without knowing why, and with the Spirit of God—the “Comforter”—receding, many find themselves increasingly *uncomfortable* in LCG. Grasp this fact: This discomfort is because a COUNTERFEIT “comforter” has entered LCG and is spreading, while the Spirit of God is diminishing!

“Obeying the Truth”

Even those who are newly converted understand that Christians *obey* God. They know that they must *obey* the Ten Commandments and others of His laws. Now understand a vital point that almost no one considers—and it has everything to do with obedience. Most of God’s ministers have been derelict in teaching this *closely related* Bible principle.

In numerous verses God specifically commands His true followers to also “obey the *truth*.” Most generally think of God’s many truths as things to be *believed*—or *understood*—not as things that must be *obeyed*. Has this not generally been your thinking? In fact, how often have you heard Bible doctrines described in this context?

Here is what the apostle Peter wrote, and it introduces how obedience to *truth* is tied to conversion. Read carefully: “Seeing you have *purified your souls* in *obeying the truth* through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren...” (I Pet. 1:22). The Greek word for *obey* carries the additional meaning of “attentive hearkening [listening],” “compliance” and “submission.” This is strong.

Further, obedience to points of truth is seen in this passage to be inseparable from three things: (1) the purity of one’s conversion, (2) the role of God’s Spirit—the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 15:26)—actively assisting in obedience to true doctrine and (3) how one genuinely loves the brethren. The last point becomes very difficult (in fact, impossible) when most of one’s brethren are scattered throughout competing, disagreeing organizations where he can never see or know them. This verse cannot be read any other way.

But the subject grows *much* more serious.

Next notice what the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: “O *foolish* Galatians, who has *bewitched* you, that you should not *obey the truth*, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth...?” (3:1). The Galatians had grown foolish, allowing themselves to be tricked—“bewitched”—into believing something other than the truth. (In their case, they had lost sight of the true gospel and fallen under a curse—chapter 1, verses 6-9.)

Two chapters later Paul summarized what happened: “You did run well; who did *hinder* you [Greek: “beat back”] that you should not *obey the truth*?” (5:7). This latter verse describes the problem with the splinters today. Now think. Scores of thousands of God’s people once understood exactly what was the truth that Jesus taught His Church. For decades they “ran well.” But today, having themselves grown foolish, they have also been “bewitched” and “beaten back”—now having become *disobedient* in BELIEF.

This sets up a final passage that puts the gravity of the matter into its fullest context—that of how GOD sees disobedience to truth!

Paul wrote the Romans about some who were “contentious,” who wanted to argue about established truth: “Unto them that are contentious, and do not *obey the truth*, but *obey unrighteousness*, [comes] indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does *evil*” (2:8-9).

God views those who will not hold to the truth—will not *obey* it—as obeying UNRIGHTEOUSNESS! Even beginning Bible students know that, “*ALL unrighteousness is sin*” (I John 5:17).

How many of God’s people even *remember* this?

Disbelief of truth is now seen to be SIN! We could ask: How much *worse* is the sin of rejecting truths that stand among the greatest in all of God’s Word? The close of Romans 2:8-9 brings this subject into perspective. It speaks of God’s “indignation” and “wrath”—and of the “tribulation” and “anguish” He has prepared for those (“*every soul*”) who commit what He calls the “evil” of disobeying truth.

May this powerful spiritual reality guide your thinking! May you OBEY GOD *on all points of truth* (Acts 5:29, 32)!

What Will You Do?

It is time to summarize. Rod Meredith and LCG’s “future all-nations apostasy” belief is fundamentally wrong in two ways: (1) the apostasy is NOT a future event tied to the man of sin, and (2) it will not strike the world, but rather involves God’s Church. When understood, Rod

Meredith and other LCG leaders are both “deceiving and being deceived” (II Tim. 3:13). If you are diligent and patient, eventually people expose themselves for what they really are. This includes false teachers.

This has happened.

Like those who deny the Holocaust, it is much *easier* to ignore history decades into people’s rearview mirror. Similarly, it is *easier* to claim the apostasy lies ahead when it is over 20 years behind us—and still occurring. I urge the reader to remember what it was like. Go back in your mind to that time period—the late 1980s and early 90s. Could someone have convinced you *then* that, “This is not the apostasy! It is still coming. Prepare for it!”?

Sadly, history has shown that most will not care about or act on the facts and truth contained in this article. They will allow themselves to accept giant lies as small “doctrinal updates”—“upgrades”—from those who seek to play down the changes. This will of course include the usual attacks on my character. In fact, Rod Meredith has been systematically lying about me for years, and our brochure *Do You Know “David Pack”?* – *My Life and Ministry—Rumors and Lies vs. Facts and Truth* explains the truth.

To learn more about what happened in the WCG, and the process of apostasy still underway throughout the various splinter and sliver groups, again, read “*Anoint Your Eyes*” – *Christ’s Warning to His People, The True Church – One Organization, or Many?*, along with my books *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* and *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties*. You should also listen to my sermon, “The ‘Synagogue of Satan’ Identified—and Marked!” The reader may also wish to read my two-volume biography describing my years in the Global Church of God, as well as the details of my many years’ association with Rod Meredith (and of course much more).

This article has brought proof—ABSOLUTE PROOF—that the “falling away” has already occurred—is still underway—and will not strike the world later!

A powerful irony: Rod Meredith’s very teaching regarding the falling away is its own “defection from truth” in favor of the *world’s* position on a matter we saw the world could not possibly understand. Thus, the world has an excuse. Rod Meredith and those who copy and follow this false teaching have none. (This includes so many of his *other* wrong teachings.)

The Living Church of God is very much part of the long foretold falling away. And it is in fact experiencing its own *slow-motion* falling away and return to the world. *Many* heresies have entered it. The ques-

tion now looms: What will you DO with this knowledge, and *how long* are you willing to stay in an organization that so deceitfully changes and twists the plain truths of the Bible? Think hard a final time. Can a man so confused and ignorant of such profoundly important understanding—having now seized a central teaching from a world guided by the devil—be *God’s servant*? And when there are so many other *false doctrines* that he teaches—and *false narratives* about the past that he promulgates?

The facts thunder—of COURSE NOT! But you must decide for yourself.

DINING OUT ON THE SABBATH

What Does the Bible Teach?

Does God forbid Christians to dine in restaurants on the Sabbath? Is this a worldly tradition carried over from Sunday worshippers? Is it “conducting business”? Does it cause others to profane the Sabbath by “laboring on our behalf”? Must Christians abstain from “indulging” in pleasure on God’s Sabbath? What does God’s Word teach? Here are the scriptural facts—the truth made PLAIN!

During the last few years, a controversy has been brewing among brethren in the various post-WCG splinter groups: whether or not Christians may dine in restaurants on the Sabbath. Some critics claim that this is “a Sabbath test,” and imply that those who fail it are Laodicean—or worse.

Is this claim true?

The debate regarding Christians eating out on the Sabbath is a recent phenomenon. One article promoting this idea—“Should Christians Frequent Restaurants on the Sabbath?”—was written during or after 1995, and was circulated among certain splinters. To prove his point, the author wrote, “I understand that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong even began to eat out on the Sabbath, he said due to his continual traveling [sic]. An old saying comes to mind, ‘As goes the leadership, so goes the church!’”

This implies that Mr. Armstrong never ate in restaurants on the Sabbath during his early years, that he later compromised, and personally started the Church down the wrong path.

The author, after discussing a Holy Day during which a potluck meal was served, states, “I’m told that such was the norm during the 50s, 60s, and early 70s. Obedient Church members never went out to a restaurant for a meal on a Holy Day or on the Sabbath.”

(It is possible that there may have been a few brethren whose conscience would not permit them [Rom. 14:22-23] to eat at a restaurant on the Sabbath, but such cases were extremely rare.)

Notice that the author did not cite a specific source for his information, but merely stated, “I’m told.” Is his statement true? Is it based on solid evidence—on concrete facts?

Researching the Early Years

In examining Mr. Armstrong’s member/co-worker letters and literature, dating back to 1947, nothing was found in writing as to whether Christians should avoid eating at restaurants on the Sabbath—either for or against—yet, in practice, he regularly ate in restaurants on Sabbaths. We will also momentarily see anecdotal information about the Church’s beliefs. Though restaurants were mentioned quite often in Mr. Armstrong’s personals, articles and letters, they were virtually always in reference to his dining with various dignitaries such as the Mayor of Jerusalem, the President of Hebrew University and others—occasionally on the Sabbath.

Although we cannot find where Mr. Armstrong had written on the subject of dining out on the Sabbath, he addressed the subject in a Bible Study given on Friday evening, October 23, 1981, “The Sabbath Question.” His comments are definitive:

“Now if you go out to a restaurant on the Sabbath, that restaurant’s going to be there and the food’s going to be prepared whether you go or not, and the other people are going to be working anyway. They don’t keep the Sabbath—they pay no attention to that...God gives us a kind of a principle here, and I think that we can see how to apply it to a given circumstance.”

Shortly after the above comment, Mr. Armstrong acknowledged not having focused in detail on that subject prior to being questioned at the time of that particular Bible Study: “Now I had never thought until this evening when the question was brought up to me about whether it was wrong to go to a restaurant to eat. And I know when I travel I have to do it or go without, and so I do. [Note that God did not require Mr. Armstrong to go hungry on the Sabbath due to the fact he was often traveling and away from home.] On the other hand, those who eat at home should do all the preparing they can—like baking, and things that take time. For example you could prepare a salad, a cold salad, on Friday, put it into the refrigerator...that’ll keep it fresh.”

Regarding the proper use of the preparation day, Mr. Armstrong touched upon this subject earlier in the same Bible study: “Well, preparation of food so far as possible ought to be made on Friday—that is the preparation day. And a little bit of cooking, a little preparation of food

is allowable on the Sabbath, but remember it's a day that is holy to God. It's not for our work. It shouldn't be work like regular daily work for the housewife or anyone who does the cooking. It should be cut down to an absolute minimum."

To summarize the gist of this Bible study, Mr. Armstrong stressed the avoidance of making the Sabbath a "straight-laced yoke of bondage," while not going to the opposite extreme of a liberal, "we can do as we please" approach. He stressed the Sabbath was made for man and intended to be a delight instead of a burden. Proper balance within God's Law is to be sought.

In effect, the above understanding was the Church's previous teaching—established doctrine and policy—arrived at through what was obviously at least a *de facto* administrative judgment prior to the time Mr. Armstrong articulated this matter in 1981. This is important because the Bible commands that God's people even hold to traditions established in the Church: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (II Thes. 2:15; also 3:6). Notice that traditions were binding based merely on "word" without having ever been in writing ("epistle"). Recognizing that God permits dining out on the Sabbath was certainly more than a mere tradition. It was well understood by scores of thousands that eating in a restaurant on the Sabbath was not wrong!

For example, when discussing special events at Spokesman's Club, the *Pastor General's Report* stated, "Such occasions are often held at a banquet room in a restaurant where the Club members and their wives or dates simply sit down to a served meal and fellowship until the end of the Sabbath" (Sept. 3, 1982). Of course, such a policy would have been approved by Mr. Armstrong.

Additionally, there are individuals at the Headquarters of The Restored Church of God who knew and closely worked with Mr. Armstrong—one of them going back as far as the mid-1960s. They confirmed that Mr. Armstrong *never* communicated, in *any* way, that God's people should avoid dining in restaurants on the Sabbath.

The attempt to associate this controversial issue with the early years of the Philadelphian Era was an obvious effort to portray a doctrine born exclusively in Laodicea as having deeper, older roots. Such attempts become transparent upon objectively investigating the past.

In order to promote their theories, advocates of this new movement must discredit Mr. Armstrong and portray him as having compromised on this issue, as did the writer of the article cited earlier. As a result, he is presented as having fallen short on their "yardstick" for measuring

righteousness. Not wanting to overtly denigrate Mr. Armstrong, authors of the book to be addressed later, *A Sabbath Test*, have been more subtle, suggesting that Mr. Armstrong simply never “grew” to understand Sabbath observance as they did. In the identical spirit and thinking of the apostates before them, these have also introduced error under the guise of “outgrowing” Mr. Armstrong.

Regarding the new groups forbidding Christians to eat in restaurants on the Sabbath, we have to carefully consider the spirit motivating them. The wise always discern where “another spirit” has entered (II Cor. 11:4)—in this case, the same old spirit that guided the world and the apostates who were taught by its theologians.

Thus, such single-issue groups have emerged bearing their main message: “Thou shalt not eat in restaurants on the Sabbath.” What was Mr. Armstrong’s response when certain individuals proceeded to judge others for eating in restaurants on the Sabbath? The Bible Study mentioned above made his position quite clear: “Well, I understand some others are condemning one couple for doing that [dining out on the Sabbath]. Now I say that you can’t sit in judgment, and I don’t condemn them.”

Breaching the Four Walls of Defense

To prepare the reader for all that will follow, we must first create an overview—a backdrop—to properly approach this new teaching *before* looking thoroughly into it. This involves several elements, and some of these have been added to this new, expanded edition of the article because the advocates of Sabbath bondage have misrepresented the truth we explained.

Think for a moment! God does not take violating the Sabbath command lightly. Properly observing the seventh day points one to the true God, the Creator.

The two great national sins—the “twin sins”—for which Israel went into captivity were idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. Breaking the Sabbath always leads one away from the true God and into idolatry. Having judged Israel to be guilty of breaking the Sabbath and committing idolatry, God allowed her to be defeated, overcome and taken captive by her enemies.

Grasp this! Judgment is now only on the house of God—spiritual Israel (I Pet. 4:17). With so much at stake for His people, would God leave us in the dark, unable to figure out whether eating at a restaurant on the Sabbath breaks the Fourth Commandment? Would He have left

Mr. Armstrong (whom Christ used as the end-time Moses – Mal. 4:4) in the dark about this? If this was the “test” to come on the Church in these last days, as some self-appointed experts claim, would the Bible not be clear and definitive about it?

Of course it would! And those who clearly understand Mr. Armstrong’s role, as both an apostle and Moses, who laid the Philadelphian era’s doctrinal foundation (“law”), know that he correctly taught the Church how to keep the Sabbath, and do not fall victim to the multitude of heresies that this last era brings.

On the other hand, those who dismiss Mr. Armstrong’s end-time role are most susceptible to stumble over such human opinions peculiar to the Laodicean age. In doing so, they breach the four scriptural walls of defense that protect the body of truths that were given to the true Church:

1. No one may alter the established doctrinal foundation (Mal. 4:4).
2. Truth is only revealed through apostles (Eph. 2:20; Acts 2:42).
3. Philadelphians “hold fast” to what has been established (Rev. 3:10-11).
4. Those who constitute the body of unified believers are to “*continue* in the things that they have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom they have learned them” (II Tim. 3:14). They are to take heed and continue in the truth, which will lead to salvation (I Tim. 4:16 and other verses).

These four walls protect the one true Church, which is unified and uncompromising in its embracement of true doctrine. The identifying factors of the Church are defined exclusively *by the Bible*—not by prevailing opinion. The common bond of loving the truth is what distinguishes this one Body, as it continues unified and dedicated to sound doctrine (I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1).

In today’s Laodicean age, whenever you hear statements such as “Mr. Armstrong was wrong” or “he compromised on this or that,” take these as sure signs that *false teachers* are about to spew heresy upon you.

A book was published some time ago, arguing that Christians must not eat in restaurants on the Sabbath. Titled *A Sabbath Test*, the authors devoted 136 pages to disputing virtually all objections that they anticipated might be raised. Yet, the authors were mindful not to mention Mr. Armstrong by name, only referencing him indirectly. This was done in a carefully crafted attempt to reprimand him for holding to traditions and past teachings, as opposed to “progressing” to their “enlightened” point of view.

The book, *A Sabbath Test*, was clearly an expansion of the existing article cited earlier, “Should Christians Frequent Restaurants on

the Sabbath?” The book offered no credit to the 14-page article as a forerunner in this school of thought, although both publications were equivalent in substance—using a loose interpretation of “substance.” It appears that the writers of the book sensed that a *movement* was beginning in the splinters without a spearhead. Hence, it appears that these followers aspired to the lucrative position of quasi-leaders of this trend, by virtue of offering a much bigger publication expounding their idea. Since they so obviously desire to lead this movement, one must ask, are they “teaching things they ought not for filthy lucre’s sake” (Tit. 1:11), and thus “making merchandise of” (II Pet. 2:3) unsuspecting brethren?

The only significant difference between the former article and the book patterned after it was that the authors of the book were most careful to not directly attack Mr. Armstrong. They were well aware that, from the public relations standpoint, bashing Mr. Armstrong was not expedient. However, as we will see later in this article, they consider him to have compromised, labeling him as having accepted the “mark of the beast” (by their own definition) by his dining out in restaurants on the Sabbath, which he practiced at least throughout the final years of his life. Again, these authors, however, are careful not to explicitly accuse Mr. Armstrong.

This towering question arises from the outset: Would Christ allow His apostle to be wrong on such a crucial point and then to be set straight or corrected, after the fact, by self-appointed “leaders” (actually lay members) arriving in the age of Laodicea? Such a prospect would be laughable, were its effects not so serious. Yet, significant numbers of weak or relatively new brethren across the landscape of God’s people seem to have bought in.

It appears that the leaders of this thinking have extended mercy “to whom they would show mercy,” in this case Mr. Armstrong, because they know this makes their doctrines more palatable to independent-minded potential converts, many of whom view him favorably and who are the ones most likely to send contributions. Yet, the facts are that they have leveled character assassination (John 8:44) at any who dare bring their doctrines to the light of the Bible, as would Mr. Armstrong.

What the Church Taught in 1988

In October 1988, the Personal Correspondence Department (PCD) of the Worldwide Church of God responded to questions about dining out on the Sabbath. The PCD letter reads as follows (emphasis ours):

“Thank you for your question concerning whether it is proper to eat in a restaurant on the Sabbath.

“The Church *has long taught* that it is not wrong to eat out on the weekly Sabbath occasionally or on the annual Holy Days, depending upon one’s circumstances and preferences.

“Those waiters, waitresses, chefs, and the like, who may serve in a restaurant, are not our ‘servants’ in the way described in the Fourth Commandment. They are the employees of the owner of the restaurant. They would be working regardless of whether or not we ate there. God does not hold us responsible for their working on the Sabbath just because we use their services—unless we were the only ones who ever ate in that restaurant on the Sabbath. Obviously, we make up a very small portion of the customers served in restaurants on the Sabbath or Holy Days.

“Further, eating out occasionally on the Sabbath can enhance spiritual fellowship with brethren and allow family members more time to be with one another.

“Some may still feel that eating out is not included in those things a Christian may do on the Sabbath and Holy Days. No person should violate his own conscience in this matter, nor should he judge someone else on this subject. It is a matter of personal conviction. However, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. See Romans 14:22-23. Therefore, be fully persuaded in your own mind according to your own faith in Christ Jesus.”

Critics have attacked this letter, dissecting every phrase of every sentence and disputing each point. They especially dispute the phrase “eating out occasionally on the Sabbath,” insisting that if it is wrong to dine in a restaurant on the Sabbath in *any* event, then it is wrong under *all* circumstances. They go to great lengths to argue that restaurant employees work at the behest of customers; therefore, the very presence of Church members *adds* to the employees’ workload, and involves conducting business on the Sabbath.

Again, are these arguments valid? Are they founded on what the Bible teaches—or do they derive from human reasoning? (See Jeremiah 17:9 and Proverbs 14:12.)

Why This Article Was Needed

The WCG form letter was somewhat weak and certainly incomplete. It was written after Mr. Armstrong’s death, when the apostates were in control. The letter seemed to be somewhat dismissive, although their reference to Romans 14:22-23 was tactfully stated. Within a decade from the time of their letter, the apostates had completely abandoned the keeping of the Sabbath and the rest is history.

We cited this letter because it was the only rebuttal in existence, however weak, with respect to the movement forbidding dining out on the Sabbath. During that time and later, *true* defenders of the faith became few and far between. This issue had not yet reared its head, or certainly not in any major way.

The movement condemning dining out on the Sabbath began to grow in the confusion of the 1990s. All this time, there was essentially no rebuttal in existence which questioned its legitimacy. The decade of the 1990s was a time of unparalleled turmoil in the Church of God. By the time of the printing of this article in 2005, the movement condemning dining out on the Sabbath had enjoyed free reign with no formal opposition (to our knowledge) throughout the splinters.

Why have the leaders of the splinters not addressed this issue? Could it be that they have assessed the liabilities of opposing something of this nature? Could it be that they are not necessarily committed to what Mr. Armstrong believed in the first place? Could it be that they are afraid of offending segments of their groups—or of incurring the authors’ explosive wrath, as have we?

Someone has to stand up for what Mr. Armstrong taught. There is no other voice among God’s people that is both willing and able to stand in the gap in this final Church era and defend what *all* used to believe. What other group has documented all the changes that occurred in the WCG in the 1990s? Who else has come out with so many separate and distinct books explaining the confusion which has led to the splinter groups during this time? Who else has worked tirelessly in recapturing all the truths that God used Mr. Armstrong to bring? Who else is willing to expend the effort to amass an even greater bank of literature exceeding that of the WCG during the time of Mr. Armstrong?

We do not retreat from the fact that it has fallen to us to defend the truth taught by Mr. Armstrong. We truly wish all the other groups were equally determined to follow this same track. However, we understand the nature of the present age, and this is not what God knew could any longer be possible. Being willing to spotlight and counter false teaching means stepping into the line of fire from a growing array of false ministers and teachers who sponsor a host of unique doctrines specific to this time. We will continue to counter heresy, in spite of the inevitable false accusations and slander that will surely follow those set upon demolishing false idols.

One reason some advocates of particular doctrines react with viciousness when their positions are brought into question is that their

single-issue doctrines often represent 95 percent or more of what makes them unique, and thus their identity. In fact, there are numerous “one-issue” groups among the various splinters and slivers of the WCG. Some advocate sacred names, and their universe centers around the practice of the precise pronunciation of specific names of God. To question them is to provoke a vicious reprisal. Others have created their own version of the Hebrew calendar, and this is their main focus in life. Still others keep Passover a day late. And still others focus upon secret, coded Bible messages, while some promote their unique interpretation of prophecy. There are now dozens of groups promoting single-issue Christianity and most are of recent vintage.

Those condemning Sabbath dining out are primarily single-issue religionists set to defend their turf against any who would bring their lone doctrine into question. Yet, in the process of defending the body of doctrines established for God’s Church in the 20th century, it is inevitable that we will call such doctrines into question and incur wrath as a result. Yet, we dare not ignore false teaching. We will not back off to avoid conflict, trying to “live and let live,” and falling back on popular forms of “lovespeak,” “understanding” and “tolerance.”

When false teachers arise, we are obligated to distinguish between Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5, and to endure their deceitful character assassination, knowing that “the wise will understand” who sent them (John 8:44) and that they are of “another spirit” (II Cor. 11:4). Because there is nothing new under the sun, we understand that modern Pharisees will react exactly as their ancient counterparts and seek to shoot the messenger (John 16:2).

The authors of *A Sabbath Test* find it literally inconceivable that the real reason we have addressed their book is that it is plain, simple *error* and God’s people need to be PROTECTED from them.

Our Duty and Your Duty

Let’s state this plainly: Our DUTY is to defend the truth—and Mr. Armstrong did not mince words about this in *MYSTERY OF THE AGES*: “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” (p. 262; emphasis his).

We can call issues to the attention of those who are oblivious to danger, but the remainder of the obligation rests with the readers. God holds His people accountable for what they take into their minds. Here is Christ’s warning concerning the *source* of the doctrines you choose

to internalize: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them” (Matt. 7:15-20).

This particular false doctrine is already resulting in the “fruits” of division within various groups and congregations, creating factions within the United Church of God and the Living Church of God, and among other segments of God’s people. While the book’s authors feel thrilled by this “progress,” and feel validated as a result of this growing turmoil, seeing it as more coming to the truth of their thinking, they are actually sowing division and bringing an ocean of blood on their own heads.

(The inset at the end of this article will revisit another astonishing element of these authors’ very visible fruits.)

Would a victim’s plea of “It wasn’t my fault, I was deceived” carry weight with God? Of course not! God gives the necessary warnings and leaves it to individuals whether to choose to heed them. Concerning the government in God’s Church, would not God require that we heed the protocol we learned decades ago within the Philadelphia Era? Would God honor decisions to follow self-appointed ministers, as opposed to ministers thoroughly trained in the Church of God under Mr. Armstrong, who refuse to compromise doctrine? Ask: On what basis could Christ expect that His servants would, could—or should—know that He had decided to send pivotal crucial “new doctrine,” supposedly representing the nexus of the test at the end of age, through men that are completely unqualified to teach by every biblical definition—and who are virtually unknown?

When the Church was on track, none would have taken seriously such reckless individuals—never mind that they are not even ministers. Even though confusion reigns in this era when the people judge, rule and decide (the meaning of “Laodicea”), those with sound minds stop and take heed before aligning with leaders promoting new ideas. God has neither relaxed His standards nor reduced personal accountability simply because false teachers and ideas have multiplied.

As you study further, decide whether you will base your decision upon scriptural principles and sound reasoning. For instance, serious Christians should easily recognize the absence of logic in defining the Mark of the Beast as dining out on the Sabbath. You are, indeed, accountable for what you accept.

A crucial duty of every Christian is to guard the door of his mind!

Let's pull no punches. This problem illustrates why Christ told the Pharisees that they were in danger of the unpardonable sin—of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Regarding misguided teachers, to be Laodicean involves lethargy, but it also indicates that one has God's Spirit—and thus at least a degree of sound mindedness (II Tim. 1:7). Yet, Christ also said that by their fruits YOU KNOW THEM! The thinking that assigns the Mark of the Beast to dining out on the Sabbath is so wrong—so alien—so unrelated to God's TRUE TEST at the end of the age—so confusing to His GREAT PURPOSE—so far from biblical reality!—that it is in the same category as the mindset of the apostates who left God's Way completely. To call such teachers "Laodicean" is to pay them an unmerited compliment.

The reader should recognize what is at stake as he continues.

Necessary Transactions on the Sabbath

Dining out in restaurants is equated to profaning the Sabbath for numerous reasons. One is that it involves conducting business or monetary transactions. If exchanging money for food is wrong, then according to their own reasoning, any transactions at all during the Sabbath should be forbidden, as long as they are "within our control."

Consider. In many of the world's larger cities, such as London and New York, brethren must ride metro trains to get to services. This sometimes means having to invest hours traveling to and from services, and riding two or more separate trains. And of course, none of this is free! Sometimes, multiple cash transactions must take place. Early in his ministry, Mr. Armstrong rode streetcars—exchanging money—to get to Sabbath services.

Yet, those brethren who pay these transactions—in order to obey God's Sabbath command and attend His service—are condemned by critics who forbid dining out on the Sabbath. In their minds, no exceptions are allowed.

Suppose a Church member has to wait an hour for his train to arrive, and he becomes thirsty or hungry. If he buys something to eat from a food stand, these critics would condemn him, insisting that everyone should prepare their food on the preparation day (Friday) and bring it with them.

But not every elderly lady or gentleman is equipped to carry more than a carrying case, which would contain a Bible, a notebook and other personal items. For many brethren, adding a pre-packed lunch, along with a drink, is not feasible when traveling by public transportation.

Some would even condemn others for buying bottled water instead of drinking from a public fountain.

In the Philippines, some brethren in Manila must take taxis to get to services—which requires exchanging money for services rendered. These “taxis” are more like short buses, and hold well beyond the maximum number of passengers allowed. Riding in them can involve a considerable amount of risk, not to mention the discomfort brethren must endure during long rides through the city.

It is always convenient for critics, who live in the modern nations of Israel and benefit financially from the birthright blessings, to proclaim the “errors” of brethren who live in less affluent regions. Apparently, these detractors are unaware that the world actually extends beyond the borders of North America—they do not comprehend the kind of sacrifices that so many brethren around the world make—and have long made—week after week in order to attend Sabbath services.

(For the sake of brevity, throughout this article, we will refer to those who condemn eating in restaurants on the Sabbath as “critics.”)

Suppose a Sabbath service was being held in the downtown area of a large U.S. city, such as New York City, Chicago or Los Angeles (which was done in Mr. Armstrong’s day), and you decided to drive your car. Where would you park? Most, if not all, major American cities are notorious for their lack of parking space. More than likely, in order to park in a safe and convenient location, you will have to use a parking lot or a parking garage. This means having to pay a parking attendant, which is condemned in the eyes of those who oppose dining out on the Sabbath.

Driving your car to services could also involve using toll bridges and taking toll roads. For those who use them, traffic tolls are mandatory business transactions. Sometimes toll areas can be avoided. However, in many cases, detouring around them could amount to extra travel time, as well as additional fuel consumption.

Do you begin to see a trend here? For many brethren, there are legitimate expenses that must be paid in order to attend God’s commanded assembly—and these have nothing to do with fulfilling personal pleasure or profaning the Sabbath.

To illustrate the extent to which some will go to justify or highlight their own standard of righteousness, notice an example cited by Mr. Armstrong in the Bible study noted earlier: “Now I knew a man when I was a boy, and I was brought up in a Sunday church. And, of course, he thought Sunday was the Sabbath. And this man would not ride on a streetcar, because then he would cause other men who were working

on that day to work to carry him. Of course, they were going to work anyway, whether he got on the car or not. He didn't stop to think about that. But he walked, from way over on the west side of Des Moines to the east side of Des Moines, Iowa to attend church, every Sabbath. He walked about two or three miles over, and three miles back to prevent riding where other men were working that were going to work anyway whether he did it or not. Well, that seems like a kind of foolishness—you see what I mean.”

In considering this account, one could ask, who “worked” harder—the man who walked six miles, or the driver of the streetcar who was sitting all day?

Ask yourself: Would Christ understand the necessity of having to pay traffic tolls, parking fees, and transportation expenses for trains, buses or taxis? Would He understand His brothers and sisters paying for food and drink as they travel to Sabbath services? Is Christ scrutinizing whether a transaction becomes one too many, immediately condemning that person for profaning the Sabbath? Does He eagerly stand ready to enforce “yardstick Christianity” and punish us for such “oversights” or “infractions” (particularly, in this case, when it was He who commands Sabbath fellowship and assembly – Mark 2:28; Heb. 10:23-26)?

Or, does Christ measure our *intent* in context with the spirit of the Law?

A Misunderstood Teaching

In Matthew 12, Christ and His disciples were immediately accused of breaking the Sabbath when they acquired some grain: “At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat” (vs. 1).

Critics of those who dine out on the Sabbath might suggest that Jesus and His disciples should have prepared their food on the day of preparation. After all, the critics might argue, was it not their lack of diligent planning that led to them becoming hungry in the first place?

As the following verses show, there is never a lack of detractors to point out where others *appear* to fall short.

Now read verse 2: “But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Your disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.”

The Pharisees condemned them for merely gleaning on the Sabbath. But gleaning was not (and still is not) wrong, unless the quantity that

was harvested was so much that it had to be stored in crates or hampers. Gleaning food on the Sabbath was permissible as long as the person gathered enough food to be eaten on the spot, and therefore did not break the *spirit* of God’s Law.

Now notice verses 3-4: “But He said unto them, Have you not read what David did, when he was a hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?”

According to the letter of the law, David was forbidden to eat this showbread, which was intended for the priests. Only after Ahimelech the priest had inquired of God were David and his men allowed to eat it (I Sam. 22:10).

But why did God permit this? He was able to consider the circumstances, recognize that a need had to be fulfilled, and judge accordingly. Of course, Christ was the Old Testament God making the judgment.

The letter of the law has a definite purpose, and should be followed. Yet, God is capable of extending His mercy and applying the spirit of the law—something the Pharisees could not extend to others. They could not comprehend mercy and judgment. Lacking God’s Spirit, they could not see the big picture.

The account continues in Matthew 12: “Or have you not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple” (vs. 5-6).

Exactly how did the priests profane the Sabbath, and why were they blameless? They carried out vigorous, servile labor every Sabbath. For instance, much work was required for the double offerings that were presented each Sabbath. Fresh showbread had to be prepared and baked each Sabbath morning. Besides this, there were occasional duties, such as circumcisions that occurred when the eighth day of a baby boy’s life happened to fall on the seventh day of the week. God considered the priests blameless because He extended His mercy to them in light of their required duties within the spirit of the law—again, something the Pharisees could not comprehend.

Neither can today’s critics!

Now we come to the crux of this account: “But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless” (vs. 7).

This means that the *spirit* of the law must be taken into account with the *letter* of the law.

The account paralleled in Mark 2 concludes with this, “He said unto them, The Sabbath was made *for man*, not man for the Sabbath” (vs. 27).

Man is not to be deprived of attending to his physical needs, such as hunger, finding warmth from the freezing cold, or even being denied the opportunity to assemble on the Sabbath because it might involve exchanging money when traveling.

Matthew 12:7 quotes part of Hosea 6:6—“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

Sacrifices and burnt offerings were commanded physical duties. Their purpose was to lead God’s people (unconverted Israel) to establish a pattern of obedience in the letter of the law, eventually leading them to internalizing mercy and the knowledge of God.

In Micah 6, the prophet asks if God would be pleased with an abundance of sacrificial offerings (vs. 6-7). His question is answered with another question: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (vs. 8).

Mercy does not, however, equate to license to disobey or latitude to do whatever one wishes.

Now notice Psalms 130: “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (vs. 3-4).

If God marked every single transgression, no matter how diligently we tried to walk according to His ways and laws, we would fail—we could not stand. But God’s mercy increases our reverence for Him, and His forgiveness enables us to stand.

Had the Pharisees come to fully grasp the meaning of mercy, they would not have condemned the guiltless. Could the same be said of *modern* Pharisees, who focus on the letter of the law, while ignoring the spiritual intent?

Here is how Christ described the Pharisees of the first century: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, JUDGMENT, MERCY, and FAITH: *these* ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23).

Jesus was showing that the Pharisees were correct in tithing, but obeying the letter of the law *should* have led them to appreciate the spiritual intent of the law—judgment, mercy and faith.

The Pharisees of today see only two alternatives: Keep the “letter of the law” or abandon it. They mistakenly view “the spirit of the law” as a Protestant platitude translated “the law is done away.”

As we conclude the topic of the Pharisees condemning Christ and the disciples for gathering food on the Sabbath, we repeat the fact that their main objection (evidenced by the subsequent replies by Christ) was their “servile work” in the gathering of food. It is significant that these carnal Pharisees were savvy enough not to invoke Exodus 16 to bolster their position. It was obvious to all familiar with God’s laws that the prohibition against gathering manna did not apply to gleaning on the Sabbath to relieve hunger.

By way of review, as manna was first given to Israel, the instructions were to gather enough manna on the sixth day to cover for the Sabbath, as well—enough for two days (vs. 23). Note this instruction specifically applied to the gathering of manna. Then, Exodus 16:25-26, 29 continued with further instructions to not gather manna on the Sabbath. As noted above, gleaning in order to fill one’s hunger on the Sabbath was not forbidden for all time, especially after manna was to cease at some future time.

The Pharisees were smart enough not to cite the Exodus 16 prohibition to condemn Christ and the disciples for Sabbath gleaning. Do any doubt that they would have overlooked this point, had it applied? The modern critics who use Exodus 16 reveal themselves to be uneducated. Outdoing their counterparts, these modern Pharisees “rush in” where even the original Pharisees would have “feared to tread.”

However, these modern critics do not even stop here. They take the matter *another* step further by quoting the latter part of verse 29, which states: “...abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” Although this instruction was primarily given to restrain Israel from going out and seeking manna on the Sabbath, today it is misapplied by the authors to suggest Christians are forbidden to be “among the world” on the Sabbath.

When using public transportation, as some brethren must to attend Sabbath services, being among the world is virtually unavoidable. Sometimes rented halls for services place brethren “among the world.” God’s people are widely scattered today—not gathered into one camp as was Israel. To misapply the intent of verse 29 reflects, again, a mind that even the Pharisees did not have.

Let’s make a comparison. In Matthew 23, Christ said of the Pharisees: “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (vs. 4). Yet, the authors present a form—a level—of Sabbath bondage that even the Pharisees would not dare enforce!

Nehemiah's Sabbath Reforms

A growing number of people equate dining out on the Sabbath with ancient Judah buying and selling on the Sabbath. They point to the account of Nehemiah, who confronted and drove off nomadic merchants who sold their foods and wares on the seventh day. They conclude that exchanging money for a restaurant meal during the Sabbath is no different from how the Jews violated the Sabbath in Nehemiah's day.

Yet, there is a significant difference between these two situations!

Nehemiah was the governor of Judea when the wall and the second temple were being constructed, following the Babylonian captivity. Like Ezra, his contemporary, he was zealously determined to reform certain trends that had developed among the Jews in and around Jerusalem.

The issue of their Sabbath-breaking was spelled out in Nehemiah 13:15-16: "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem."

As governor, it was incumbent upon Nehemiah that he did not allow an open market to develop on the Sabbath. The next two verses show the measures he took: "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that you do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet you bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath" (vs. 17-18). Breaking the Sabbath was one of the main reasons that God sent the Israelites into captivity.

Nehemiah commanded that Jerusalem's gate be shut at the beginning of each Sabbath, and that it not re-open until that day had passed (vs. 19). Despite this, the more persistent merchants camped outside the city walls, and only left after being threatened (vs. 19-21). This was but one of the many problems Nehemiah faced during this volatile period in Judah's history.

It is important to understand that not all the sins of Israel and Judah anchored around the issue of buying and selling on the Sabbath. It is possible for someone to sin, in a spirit of wickedness, while actually observing (at least in the *letter*) such restrictions during the Sabbath.

A Closer Look

Consider the following account, which typifies the sentiment of many in ancient Israel: “Hear this, O you that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?” (Amos 8:4-6).

At least these Israelites, however reluctantly, waited until the Sabbath was over before practicing their deceitful transactions. Perhaps the critics of today would give such people high marks, since they were not involved in buying and selling on the Sabbath (yet they were still involved in wicked practices).

Buying from an open-air market during Nehemiah’s time would more accurately be equivalent to shopping at an open farmers market or perhaps a super market today for groceries to last for some duration. In a restaurant, one buys a meal that is consumed *at that time*—which is *not* the same as shopping for food and taking it home to be eaten later. Dining out at restaurants, as opposed to shopping in volume for the next day’s meals, is comparable to Christ and His disciples gleaning corn to be eaten on the Sabbath, as opposed to gleaning enough for tomorrow’s meals.

Just as the Pharisees could not discern the difference and, as a result, condemned any and all gleaning done on the Sabbath, critics of today condemn dining out on the Sabbath altogether.

Consider the following comment from the book *A Sabbath Test*: “There are some who have suggested that Nehemiah’s indictment is against those doing business with MERCHANTS selling food in open markets, not specifically restaurants. *Therefore, in a very technical sense, God appears to be silent on the subject of dining out on the Sabbath*” (p. 30; italics ours).

What an amazing (and unexpected) admission! Yet, despite this weak acknowledgement, the authors try to spin the matter in their favor. The quote continues: “But, could this possibly be true? Why would God forbid buying food at a market, while permitting buying the same food at a restaurant?”

The answer is simple: Gleaning corn on the Sabbath and eating it on the spot is *not* the same as gathering food in volume for tomorrow’s meal. Likewise, going to a restaurant on the Sabbath and eating the meal where it is served is *different* from grocery shopping for large amounts

of food. Those who are obsessed with dissecting the letter of the law lose the ability to discern just how much gleaning would be acceptable on the Sabbath. To the Pharisees, it seemed to magnify their “righteousness” by simply condemning *any* gleaning.

Becoming obsessed with such “yardstick Christianity” can lead to debate such as whether it is permissible to operate a light switch during the Sabbath, using Exodus 35:3—as do Orthodox Jews—altogether missing the spiritual intent of observing the seventh day of the week!

But what about the argument that eating out during Sabbath time causes extra work for restaurant employees—and that the customer is an accomplice to the employee breaking the Sabbath? Detractors claim that, even though the employee is working by his own volition, any *extra* work of preparing additional food, or causing the clerk to tabulate and collect payment, results in the customer becoming a party to their sin.

Is this claim true?

Consider the following analogy: Suppose that, while driving your car on the Sabbath, you approach a highway construction site en route to services. As you draw near, a flagman waves for you to stop. Then, a few minutes later, he waves you on through the construction zone and back into free-flowing traffic. By driving through the work zone, you caused extra labor for the flagman.

Though it might not be proportionate to the work that restaurant employees do in accommodating an additional customer, the fact remains that (in this analogy) you caused the flagman an extra measure of work—thus making you cause him to break the Sabbath. Work is work. This analogy cannot be dismissed. Those who oppose dining out on the Sabbath, yet would drive through a highway work zone on that same day, would be guilty of utter hypocrisy! If one truly opposed eating out on the Sabbath on the grounds that extra labor might be produced, then he would be obliged to bypass all construction zones during Sabbath time.

Let’s go further and take *their* thinking to its natural and logical conclusion. Let’s look at other details at Sabbath conduct that have been conveniently overlooked.

If one believes that it is wrong to dine in a restaurant on the Sabbath, then he should also refrain from watching television for the same reason. Viewing the fruit of someone else’s labors (the news and other programs that are presented) would be utter hypocrisy, since doing so involves taking advantage of their work during the Sabbath. The same would apply to listening to radio news programs.

Also, newspaper subscriptions would have to be cancelled to avoid the hypocrisy of reading what others have labored to produce

on Friday night and deliver Sabbath morning. In addition, one would be obligated to cancel his mail so that it would not be delivered on the Sabbath.

While the authors of *A Sabbath Test* dismissed the use of utilities as beyond one’s control, is this true? By their standard, should a Christian not refrain from turning on his lights or air conditioning (electricity) because someone at the power plant must be on the job for this to be possible? Similarly, what about gas heat in winter? Should not a kerosene space heater—or heating by wood—be used instead? Then, should a Christian refrain from turning on the water, including showering, on the Sabbath so that others are not further burdened (the water is heated by supplied energy)? What about not flushing the toilet, and using a bucket instead, to eliminate any kind of additional work at the sewage treatment plant?

These examples are all under our control. Utility workers must be there to make available the services you are taking advantage of. In doing this, why are you not, therefore, “a partaker in other men’s sins”?

Have most forgotten—or were they never aware—that brethren in western states often drove so many hours to and from services on the Sabbath (and did so routinely) that it was necessary to buy gasoline to get home? By the standards of these authors, these brethren were doing business on the Sabbath and should have stayed home in supposed obedience to God—never mind Hebrews 10:25-26.

But let’s go further. Suppose one goes to the Feast of Tabernacles intending not to “sin” by eating out on the Sabbath. According to this standard, he would be sinning by renting a hotel room during that time. Even if he requested that his room not be cleaned on the Sabbath, he still benefits from what the hotel has to offer—water and electricity, security, heating, air conditioning, use of elevator, use of phone and daily updating of charges. These are all paid for, and require a support staff to do them.

Leaving the family pet in a kennel during the Feast incurs charges on the Sabbath, as a worker must feed and groom the pet. To dismiss factors such as these, while exclusively focusing on dining in restaurants, would be more of the same utter hypocrisy.

Anyone who listens to this pet doctrine of these false leaders must be prepared to do all of the above.

To quote Paul, we “speak as a fool” (II Cor. 11:23), and any reasonable person reading this will understand that those of “sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7) will see the valid comparison. They will be embarrassed for those who “suffer fools gladly” (II Cor. 11:19).

We must ask: Do *you* see how utterly ridiculous their thinking is? Are *you* able to see why Mr. Armstrong never bought into this confusion?

Of course, God knew that *some* minds crave, even require, such pharisaical do's and don'ts to make their religion complete. This article is not intended for, and cannot reach, such people.

Are “Strangers” and Unbelievers Now Held Accountable?

When God proclaimed the Fourth Commandment to Israel, He—knowing that the Israelites would seek to get around the restriction against work on the Sabbath—forbade them from allowing “strangers” (foreigners) to work on their behalf on the seventh day. Of course, all national law was under Israel’s control.

The book *A Sabbath Test* argues the following: “The ‘stranger’ is an unbeliever—one who does not embrace the faith. The world today is filled with such people. There are virtually billions who do not know the true God or His plan for mankind. As a result, these people think nothing of working on the Sabbath and holy days” (p. 20). We can certainly agree with these points, thus far.

The authors continue: “However, even though this is the case, God’s position regarding His Sabbath shall not be compromised. His command is unwavering—the stranger shall not be compelled to labor on behalf of His people. The unbeliever may, through ignorance, choose to profane God’s Sabbath, but they are not to be encouraged to do so by those God has called.”

At this point, they proceed to make analogies between the “strangers” in the days of Moses and the “strangers” who work in restaurants today. At first glance, their position appears to be plausible. Nonetheless, we need to understand how *God* viewed the strangers or foreigners of Moses’ day. To what extent did He hold them accountable for His laws?

If dining out on the Sabbath causes employees to sin, then we must conclude that God contributed to the sin of foreigners when He decreed that animals that die of themselves should be given or even sold to “strangers” among the Israelites! Notice: “You shall not eat of any thing that dies of itself: you shall give it unto the stranger that is in your gates, that he may eat it; or you may sell it unto an alien: for you are a holy people unto the LORD your God...” (Deut. 14:21).

Some people misunderstand this verse and conclude that God has a double standard—that somehow His laws do not apply equally to foreigners as it does to Israelites. This misconception might expand to conclude that God is a respecter of persons—in this case, Israel.

Let’s review the issues at stake here. First, we need to acknowledge that Israel was the only nation that had been given God’s laws, which covered a wide spectrum of areas, with clean and unclean meats being but one. This is summed up in Psalms 147:19-20: “He shows His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them.”

Deuteronomy 14:21 shows that God has never held the other nations accountable in following His laws as He did Israel. Though placed in the chapter regarding clean and unclean meats, this verse shows that even clean animals that die of natural causes become “unclean,” “common” or unfit for human consumption. Thus, the Israelites were not to eat of it; yet God did not hold foreigners accountable to the dietary standards that He taught Israel. God’s focus was upon the nation with which He was working—ancient Israel. He will focus on and work with all other nations later.

The apostle Paul wrote, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). All around the world, people are breaking God’s Law (I John 3:4), ignorant of the fact that it exists. Moreover, every person has earned the death penalty (Rom. 6:23). Ignorance of the law is not excusable in the courts of men; neither is it with God.

Yet, Paul said: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent: Because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

Here is the point: While all men should repent “yesterday,” so to speak, God will only truly judge them when they are called.

Israel was supposed to be a model nation and serve as an example in teaching all the other peoples and nations (Deut. 4:6-8). Israel’s government was both Church and state, and had authority over all its citizens, along with the foreigners who dwelt among them. It could regulate whether or not everyone within its borders observed God’s Sabbath—and it could mete out swift judgment on those who worked on that day. (Of course, physical Israel failed to set this high standard, and turned away from God’s laws.)

Today, God is working with spiritual Israel; His judgment begins with His Church (I Pet. 4:17; Eph. 2:19). Colossians 2:16-17 and Ephesians 1:22-23 show that God’s government within His Church has authority in how those within the Body of Christ keep the Sabbath and Holy Days. However, that authority does not extend to people in the world, those whom God is not yet calling.

Accountability changes altogether when one's mind is opened and becomes convicted to the truth: "Therefore to him that *knows* to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin" (Jms. 4:17; Heb. 10:26).

Is Pleasure Forbidden on the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13-14 states, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing *your pleasure* on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing *your own ways*, nor finding *your own pleasure*, nor speaking *your own words*: Then shall you delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it."

Verse 13 *does not* condemn one having pleasure on the Sabbath. Rather, it condemns seeking "your own" pleasure—"your own" ways—"your own" words. The negative focus is upon "your," rather than on "pleasure."

The term "pleasure" is translated from the Hebrew word *chephets*, which means "pleasure; desire concerning a valuable thing." It pertains to delight, things desired and things pleasant. In verse 13, God condemns things that detract from or cheapen His Sabbath day. Today, this could include such things as going to sporting events or amusement parks, shopping, or to the beach to swim or sunbathe. It could also include going to a restaurant that provides an inappropriate environment—for example, a congested restaurant that places diners in a rowdy atmosphere of worldly chatter, cigarette smoke or loud, intrusive music. (Of course, there are some restaurants that a Christian should not visit on *any* day of the week.)

A more acceptable atmosphere would be a restaurant with spacious seating, subdued lighting and quiet, sensible background music.

God does not forbid pleasure that is appropriate for the Sabbath. It is not profaning the Sabbath to listen to pleasing classical music. Neither is it sinful to appreciate a beautiful landscape or to walk out into God's creation to better enjoy His Sabbath. Certainly smelling the fragrance of flowers or taking in fresh mountain air is pleasurable—would God have us abstain from enjoying these things on the Sabbath? Does enjoying a delicious, wholesome meal profane the Sabbath? Of course not! Even in I Corinthians 7:5, in which Paul instructs husbands and wives to abstain from the pleasure of marital relations while fasting, he does not command them to refrain from this on the Sabbath. Clearly, God does not condemn pleasure that is within reason and within His Law.

Yet, statements from the book *A Sabbath Test* paint a much different picture. After quoting Isaiah 58:13, the authors write, “By this statement, God makes it abundantly clear that we are not to seek personal enjoyment on His Sabbath. It is true that the Sabbath was made for man (Mk. 2:26) [sic – actually Mark 2:27], but it is God’s day (Ex. 31:13-17). Therefore, His people are to honor His instructions regarding how it is to be kept” (p. 34).

They then conclude, “Therefore, God was instructing His people to avoid physical activities which cater primarily to personal pleasure. Tragically, this is exactly what dining out on the Sabbath is. It is something that is geared toward personal pleasure. It is what millions of Americans and Europeans do for entertainment and recreation every single day and especially on the Sabbath.”

Do you grasp what these authors are saying? They are equating the physical necessity of eating—ingesting food in order to obtain necessary nutrients for life—as entertainment and recreation. Who is missing something here? Should such a rift in logic or judgment not serve as a warning flag to reasonable, spirit-led minds? Should it not also be painfully obvious that the authors simply do not know and understand the true God?

As with all the other “proofs” used to support their unstable hypotheses, this “proof” is tailored to fit the authors’ predetermined conclusion.

Traditionally, in the Worldwide Church of God (when it was “on track” under Mr. Armstrong), everyone looked forward to enjoying a meal between or after services on the first Holy Day at the Feast of Tabernacles. Virtually all the brethren went to fine restaurants with the second tithe they had saved for this special occasion. They enjoyed memorable meals, along with drink and fellowship. This was indeed a God-ordained pleasure.

Now notice God’s instructions concerning the Feast of Tabernacles, which includes annual and weekly Sabbaths: “And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of your corn, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks; that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. And if the way be too long for you, so that you are not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from you, which the LORD your God shall choose to set His name there, when the LORD your God has blessed you: Then shall you turn it into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and shall go unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose” (Deut. 14:23-25).

Food for the Sabbaths and annual Holy Days could not always be prepared on the day of preparation. Often, on long journeys, their food

supplies were, of necessity, converted into money, which was spent upon arriving at the festival.

Verse 26 shows that finding pleasure, within reason, at God's Feast is actually **COMMANDED!** "And *you shall* bestow that money for whatsoever your soul lusts after [desires], for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever your soul desires: and you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you, and your household..."

God tells His people to rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles—even including the high Holy Day.

For the critics, it becomes somewhat of a "catch-22" to pretend that, although God commands His people to rejoice, His people are warned not to experience any personal enjoyment or pleasure on the Sabbath. When one keeps God's command to rejoice, it will be *pleasurable*.

Should Women Never Get a Break?

These modern critics seek to make the Sabbath a burden, but especially upon the women. They fail to recognize that their misguided zeal in not adding to the burdens of restaurant employees on the Sabbath *automatically* transfers over to their wives, mothers and daughters—who labor in cooking, reheating, setting up tableware, etc. Like chauvinists, these critics do not take into consideration the fact that their wives, mothers and daughters would appreciate an opportunity to occasionally have *their* burdens lightened on the Sabbath. How ironic—and revealing—that these critics give this consideration to the restaurant employees—unbelievers who have no regard for, or understanding of, this holy time—but give no consideration to women who *are* believers! In other words, "Let's worry about people who are *not* being judged and whose burden will *not* be reduced, and ignore the workload of those who *are* being judged and whose burden *would* be reduced."

Much like the Pharisees, these one-issue critics seek to make the Sabbath a *burden*—something that Christ condemned. Notice again the double standard of those willing to burden others: "Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:1-4).

Kitchen and Dining Facilities in the Millennial Temple

During the Millennium, throngs of people will come to the temple complex on Mount Zion and offer sacrifices, especially on the weekly Sabbaths and annual Holy Days.

Yet, the writers of the previously quoted book make this blanket statement: “In the millennium there will be no restaurants [implying dining facilities in general] operating on the Sabbath” (p. 10).

This contradicts what is described in the book of Ezekiel. In the huge temple complex, four large kitchens in the outer court (Ezek. 46:21-24) will be in operation, providing food for many thousands who will dine in 30 separate dining rooms, each about 6,400 square feet. The kitchens provide a place to cook the sacrifices that people will bring to the temple. They will be allowed to have a portion of the offerings they present; a portion will also be reserved for the priests.

Two larger kitchens will exist in the inner court (vs. 19-20), providing food for hundreds of priests, in two large, immaculate dining facilities described in Ezekiel 42:1-13. One will be located about 40 ft. north of the main temple structure; the other will be located about 40 ft. south of the temple. Each will be about 200 ft. long by 100 ft. wide, and three stories tall. Each progressive story will be slightly narrower in width than the story below it, allowing for a beautiful terrace and overlook on the upper stories.

Recall what Christ said about the priests who served at Solomon’s temple: “Or have you not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?” (Matt. 12:5).

Just as this was done in ancient times, it will also be done in the world tomorrow. The future temple will be a huge complex that will accommodate the many thousands—and later, millions—who will come to worship there each year. This complex will need to accommodate far larger numbers than Solomon’s temple or the temple that was renovated in the days of King Herod. In the future, certain types of service will be done on the Sabbath—and this will be done with God’s full knowledge and blessings!

While privately-owned restaurants are different from Church-operated dining facilities, both require labor. The millennial temple complex will involve specialized workers who will serve in distinct capacities, meaning they will be compensated.

The food menus at the millennial temple will not solely consist of meat (beef, lamb or goat). Ezekiel 46 also mentions meal (grain) offer-

ings and baked bread. Certainly, God will allow vegetables, fruits and various trimmings to make the dishes attractive, as well as nourishing. Again, all these things spell W-O-R-K. Much of it will be pre-assembled on the preparation day, but also much will be done on the Sabbath.

During the Millennium, as the world's population escalates into the billions, only a tiny fraction of the people will be present at the temple at any given time. There will be hundreds of other locations in which Sabbath services will be held. Provisions will be allowed for people to eat. This means that there will be dining facilities to accommodate larger groups numbering into the thousands. Perhaps on many occasions, the people might bring potluck meals prepared the day before. But there will be times when potlucks for such large gatherings will not be practical.

Ezekiel's vision of the future temple gives us a glimpse into how God will conduct things in the world to come. From this, we can readily discern that feeding large congregations on the Sabbath will entail a degree of real labor. If God can make—and always *has* made—allowances for His priests when they worked on the Sabbath, is it not possible for Him to make allowances for others who serve God's people?

Those who condemn brethren for dining out on the Sabbath do not think so. Nevertheless, the glimpse that God inspired Ezekiel to record, along with many other scriptures, shows us a more realistic picture.

Let's understand: There are circumstances under which God says that work on the Sabbath is wrong and other times He makes plain that it is not. Thus, it comes down to: What are the *circumstances* involving the work?—*who* is doing the work?—*why*, for what *purpose*, is it being done?—*who* is being *burdened* and *who* is being *unburdened*?

God always answers these questions in principle, but does it through His faithful leaders (Tit. 1:9), not through any “Tom, Dick or Harry” who gets a notion in his head about the *who*, *what*, *why*, *when* and *where* of that work according to his personal opinion or feeling.

Here is why following personal opinions of misguided, unqualified, self-appointed teachers becomes a truly serious issue.

Is Dining Out on the Sabbath the “Mark of the Beast”?

In order to avoid confusing anyone as to what these critics actually believe, it is necessary to quote them extensively. This will help brethren to understand the prophetic significance these critics attribute to their pet doctrine.

The first quote is from the article “Should Christians Frequent Restaurants on the Sabbath?”:

“What does the apostle John tell us about this mark in Revelation 13:16-17: ‘And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And no man might BUY or SELL, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.’

“The ‘forehead’ signifies submitting one’s mind, will power, and intellect. The “right hand” signifies willingness, action, and more importantly, co-operation.

“Which is the biggest BU\$INE\$\$ day for buying and selling in all of the world? Is it not Saturday, God’s Sabbath day?

“The fact is, if you have the mark of God, you are limited in your buying and selling because you will not be buying and selling on His Holy Sabbath day. If you have the mark of the beast, you have no restrictions, you will buy and sell on God’s Sabbath day. The mark of the beast is spiritual! The mark of the beast has always been here!...ALL of these resurrected saints [mentioned in Rev. 20:4] REJECTED the mark of the beast! They had to make a “conscious choice” and they REFUSED the mark of the beast, which means that they KNOW WHAT IT IS!

“Don’t you see? The mark of the beast has always been here! God is marking His own. Are you numbered among them?” (pp. 13-14).

According to the author, the marking process of the beast *is now in progress*—and has been for quite some time. He feels that the separation process is virtually complete, and those who have gone to restaurants and conducted business on the Sabbath *already* bear the Mark of the Beast. Absolutely incredible!

Now let’s read an extensive quote from *A Sabbath Test*:

“God’s church has rightly understood this mark [from Rev. 13:16] to be a rejection of the true Sabbath and holy days and the embracing of false religious customs and festivals. This understanding is drawn in part because of the remarkable contrast that can be drawn between God’s Sabbath and this ‘mark.’ The mark of the beast even has the appearance of being a counterfeit Sabbath.

“To illustrate this point, consider the following: one is called a mark (Rev. 13:16), the other is called a ‘sign’ (Ex. 31:13, 17). The mark of the beast is placed in the right hand and the forehead (Rev. 13:16). The Sabbath, which is part of God’s law, is placed in the right hand and as frontlets between the eyes (Deut. 6:6-8). The mark of the beast is very popular: ‘all receive it.’ The Sabbath is very unpopular, almost all reject it. Those who refuse the mark will be persecuted by the Beast. Those who receive the mark will be punished by God. But there is more. Perhaps the most unique quality of the mark of the beast, is its connec-

tion to buying and selling. Notice what the apostle John writes when describing this ‘mark.’ ‘And no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark...’ (Rev. 13:17).

“With these words you almost get the impression that while God is commanding His people to refrain from buying and selling on the Sabbath, the beast, under direct authority of Satan the devil (Rev. 13:2), is doing the very opposite. He is declaring that unless you reject the Sabbath, he will make it impossible for you to ever buy and sell. With this in mind, is it possible that the rejection of God’s Sabbath is defined more by engaging in business on this day than any other activity? After all, commerce drives so much of man’s physical existence. A leading industrialist once put it this way, ‘nothing happens in this world until something gets sold.’ The point here is that the exchange of money represents a huge part of man’s profane existence. This practice touches virtually everyone on earth.

“This is a fact that is undoubtedly not lost on Satan the devil. He knows all too well what makes the world go ‘round. This being the case, it is almost certain that this great deceiver (Rev. 12:9) will use commerce to persuade God’s people to reject their Creator. In essence, he will attempt to compel them to profane the Sabbath by buying and selling on that day. If they refuse, they will never be able to buy and sell. What an incredible test of faith that would be! It is true that Satan will use the beast to deceive all the people on earth to accept his mark, but the real target will be God’s people” (pp. 47-48).

The authors were very careful to stop short of an official explicit statement—that the Mark of the Beast is defined as eating at restaurants on the Sabbath. Yet their implication comes across quite loud and clear.

Consider what their point of view means: If eating out on the Sabbath is the Mark of the Beast, exactly how will it be enforced during the coming captivity? Are those hoping to endure to the end going to be forced to eat and pay for a meal in a restaurant, thereby violating their conscience?

This is simply ludicrous!

Grasp this firmly! The Mark of the Beast is enforced *Sunday* observance, as well as enforced slave labor on the Sabbath, with the penalty of death for non-compliance.

Once again, we cite a particular comment from the book, *A Sabbath Test*, page 30: “There are some who have suggested that Nehemiah’s indictment is against those doing business with merchants selling food in open markets, not specifically restaurants. Therefore in a very technical sense, *God appears to be silent on the subject of dining out on the Sabbath*” (emphasis ours).

Notice their admission that God is silent in prohibiting Sabbath dining out. God is not only silent on this, but He also says nothing that relates it to the Mark of the Beast.

Since there are no explicit biblical explanations that exist for what they conclude is the single most important issue facing the Church of God today, the authors have to fill in the blanks with their own abundant, then redundant, and then even tediously repetitious explanations. Just as much explanation is required to lay the groundwork for their interpretation of the Mark of the Beast, they have to be very careful and allow their readers to “fill in the blanks” and “connect the dots” themselves. An explicit explanation by the authors, here, would be all too transparent and would risk exposure.

By contrast, the understanding of the Mark of the Beast as taught by Mr. Armstrong was simple to define and required no extended, convoluted explanation. To repeat the simple definition from above, the Mark of the Beast is enforced *Sunday* observance, as well as enforced slave labor on the Sabbath, with the penalty of death for non-compliance. Here is what Mr. Armstrong taught, with his emphasis: “Sunday observance—Christmas, New Year’s, Easter, etc.—this is the MARK of the BEAST!” Later in the same section, he continues, “Yes the MARK OF THE BEAST will once again be enforced!...Those refusing will again be tortured and martyred...at the behest of the [Roman] church!” (*Who or What is the Prophetic Beast?*, pp. 44-45).

Shunning Profane and Vain Babblings

The Bible is explicit and straightforward about what is allowed and what is forbidden. Some attempt to attain a new threshold of “righteousness” by setting up a unique hurdle of their devising. Such is the case with this recently-contrived issue of avoiding restaurants on the Sabbath. We have seen that it was necessary for the advocates of this belief to subtly trash Mr. Armstrong, since he was “out of step” with their newly established definition of righteousness.

Ironically, the same scriptures upon which these modern critics base their beliefs were also in the hands of Paul and all other apostles and ministers of the early Church. When people traveled in those times, they did not always bring all their food along with them. The modern critics might consider Paul and other ordained leaders guilty of negligence for not addressing such issues in their letters.

However, what we do find is an admonition from Paul, warning Timothy about various people who shun wholesome words and resort to

petty arguments about miniscule issues, which are then inflated out of proportion. Paul had to quiet such teachers who failed to consider the BIG PICTURE, while focusing upon their pet theories to the detriment of others. He continues by declaring of such a teacher: “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of *men of corrupt minds*, and *destitute of the truth*, supposing that gain is godliness: from such WITHDRAW YOURSELF” (I Tim. 6:4-5).

Now read I Timothy chapter 1: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law [in this case, the Sabbath]; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (vs. 5-7).

As Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun! Such poisonous heresy is very much alive in these last days—and, in this issue, is disguised as ultra-righteousness Sabbath-keeping.

In this second letter to Timothy, Paul actually names some of these false teachers, and mentions how they entrapped brethren. “Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth HAVE ERRED, saying that the resurrection is past already; and OVERTHROW THE FAITH OF SOME. Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are his. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (II Tim. 2:14-19).

Heresy can and does overthrow the faith of some—especially newer brethren. The restaurant-Sabbath issue has affected hundreds throughout the splinters. Rather than recognizing this as plain false teaching, and contrary to the teachings and practices of Mr. Armstrong, certain weak splinter leaders have actually signed on and endorsed this heresy.

How Did They Do It?

Consider one example of false and incredibly foolish teaching in the first century. One might ask, by what means were Hymenaeus and Philetus able to persuade some brethren that the resurrection was already past? Since the New Testament scriptures were not canonized until many years

later, those brethren could not study the details of the resurrection in a point-by-point manner as discussed in the New Testament writings. Most likely, these false leaders declared that the physical resurrection of some of the saints at the time of Christ’s death and/or resurrection fulfilled the resurrections prophesied in the books of the prophets such as Isaiah 65:17-25 or Ezekiel 37. However incredible it might seem to us, gullible people did buy in.

Here is one account that is falsely considered to fulfill a prophesied resurrection: “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matt. 27:50-53).

The false teachers of that time probably presented this account accurately, but then proceeded to skillfully spin the matter to fit their conclusions. Their presentation was so convincing that many of those new in the faith, lacking the roots and foundation to discern between genuine truth and intimidating arguments, signed on to this thinking.

Likewise, the majority of those who have bought into these cunning restaurant-Sabbath arguments appear to be relatively new brethren—and thus candidates to be more easily confused and fooled by seductive thinking (II Tim. 3:13). Many of them have turned away from the truth even before becoming grounded in the most basic understandings. The “modern Pharisees” have come across as “wonderfully” righteous to such unsuspecting novices. These teachers usually state facts and present them in an accurate manner, but proceed to draw their crafty conclusions by weaving webs of convincing deception.

It usually turns out that false teachers who raise the bar to the highest level of conduct do so in the most hypocritical fashion. This is because their own personal track record falls abysmally short of what they expect of others. For example, those demanding the highest level of expectations of others have rarely attained that level in their personal lives or in their past inconsistent track record with the Church. Yet they readily set the bar for others to follow their projected image of righteousness while they live by a different standard. False teachers have consistently followed this type of pattern. Again, Christ says of them, “...for you laden men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers” (Luke 11:46).

In contrast to the hypocrisy of this age, true Christianity reflects the simplicity and purity that Paul wrote to Timothy: “Hold fast the form of

sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. 1:13).

We must ask: If the restaurant-Sabbath issue were so dominant that it was foremost in God’s mind, again, would God have left Mr. Armstrong and His Church in the dark as to the importance of this supposedly towering doctrine? If eating out on the Sabbath were an issue crucial to salvation, as it has been implied, certainly Christ would not have failed to emphasize this—in fact, with so much at stake, a fair, just and loving God would have inspired His servant to explicitly spell this out in no uncertain terms.

Truly, the greatest danger in regard to the restaurant-Sabbath issue is not whether we cause someone already working to “perform extra labor” on the Sabbath or whether we make a cash transaction, not unlike paying a toll or parking fee. The greatest danger associated with this issue involves whether we fall into the trap of this heresy. The assumed righteousness—self-righteousness—that accompanies acceptance of this heresy adds to the loss of vision for those who buy into it. Few have been known to recover from such a risky endeavor.

Resist Capture!

Most will agree that a Sabbath meal at one’s home or at that of other brethren offers a better atmosphere than most restaurants, and the quality of the food may be generally more acceptable, as well. It is true that some have, most likely, gone overboard in their use of restaurants on the Sabbath. Yet, for some brethren—such as singles, widows, widowers and those who travel relatively long distances to attend services—a Sabbath meal at a restaurant can and should be a special, enjoyable event.

True Christians should be wary of humanly-devised legalism and pet doctrinal ideas that try to define the liberty and latitude that Christ allows. Paul tells us to “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

People who are caught up in this new, ever-growing Laodicean mentality seem eager and willing to give up the liberty they had been given upon coming to the knowledge of the truth. They relinquish liberty in order to buy into a recently devised form of “yardstick Christianity” produced by the era defined by Christ as “the people rule, judge and decide.”

Verses 13-14 adds, “For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one

another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

One of the greatest ways of encouraging one another and communicating sincere love for the brethren has been to share a meal upon coming together on the Sabbath. Someone who is single or a widower hardly ever has the opportunity to serve others a meal. Yet, they can use the liberty to invite other brethren for a meal on the Sabbath or high Holy Day at an appropriate restaurant. Mr. Armstrong *never* condemned this practice. And, according to their thinking, why is this extra effort to serve food at home when entertaining Sabbath visitors not unnecessary labor, and thus Sabbath-breaking?

Dining out on the Sabbath (in moderation) has always been a special treat for those honored to serve others, as well as for the guests. The motive should always be to lift up, encourage and show other brethren that they are appreciated. For many brethren, who are scattered in various locations, eating at a restaurant offers the *only possible opportunity* for fellowship after services.

Many Sabbath services have been held in a city near the downtown area, many miles away from where any of the brethren live. Those in attendance are themselves usually scattered long distances from each other, making quality fellowship a rare and precious golden opportunity. In such cases the only opportunity for fellowship is for the group (while they are together) to go to a nearby restaurant for a meal and fellowship. Else fellowship would be scrapped in order to comply with this “Pharisaical Laodiceanism”—where the people rule, judge and decide doctrine!

No reasonable mind believes that the God who said that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” would forego wonderful, vital fellowship among His children on the Sabbath so that worldly restaurant employees will still render the exact same service anyway—but now at someone else’s table.

Critics have attempted to debate a range of reasons for why dining out on the Sabbath has become “a” (if not “the”) central issue facing true Christians in these “perilous times.” Their movement is gaining ground in certain splinters.

The article you have just read was written to give people—both older brethren and those new to God’s truth—an advance warning, so that they will not be captured by the cunning arguments of those who *appear* to be standing fast for the truth. In reality, the advocates against eating out on the Sabbath are teaching a new form of bondage that *appears* to follow the letter of the law, while ignoring the weightier matters. As the apostle

James wrote, the Law of God is not a surrender of liberty; it allows us to *continue* in God-given liberty (Jms. 1:25; 2:12).

Titus 1:9 instructs God's true ministers to "hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught" so that "he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers." Verses 10 and 11 describe today's age: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision [legalistic Jewish teachers of the law, like these today]: whose mouths must be stopped..."

Of course, we cannot literally restrain those who are deceiving God's people with their humanly-devised nonsense about how to keep the Sabbath of a God they so obviously do not know. But, we *can* present you with the mind of God—and we have done that here—so that you can resist their designs to make you another captive, joining the others who have fallen prey to such deception!

May all of God's people keep straight the PLAIN TRUTH of God's Way!

HOW DOES GOD REVEAL TRUTH TO HIS CHURCH?

Does God reveal all of the truth about any one doctrine at the same time? As His servants grew in spiritual understanding, did God expect them to refine doctrine? Should Mr. Armstrong have done this? What about the Catholic concept of “progressive revelation”—have some applied this to God’s Church?

Over the years, various ideas, opinions and perceptions have arisen over how God reveals truth to His Church. During the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong, the Church understood God revealed truth through His apostles. This was once not a mystery to anyone. God inspired Paul to write that His Church was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20).

However, throughout Church history, liberals have sought loopholes to justify watering down long-held doctrines and traditions. They longed to be “free” from restraints.

At the other extreme, some senior ministers who were “conservatives” (Raymond Cole, Bryce Clark, Paul Royer and a few others), in their quest to not water down or compromise, have rejected legitimate—and *necessary*—refinements in doctrine, as God revealed them through His twentieth-century apostle, Mr. Armstrong.

Both extremes are wrong. They kept some brethren from properly growing in godly understanding. This need not and must not be!

Making Mid-Course Corrections

In the 1960s, during the Apollo moon landing program, NASA’s top scientists and engineers had to comply with the laws of physics in order to successfully land men on the moon.

But to do this, they had to continually make mid-course corrections or else they would not have achieved their goal. Worse, *without* proper mid-course corrections and refinements, the astronauts would have died.

These vitally needed corrections paid off because scientists adhered to the laws of physics in every step of the process. No laws were broken. As a result, the spacecraft successfully reached its target, allowed men to walk on the moon and brought them back to earth alive and well.

Just as scientists and engineers needed to make mid-course corrections, without breaking physical laws, to achieve their goals, Christians must do the same. God’s servants must actively grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet. 3:18). This means having teachable minds and child-like attitudes so that God can teach them His ways through His faithful ministry.

Personally growing in grace and knowledge is a long, ongoing process that will take the rest of your life. Similarly, God does not reveal everything about any particular doctrine all at once even to apostles.

Examples of Moses and Paul

Unlike men, God is perfect and infallible. He does not make mistakes. And yet, even the perfect and infallible God has made *refinements*—amendments—to His holy, righteous judgments.

An example of this is found in Numbers 36. Zelophehad, a Manassite, had died. Since he had no sons, God allowed his inheritance to pass to his five daughters (Num. 27:1-11).

However, this led to a big problem. Let’s first read the passage: “And if they [Zelophehad’s daughters] be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance” (Num. 36:3).

This was serious. Even during the Jubilee year, when all the land in Israel was to revert to its original owners (thereby eliminating third and fourth generation poverty, which plagues our world today), the daughters’ inheritance would not have reverted to the tribe of Manasseh (vs. 4).

God, through Moses, acknowledged that the Manassites had a legitimate complaint: “And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph have said well. This is the thing which the LORD does command concerning

the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry” (vs. 5-6).

God made a refinement here—an amendment!—to His original judgment, without breaking His other spiritual laws. However, it was not a correction made because God had somehow not thought out these laws sufficiently, but was rather an amendment to a previously made judgment. God did not present judgments for every possible scenario. Instead, as new circumstances were presented, God ruled accordingly. He added judgments!

For example, what if a bachelor from a different Israelite tribe had his heart set on marrying Mahlah, the eldest of Zelophehad’s five daughters? What if this man thought to himself that since God was perfect and possessed all truth, He had no business changing something that was working quite well? Maybe this man blamed Moses instead of God, like so many Israelites had done in other situations. God’s true servants have always taken the heat when their decisions did not go well with some of His people.

Consider this—God wants His people to learn from experience. He does not tell us everything in precise detail all at once in every circumstance. He does not address, at the outset of any undertaking, every possible complication that may arise.

If He did, God knows that we would not *grow* in grace and knowledge. He is currently judging us based on what we *do* with what we *know*. The more we obey Him, the more spiritual understanding we gain. If we refuse to obey Him, even in mid-course corrections, we deny ourselves greater understanding. Mr. Armstrong saw in stages the truth of even single doctrines.

For instance, he first saw that the Church should keep Pentecost before later recognizing how to compute the correct day upon which it should be kept.

The liberals who infiltrated the leadership of God’s Church and led the great apostasy of the late 1980s and early 1990s referred to their doctrinal changes as “growth.” But their radical changes were *not* growth, because growth does not dismantle, restructure and depart from virtually all of God’s truths.

As a result of the apostasy and falling away, hyper-conservatives at the other extreme are now more cautious and suspicious of *any* change that *Mr. Armstrong* himself made.

God expects us to discern whether a refinement or correction was made by His servant according to His Word—or by wolves seeking to

devour the flock by leading them to depart from sound doctrine. When God uses His true apostles to increase our spiritual understanding, He expects us to act and grow. Mr. Armstrong’s role as Moses more greatly emphasizes this principle.

Even Paul made refinements—mid-course corrections—in his doctrinal understanding. For example, he taught the first-century brethren that Christ’s Second Coming would take place in their lifetimes (I Thes. 4:15-17). This was not a teaching invented in Paul’s mind—he based it on his understanding of Scripture. This teaching actually became an established doctrine (in the original Greek, *doctrine* means “teaching”).

God allowed this to be recorded in the Bible! Mr. Armstrong also taught and believed that Christ was returning in *his* lifetime. Because of this, some people label Mr. Armstrong a false prophet. Yet they do not say that *Paul* was a false prophet, even though, in his original thinking, Paul was over 100 times as wrong as Mr. Armstrong! Was God not using Paul at that time?

In II Thessalonians 2:1-6, Paul came to realize he had been wrong—and he corrected what must have seemed “established” doctrine. Did Paul begin an apostasy when he admitted his error? Of course not!

If Paul, God’s servant and a true apostle, was allowed to grow in doctrinal understanding *and* make corrections and refinements accordingly, why would we not have expected the same from God’s faithful twentieth-century apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong?

Accepting New Truth

Since God’s truth is understood step-by-step—slowly, throughout a lifetime of conversion and overcoming—necessary refinements and corrections in biblical understanding need to be made.

The ability to take correction from God’s Word is one of the traits of a true Christian. Once new insight and understanding are revealed, Christians must act upon them.

Some argue that there is no possible way that God can ever make a correction through His servants. However, consider the following:

Mr. Armstrong did not learn about the spirit in man until 1965. How could God use a man to teach conversion to millions and “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” if he did not even know about the spirit in man? Did God not use Mr. Armstrong until he learned this?

In a 1939 *Good News* magazine article, Mr. Armstrong explained that he believed hierarchical government to be wrong. Yet, during the winter of 1952-53, he came to understand how God's government works and taught this new understanding to the Church. Was God not working with him until he understood the right form of government?

Similarly, Mr. Armstrong did not understand Church eras for many years. But, as with government, God eventually revealed them to him. Some could ask: How could God have used Mr. Armstrong to lead the *Philadelphian* era for so many years if he did not even *understand* Church eras? And how many decades had he served in the office of apostle before he even recognized and accepted that he was one?

While God used Mr. Armstrong to lay a doctrinal foundation (Zech. 4:9), this did not happen all at once. If God had not been working through Mr. Armstrong until such times that error was acknowledged and a change made, then Mr. Armstrong would not have even been led to make the changes.

Christ described this in John 16:13. Notice: "Howbeit when [It], the Spirit of truth, is come, [It] will GUIDE you into all truth..." Those who refuse to follow where God is leading through His chosen servant, by His Spirit, ironically view themselves as possessing an extra measure of righteousness. They are unaware that they are actually resisting God.

Notice the attitude of the Thyatiran Era of God's Church: "In a confession of their faith, one of the members of the Waldenses stated their faith, 'declaring that they proffered [proposed or offered] the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and comprehended in the apostles' Creed, and admitted the sacraments instituted by Christ, and the Ten Commandments, etc...They said they had received this doctrine from their ancestors, and that *if they were in any error they were ready to receive instruction from the word of God*'" (*Jones' Church History*, p. 355, 1837 edition).

Do not be confused by the terms "Apostles' Creed" and "sacraments instituted by Christ." The Thyatiran brethren had been reared on a Catholic education. As they came out of that background, some Catholic expressions remained. But their zeal, courage and unyielding devotion in the face of martyrdom testify that they were indeed converted brethren.

The Thyatirans willingly looked to God's Word to correct and refine their doctrinal thinking. This attitude is so precious and rare that it identifies God's true Church. Unlike counterfeit Christianity, which relies on the traditions of men, God's true servants will look to Him for His truth.

However, not only is this attitude far removed from this world’s false religions, it has become increasingly rare, so as to be virtually non-existent in the Laodicean Era of God’s Church. In this final era, in which the people have taken over precious few are open to change from *their own adopted errors!*

What Is “Progressive Revelation”?

Now contrast the attitude of true Christians with that of the great counterfeit. Like certain elements within the Church of God, Catholics deny that Christians can grow in the truth or recognize that former beliefs and practices are in error. They believe that their church can never err, since “Christ” is deemed to be mysteriously guiding it at *every* moment and in *every* way. This is called “progressive revelation.”

As a result, the Catholics consider even every *contradictory* decree ever issued to be inherently irreversible. Therefore, they do not feel the need to repent of error. Change is not an option, they reason, since their church could not err under Christ’s guidance.

But what the Catholics fail to realize is that God does not give Christians the full measure of His truth instantaneously—just as He does not give them the full measure of His Holy Spirit instantaneously.

Human beings make mistakes—yes, even faithful apostles! Paul demonstrated this. God’s Spirit guides His servants into His truth throughout a *lifetime* of conversion.

Progressive revelation predates the time of Thomas Aquinas (1217-1274). In his most famous works, *Summa Theologicae* and *Summa Catholiciae*, Aquinas attempted to open the door to accepting new discoveries in mathematics and physics, mainly by Arab scholars (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 9, pp. 250-251).

But this made little impact. The Catholic clerics and theologians were so unyielding that, when the astronomer Galileo made a series of discoveries confirming the theories of Copernicus, he was put on trial in 1632. Galileo and Copernicus had confirmed the earth’s orbital position in relation to the sun and other planets.

The Catholic leaders would not accept this new knowledge, because it contradicted their pre-ordained theological “truths.” Refinement or correction was impossible. Instead, they forced Galileo to publicly renounce his discoveries (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 11, pp. 406-411).

Needless to say, progressive revelation—the inflexible belief that every position taken by the church is without error—is the antithesis of truth, or the “Spirit of truth,” which “leads” into all truth.

It does allow for subsequent doctrines to help bridge the gap, so to speak. But, since the original doctrines were deemed to be not in error, there is nothing to ever actually correct. The only option is to keep building upon former doctrines in order to better “interpret” them. This is exactly what Rome does, and seemingly without end. Since no error is ever admitted, and correction and change are forbidden, composite doctrines become a maze of contradictory decrees and positions. Doctrinal simplicity and purity become impossible to maintain.

Progressive revelation ultimately led the Catholic Church to adopt the doctrine of Papal Infallibility: When the Pope speaks from the official throne—*Ex Cathedra* (“from the chair”)—it is considered as if God is speaking. Error is deemed impossible!

Counting Pentecost—A Case-in-Point

During the Philadelphian Era of God’s Church, some resisted refinements from error. Their line of reasoning closely paralleled what the Catholics have practiced. They felt that truth was revealed all at once—and any attempt to *correct* error had to *be* error.

A case-in-point: counting Pentecost. The Bible is explicit on how to count from the time of the wave sheaf offering. This occurred on the day following the weekly Sabbath that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread: “And you shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths [weeks] shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you number fifty days; and you shall offer a new meat [meal] offering unto the LORD” (Lev. 23:15-16).

Before a faithful apostle can revise any established doctrine, he must examine all the facts from every angle. This includes the original text and meaning of the language in which the scripture was originally written.

In this case, Mr. Armstrong contacted his personal friend, Dr. Binyamin Mazar, of Hebrew University in Israel. Dr. Mazar gave Mr. Armstrong access to the most able scholars from Israel specializing in the ancient Hebrew language. Mr. Armstrong conferred with these experts in a series of conversations, over a period of time, before ever reaching any definite conclusion.

The accuracy of counting Pentecost lay within the technical meaning of a couple of words found in Leviticus 23:15. It was originally thought that “*from* the morrow after the Sabbath” meant to start counting *from* Sunday. The Hebrew intent, as was explained to Mr. Armstrong, was to

also count the day from which the counting began. The original Hebrew *allowed for the inclusion of the day of origin*, whereas the English language did not! This was critical *new* knowledge.

This understanding, as presented by the Hebrew scholars, was vindicated by the wording of verse 16: “Even unto the morrow after the Sabbath shall you number fifty days.” This demonstrates that, after counting the fifty days, the target date was to be *the day after the weekly Sabbath!* This became more clear-cut than ever. The Hebrew intent of this scripture left no room for maneuvering or doubt regarding the target date. Pentecost is clearly and unequivocally labeled “the morrow after the Sabbath”—Sunday.

The same conclusion had been previously introduced to Mr. Armstrong by a Headquarters minister. But not until conferring with the ancient Hebrew language experts did Mr. Armstrong consider revising the Church’s former understanding. Although he respected this man, Mr. Armstrong did not correct and revise the Church’s doctrinal understanding until he had irrefutable proof.

There is no record that any of the major sects of Judaism observed Pentecost on Mondays (although it is possible that one or more obscure sects could have done so).

The Sadducees and the Karaites (a sect founded in the eighth century A.D.) counted Pentecost from the day after the weekly Sabbath that fell *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. This was biblically correct, according to Leviticus 23:15-16. Even the Samaritans, who had a hybrid form of Judaism, observed Pentecost on the correct day.

However, the Pharisees counted Pentecost from the day *following* the First Day of Unleavened Bread. By this method, Pentecost never occurred on any fixed day of the week. Obviously, this was not biblically correct. Another sect of Judaism, the Falashas of Ethiopia, kept Pentecost on Sunday, but they counted it from the day following the weekly Sabbath *after* the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. By this method, Pentecost fell on a fixed day of the week—Sunday—but it was one week too late.

The Sadducees were the ones in charge of the temple during Pentecost, A.D. 31. Since they kept the correct day, along with thousands of orthodox Jews visiting Jerusalem for that Holy Day, the stage was set for the miraculous beginning of the Church of God.

The scholars at Hebrew University held that observing Pentecost on Sunday was founded on solid scriptural authority and tradition.

As for minority sects, many originated from the Babylonian captivity, while others emerged later, during the Hellenistic domination.

Whatever their origin, Christ's admonishment applied to them as well as to the Jewish authorities of Christ's day, who had given priority to their own traditions over God's commandments (Mark 7:8-9, 13). This included keeping any of God's feasts on the wrong days.

Precautions Used in Vital Decisions

Mr. Armstrong knew that he was not, and had never been, infallible. He knew that the Spirit of truth guides Christians into all truth gradually—not in “one fell swoop” (John 16:13). Therefore, when he decided to correct the Church's former understanding of counting Pentecost, or of divorce and remarriage, the brethren had to make a decision: cling to a form of progressive revelation and claim that established doctrines are irreversible or follow Mr. Armstrong's lead, acknowledging that they had not yet attained spiritual understanding in all truth.

In the quote below, Mr. Armstrong gave an overview of how he carefully studied any issue before arriving at a final decision. The context pertains to objections from some ministers about his just-published booklet about divorce and remarriage. It summarizes the care, diligence and forethought that preceded his every decision that involved establishing or revising doctrine:

“...I not only carefully studied all reports given me from the doctrinal committee, I showed their papers to some of our best scholars on the British campus...

“I have always tried to follow the Biblical admonition that in a multitude of counselors there is safety. I have always tried to follow the principle that I learned as far back as 1915, to get ALL the facts before a decision. God called and chose me to get HIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM TO THE WORLD, and to be used in raising up His Church for our time to HELP get that Great Commission DONE!

“I am sending word to Headquarters to WITHDRAW the booklet from circulation until I may have opportunity to study the position of those opposed to the present booklet. That is not to say I will agree with them—it IS to say I will study their position and facts in the Scriptures WITH A COMPLETELY OPEN MIND. If there are errors in the booklet, I will correct them. I want GOD'S TRUTH, and I must assume you Ministers do too!...

“If there is any reason I can account for, as to why God chose me and put me in the position I occupy, it is because I HAVE ALWAYS

BEEN COMPLETELY FAITHFUL WITH HIS WORD as He gives me to UNDERSTAND!”

Letter to the ministry, Feb. 22, 1974

This quote echoed the same sentiment expressed by the Waldenses of the Thyatiran Era: “...They said they had received this doctrine from their ancestors, and that *if they were in any error they were ready to receive instruction from the word of God.*”

If the Church was seeking to follow God and hold fast to His doctrines, then it should have been ready to acknowledge error when found and to receive instruction from God’s Word!

Where did the Church of God traditionally receive its teachings during the twentieth century when it was vibrant and on-track? During this stage of the Church, most every member was acutely aware of the origin of our teachings. As a refresher of that vital knowledge, we quote Mr. Armstrong a final time. In the context of this quote, he is discussing education in the World Tomorrow and the source of true doctrines not only in the Millennium, and in the first century, but in the twentieth century, as well:

“One thing there will not be in the millennial Headquarters Church is a doctrinal committee of intellectual ‘scholars’ to decide whether Christ’s teachings are true doctrines.

“There was no such doctrinal committee in the first century Headquarters Church at Jerusalem. All teaching came from Christ through the apostles—and a few times Christ communicated to apostles via the prophets (of which there are none in God’s Church today since the Bible for our time is complete). God’s Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in A.D. 31”

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Christ continued to lead His apostle into more of the truth—sometimes by degrees—rather than giving a sudden, complete picture, fulfilling the sum total of understanding, at the initial instant.

This also applies to the doctrine of *divorce and remarriage*, as changed in 1974. At that time, Mr. Armstrong grew into a fuller understanding as he observed the confusion and inadequacy of his initial comprehension of that doctrine. He was able to grow in understanding and correct, refine and set straight the doctrines as he grew in the understanding of truth—as his mind was guided by Christ. This is explained in greater detail in our biography of Mr. Armstrong, *Herbert W. Armstrong – His Life in Proper Perspective*.

In this post-apostasy era, people now argue, “The eras have changed... absent any apostle (as they suppose), we must take matters into our own hands.” Hence, those not content to accept Christ’s teachings through His chosen apostle have taken the prerogative to seize control of the Church, true to the era named after its own brand of conduct—Laodicea.

EPILOGUE

WAYS THE PEOPLE RULE IN THE LAODICEAN AGE

There are many ways the people and ministry now rule in the seventh era of the Church, sometimes unknowingly. Could any of these apply to you?

This Epilogue was originally an article written to our membership. It carries a powerful message for you and has been added to this book. Realize that it starts by building a somewhat repetitious foundation from which to prepare readers for later portions.

Everyone understands that we are now living in the Laodicean age—the era when the people rule.

Some have asked, “Where in Revelation 3 do we find that Laodicea means ‘the people rule’ in the Church?” This phrase is derived by a close analysis of the name “Laodicea”: *Laos* means “people” and *dike* (from which the suffix *dikeia*, or *dicea*, derives) means to “decide, judge and rule.” Christ addresses the first six eras in terms of the church “in” their respective locations. But the Bible refers to the people of the Laodicean era as “the church OF the Laodiceans.” This in effect reveals who actually governs this church.

Many attributes of the Laodicean era—its condition—originate from the world around the Church. Scripture reveals what the general character of people—in both the world and the Church—will be like in the last days.

In Matthew 24:9, Christ explains that the Church will be persecuted and that some will *later* be martyred. Keep in mind that this is to take place well before the Tribulation.

He continues, “And you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake.” During this unprecedented series of events, many will succumb to the growing pressures out of the need for self-preservation, instead

of being willing to lay down their lives for one another: “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (vs. 10).

Verse 11 speaks of false prophets arising and deceiving many among God’s people. As a result of rampant lawlessness and turbulent events, “the love of many shall wax cold” (vs. 12)—this refers most specifically to those who had God’s Spirit but became embittered.

Then comes a pivotal verse defining the crucial hurdle that differentiates those who survive and those who fail: “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (vs. 13). We must recognize, avoid and *overcome* the fatal attitudes common to this era so that we will be among those who endure.

Willing to Address

Once one recognizes these trends in his own thoughts, he should be willing to immediately uproot them. Such characteristics *must* be brought under control, instead of becoming the controlling factors in our lives. We have to be on guard against acquiring habits from the world around us. Ignoring such trends and attitudes is the first step in becoming another casualty of this age. Those who unwittingly adopt such a mindset eventually lose the humility and submissiveness that characterize the sheep—the flock of God.

The headstrong, stubborn and independent attitude that characterizes goats applies well to the mindset of this final time. Recognize that, of all the Church eras listed in Revelation 2 and 3, the only one to *talk back to God* was Laodicea—“I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”!

Notice God’s response: “Because you...know...not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked...” (Rev. 3:17). This is the era we in The Restored Church of God are coming out of, and we must strive to correct our thinking accordingly.

Long-term cumulative effects of dealing with people of this era are evident among those whose responsibilities have required significant contact with them. This age of contention has taken its toll upon the few remaining servants of God, including those scattered among the splinters.

Attitudes of increasing self-importance, material self-sufficiency, headstrong independence and rebellion have existed in the world for thousands of years—and they are growing worse. Some who have been part of the Church for decades have also adopted these through constant

exposure to the world and the special pressures of this age. *Everyone* is susceptible to these attitudes, depending upon his or her exposure to conditions that foster them—representing the antithesis of what God requires of His flock.

Those coming out of the world today are at a distinct disadvantage because of them. However, having been part of the true Church for one, two, three or more decades *should* have provided the much needed momentum to resist prevalent attitudes during these turbulent times. But one's association with certain splinters can actually be MORE damaging than simply being of the world. Because one has been in the Church for a while does not mean that he has not been affected.

Prevalent Attitude

Another prophecy of end-time attitudes—in the world and among God's people—is recorded in II Timothy 3:1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: FROM SUCH TURN AWAY."

These passages list about 20 aspects of selfish, inward, carnal attitudes. We must recognize what is still entrenched in our minds and uproot such attitudes in order to endure to the end and qualify for the FIRST RESURRECTION. Our very spiritual survival depends upon whether we put forth the effort to root out these tendencies and become submissive to God.

Cynicism is predominant today partly because of the outright scandalous conduct of national and corporate leaders, as well as entertainment and athletic icons. This distrust of leaders and dignitaries has affected *everyone*, directly or indirectly. Yet, there must still be a strong trust in God and proper respect toward His Church in carrying on, reviving and restoring the truth and His Work in these perilous times. We must remember that Christ has not changed (Heb. 3:8; Mal. 3:6), and is still capable of governing His Church.

The various problems reflecting *independent* and *unyielding* attitudes have become stumbling blocks to some through recent years. First, let's examine the source of much dissension in the last 15 years or so—doctrine.

Doctrine

Doctrine is central to all that has gone wrong in the Laodicean Era. God continues the Church that Christ built—The Restored Church of God—for those who long for the full truth as formerly taught by God’s twentieth-century apostle. But all those with His Spirit must come back to His Church or lose that Spirit. One crucial difference between Philadelphia and Laodicea stems from the position as to whether leaders of Church organizations have the authority to alter doctrine.

The Philadelphian approach is this:

(1) Herbert W. Armstrong was the end-time Moses who established our doctrinal foundation (Mal. 4:4).

(2) Truth is revealed *only* through apostles. Again, this means that no one of lesser rank may present new doctrines to the Church.

(3) Philadelphians *hold fast* (Rev. 3:11) to the truth and traditions (II Thes. 2:15) that they received.

(4) The Bible reveals there is one true Church, which stands in unity of doctrine: “But continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them” (II Tim. 3:14).

A typical splinter response to the points above is:

(1) Even though Mr. Armstrong clearly fulfilled the Moses role, many will not accept this.

(2) The truth is better decided through personal opinion, open discussion and occasionally use of balloting. This essentially leaves all doctrine “up for review.”

(3) The term “Philadelphian” only has meaning when one accepts the “idea” of Church eras. Yet, we know this controversy remains an “unresolved issue.”

(4) Every individual is judged on his own “merit,” regardless of his doctrinal position.

These responses do not agree with Scripture. They lean primarily upon liberal human reasoning. (Yet, many among the splinters do believe Mr. Armstrong was an apostle and that Philadelphians will be protected during the Tribulation, as promised by Scripture.)

Those who come to God’s Church agree with the truth as the Church once knew it. However, each new member unconsciously brings with him concepts that represent aspects of the Laodicean mindset. Some simply absorb a liberal mentality while others become fiercely independent. Others become just as fierce as “watchdogs” of how well Headquarters

or others are holding fast. Regardless of our degree of doctrinal understanding before coming with us, the ultimate test is whether we treasure the full truth that everyone *appeared* to believe when the Church was on track under Mr. Armstrong. It depends upon whether one has *proven* from the Bible each point of truth—believing that what is written in the Bible represents God’s Word.

The four points describing the Philadelphian approach are the same points defined earlier as the four walls of defense against false doctrine. In order for wrong teaching to come into the Church, these walls must first be breached individually. Yet, the various splinter organizations have no such defense against wrong ideas. Just as their open door policy admits all kinds of visitors and other interested *individuals*, it also permits strange and foreign *doctrines* of every kind. This essentially creates an “open doctrine” policy.

Opinions and Pet Ideas

In this age, everybody has many opinions—about nearly everything! To be opinionated is not necessarily wrong. In fact, as life teaches us lessons, we need to know what to retain and what to avoid. These lessons can become so deeply ingrained that we develop strong opinions regarding certain issues.

However, when personal opinion becomes a hurdle to learning and growing, it is detrimental to the ability to properly function under God’s government. Strongly held opinions can taint objectivity, leading to stubbornness and being narrow-minded. Some form opinions from a limited point of view and refuse to reconsider or budge. Others among God’s people have formed concrete opinions based on premature conclusions from limited observation of what happened in the apostasy. Hence, such insisted that the *entire* ministry was responsible, since it was spearheaded by *some* in the ministry. In truth, some *ministers* were just as deceived as lay members. Yet, the fact that *some*, or even most, ministers conspired to undermine the Church should not be used to hold *all* ministers accountable. Although most resort to such reasoning to justify their new independent status, this is simply building upon irrational *opinions* based on faulty *assumptions*.

Many today base their personal philosophy upon opinionated half-truths. For instance, some insist, “The Work was completed by Mr. Armstrong and our only responsibility is to get the bride ready.” This faulty assumption is based on *selfishness*. It implies that although God sent prophets to warn Israel and others through the centuries, He

now wants virtual *silence* before this time of the most horrible suffering the world has ever experienced. Mr. Armstrong did sound the warning up until about 25 years ago—but in the past, when did God *ever* cease to warn any city or nation on the grounds that it had been warned two decades previously?

Pet ideas and opinions feed upon one another. Through previous decades, some have left the Church over issues as ridiculous as “mushrooms propagate by the use of spores rather than seeds, therefore such species are unfit for human food.” Others insisted that bananas lacked recognizable seed and left for this reason. Likewise, some feel that unless the Church is using television or radio to spread the gospel message, the Work is not being done. How short-sighted!

As different advertising mediums become available, God’s Work must change the way in which it spreads the gospel. There was a time when radio was the optimum method, later replaced by TV. Today, the most efficient way to reach the vast majority of humanity is via the Internet. Those who are researching various topics often search the Internet for answers and solutions.

What does *not* change with the times are GOD’S DOCTRINES, which the Church guards carefully. Ironically, the groups that are seemingly unchangeable in their view as to the *means* of spreading the gospel are quite willing to change the *doctrine* they spread to conform to the times.

Some have approached Restored with an ultimatum: “If you want us to come with you, you have to conform to the following standards...” They then proceed to dictate what *they* feel are the most important attributes of Christianity. For some, it is to restrict all members from *watching television*, anywhere at any time—period. For others, the overriding issue is offering an open door policy at Feast sites.

Some felt in the past that the most important attribute of the true Church is to have a living human apostle to guide God’s people in *every* age, and had to see this before coming. Others insist that we need to adopt “gospel” music, while others claim that their personally developed version of the sacred calendar will put us back on track. You can readily see that any organization that tries to make everybody happy (and some actually try) will become entangled in an exercise in futility.

Tithing

Now, let’s look at tithing. Obviously, this is a central doctrine of God, and, along with offerings, it plays a vital role in the Christian life. Some regard money as their most sacred commodity. On the other

hand, God regards a *converted mind* as one's most sacred possession. Those lacking God's Spirit naturally turn to something on the material plane—their pool of earnings—as something to guard at all cost. Various independent-minded individuals use this tool in a number of ways. One of the most effective ways in which the people rule in this age is through their payment of tithes, using it as a barometer to “test the water” before making a commitment. This is done by withholding “their” tithes. If the ministry mentions to such people that they have not tithed since having been with the Church for two, three or even six months, they conclude, “It's only money they care about; I want no part of such an organization.” The Church has failed their test by asking, “Why have you not paid God's tithes for months?” So they leave, convinced of their own righteousness and the Church's greed and wrong priorities.

Others allow three to four months to pass before they begin tithing—and then only do so with carefully guarded conditions. Since no one has condemned their stealing from God, they are content to begin tithing *on their own terms*. At the first sign of “abuse of authority” or perceived “misuse of funds,” these people immediately begin withholding “their” tithes. They come into the Church with this mentality and usually exit in the same way.

God declares that the first tenth of one's earned income or agricultural bounty belongs to HIM and is *never* the property of the one paying it. When someone comes into the Church, he is to prove that God exists, that the Bible is God's Word, and that this is the sole Church in which He is working. Once these crucial points have been proven, that person should begin paying that which God states belongs to Him. If one remains reluctant, and plans to use tithes to test the Church, then he has not proven that this is where God is working.

Of all the issues regarding God's commands that face His people in this age, tithing seems to be one of the most difficult to observe. People who faithfully tithe (and give regular generous offerings) rarely leave the truth, while those unfaithful in this matter rarely stay for very long. Tithing has long been understood to be an accurate barometer of one's commitment to God and His Work.

Yet, in this age, people try to turn it into a way to test the Church. God never intended tithing to be used in this way. In effect, it puts *His* leadership to the test and thus insults Him. Anyone who practices this unfaithful approach has no place in the Church of God! Those coming with The Restored Church of God must thoroughly prove and solidify the fact that God has always commanded tithing and that His true ser-

vants have always willingly obeyed. God will not consider anyone worthy of the first resurrection if He cannot rule over them now.

When one joins a new splinter, he brings God’s tithes with him and is welcomed as a new member. Yet, he may also bring with him a set of expectations, using tithes as a WEAPON to control the Church or ministry. Any organization hoping to attract the maximum number of members will have to stay attuned to what the *people* prefer. This means that doctrines, policies, traditions and administrative “style” will need to be periodically modified to stay up-to-date with the current wants of the people. All forms of steadfastness tend to be regarded as being “stuck in the past” or “worshipping Mr. Armstrong.”

Regardless of how the liberal mindset tries to spin the facts, “hold[ing] that fast which you have” can only mean to adhere to the timeless truth that was given to the Philadelphian era. There is *never* a good reason to change, alter or water down proven doctrine (such as tithing) or established tradition!

Most people who came into the Church when Mr. Armstrong was actively leading it did so intending to stay, grow and spiritually develop. Many have stayed for decades and some died in the faith. Yet, many others have simply failed to sufficiently PROVE what they once professed to believe.

Independence and Mobility

Many in this age have experienced disappointment with some of the groups with which they have aligned or sought to align themselves. As a result, they have been conditioned to *expect* disappointment, betrayal and alienation. As a means of protection, many have adopted a stance of independence and “mobility.” They cautiously investigate what they can about an organization, but yet are prepared for the worst case scenario, and are ready to move on—almost eagerly—“at the drop of a hat.” Ultimately, they refuse to surrender their loyalty to any cause or group that would threaten their personal freedom.

In an approach similar to withholding tithes, some proclaim, “Here I am. If you want to keep my company, you will have to do things my way.” In this trend toward independence and mobility, exclusive to this final era, it is the members’ *presence* that is regarded as sacred instead of their tithes.

People who make demands and place conditions for their presence fail to understand the most basic purpose of the Church. Since The Restored Church of God does not alter doctrines, it is not an issue here. But it remains a factor among the people who rule in this age.

Because of their refusal to submit to government, many develop a resentment toward *anyone* who represents or advocates submission to authority. This leads to speaking evil of dignities, which, although not exclusive to this age, is now the rule instead of the exception. Those who rank independence as paramount in their lives must come to realize that those who follow Jesus Christ must *willingly* SUBMIT to God's will, as well as His government. Again, how could anyone expect to rule with Christ without *first* submitting to God's rule in this physical life? (See Luke 19:11-27.)

Respect and Advice

Many in this age find it difficult or painful to always address ministers, elders or ministerial assistants by the title of "Mister." They have forgotten the formality and respect that was in place when the Church was on track. Casual familiarity seems so much more comfortable to many. To even unwittingly refer to a minister and his wife as "you guys" (as has also happened *often* to Mr. and Mrs. Pack)—and especially by nicknames—is disrespectful to the offices in which God has placed them. Largely gone is the need to remember Paul's admonition that "let the elders that rule well be worthy of double honor" (I Tim. 5:17).

Is this true of you?

A similar issue involves those who occasionally, even with the best of intentions, offer advice as to how things should be done at Headquarters. For example, the Church recently commented regarding input concerning oversights or typos in literature, and some have responded with very helpful observations, resulting in improved publications. However, we have also, at least periodically, received unsolicited opinions, views and advice on how God's Work should be done. We have studied and considered the pros and cons of most every alternate step to take in carrying on the Work. Though well-intentioned, comments that we "need to take this or that better approach" can oversimplify reality and, in certain cases, be disrespectful.

What the people want in this age is "freedom" to worship God in the way *they* see fit. A case in point: Considering the harm that could result from smoking, to the smoker and to others, Mr. Armstrong taught that smoking is a *sin*—a violation of the spirit of the Law. Now suppose that a splinter decided to *actively* teach what Mr. Armstrong taught about smoking, with no exceptions. It would suffer the loss of members along with their tithes. Instead of the smokers taking heed and dropping the habit, they would either leave the group or demand a change in policy.

Seeking to please the maximum number of people means that correction can no longer be administered with consistency or integrity. Instead, a vague generalization would be referred to, weakly suggesting what *should* or *might* be done, without any explicit “do’s or don’ts.” Clear-cut guidelines give way to vague generalities when sensitive subjects such as wearing makeup, celebrating birthdays, interracial marriage or marrying outside the Church arise. There are other similar issues left to be ambiguities. In the absence of correction, lawlessness and “anything goes” become the rule of the day. (Perhaps read our article “The Dangers of ‘Yardstick Christianity,’” which covers the opposite extreme. It provides valuable insight into human deception.)

Some unwittingly challenge the ministry, saying, “Surely, ministers would not attend a football game, or a movie that could be historically inaccurate.” It usually does not occur to such individuals that the minister might be attending a function either as a guest or for a definite purpose. To criticize or challenge the ministry on any point without seeing the FULL PICTURE is being presumptuous. The Bible warns against answering a matter before getting all the facts (Prov. 18:13).

Inviting to Services

There is yet another mindset of independence that is more difficult to recognize, one that can result from zeal, mixed with a *misguided* “can do” spirit. This involves inviting new people to services without Headquarters first contacting them. This practice is easily solved and simply involves understanding that the local minister (or sometimes Headquarters) should make the final decision, yet with input from local brethren where necessary.

The practice of inviting new members is quite extensive, and the final decision should *always* come from those at Headquarters, who are just as eager to see them come with us as you are, but are operating from experience in what to look for. While it is *crucial* for members to stay in touch with new prospectives who show interest in coming with us, the key is to direct them to *us*—or an elder—so that the invitation can be made at the most appropriate time. Headquarters can monitor their progress and assist them, fulfilling the responsibility for which Christ holds it accountable. This is not only a courtesy extended to Church leadership, but is also indispensable in monitoring growth in an orderly way. Unless this is properly established and practiced, chaos would result as our growth rate continues to accelerate. (This is not to imply that our members are wrong for sharing their excitement with those in

the splinters and for encouraging them to come with us. This is beneficial and wonderful.)

When Headquarters is informed as the new prospective members begin seriously regarding attendance, then we are in a position to assist in fulfilling special needs or requests on their behalf. In this case, they are being shown support from local brethren as well as Headquarters. This concern can be felt.

End-runs

Another action of an independent nature is for a member to avoid any further contact or interaction with an elder who has attempted to advise him concerning some past correction. In this age, some regard any form of advice or correction as “unnecessary intrusion.” Some members seek to do an “end-run” around a particular minister in search of one who will agree with them. In spite of the super-sensitivity that characterizes Laodicea, everyone should take measures to arrest any such resentment. It is certainly always intended that corrective counsel or advice is in the best interest of the person. Obviously, God’s ministers are human and errors or “slights” can occur. But these are much rarer than most suppose.

Many first became conditioned when they left the apostates in the early- to mid-1990s and, since then, have left at least one splinter or sliver, and perhaps even two or three. This mobility becomes internalized and the mindset of standing ready to depart is again activated at the slightest offense or what is interpreted as unjust correction.

God is looking for future sons who will prove consistent under test and trial. He will not—and cannot—use someone who is *unpredictable* and given to change without notice. We have to prove to God that we will endure in the truth and will not cave at the first sign of any perceived imperfection in His human ministry.

Voting

During the apostasy, the *right* form of Church government fell into the hands of the *wrong* people, causing most to abandon hierarchical government in favor of various forms of democracy—in which either the collective ministry or the collective *senior* ministry rules. They reason that there has to be some form of “checks and balances” to prevent another hijacking of the Church. Having been convinced of this argument, the vast majority of God’s people have now accepted varying levels

of democracy as viable forms of government. They seem completely unable to recognize the unbreakable gridlock that has seized the democratic governments of men.

This system of checks and balances is so carefully spelled out in the United Church of God, but also in the Church of God, a Worldwide Association (COGwa) that split from it in early 2011, that there exists a complex MAZE of appeals for every action taken in these governments ruled by the majority. Red tape abounds—everywhere!

There is no biblical basis whatsoever for voting, in regard to doctrine, policy, budget or any other decision, and it should not be confused with the practice of casting lots. The casting of lots was originally a solemn appeal to God to decide a doubtful matter. Only during this age, in which the people judge, rule and decide, could voting—very different from the biblical casting of lots—be the means of arriving at any decision. Although the form of government restored by God’s twentieth-century apostle clearly conformed to what God used in the first-century Church and previously throughout the time of the judges, this has been rejected by the majority who constitute the naked, blind, lukewarm era of today.

Without the right form of government—only THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD—the Church could not even have reached the age in which the people and ministers took over. Government had to be in place to allow the Church to flourish and grow. Had the Church as a whole ruled from the beginning, it would have never gotten off the ground! And this form of government is what stifled and stymied Sardis. Ironically, tens of thousands think they now have it right, and that Mr. Armstrong was somehow terribly wrong.

Modern society’s obsession with individual rights, mixed with the belief that democracy is the answer to injustice, has become the driving force in UCG, but also in COGwa and other groups. Exercising anything close to proper Church government is considered rank *authoritarianism*—or worse, *totalitarianism*.

Consider what could have developed had UCG and COGwa come into existence in 1934, instead of Mr. Armstrong having been used to raise up the Church. The entire Church of God would be virtually extinct today! As a case in point, UCG began in 1995 with over 21,000 members and now, after 16 years, has diminished to about 9,000 or so. And this includes having allowed large “blocs” of people in worldly churches to enter through the years. This well over 50 percent drop in original membership happened in an atmosphere in which the people and ministers had a right, and felt a duty, to express their grievances

and to question—or even veto—their church’s policies. The concern for individual rights outweighs any determination to exercise firm but righteous government, once considered fundamental doctrine.

Contrast this with the Philadelphian era of the Church. It began with less than two dozen members in 1934 and slowly developed until a college was established to train ministers. From this point, growth accelerated and remained consistent in an atmosphere in which government operated from the top down. The Church continued to grow at the rate of 30 percent per year for 35 years—1934 through 1969—eventually reaching over 150,000 in attendance. Its track record speaks for itself.

Information Trafficking on the Internet

This issue is perhaps most specific to this present time. There are a number of dangers of which every Christian must be aware. Being forewarned and taking preventive measures is the best way to circumvent potential disaster. Notice: “The prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself [sidesteps the danger]: but the simple pass on and are punished” (Prov. 22:3; 27:12).

The Internet has provided a truly extraordinary open door for God’s small flock to do an incredibly powerful Work. However, even this extraordinary mode of communication has its downside: those who habitually traffic in information over the Worldwide Web.

Many now seem oblivious to the fact that those *called out* of the world are expected to *come out* of it—including putting away the tools of gossip, rumor and accusations, which attract unwary Church members. The “god of this world” uses every means possible to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of those who know God’s truth. When people spread and/or actively seek out gossip, they are giving Satan a foothold into their thinking.

Essentially, there are three types of people involved in information trafficking.

(1) **THOSE WHO OPERATE AND MANAGE THEIR OWN WEBSITES:** This is not necessarily wrong, but it *can* lead to problems. Some use their own websites for the inclusion of “religion” and *personal evangelism*—which would have been unthinkable when Mr. Armstrong was alive! Yet, today, technology has given people a measure of very real power that some cannot contain or deny. Personal websites often become an extension of the ego and a sounding board to communicate with those of common interest around the world.

Some who have sought to join us ultimately chose not to come because they did not want to give up their own evangelistic activity.

Some of them link to a number of related websites in order to increase their own traffic. Most often, not always, their websites at least partly traffic in slander and accusation.

A true Christian walking in humility and submission to authority recognizes and shuns such activity. But the independent-minded activist finds this difficult to resist.

For more insight into the implications of personal evangelism on the Internet or otherwise, take time to read our article “Should You Preach to Others?” If you have been tempted to evangelize, you will find this article informative and helpful. (Also, whole chapters in *The Work of God – Its Final Chapter!* and *The Government of God – Understanding Offices and Duties* carefully and *thoroughly* address the role of laymembers.)

(2) THOSE WHO REGULARLY “SURF” FOR INFORMATION: A whole generation of people now seem to visit certain websites looking for “the latest.” What they seek is not necessarily formal or objective information, but rather the “inside scoop” from certain sources specializing in slander and defamation of groups or individuals. These are fulfilling the passage, “An ungodly man digs up evil” (Prov. 16:27).

Satan has used the Internet to turn many prospective members away from the truth. Some of these potential brethren have lost out on an incredible opportunity to be in the first resurrection. A number of websites exist for the sole purpose of slandering Mr. Armstrong and the truths that God used him to establish in His Church. It should be of no surprise that, since Mr. Pack is upholding these same truths, any number of websites are also devoted to slandering all aspects of *his* character.

Those who are attracted to slander and smear campaigns should remember how the true Church was received during the first century. The “sect” to which the apostle Paul belonged “was everywhere spoken against” (Acts 28:22). Today would not be different.

Consider: Had you been exposed to some of the accusations against the first-century Church, would you have been inclined to listen and even partly believe them? Would you have sought the source of these accusations in order to stay “better informed”? Invariably, sooner or later, those who were party to such activity in the past left the Church—and the truth. The same is true today.

The Restored Church of God recognizes the need to provide literature devoted to warning people about such accusations. This includes the extensive article “Why Attacks Must Increase and Intensify!”, which is found in my book *Should Accusers Be Answered?* Still, many fall prey to these vicious, accusative websites, which feature testimonials from

former brethren, or even former Headquarters staff members, in the case of both Restored and others. The interested reader may also wish to read the thorough brochure *Do You Know “David Pack”? – My Life and Ministry—Rumors and Lies vs. Facts and Truth*.

Considering that this activity has snuffed out the future spiritual development of what were potential members of the God Family, why would anyone have an irresistible desire to revisit such websites? Could it be that there is a certain excitement and thrill that some find hard to resist? Would Christ approve of this destructive behavior? Do we not have far more than enough wonderful literature to read and sermons to hear—as well as the studying of the Bible—to more than occupy our time?

The apostle Paul offers one way of filtering information that enters our minds: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any *virtue*, and if there be any *praise*, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). Brethren should heed this scriptural command rather than desire the “inside scoop” from sources that reject true values. How many still apply this principle?

Here is one interesting example of the extent to which some will go to obtain slander from the Internet. This is a documented account of a chat room conversation involving a brand new member requesting information from someone who had attacked the Church. The new member was asking a *hostile enemy* of the Church about the salary of the leader of God’s Church. Communicating with such a website was a sign that the member was already leaving before he got here. But this was trumped by his incredible question. Others in this age seem to continually need to hear “what’s *really* going on.” This is tantamount to contacting Satan and asking him what *really* took place in the garden of Eden! It would be like saying to the devil, “I know *God’s* account of what happened, but for the sake of objectivity, I would like to hear *your* side of the story.” Seeking the “inside scoop” from hostile *enemies* is no less absurd than seeking *Satan’s* viewpoint!

By first proving that God exists, that the Bible is His Word and that The Restored Church of God is where *GOD* is truly working, one develops a foundation for trusting *Him*. Those who are predisposed to go to enemies for the “real story” of a matter have not thoroughly proven these foundational points.

The safest course is to avoid websites that specialize in slander. The Bible gives no precedent for “watch-dogging” God’s leader, but rather tells us, “by their fruits you shall know them” (Matt. 7:20).

(3) THOSE WHO SEND INFORMATION BY EMAIL: This is crucial to understand, and requires careful explanation. A relatively new phenomenon, email has potential for much good—but also for much damage. The capability of instant international communication certainly has reduced the time and distance that, in the recent past, left most brethren somewhat isolated.

Emailing has greatly helped many to stay in touch more effectively than ever before. Without the delay of regular postal mail and the inconvenience of missing a phone call, it is a most efficient communication tool.

One trend involves “forwarding” email messages to groups or lists of people, which millions around the world engage in daily. One type of message forwarding involves quasi-religious emails. Some feel that by passing on these chain-letter messages, they have somehow satisfied an obligation to encourage God’s Church to be “a better place.” Such messages serve only to breed false, shallow religious ideas. Hundreds of these Protestant-sounding emails reach virtually every home computer. While many who are relatively new to the Church might see nothing wrong with these, they can mislead some of the brethren recently called out of this world to begin to re-adopt the world’s point of view.

Our contact with friends, acquaintances or relatives should always be done with discretion. What is communicated should be edifying and worthwhile. For the most part, sending emails to whole groups or lists of people in the Church is tantamount to writing an article or giving a sermonette to an audience of one’s choosing.

And, although occasional humor can be appropriate, we should be careful as to the *content* of these messages, even when sent to one individual. Certain forwarded messages are very helpful and informative. Emailed greeting cards or cards for special occasions may be appropriate *if* the occasion and the card are tasteful. Sometimes, edifying quotes, ancient proverbs, or historical facts can be in good taste.

Out of fear of offending the sender, most recipients never complain about the plethora of forwards that are sent to them. The sender is usually unaware that his contributions are intrusive, or even silly, to others. Therefore, when anyone is in email contact with others, a thoughtful and courteous gesture would be to *sincerely* ASK the other correspondents whether or not they prefer forwarded messages being sent to them. Also, those who forward emails should make it a point to continue periodically *asking* whether the forwards are helpful or merely a nuisance. Unless a *clear message* is sent to “keep them coming,” the sender should stop emailing these forwarded messages!

Frankly, most recipients prefer to read a message that is short and from the heart, rather than to be bombarded with endless, ready-made canned expressions that are floating around on the Internet by the thousands!

Presuming

A caution that needs to be expanded is the sending of multiple emails simultaneously. For example, when someone goes to great length, sending messages to dozens of email addresses, this is going beyond personal communications into the realm of *public announcements*. This is called “carbon copying” or “blind carbon copying,” when the addresses are not visible. Sometimes, the lists may include not only brethren in the true Church, but a number of recipients from two or three splinter organizations, as well. But is this becoming of someone who has come out of this world? In fact, it is presumptuous in the truest sense.

Be careful your actions do not lead you to proclaim, “I will communicate *whatever* I choose to communicate, to *as many* as I choose, *whenever* I choose to do so, and NO ONE CAN DENY ME THAT RIGHT!” This attitude reflects defiance—incompatible with true Christianity.

Most brethren have not thought of it this way, but when an individual member contacts dozens of other brethren, it is the same as an *unauthorized* person stepping up to the lectern at a Sabbath service and making an *unauthorized* announcement! Such situations *never* existed during the Philadelphian era, nor could they in any previous age, but now have to be addressed in order to preserve decency and order in God’s Church.

Though the Internet gives the whole planet increasing communication capability, *our* foremost concern should be, “Would Christ expect me to notify all these people (and in various organizations) through public announcements?” Unless approved by the Church, such messages should not be sent. When in doubt, we should be quick to ask first.

Here are some of the effects when brethren send mass email carbon copies:

- It sends an implied message that this is authorized by Headquarters.
- Large numbers of brethren are being publicly addressed without Church authorization.
- They are giving out private email addresses to others—potentially, around the world—without permission from those on the list. This is plainly wrong!

- I repeat: It is similar to giving a sermonette or writing an article—in effect, preaching to the Church—without authorization. Consider: On what basis should a lay member be able to address 20, 30 or 75 other members whenever, wherever and with whatever he desires?

- What is sent can easily contain *unintended* messages not evident to the untrained eye.

- Consider the chaos that would ensue if someone left and used such a list to attack God’s Church. This has happened.

The Point of Danger

Also, some brethren maintain email contact with those who have left the Church. *Perhaps* a short courteous reply *might be* in order to acknowledge an illness or the death of a loved one. However, an *ongoing* exchange with such people is spiritually dangerous and goes against biblical principles. A polite notice can be given to them, but further contact should cease unless they happen to be relatives (however, in these cases, Church-related news should not be discussed). If former brethren still insist on sending you emails in spite of your request for them not to do so, a block can be placed on their incoming emails, via your email service.

Notice our responsibility: “Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark* them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and *avoid* them” (Rom. 16:17). Almost invariably, those who leave are infected with a dangerous attitude of bitterness. They should be avoided as much as possible. Through the power of the Internet, it is not difficult to circumvent the ministry. However, if one is seeking to please God, he must realize that God is intricately aware of what we do in secret (Rom. 2:16).

Any new innovation brings with it the potential for misuse or abuse. When used properly, email communication is a true blessing that has served the brethren and the Church. Yet, this same tool has been used for vicious attacks from some who were once *with* us but “were not *of* us; for if they had been *of* us, they would no doubt have *continued* with us” (I John 2:19).

When emails are handled with discretion, everyone benefits and fewer are alienated by its misuse. When proclamations and public announcements are issued by unauthorized persons (and not through the Church), there is a lack of uniformity and unity—because everyone does “that which [is] right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 21:25). When communication with those who have departed in bitterness is left off, fewer brethren are infected.

When brethren refrain from accessing websites that focus on gossip and innuendo, they are more prone to think as God would, rather than the cynical, accusative mindset of the “supermarket tabloid” approach to life. How much better it becomes when we prove all things—including that this is the Church Christ is using—so that the above approach is avoided. And do this before coming with us.

A mind that is willingly submissive, supportive and growing in brotherly love is in sharp contrast to one that is fiercely independent, stubborn and unyielding. As we further emerge from the dominant mindset we left behind in the splinters and slivers, it will not seem so painful to put submission to God’s will ahead of self-will.

Trumpeting the Spirit of Accusation

Some slivers place their focus mainly on prophecy. Yet, their prophetic teachings are unbiblical and completely off-track from anything ever taught by Mr. Armstrong. The Philadelphia Church of God, as do a number of its offshoots, specializes in a unique brand of twisted prophecy. Also, there are a few other groups that are even more “creative” in their take on prophecy, which somehow strangely attracts followers.

Brethren who have come with us from these kinds of groups have expressed how confusing their former associations’ kaleidoscope of prophecy had become. Assuring brethren that the “very elect” could never be deceived, such groups deceive their membership from the time they are indoctrinated. Often missing from their literature and messages are the old challenges we used to hear from Mr. Armstrong: “Don’t believe what I tell you—look it up in the Bible and see it for yourself!” Such challenges would expose their hybrid brand of religion. These prophecy ministries claim to believe and follow what Mr. Armstrong taught, but what they teach is *vastly different!*

Their approach is the SPIRIT OF ACCUSATION toward all other brethren scattered in other groups. Many who manage to escape these organizations unwittingly take this approach with them. This cynical spirit often precludes the capacity for future loyalty and commitment. True, numerous other groups also foster a certain spirit of accusation, but the spirit that originates in these prophecy groups has deeper roots and tends to be more permanently ingrained.

This problem can be better understood by considering that there are three types of splinters: (1) Those that are essentially dead; (2) those composed of weak brethren and led by weak ministers; and (3) those that are led by men who are influenced by, and in some high-profile

cases directly inspired by, demons. Generally, these men call themselves “prophets.” (Yes, there are prophets at the end of the age, but they are as Christ and Mr. Armstrong said, “*false prophets*”!)

Brethren who manage to escape the groups in category three must realize that their minds have been influenced by spirits. The *spirit* of accusation is characteristic of Satan (Rev. 12:10) and is mimicked by his demons and the human leaders they inspire. Experience has shown that those of this background have similar difficulty recovering from this conditioning as those emerging from a Pentecostal background. The spirit of accusation may be more difficult to expel in some brethren than various other habits and tendencies of this age, but it *can* be done with God’s help.

The Way It Was—and the Great Switch

From the very outset of the Church and through the course of history, government has existed to exhort, guide and protect God’s flock. The government of God serves to stabilize and promote growth within the Church, while protecting the flock from false brethren and false doctrine. This was especially true during the Ephesus and Smyrna eras. During those times, God’s government preserved the Church in the face of false leaders and intense persecution. The strongest congregations in the Pergamos and Thyatira eras survived because of steadfast, clearly-defined leadership in the face of continual threat and persecution.

The Sardis tendency to show “love,” by compromising and ultimately merging with various Protestant groups, served to water down what little truth they retained. This occurred because of *weak government* that lacked commitment. As a result, this era was essentially a dead church. However, a very few brethren, essentially scattered and alone, had the initiative to hold fast.

Then God used Mr. Armstrong to establish the Philadelphian era of His Church. Its government came to be patterned from the first-century Church. This was truly a benevolent, hierarchical government, starting with one Christ-appointed leader, which allowed the Church to flourish and cultivate the loyalty of faithful members who supported it.

Although some incidents of treason and disloyalty occurred during this time, the loyalty of the membership was always at 90 percent or higher. The tendency of the brethren was to accept Church government and to make every effort to comply with it. They recognized it to be the very Church of God on Earth.

After Mr. Armstrong's death, things seemed to be stable for two or three years, although, under the surface, the apostate leadership was scheming to dismantle every vestige of the truth. By the early 1990s, the test was clearly upon the Church as to who would continue in God's doctrines and Way. All of the confusion, disgust, and disenchantment that occurred in the wake of deception, betrayal and abandonment of the truth left most in a state of shock. Many gave up any semblance of religion altogether, vowing never to trust *any* religious authorities *ever* again! Others, being thoroughly confused, went back into the world, attending any corner church close to home.

The net effect of all the experiences after the apostasy tended to harden and condition those who settled into various splinters. Today, many of God's people are no longer prone to trust others, especially those associated with Church government. This is ironic, because properly administered government is the very defense that has preserved the Church.

In this present Laodicean age, people now think that it is incumbent upon *them* to at least help guide the Church. This started with the apostasy. An attitude has developed of "We cannot trust Headquarters"—and essentially Christ—"to guide the Church." We must recognize this mindset and replace it with submission to God's government as He has established it through His Church.

To Inoculate

Above all, the purpose of this Epilogue is to serve to help inoculate God's people against the many pitfalls unique to this age. Exposure to these trends and dynamics of this day has already pre-programmed most to unconsciously assume a form of rulership in the Church. This trend must be countered early on in order to endure in the long haul.

Ironically, people today are more spiritually fragile—weaker in the face of adversity, correction or admonishment. They are, however, at the same time, more generally demanding in their expectations and the standards they set for others.

In the face of these ever-worsening trends, The Restored Church of God administers the same government that was established during the Philadelphian era. One challenge is to make everyone aware of how Church government *was properly administered* when the Church was "on track." The other challenge is to make everyone aware of how people can short-circuit various aspects of government in their unconscious attempt to usurp power and authority unto themselves. Understand. We in RCG

are going directly against the trend of the Laodicean era. Therefore, we have to maintain a commitment to do things God’s way—the way we all once practiced.

In a sense, we are all now in uncharted spiritual waters. As we at Headquarters perceive new and dangerous trends, we are held accountable to inform the brethren about the areas where we need to show caution or special attention.

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!

“ANOINT YOUR EYES” – Christ's Warning to His People

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!

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 “prophesy 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.

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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