

# THE PAINFUL TRUTH

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"THE DAUGHTER OF BABYLON,  
THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE  
WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD"

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# Preface

In 1993, I finished the first edition of *DAUGHTER OF BABYLON* with the hope that it might help a few people sort out the confusion and anguish that had been created in them by their membership in the Worldwide Church of God. How can I be so certain that there are so many people who have been confused by the Worldwide Church of God? Because I too was a dedicated member of that group for a very long time. I too had been convinced that I had been called into God's one and only true church through the reading of Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong's literature. I too traveled down the same path of self-denial and ritualism that thousands of other well-meaning people had trod.

By the time that I began to counsel for baptism, I had been so convicted by the Armstrong publications that I would hardly have hesitated to endanger my life for the beliefs of the church.

I received permission to attend church services in 1969 while I was in the Navy and stationed near Oakland, California. No one could attend church services without first gaining permission from church ministers. The Armstrongs had appeared so sophisticated in their writings about the church that I felt unworthy to enter such an elite environment. I did not know what to expect but reality was a bit of a let down. When I actually witnessed church services, I had an instinctual feeling that something was odd about most of the church members. They looked abused. I even made comments about it to someone. "Oh well, God just calls the weak of the world, the cream of the crud," was the automatic response of one member. The sermon that day was delivered by church evangelist Rod Meredith. Nearly 20 years later I was invited to have lunch with Rod and his wife in Glendora, California. I told him that he was the first Worldwide minister that I had ever heard preach and about the way the appearance of church members struck me on my first attendance of church services. His response was verbatim, "Oh well, God just calls the weak of the world, the cream of the crud." *Deja vu!*

In January of 1970, I had been transferred from the USS Sperry to Dental Technicians' school in San Diego. It was there that I confronted my superior officers with the first demand made on me by the church. I asked to be discharged on the grounds of conscientious objection. Because of the Armstrong's teachings, I refused to participate in any war effort. They gave me the ultimatum of withdrawing my request or being sent to dangerous assignment in Viet Nam where my convictions against the war would be tested. Acting in faith, I chose to pursue my discharge and then faced the hard struggle of proving my sincerity. I was finally discharged in April after several interrogations with the commanding officers of the Naval Training Center. I have to say that that was a very unpleasant and distasteful thing for me to experience. I actually enjoyed being in the Navy and I worried about what my family would think about me making such a radical decision. War protesters were not appreciated where I was raised. Maybe that is why I chose not to return home to Texas.

Instead, the following November, I was hired to work for the Worldwide Church of God at their headquarters in Pasadena, California. I worked for the church for seven of the twenty-three years that I was a member. Working for the church was disappointing also. There were constant conflicts with people who were supposed to be converted and gracious. For years, I blamed myself for never being the ideal Christian that I had always been told I should be. At times, I was obsessed with perfectionism but I never could display the "perfect righteous character" that ministers assured us was supposed to happen. It bothered me that there was always the stigma of being judged as "unconverted" hanging over me. Finally, I began to wonder if I were the only one who felt that way. To test my theory, I started asking other members questions about their proof of conversion. I was shocked. People would evade answering me or just stammer while groping for an answer. Their expressions told me that they were riddled with the guilt of being untrue to themselves. It is amazing how the appearance of guilt can be

mistaken for humility.

That is part of the reason why this book had to be written.

Requests for the first edition of my book have come from all over the world. Many have written to thank me for my research. I have even sent copies of the book to Worldwide ministers (including an autographed copy to one of the two ministers who disfellowshipped me). More than one copy has gone to church headquarters.

Two years since first publication, I have continued to broaden my perspective about mainstream living and shed the narrow-minded prejudice that I had been indoctrinated to believe by the Worldwide system of control. I now hold a degree in liberal arts and am pursuing a second degree in psychology at California State University in Bakersfield.

It is an exhilarating experience to accept the mental and emotional freedom created simply by confronting the fears that had been implanted by Herbert Armstrong and his ministers. I hope that you will find my book to be the first step in your own personal liberation from an unnecessary bondage.

## Introduction

It has taken me nearly 25 years to get to the point where I can sort out the unique and baffling elements of the Worldwide Church of God (hereinafter referred to as Worldwide Church of God) as founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, and as now led by Joseph W. Tkach. To summarize these elements I will use a metaphor of a "stained glass window."

If the Worldwide Church of God is looked upon as a stained glass window, then Herbert Armstrong's self-portrait as God's only end-time apostle must dominate the picture. The church grew and was nurtured on the unorthodox teachings and prophetic speculations of this man. Armstrong taught ***that his church was the only true church***; that it was raised up by God through him to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness; that he was specially commissioned by God to restore Bible truths lost to the world for 1900 years; that world tribulation would come by 1972; that his commission would be fulfilled by then; that the church would flee to a place of safety (many thought this place would be Petra in Jordan); that Christ would return; that we would rule with Him for 1000 years in the Kingdom of God. There is no doubt that these prophecies electrified the air of our Sabbath services for many years. But then a problem arose!

The problem was this. Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, and none of this had come to pass. The portrait of him began to shatter and crumble down piece by piece. At this point I realized I had been so caught up in the movement, trying so hard to make it work and to make it rational, that I didn't care anymore whether our "truths" were valid or not. I simply wanted to be part of the group.

Upon Armstrong's death, I began to experience involuntary withdrawal pangs. I began to question the ability of the Worldwide Church of God, as now led by Joseph W. Tkach (Armstrong's hand-picked successor), to preach the gospel. How could they continue undaunted after Armstrong had left everyone in so much suspense about their lives and futures? How could Tkach's new ministry preach Armstrong's gospel without openly denying the fact that Armstrong's ministry had failed?

Tkach and his associates claimed that portions of Armstrong's ministry were valid and other portions were not. This began to destroy their own credibility, since any authority they had been given surely came from Herbert Armstrong.

So to continue with the metaphor, they decided to take the pieces of Armstrong's picture from the shards of glass and subtly attempted to put them back together into a portrait of Jesus Christ. All along

they hoped that no one would notice what they were doing until the portrait was completed and they could emerge as Protestant ministers.

One of the first paradoxes of Tkach's new church was created when he decided to preach a gospel **ABOUT** Jesus Christ. Armstrong had always preached what he called the gospel **OF** Jesus Christ (that is, the imminent establishment of the government of God's "Wonderful World Tomorrow," or the millennium).

Armstrong said that any other gospel except his was a false gospel. He taught that the gospel ABOUT Christ had started by the time the apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians and that was why Paul pronounced a curse on anyone who would preach "another gospel." Armstrong felt that modern Protestant churches preached this false gospel about Christ, and thus they were churches of Satan the devil and under Paul's biblical curse. He also felt these churches were the harlot daughters of the Babylonian Mystery system (Revelation 17).

So, what were Worldwide Church of God members left to think? It appeared the "new truths" of Joseph Tkach were the "old errors" of Protestantism condemned strongly by Armstrong!

Yet, the new truth of Tkach had begun to make more sense than what Armstrong had ever said, because, of course, Armstrong's ministry was a failure.

Because of this confusion, I was drawn to study the history of the organization in order to answer a central question: *Is the Worldwide Church of God TRULY God's One True Church?* I had to study it for myself to determine if this "one true church" was really of God, or of something else. At this writing, Tkach has succeeded in abolishing nearly every doctrine that the Worldwide Church of God was founded upon. Many old members have left the WCG. Some have started their own churches. Tkach continues boldly forging ahead in stripping the Armstrong belief system down before a bewildered membership. Those of us who have watched Tkach's systematic destruction of the Armstrong legacy wonder if there is a method to his madness or if he is fiddling while Rome burns. The church's annual income continues to drop severely. Yet, Tkach continues to displease church members by announcing radical new doctrinal shifts that he has difficulty explaining. Nor does Tkach apologize for destroying the security blankets that members felt were the biblical revelations God had given to Herbert Armstrong. He often blames the membership for stupidly believing the founder's teachings.

In this book, I will show you why Armstrong's ministry was destined for failure. This will make it obvious why Tkach's administration is failing now.

Early in Tkach's ministry, he gave the analogy that Herbert Armstrong had built a foundation in his lifetime and that Tkach's job was to build upon it. In reality, what he has done is demolish Armstrong's foundation and not build anything worthwhile upon it. Not noticing that he is without a foundation, Tkach continues to build higher and higher.

I feel that both the foundation of Armstrong and the building of Tkach were futile efforts in that both are constructed on top of the sand of falsehood.

The reader will eventually discover from the following material how I came to a definite conclusion about the Worldwide Church of God, past and present, and hence will understand the meaning of my title, ***Daughter of Babylon-The True History of the Worldwide Church of God.***

## Chapter 1

### The Mystery of the Church

The booklet simply bore the title: "This Is The WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD" on its cover and the picture of a massive crowd of people in a congregation all standing in unison singing a hymn. It wasn't the cover that was startling or impressive. It was the statement the reader saw upon opening the booklet to the introductory page.

*"This is the true story of the true Church, founded A.D. 31 by Jesus Christ, the unique and only voice giving a hopeless world its only and sure hope--the soon-coming peaceful world tomorrow!"*

To understand how members of this church have been led to believe statements like the one above, it is important to understand exactly how they interpret and define the word *truth*.

The Worldwide Church of God (originally called the Radio Church of God) was incorporated by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1948. He taught his followers, from its humble beginning that his church was the ONLY TRUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH and that his followers were called by God during the final generation just prior to the apocalypse and the dawn of "the peaceful world tomorrow." Armstrong was certainly not the first person in history to declare this message and gather a following. Many groups in history have done the same thing. But Armstrong would have to be considered one of the more successful. At his death, he had amassed a multi-million dollar empire and had been in the personal audience of many of the world's leaders.

For his followers, though, he had created an illusion by strategic and repetitious uses of the word *truth*. Any magician can verify that the most important ingredient in successfully creating an illusion is to convince his audience of its certainty and their imaginations will complete the desired effect. For Armstrong's followers, the illusion was maintained by several fundamental assumptions that led them to create a paradigm, or pattern of thinking. These assumptions begin with the concept that one has been drawn into the only true church and that all other churches are therefore false.

In Part One I want to give an overview of how his church's doctrines were all built upon the axiom of it being *God's only true church*. This claim is essential in understanding how the church functioned independently from orthodox Christianity and how church members viewed themselves as uniquely chosen to do a job.

If you read the above quote again, one observation seems readily apparent: members needed constant reassurance that their beliefs were *true*. In fact, the adjective *true* in its various forms has been meticulously labeled on every possession of the church. Their magazine is entitled *The Plain Truth*; their church is the *true* church; and their doctrines are always presented as *truths* even after being abandoned and replaced by doctrines that were once considered false or evil. In the latter case, Worldwide Church of God indoctrinators utilized the self-contradictory label of *new truth* to justify both their old faulty belief and their adoption of the newer convenient belief.

The study of other mass movements reveals that believers tend to view their cause as an archetype--they see their cause as the ideal form of government or religion--and so they will loyally identify with it. Humans have a very strong desire to identify with heroic images. This is what psychologist Carl Jung called archetypal activation. "When an archetype is successfully activated, it accrues to itself ideas, percepts and emotional experiences associated with the situation or person responsible for its activation, and these are built into a complex which then becomes functional in the personal unconscious" (Stevens, 32). It would be difficult to believe that people would participate in any cause if they did not identify with it, but there are levels of identification from mild association to blind fanaticism. Fanaticism would lead one to become anti-social, condemn outsiders, refuse to listen to reason from members outside the group, ruin one's own relationship with one's family, ruin one's

finances, or even commit atrocities in the name of their cause. It is in the shadow of fanaticism that the Worldwide Church of God has been cast by the media and other critics for several decades, and with good reason.

How did they ever get to be in that position of disfavor?

The church members simply allowed their ministers to redefine the word *truth* for them. The word *truth* was given the subjective connotation of *church authorization* as opposed to *objective reality* (or, as some have commented about attending church services, "Be sure to check your brains in at the door"). Worldwide ministers prodded members to obsess on the concept that they belonged to God's *true* church. It then followed that they became exclusive of the world around them, and when they interpreted the Bible they then found scriptures that supported their viewpoint. This is known as isogenesis, or the reading of one's own interpretation into scriptures.

By relying on church authorities to redefine the word *truth*, they were drawn into a type of **vortex of circular reasoning**. There is a natural human tendency to take shortcuts in thinking but this can make one vulnerable to manipulators. Psychologists know that people will readily submit to advertisers, salesmen, politicians and other exploiters who use certain "weapons of influence." "The secret of their effectiveness lies in the way they structure their requests, the way they arm themselves with one or another of the weapons of influence that exist within the social environment. To do this may take no more than one correctly chosen word that engages a strong psychological principle and sets an automatic behavior tape rolling within us. And trust the human exploiters to learn quickly exactly how to profit from our tendency to respond mechanically according to these principles" (Cialdini, 10). Armstrong carefully chose the word *truth* to solicit automatic behavior from his followers, thus creating the illusion that his church was the apple of God's eye, as long as it remained the guardian of his definition the *truth*. Escaping from a vortex of circular reasoning can be next to impossible but one key to escaping is to relearn the meaning of *truth*.

A generalization about the Worldwide Church of God paradigm of circular reasoning could be summed up with a statement like: "We agree with God. Since God is right, we are right and you are wrong. Either you agree with us or we will have very little, if anything at all, to do with you until you agree that we are right." Ironically, while maintaining this view of the outside world, believers flattered each other for their open-mindedness.

*revealed truths of God because they neither observed nor obeyed the doctrines of God's one true church. Worldwide ministers have been quite prone to remind their people that they must "come out of [Babylon] my people and be ye separate." And since members were convinced that they were now of the only existing non-heretical sect of Christians, they were further led to believe that the church was their only refuge in a confusing world that had departed from the "faith once delivered" on Pentecost AD 31. Many of them wondered why other groups, with such a paranoid mind set, would have been classified as cults. Their ministers responded that in a world under attack by Satan the devil, it should have been expected that cults displayed the same type of behavior as God's true church. And this strengthened their resolve to stay in the fold and be wary of the devices of the devil.*

*At an early point in the indoctrination of followers, the idea was implanted that the paradigm was not so much something that was taught to them by Armstrong but something that they had somehow always believed in. This pressure to accept that they had known Armstrong's truth all along was proof of their "calling." In reality, the natural desire to belong to the group they had identified with had been transferred from one of pressure to conform to one of self-persuasion. This was the hook.*

*"Self-persuasion is a very powerful force because, in a very real sense, the persuaded never know what hit them. They come to believe that a particular thing is true not because J. Robert Oppenheimer or T. S. Elliot or Joe "The Shoulder" convinced them it is true but because they convince themselves the*

*thing is true. What's more they frequently do not know why or how they came to believe it. This renders the phenomenon not only powerful but frightening as well. As long as I know why I came to believe X, I am relatively free to change my mind; but if all I know is that X is true--and that's all there is to it--I am far more likely to cling to that belief, even in the face of a barrage of disconfirming evidence" (Aronson, 439).*

*With the paradigm that they had been made privy to God's truth fixed in mind, converts felt that they stood alone in preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ and that all other gospels were obviously false. Again it is ironic that the gospel Herbert Armstrong felt compelled to preach was that the millennium (or "peaceful world tomorrow") would occur within his lifetime. And after Armstrong's death, the gospel that Armstrong's successor substituted as new truth became a weak attempt at the gospel of grace, the benchmark of Protestant reform. For example, after hearing that Tkach was about to make a doctrinal shift, Watchman Fellowship (a Christian apologetic ministry) contacted Worldwide Church of God headquarters asking for permission to publish the story. They were ungraciously threatened with a lawsuit by church evangelist David Hulme.*

*When examining the Worldwide Church of God's history of doctrines (its past paradigm) one is constantly confronted with doctrinal inconsistencies. So, it becomes apparent that the term truth to a member of the Worldwide Church of God is not the same as the standard definition of truth. For, the hallmark of truth is that it is consistent and unchangeable.*

*Another standard for establishing truth and falsehood is by logic. Logical statements (or syllogisms) are always based on a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. It has been understood for a long time in western culture exactly how to establish an argument's relevance and an argument's falsehood. (An argument is the way one's belief is proven). False arguments have been categorized by logicians in what are called the "fallacies of relevance." There are at least 22 ways to deceive people by using the false logic hidden in "fallacies of relevance." I will give examples of these types of fallacies under their title. According to Patrick J. Hurley of the University of San Diego (117), these false arguments are:*

***1. Appeal to Force (Argumentum ad Baculum: Appeal to the "Stick")***

*example: "We must be constantly on guard against deception. Many have left us because they were deceived. Therefore, if you associate with them, we will have to disfellowship you from the church."*

***2. Appeal to Pity (Argumentum ad Misericordiam--gaining sympathy)***

*example: "God's ministers sacrifice long hours to do his work. Many times they don't even have enough time to spend with their families. The least that you could do is dig deep in your pockets and show God how thankful you are for the sacrifices of his ministers."*

***3. Appeal to the People (Argumentum ad Populum--flattering listeners)***

*example: "Not many have been called by God to do his work. Those who are must be very special. It is you, brethren, who are specially hand-picked by God to preach this unique gospel to a deceived world of nonbelievers."*

***4. Argument Against the Person (Argumentum ad Hominem)***

*example: "Many of you ministers have learned your theology from the evangelist who has just left God's church. Many believe that he was dedicated to the truth. But, I want you to know that for many years he was nothing but a thorn in our sides and a rebellious person."*

***5. Accident (drawing an illogical conclusion by accident)***

*example: "During the Dark Ages the Catholic church controlled the whole world and would not allow*

*freedom of religion. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Catholics today are all evil people secretly bent on controlling the world."*

#### **6. Straw Man (similar to ad Hominem)**

*example: "Mr. Brownshoe talks a lot about the good old days, when he was first baptized. As we know, in the good old days the church made a lot of mistakes because it was too harsh. Obviously, Mr. Brownshoe wants us to return to the harsh times when women and children were treated cruelly. Clearly Mr. Brownshoe hates women and children."*

#### **7. Missing the Point (Ignoratio Elenchi)**

*example: "After taking that course in Social Psychology, Mrs. Jones stopped attending church services. Obviously, Satan deceives people when they go to college."*

#### **8. Red Herring (used to get someone off the path)**

*example: "Brethren, it is true that God's ministers commit sin. And Mr. Wanderlust did indeed commit adultery with the deacon's wife. But, David was a man after God's heart and he committed adultery too. If David could do it and be found innocent, you must not judge Mr. Wanderlust."*

#### **9. Appeal to Unqualified Authority (Argumentum ad Verecundiam)**

*example: "Our late apostle told me, as he lay dying, that I must change the doctrines he taught for more than forty years. I tried to record him but could not find a recorder. Based on his authority alone, you must agree that I must make these changes."*

#### **10. Appeal to Ignorance (Argumentum ad Ignorantiam)**

*example: "Why, all the PhD's in the world can put their egg-shaped heads together and NEVER conclude the truth that we, the weak of the world, have come to accept. God chooses just exactly who he reveals true knowledge to. "*

#### **11. Hasty Generalization (Converse Accident)**

*example: "I went to the dentist to get my abscessed tooth removed and he couldn't take me this week. I went to the other dentist in town and he was busy too. God is obviously trying to tell me that I should never go to dentists but just rely on prayer for healing."*

#### **12. False Cause**

*example: "There was an earthquake last week in China. The book of Revelation says that earthquakes precede the return of Christ. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus is returning in our time?"*

#### **13. Slippery Slope (everything leads to disaster)**

*example: "When that earthquake occurred last week in China, I began to hoard water in my basement. I must hoard thousands of gallons because when the great famine occurs people will come and force me to give them my water and, if I refuse, they will begin to riot. The riot will lead to several murders and then the news media will come. Then the whole world will find out that I have water in my basement and more people will come. All law and order will break down and I will be the cause of the end of the world."*

#### **14. Weak Analogy**

*example: "Before Jesus' ministry in the New Testament, John the Baptist prepared the way for him. Jesus is about to return again. Therefore, our apostle must be a type of John the Baptist."*

#### **15. Begging the Question (Petitio Principii--it just doesn't follow)**

*example: "The Apostle Paul and our present leader were personally taught by Jesus Christ. How could we ever question our leader's request to drink this cyanide since the Apostle Paul was bitten by a poisonous serpent and lived to tell about it?"*

**16. Complex Question (a question that can't be answered 'yes' or 'no')**

*example: "Have you stopped breaking God's laws yet?"*

**17. False Dichotomy (either you do this or else)**

*example: "Either you are committed to pay your tithes to God's true church or you are stealing from God. You don't want to be stealing from God, so you'd better pay your tithes to His church."*

**18. Suppressed Evidence**

*example: "Peter Waldo, a successful businessman, was called by God to preach the gospel during the Middle Ages. Our apostle was a successful businessman and was called in these latter days to preach that same gospel."*

**19. Equivocation (things appear to be equal so they must be equal)**

*example: "The title 'church of God' occurs exactly 12 times in the Bible. There were 12 apostles. So, 12 must be a significant number. Since our church is called 'The Church of God' we must be the same church as the church in the New Testament."*

**20. Amphiboly (an illogical play on words)**

*example: "The Hebrew words berith and ish mean covenant people. Therefore, the British are God's covenant people."*

**21. Composition (a sweeping generality)**

*example: "Since God likes me to give a tenth of my salary to the church, I will give all of my salary. You can't outgive God."*

**22. Division (an oversimplification)**

*example: "Our church is God's true church. Therefore, every individual member in our church must be truly converted."*

*About eight years after the death of Herbert Armstrong, one ex-minister counted 150 formerly held truths that had been revised with new truths by Joseph Tkach, the church's present pastor general. Tkach has revised truth even more since then. In this chapter, I have delved into the general concept of what truth is. The fact that truth can change so much for members of the Worldwide Church of God should be an indicator in itself that their leaders might not even have a clue to what truth is. So, when a concept becomes convenient for the controlling of the membership they slap on the label truth. This has enabled Worldwide Church of God ministers to easily wield the "weapons of influence" on a congregation that responds harmoniously.*

*Interestingly, all of Herbert Armstrong's teachings could be reduced to three basic doctrinal premises. These three major premises will be explained in Part One.*

*In the next three chapters I will give a synopsis of these three major premises to show how they were once the source of even the most insignificant of the church's teachings. Let's analyze them, quoting from the writings of the church leaders, before going on to analyze the church's long-held claim to "apostolic succession." This will lay the foundation that is needed to challenge the greatest premise of Herbert Armstrong, that his church was the only modern-day descendant of the New Testament church and therefore God's true church.*

### ***The Three Fundamental Beliefs***

***The three basic premises taught by the Worldwide Church of God are: 1) There is only ONE church that was "built" by Christ and it is identifiable by special keys and doctrines, 2) The law of Moses is an eternal immutable law and the Ten Commandments are God's "great spiritual law", 3) Satan has developed a counterfeit system of Christianity primarily through the Roman Catholic Church.***

*Let us now see how these original premises created the paradigm of beliefs that supported the Worldwide Church of God during the days of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong.*

## Chapter 2

### Where Is The True Church?

At the time of his death in 1986, Herbert Armstrong had become a figure of prominence to his followers. Many had assigned spiritual titles to him. He was the embodiment of Elijah the prophet or John the Baptist. He had maintained a prophetically based ministry for 50 years. One thing remained clear among his people: they were specially hand picked by God to support Armstrong's ministry.

His church had become well known in the public eye. The news media found it difficult to interview Armstrong or his ministers. "Don't all churches believe that they are the only true Christian church?" rhetorically shouted a reporter once as he rushed to interview a Worldwide Church of God televangelist departing for a flight. The evangelist turned in his cavalier manner and answered, "Oh yes, but they can't all be the one true church now can they?"

The team spirit created by believing that they were the good guys was raised to a crescendo of heightened awareness that only the Worldwide Church of God was the *one true church*. Through repeated kudos toward the organization the ministry was determined to reinforce this belief system in its follower's minds. As I have mentioned in the last chapter, this illusion was created by encouraging shortcuts in reasoning like believing something is true simply because it is labeled so or because an unqualified authority says it is so.

The first fundamental premise established in Armstrong's ministry was that ***God has a plan that he is working out with a special group of people, God's true church. The church is governed by God's special form of government, government from the top down.***

Armstrong taught this doctrine by starting with a very old exegesis of Matthew 16:13-20. (An exegesis is how one draws out a meaning from a scripture.) This passage is the basis for what came to be called the "Petrine doctrine." There are many ways to draw out a meaning from Matthew 16. The Roman Catholic church is the actual originator of the "Petrine doctrine." The Worldwide Church of God has viewed this passage in a similar way as the Roman Catholic church has. One might consider this view as a variation of the same theme. Herbert Armstrong originally taught that Christ was the Rock and Peter was a pebble by semantic manipulation of the Greek word *petros* used in the text that the King James Bible was translated from. Apostolic succession was, therefore, granted from Christ through a lineage of apostles. And this is the very basis for the belief in a singular church that the gates of hell could not prevail against. But there is a problem with this particular viewpoint:

*"The most obvious of these is reading one's personal theology in the text...Protestants must ask themselves if the "you are Peter" passage (Matt. 16:13-20) would find interpreters scrambling to identify the rock not with Peter but with his confession, his faith, or his Lord, if there had not been many centuries of papal claims falsely based on that passage. Our presuppositions, called up by an error on the other side, do not easily give way to modification by biblical text. The problem becomes even more acute when it is not the interpreter's personal theology--perhaps even a published point!" (Carson, 136)*

The problem is that the "Petrine doctrine" neither fits into scriptural context, nor has it withstood the test of time. How does the *Bible Commentary* by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown explain this biblical passage?

*"Whatever this means, it was soon expressly extended to all the apostles (ch. 18:18); so that the claim of supreme authority in the Church, made for Peter by the Church of Rome, and then arrogated to themselves by the popes as the legitimate successors of St. Peter is baseless and impudent. As first in confessing Christ, Peter got this commission before the rest; and with these "keys," on the day of*

*Pentecost, he first "opened the door of faith" to the Jews, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the Gentiles. Hence, in the lists of the apostles, Peter is always first named. See on ch. 18:18. One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles--a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of that apostle."*

The basis for the belief in the *one true church* lies within the "Petrine doctrine." Was Peter the authority of the Church after the death of Jesus? Or was the confession of faith in Jesus the foundation for conversion? The difference between these two possible interpretations is pivotal. Some theologians would argue that one points to a man as the earthly authority of the church and the other points toward Jesus as the Messiah. Now, follow along as this basis for belief begins to grow into an entire belief system.

Let's explore this teaching in a step-by-step fashion by studying Worldwide Church of God literature. How did the Worldwide Church of God itself view the teaching that there is only one *true church*?

Armstrong taught that Matthew 16:13 established apostolic authority and that the apostle holding authority could govern the one true church. The choosing of an earthly representative by Jesus, in the form of an apostle, granted this man a special calling. This calling was then assumed to be the power to change truth through the "binding and loosing," of doctrinal understanding. (A loose reference to the same Matthew 16 passage.) Here is how Armstrong put it all together:

*He also said the Church would never die. The rains would fall (Matt. 7:24-27), the floods would come, the hurricanes would blow, but this NEW house built on the solid rock foundation would ALWAYS STAND!*

*(A World Held Captive, 1984, Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 21)*

*Immediately after the decisive battle to overcome Satan, two of the disciples of John the Baptist saw, with John, Jesus. Jesus asked him to follow him to his home. One of these was Andrew, son of Jona. He called his brother, Simon bar-Jona.*

*Jesus looked on Simon, and said to him, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas [in Greek, PETER]," meaning a stone (John 1:42).*

*In Mark 3:14, 16, we read: "And he [Jesus] ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach...And Simon he surnamed Peter." A surname is, according to Webster, "an added name derived from occupation."*

*The surname Peter had for centuries been a surname or TITLE, designating a religious LEADER, HEAD or HEADQUARTERS. Peter was the first and chief apostle. An apostle is "one sent forth to proclaim or preach."*

*So, at the very beginning of his earthly ministry, preparing the FOUNDATION for the Church, Jesus Christ chose his chief human apostle and the other original 11. They, with the prophets whose writings were preserved from the days of God's first chosen Congregation (and NATION), Israel, were to form the very FOUNDATION of God's CHURCH (Eph. 2:19-21; 5:23). (Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery Of The Ages, pp. 221-222).*

Armstrong was not content to just claim that he had inherited Peter's authority over the church. He went on to draw a parallel between himself and the apostle Paul.

*The experience of the apostle Paul seemed to parallel his own. Mr. Armstrong later wrote: "But I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...But when it pleased God...to reveal His*

*Son in me, that I might preach Him to the world, I conferred not with flesh and blood [humans], neither went I to any theological seminary, but, as the original apostles and Paul were taught by CHRIST IN PERSON, so was I taught by the SAME CHRIST, through HIS WRITTEN WORD." (cf. Gal. 1:11, 15-17) (1979, This Is the Worldwide Church of God, p. 17)*

And then from Paul, Armstrong created a historical link by drawing the weak analogy that a "successful businessman" was somehow capable of keeping the *one true church* alive for the 1100 year period of history known as the Middle Ages. One of Armstrong's editors, Herman Hoeh, claimed that Armstrong was the last of the apostles because of his training as an advertising man.

*Jesus chose Paul, who was highly educated, for spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. He later raised up Peter Waldo, a successful businessman, to keep His truth alive during the Middle Ages. In these last days WHEN THE GOSPEL MUST GO AROUND THE WORLD, Jesus chose a man amply trained in the advertising and business fields to shoulder the mission--HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG. (Herman Hoeh, A True History of the True Church, p. 26)*

Herbert Armstrong had been presented to the Church as an archetypal figure. He was equal to biblical apostles like Paul and Peter. He was specially trained in the field of advertising. He was part of a lineage of apostles. I will have more to say about Peter Waldo later.

Now, let me insert a thought here. The Worldwide Church of God claimed that the true Christian church could always be identified in history because it observed the same three major doctrinal stances as the Worldwide Church of God. The Worldwide Church of God assumes that this way, the Worldwide Church of God way, was in complete harmony with the entire Bible, not just the New Testament. There was a general assumption made by Worldwide Church of God authorities that the Old Testament had been categorically denied by "professing Christianity," Protestants and Catholics.

*The teachings of God's true Church are simply those of "living by every word" of the Holy Bible.*

*The first man, Adam, chose to decide for himself right from wrong--to decide his own teachings, beliefs and ways of life. The world has followed that same course for 6,000 years. The Church is called out of the world to live the way God, through the Bible, teaches. (Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of the Ages, p. 224)*

Followers were next led to conclude that salvation could not be found outside of the Worldwide Church of God.

*Now what about the "private," or "individual Christian," who says, "I don't want to be a part of the Church--I want to seek my salvation direct and alone with Christ...." The person who says "I will get my salvation alone, outside of the Church" is totally deceived. This is not the time when salvation is opened to those in Satan's world. Those called now, I repeat emphatically, are NOT CALLED just for salvation. They are called for a special training provided only in God's Church....The Church is ORGANIZED on God's pattern of mutual teamwork and cooperation to function perfectly together. They shall become the God FAMILY as it shall exist at the time of Christ's Second Coming. Remember God IS that divine family!*

*...Neither will God let one INTO his family at the resurrection who refused to be part of it now--in the CHURCH--in the spiritual "training season." (Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of the Ages, pp. 270 271)*

*Here is the KEY which proves who are in God's Church. It is composed only of those who are growing into truth as God reveals it. The moment anyone ceases to GROW, but wants to retain only what he had five or ten years ago, from that moment on the Holy Spirit ceases to live in him. (Herman L. Hoeh, "How Would You Recognize the Church Jesus Founded?", 1968, p. 2)*

Then the followers were led to draw another "obvious" conclusion. If Christ did build a Church that the

gates of hell could not prevail against, then history must have some record of it. How would history buffs be able to find it? Certainly by looking for some historical groups that kept the same doctrines that the Worldwide Church of God keeps? This must be the identifying factor!

And so, the Worldwide teachers unveiled their historical view, revealing that the primitive church had never died out but continued through the ages until the calling of Herbert W. Armstrong--its "end-time apostle." Matthew 16 was the springboard that led followers to accept that the church of Armstrong was the same as the church of the apostles Peter and Paul, yet not entirely in its original form. Its members could no longer speak in tongues.

### ***Synoptic History of the Church***

*Finally, we come to a brief history of the Church from its foundation in A.D. 31 to the present.*

*The Church started on the day of Firstfruits called Pentecost, in June of A.D. 31. The Holy Spirit came from heaven upon the 120 disciples assembled in Jerusalem with a miraculous display such as has never before nor since occurred.*

*The 120 were all of "one accord." Suddenly "there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2). Have you ever been in a tornado or a hurricane? I have. Wind can make a very loud sound. This sound filled "all the house where they were sitting." Next there appeared unto them cloven tongues.....*

*Never has such a supernatural display occurred before or since. Yet the modern sects calling themselves "Pentecostal" claim to repeat this experience....(Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*, p. 275)*

*Jesus prophesied, "I will build my church."*

*That Church, foretold Jesus, would never be extinguished. "And the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Christ's Church is to last through all ages!*

*It has. It is here today, doing the Work of God! (Good News magazine, December 1981, "The Church They Couldn't Destroy")*

The fact that the New Testament church was able to speak in tongues raised the need to refine the identity of God's only true people. A problem also arose if one discovered that there was really no way to find churches in history that believed exactly the same doctrines that the Worldwide Church of God had been teaching. Some ancient texts could be made to present churches with similar beliefs, similar enough that they would appear to be like the Worldwide Church of God. So, this conflict was bridged by drawing out a new meaning from another scriptural passage. This modification was devised in the teaching of seven successive "eras" of the one true church, found in the seven letters to the churches of Revelation 2 and 3. Each of the assumed "eras" was believed to have various levels of spiritual understanding. It seemed plausible that if church eras did occur this would justify the belief that truth becomes variable and changeable within the one (relatively) true church of God. Of course, this begs the question of why a perfect God would allow such a sliding scale of truth for some Christians and not for others but we will continue to follow this line of reasoning to see how Armstrong builds a paradigm.

*The book of Revelation records seven messages to seven churches that existed in Asia Minor toward the end of the first century A.D.(Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*, p. 283)*

*They are a series of remarkable prophecies, by which the future of the true Church was foretold in outline form, from the day it began on Pentecost, A.D. 31, until the Second Coming of Christ.*

*The history of the Church would fall into seven distinct eras--each with its own strengths and*

*weaknesses and its own special trials and problems.*

*Just as a message could pass along the mail route from Ephesus to Laodicea, so would the truth of God be passed from era to era. (ibid, p. 283)*

Unless the "era" belief was further modified, it would also cause another inconsistency. This inconsistency appeared in the fact that the last "era", Laodicea, was not at all in favor with Christ. How could Herbert Armstrong have been God's end-time apostle, restoring lost truths, if the final "era" of God's true church was about to be spewed out of Christ's mouth for lukewarmness? This doctrine was modified by declaring that the sixth "era," Philadelphia, co-exists or is contemporary with the seventh "era", Laodicea.

Now that I have briefly shown how the Worldwide Church of God arrived at it's "one true church" doctrine, I would like to move on to the next fundamental belief that Armstrong taught. Once it was established that there was only one true church, Armstrong led followers to believe in yet another revelation, a need to understand that there was a unique identity for the British and American people. According to Armstrong, it was more than an identity; it was a sign. Just like the identity of his church, this sign would link these people to history as well as to the pages of the Bible.

## Chapter 3

### Which Old Testament Laws Are In Force Today?

If there was only one authentic Christian church, which doctrines would it have kept throughout all of history? Is there a mark of distinction? A sign of who God's people are throughout all time?

Even though I have already shown that the Worldwide Church of God has never been able to establish doctrinal stability, the assumption that their beliefs were stable led to the second most pivotal doctrine of Herbert Armstrong: **Moses' Law is Eternal and Immutable.**

*Now we must summarize the teaching and beliefs of God's true Church.*

*This, naturally, is related directly to the purpose of the Church--to call out of Satan's present world disciples (students, learners) to be trained to become kings and priests (teachers) in God's world tomorrow when God will open the tree of life (salvation, immortality) to all flesh.*

*But doctrinally, remember what the Church is called to help restore--the kingdom, government and character of God. What was taken away? God's law, the foundation of his government and the very essence of God's character and divine life.*

*In other words, the pivotal point is the SIN question. Sin is the transgression of God's spiritual law (I John 3:4).*

*Satan has deceived this world's churches into the belief that God's law was done away--that Jesus, rather than paying the price in human stead for transgressing the law, did away with it--"nailing it to his cross."*

*The expression used by Protestants "nailing the law to his cross" can mean only one thing. This is Satan's teaching that by being nailed to the cross, Christ abolished the law, making it possible for humans to sin with impunity. What actually was nailed to the cross was Christ our sin bearer, who took on himself our sins, paying the death penalty in our stead, so that we are freed from the ultimate penalty of sinning, not made free to sin with impunity.*

*The very basic teaching, belief AND DOCTRINE OF God's true Church therefore is based on the righteousness of and obedience to the law of God. (Mystery of the Ages, Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 225)*

*Before you can sincerely believe and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, and have His shed blood cover your sins, you must repent. But repent of what? Repent of SIN!*

*What is sin? Despite the contradictory ideas and generalizations of organized religious denominations, your Bible clearly states: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).*

*Sin is breaking God's spiritual law--the Ten Commandments. That is definitely and specifically what sin is! (The Ten Commandments, Roderick Meredith, 1977, p. 6)*

*When joined with "law", as, "the works of the law," primarily in Romans and Galatians, it refers to the RITUALS of the Law of Moses. These were physical WORK--labor! These laborious physical rituals--"the works of the law"--were a SUBSTITUTE for Christ and the Holy Spirit, and were in force only until Christ. They were then ABOLISHED. There were certain other secular laws, such as statutes and judgments, that were not abolished. Nor, of course, the great spiritual Law, the Ten Commandments, which define righteousness, the transgression of which is sin. (What Will You Be DOING in the NEXT LIFE? Herbert W. Armstrong, 1969, p. 7)*

*Why has this law been called the "Law of Moses"?*...

*Read that again carefully! That is not what you probably have been told. Read it in your own Bible!*

*These words of the Ten Commandments the Lord spoke. To whom? "Unto ALL YOUR ASSEMBLY." The people did NOT receive the Ten Commandments from Moses, but direct from the very voice of God, which they all heard! (Which DAY Is the Christian Sabbath?, Herbert W. Armstrong, 1976, p. 43)*

Acceptance that the ten commandments were great spiritual laws and an eternally binding covenant, led to what Armstrong believed was a "test of obedience." That test of obedience was in observing the seventh day as the Sabbath according to the Old Testament restrictions.

The Sabbath Day was called a "sign" between God and ancient Israel. This seemed rather obvious that the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath would provide a mark of distinction in modern times. Especially in looking through history for God's one true church. Could it really be that simple?

*Now study this special covenant a little further:*

*"...for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13)*

*What tremendous meaning is packed in that portion of this sentence! Yet most people read right past it, failing to get the vital TRUTH it contains!*

*Notice! Here is the purpose of the Sabbath. "...for it is a SIGN..." (Which DAY is the Christian Sabbath?, p. 52, Herbert Armstrong, 1976)*

*The people of the world are willing to acknowledge the other nine commandments--but the Sabbath command is the one they positively REBEL against! It is THE ONE that is the crucial test of obedience! It IDENTIFIES those who have surrendered their wills to God--who OBEY God, regardless of persecution or cost!...God's SIGN is one you accept voluntarily--of your own volition, or not at all. But the "beast"(symbol of the coming resurrected, so-called Holy Roman Empire in Europe) has a MARK, which is soon going to be BRANDED ON, by physical FORCE! And it has something to do with "buying or selling"--trading, business, earning a living, having a job (Rev. 13:16-17; Rev. 13 and 17). Yes, this is the TEST COMMAND--the one on which YOUR VERY SALVATION AND ETERNITY DEPEND!*

*I have said that God made the Sabbath a separate, eternal, and perpetual covenant entirely separate and apart from what we term "the Old Covenant" made at Mt. Sinai. (Herbert W. Armstrong, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, 1980, pp. 139-140)*

The Sabbath was not only considered a "sign" of who God's people were. Armstrong indicated that the observance of it had a mystical quality. Sabbath day observance could reveal that God's great purpose was the advent of the millennial reign of Christ (the kingdom of God).

*"A good understanding have all they that do his commandments" (Ps. 111:10). The one test commandment is the fourth--keeping God's Sabbath. My conversion resulted from a struggle to resist that commandment! But when a merciful God conquered me--brought me to surrender to him on that point--he revealed also the necessity of observing his ANNUAL Sabbaths and festivals. (These picture the seven major spiritual steps in the book Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days--Which?) Through this and other revealed knowledge of the Holy Bible, God gave me UNDERSTANDING of the working out of his great PURPOSE! And also the necessary part of his CHURCH in fulfillment of that glorious purpose! (Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of The Ages, p. 191)*

Annual Sabbaths were the holy days mentioned in the Old Testament--The Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and Last Great Day. If the law of Moses was to be kept today, the annual Sabbaths of the Old Testament were certainly included. They became a requirement for salvation and further revelation of understanding about God's plan of salvation.

*And now we wish to show a New Testament command--more plain, more direct, than any we can find for the weekly Sabbath--to keep these annual holy days!...Notice Matthew 26:5. The chief priests and the scribes, conspiring to kill Jesus, said: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." They hastened so they could take and kill Him the day before the feast, or on the 14th Abib (Nisan)...Now let us examine carefully I Corinthians 5:7-8. Churches have applied this to the Passover. Notice it does not say, nor apply to, Passover at all. Let us willingly, prayerfully, study to see what it does say:*

*"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore LET US KEEP THE FEAST." Notice it. Because Christ our Passover, has been sacrificed, therefore let us of the New Testament dispensation--because Christ had died--keep, what? Notice it! Not the Passover here which was on the 14th Abib (Nisan)--but let us keep the feast--which was the 15th! The highday Sabbath of John 19:31! The annual holy day. And, in a larger sense, the feast included all seven of the days of unleavened bread, including the second holy day, or Sabbath, on the 21st Abib (Nisan)! We cannot escape this, if we are yielded to the Lord and the Word of God! There it is, in plain language, in the New Testament! Because Christ was crucified, therefore let us keep the feast! (Herbert W. Armstrong, Pagan Holidays--or God's Holy Days--Which, p. 26)*

The observance of the same holy days that ancient Israel observed was the source of one particular revelation. In the Old Testament, the observance of the spring and fall festivals required a special way of tithing of one's increase. Now Herbert Armstrong proceeded to close the deal by informing his readers that tithing was part of this eternal law of God and was taught in the New Testament for Christians to practice. In 1927 Herbert Armstrong felt that he had come into contact with the descendant of the New Testament church. How did he identify it?

*...They held faithfully to the things that are HOLY TO GOD--his Sabbath and paying his tithes. They held to the true biblical NAME, "the Church of God." No other church on earth held to these three pivotal basic beliefs and practices. They were humble and sincere and would have sacrificed their lives for these basic truths. (Where Is the True Church?, Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 19)*

*So tithing, far from being abolished, is NEW TESTAMENT LAW! But, the priesthood being changed to that of Jesus Christ--the Melchisedec Priesthood restored--that tithing law is also changed of necessity, so as to become God's system for financing the ministry of Jesus Christ! (Ending Your FINANCIAL WORRIES, p. 20, Herbert Armstrong, 1959)*

*God has a financial law for our nations. He says 10 percent of the increase, or gross income of each one of us, belongs to God for his purposes and his work.*

*In Malachi 3:8-10: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes in the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."*

*After the year 1800 we prospered because of Abraham's obedience and God's unbreakable promises to him. But now having received such individual and national prosperity, we sin by stealing from God. That has brought our nations under a curse. We have won our last war. Nothing but troubles now lie ahead until we repent.*

*God's tithe is holy to him (Lev. 27:30). God's Sabbath, the seventh day of every week, is holy to him. Yet we have put no difference between the holy and the profane (Ezek. 22:26) (Mystery of the Ages, Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 158)*

As doctrinal revelations began to snowball, Armstrong's credibility began to grow and his paradigm

appeared plausible. By accepting the Sabbath, members could now be shown one of Herbert's favorite mysteries. The Sabbath sign led to the discovery of a unique people who had lost their identity and yet were destined to fulfill a dual purpose of the Old Covenant after collectively recovering from amnesia. That unique people were "the lost ten tribes of Israel" who were primarily found in the United States and Great Britain. This is an old doctrine many refer to as British-Israelism.

And like all of the other revelations of *truth*, the identity of who modern-day Israel was opened followers' minds to yet another conclusion: Israel's identity was the master key to understanding prophecy.

*That key is knowledge of the astonishing identity of the American and British peoples--as well as the German--in biblical prophecies. This very eye opening, astounding identity is the strongest proof of the inspiration and authority of the Holy Bible! It is, at the same time, the strongest proof of the very active existence of the living God! (p. 3, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, Herbert W. Armstrong, 1980)*

*And don't forget, the specific key that unlocks these closed doors of prophecy is the definite knowledge of the true identity of the American and British nations as they are mentioned in these prophecies. (p. 6, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, Herbert W. Armstrong, 1980)*

Armstrong considered Great Britain to be the modern nation of Ephraim, and the United States to be the modern nation of Manasseh (the two sons of Joseph who bore the collective identity of modern-day Israel). At the same time Armstrong villainized the German people by claiming that they were the descendants of the ancient Assyrians who had taken Israel captive in the days of Jeremiah the prophet.

*Of proof that our white, English-speaking peoples today--Britain and America--are actually and truly the birthright tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh of the "lost" house of Israel there is so much we shall have space for but a small portion in this book.*

Like the picture that emerges when piecing together a jigsaw puzzle, Armstrong's paradigm unveiled a unique view of the cosmos. If accepted as truth, the vortex of circular reasoning would now show the self-convinced followers that they were on to something that made sense and offered them a special place in the universe. For instance, being a descendant of Israel magnified the need to observe the Sabbath; keeping the Sabbath revealed one's special identity and pleased God; knowing one's special identity led one to understand the real meaning of prophecy; and understanding prophecy could save one's life. Therefore, one must keep the Sabbath or risk getting amnesia and losing one's salvation.

*And this prophecy of Leviticus 26, though written by Moses before the Israelites had entered the promised land, is one of dual fulfillment. It was a warning to those of Moses' day, but its final fulfillment, as we shall see, has taken place and is now taking place--in our time. And, through fulfillment, typical of so many prophecies, it is also a WARNING to the American and British peoples of impending events! Leviticus 26 is the basic prophecy of the Old Testament. It contains a vital, living, tremendous message and warning for our people today! (pp.109-110, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, Herbert W. Armstrong, 1980)*

Understanding prophecy seemed to depend upon a Christian's performance in several ways. If America and Britain (modern Israel) did not obey God and keep the Sabbath, God would bring a curse upon them--this is how Old Testament prophecies were played out. Armstrong's followers were the only ones who knew the vital keys to prophecy. His church was the only institution that knew the identity of modern Israel. Therefore the church felt a responsibility to God for warning Israel (America) of God's impending wrath.

One other revelation, of minor importance, seemed evident. God had a particular interest in race. After all, He had never given up on the descendants of Abraham. Again, this implied that God was exclusive

with salvation.

*On the world scene nothing is so important right now as to know where the white, English-speaking peoples are identified in scores and hundreds of prophecies--prophecies which describe vividly our sudden rise to national power and reveal the causes of that greatness; prophecies that paint a crystal-clear picture of our present international dilemma; prophecies that open our eyes wide to see what now lies immediately ahead for our nations--and what our ultimate and final status shall be. (p. 10, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, Herbert W. Armstrong, 1980)*

Armstrong claimed that these restored *truths* had been delivered to him by divine providence. They all revolved around one basic premise--the laws that were given to Moses, beginning at Sinai, were never abolished but were still in full effect.

But if this were the case, then, who were all of the other people, outside of the Worldwide Church of God, who thought of themselves as Christians?

## Chapter 4

### A World Held Captive

It only follows that the belief in only one *true* Christian church led Armstrong to preach that all other Christian churches were false. As we have seen previously, the Worldwide Church of God belief system was *proof-texted* from scriptural references (In other words, the scriptures were often set up so as to prove a desired point.). How did Armstrong follow through with a biblical case for the identity of the remainder of Christianity?

He accomplished this by building an exegesis from a passage in Revelation 17. This viewpoint had been held by many Protestants in the past, especially during the Middle Ages. And this led to the third and final fundamental premise of the Worldwide Church of God: **The Catholic Church is the Great Whore (Mystery Babylon) of Revelation 17.** Rome had perverted and paganized Christianity. It had substituted "pagan rituals," such as Saturnalia, for the biblically sanctioned Christian holidays. Further, Armstrong claimed that the mother church had Christianized these pagan days of worship by giving them Christian sounding names like "Christmas." The harlot *daughters* of Babylon would therefore be Protestant churches that had protested against the mother church in Rome.

*We shall deal later more specifically with the 17th chapter of Revelation in this connection. Then we shall prove beyond doubt that the "harlot woman," BABYLON THE GREAT, is the Roman Catholic Church. But let us note in passing that the "woman," the Catholic Church, with the papacy, never "rode" on any part of this Beast except its last seven "horns"!* (p.8, Herbert W. Armstrong, *Who Is The "Beast"?*, 1960)

*But this Church became MOTHER, and DAUGHTER CHURCHES came out of her, in "protest," calling themselves "PROTESTANT." And ALL have worldly, political CHURCH GOVERNMENT. "Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (Rev. 17:5). Her daughters are called "harlots." Together, they are called "BABYLON." They are pagan, teaching pagan doctrines and customs, cloaked in the NAME of "Christianity!" And ALL NATIONS are deceived!*

*Yes, human-organized CHURCHIANITY is the "IMAGE" of the "BEAST." When people speak of "MY Church," they mean their organized denomination. And today people seem to IDOLIZE their CHURCHES! This is "worshipping the IMAGE of the BEAST."*

*"COME OUT OF HER," God says (Rev. 18:4). God help us to HEED! (ibid, pp. 15-16)*

*What, then, is the real PURPOSE of the Church? Why did Jesus found the Church? Was it to repair the superstructure of the faulty and decadent BUILDING to which I have likened this present evil world? Was it to "save" by conversion this sinning world of Satan? And was it to become divided into many divisions or branches, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant?*

*The whole professing "Christian" world has been deceived. All nations have been deceived. The ninth verse of Revelation 12 states this emphatically and plainly. (A World Held Captive, 1984, Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 20)*

Where did all of this *paganization* of Christianity begin? Some have contended that it seemed to have started during the time of the apostles. This becomes controversial when one considers the fact that many scholars would doubt the reliability of some scriptural passages actually being written in the first century. For those who simply take the text as it is, there are a few passages that discuss *apostasy* in the early New Testament church. Some ancient historians, such as Eusebius, have also recorded instances of heresy and disagreements among the early bishops.

But, was heresy or apostasy the same thing as paganism? Not exactly. Heresy in both the New Testament and in the fourth century councils were usually either Jewish legalism or unorthodox philosophies.

None of the controversies of Christianity are more pivotal than the organization of Christianity by the Roman emperor Constantine. The organized Roman Church unified its doctrines around 325 A. D. at the Council of Nicea, when Constantine made Christianity the state religion. It was at this place and time that heresy began to be defined.

Even though it was called Christianity, pagan ideas and philosophies were introduced into his official state religion. Sunday was made the legal day of Christian worship at this time. But, Herbert Armstrong claimed that the *true* Christian church observed the Sabbath day on Saturday as the did the Jews and that it was significant.

*As the Sabbath is the identifying sign of the people of God ( gentile or any race), so Sunday is the mark that identifies the AUTHORITY of false Christianity--"BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS"--because Sunday carries no authority. The substitution of the pagan Sunday to counterfeit God's Sabbath is the primary stratagem of Satan in deceiving all nations, and counterfeiting God's Truth as well as God's Church. (Herbert W. Armstrong, p. 24, Where Is the True Church?, 1984)*

If Saturday was the sign of God's true church. Sunday was undoubtedly the "mark of the Beast."

Armstrong's vortex was now complete.

In the next chapter I will summarize the suppositions that comprised the paradigm held by members of the Worldwide Church of God during the 50 year ministry of their founder.

## Chapter 5

### Elijah Shall Truly Come

It might be easier to understand the general thinking pattern of the Worldwide Church of God members, now that we have explored their paradigm. To them, their world view became so fixed that they quickly felt uneasy around other people who did not think the same way. In an orderly flow, one precept was built upon another until an answer emerged for the meaning of life. A dilemma was created when Worldwide Church of God members tried to explain their point of view to outsiders. This would reinforce their fixation that "God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (I Cor. 1:27). The fact that outsiders seemed bewildered by Worldwidiers and their rituals appeared to be a proof to them that God had "opened their minds" to divinely guided revelations. This is what they all referred to as their "calling." Being "called" (accepting the paradigm) was a mark of distinction and a "proof" that God was personally involved in their lives.

By the time inquisitive literature readers began counseling for membership, Worldwide Church of God ministers would make sure that they had accepted Herbert Armstrong's paradigm. Here is a synopsis of Armstrong's paradigm that was built upon the three major premises:

- 1. The true church only preaches the true gospel.*
- 2. That gospel is not a message about the person or ministry of Christ.*
- 3. The gospel is about the coming Kingdom of God (the Millennium).*
- 4. Salvation is achieved by the works of the law, primarily the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath.*
- 5. The Sabbath day is a special sign or mark of who God's true people are.*
- 6. The Sabbath and Holy Days (annual Sabbaths) have a special spiritual meaning and the keeping of them brings spiritual revelation, including the correct understanding of God's plan and His government.*
- 7. God's government is from the top down and higher ranking ministers have greater divine inspiration.*
- 8. This divine inspiration allows the Worldwide Church of God to be the only group that understands the secret plan God is working out on earth under the noses of a deceived world. This understanding only comes from the top down.*
- 9. This deceived world includes all professing Christian churches, which are Satanic counterfeits of the true church.*
- 10. Satan's first and greatest counterfeit of Christianity is the Roman Catholic Church which is identified as Babylon the Great in Revelation 17.*
- 11. Since the Catholic Church is counterfeit, and uses its' lineage as a proof of its' authority, the true church must trace its' lineage among the persecuted, anti-Catholic, Sabbath-keeping "heretics" throughout history.*
- 12. The true church can be found in history because it is persecuted by the false church for not keeping the true Sabbath.*
- 13. Enforced Sunday worship is the mark of the Beast.*
- 14. Any church (including the Protestants) who observe Sunday as their "Sabbath" are identified as the harlot daughters of BABYLON THE GREAT.*

*15. Since the true church rejects the false system, and accepts the true, it must be called of God to participate in the great commission to preach the gospel in the end time.*

*16. Since the true church understands that the commission is for the end time, and Daniel 12:9 says that understanding will be increased in the end time, then we are in the end time.*

*17. Since there are 7 eras of the church and this is the end time, Christians should strive to be the 6th era and not the 7th because the 6th will be divinely protected from tribulation.*

*18. To remain in the 6th era, a member must sacrifice greatly to help the gospel be preached, adhere to all of the true teachings, and obey government.*

*19. Therefore all of the teachings and authority of the Worldwide Church of God hinge upon its belief that it is the Philadelphia (or 6th) Era of God's one true church and in great favor with God.*

After accepting their "calling," members were now primed for initiation into the church. Initiation would consist of cross-examination by ministerial representatives. Modification of their lifestyle would invariably be required of the new proselytes. They would have to change their diet (the Jewish kosher laws of Leviticus 11 were to be adopted); they would be required to commit themselves to a rigid tithing system (20% of their gross income was earmarked for the church and church holy day observances); further donations were commanded at the seven annual holy days that were required assemblies (these required assemblies would strain employment and cause problems when removing children from school); members were often asked to alter marital arrangements (in some cases a divorce was requested); and finally, new converts were threatened to remain ever in subjugation of the ministry.

Once these commitments were agreed to, they were invited to attend church services and allowed to counsel for baptism. Upon baptism, the initiation rites had been completed and the proselyte was considered a converted member under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

In 1959, researchers Elliot Aronson and Judson Mills discovered that "persons who go through a great deal of trouble or pain to attain something tend to value it more highly than persons who attain the same thing with a minimum of effort" (Aronson and Mills, 177-81). Studying both tribal rites of passage and fraternity hazing, these behavioral scientists concluded that loyalty is correlated to the level of pain or distress one suffers upon initiation. This was the case also for those who were admitted membership into the Worldwide Church of God.

Another factor that increases loyalty to a group is open compliance (Schein, 149-72). By being consistently prompted about loyalty and enticed to verbalize reasons for compliance, American POWs were coerced to swear loyalty to their captors during the Korean War.

Kudos can be hazardous to one's health.

This was the vortex of circular reasoning used by the general membership of the Worldwide Church of God until their founder's passing in 1986. Many still maintain this belief system privately. Many would like to escape the vortex altogether, but find that the church's very assumption that it has a correct understanding of Matthew 16 gives no alternative for them. They have been warned that one must remain a Worldwide Church of God member, held captive to the authority of their church at all costs.

In 1933 Herbert Armstrong claimed that he had been given a divine calling by Jesus Christ to restore all of these doctrines to a church that had grown dead since the day of Pentecost in 31 AD. In 1926 he had been challenged to accept and observe the Saturday Sabbath by his wife. He later claimed to be loosely associated with a Sabbath-keeping group in Eugene, Oregon, the Church of God, Seventh Day. Later his wife had a strange dream that she repeated to Herbert. She had dreamt that Christ wanted Herbert to preach the gospel. This was the start of a ministry that lasted until his death in 1986. Millions of lives

were affected by his teachings during his lifetime and many are still perplexed a decade after his death. Toward the end of his life he was often referred to as the Elijah, a reference that meant he was preparing the world for the return of Christ. He claimed that he had restored all of the *truths* of the early Christian church lost for 19 centuries in the doctrinal premises of the Worldwide Church of God. The church had been made ready. It was "Philadelphian."

In August 1986, nine months after the death of Herbert Armstrong, the new Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, Joseph Tkach, had an article printed in the church's newspaper, *The Worldwide News*. Its title was, "God restored these 18 truths: How thankful are you for them?" Herbert Armstrong's life's work in restoring spiritual truth as the Elijah was listed in these 18 points. The editors wrote:

*In his last book, Mystery of the Ages, the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote: "This Church, until after the year of 1933, had lost many...vital truths. At least 18 basic and essential truths have been restored to the true Church since that year" (page 251, hard cover edition)...Jesus said, "Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matthew 17:11). Jesus was referring to something that was to happen in the future. John the Baptist had already come, and Jesus didn't even begin His ministry until John had been put in prison. John didn't restore anything. Jesus was referring to another man, not John....Where would we be without these truths? Without them--without Herbert W. Armstrong's legacy of these 18 restored truths--there isn't much left.*

In his book *Mystery of the Ages*, Herbert Armstrong had also asserted that he was the embodiment of Elijah the prophet as well as John the Baptist.

*But also preparing the way before his Second Coming was a messenger of whom Elijah was a type. A voice crying out in the worldwide spiritual wilderness of religious confusion, preparing the way for the spiritual glorified King of kings and Lord of lords to come in the supreme power and glory of God to his spiritual temple, the Church.*

Had the Elijah come? In less than a decade after Armstrong's death Joseph Tkach and his staff saw fit to abandon or cannibalize nearly all of the 18 *restored truths* that Armstrong had established as the essential doctrines of the "Philadelphia Era." But, if Armstrong had been the Elijah (or the second John the Baptist), who was Tkach? We might well ask the same question that Jesus asked those in religious authority during his ministry, "The baptism of John (or Herbert Armstrong), whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

By what authority did Armstrong speak? Surely validation might be found by tracing the history of the Worldwide Church of God. All one would need to do is verify documents that might prove if it were somehow descended from the New Testament church, as Armstrong claimed it was. If history substantiated the Worldwide Church of God claim, then some might well have believed correctly that Elijah, in the form of Herbert Armstrong, had been sent from God to restore lost truths.

Let's examine what Armstrong's church historians provided for their evidence.

## PART II

### The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It

#### Chapter 6

#### "The Church They Couldn't Destroy".

As I have shown, the three original doctrinal premises of Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God were as follows: There is only one true church; Moses' Law is eternal; and the Roman Catholic Church is "BABYLON THE GREAT". These three premises were the very foundation of the Worldwide Church of God tree of spiritual knowledge for more than 40 years.

Once original believers had adopted these three basic constructs of what Christianity was built upon, they viewed the whole world quite differently than their general religious community.

Imagine if every other "Christian" that you came into contact with were perceived as a deceived counterfeit version of yourself. If this were your perception, you too might feel a bit like a character in a science fiction story. You might feel as though the world were full of alien life forms that posed a threat to the survival of civilization. (This reminds me of the old science fiction movie: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In that story, alien pods were capable of cloning evil replicants of a town's inhabitants as they systematically destroyed their real human images. The story's hero was unable to convince the townspeople of the danger that they were in and eventually had to flee to save his own life.)

If either one or all of the three great premises were actually false, though, you would be the deceived one. Your perception of truth might result in an antichristian attitude. Therefore, you would become the alien by alienating yourself from your community. You may have forgotten that there are scriptures in the New Testament that warn Christians against thinking they are right while displaying no compassion toward others. And this would create a paradox.

This is how members of the Worldwide Church of God came to see their world. Constant prodding from their ministers reinforced within them the illusion that only they had sound minds in a deceived world.

One oversight in the creation in Armstrong's paradigm is that he cited secular authorities in trying to prove that his church could trace its lineage back to first century Christianity. If the reported history of the Worldwide Church of God was different from secular history then we are left to question Armstrong's ability as a historian as well as his motive.

Aside from secular sources, Armstrong claimed that he was divinely inspired:

*"But I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...But when it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him to the world, I conferred not with flesh and blood [humans], neither went I to any theological seminary, but, as the original apostles and Paul were taught by CHRIST IN PERSON, so was I taught by the SAME CHRIST, through HIS WRITTEN WORD" (cf. Gal. 1:11, 15-17). ( This Is the Worldwide Church of God, p. 17. 1979)*

It becomes awkward and even appears sinister to challenge someone's claim to divine inspiration.

According to Herbert Armstrong, God had personally revealed the "essential truths" of the Worldwide Church of God to him. He assured his followers that he received nothing from the teachings of men. He claimed that God had ordained his ministry and revealed everything to him. Because he claimed that

his doctrines were inspired by God they should have been considered as holy as the Bible itself.

But, divine insight has been claimed by others. In the eighteenth century, John Wesley, the founder of the modern Methodist movement, claimed to have a religious experience. In the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith claimed that the angel Moroni delivered to him a history of great civilizations in the Americas and that Jesus had appeared to the Native American Indians after his resurrection. Ellen G. White claimed to be a prophetess in the post-Civil War era and added that salvation had been sealed up for all of mankind during her lifetime. In this century, Charles Taze Russell, Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen, Jim Jones, Benny Hinn, and David Koresh have been among many modern ministers claiming to have received messages from God. Were these claims real or delusional? They certainly were incongruent with one another.

If someone goes so far as to claim that secular history verifies their story, then this actually makes it easier for us to prove or disprove their claim. We simply study their sources and look for substantiating evidence.

Armstrong wrote that historical figures, like himself, were granted divine commissions. These men were separated from each other by centuries of time. Yet Armstrong claimed they were links in a lineage from the New Testament apostles to himself. Their names were Polycarp, Polycrates, Peter Waldo, Walter Lollard and Stephen Mumford. According to Armstrong, their job was to hold fast to the faith once delivered. According to Herbert Armstrong and his successor, Joseph Tkach, they held the high church office of "apostle." The divine purpose was to deliver the true gospel to God's one true church and the lost tribes of Israel. And this is how Armstrong established a link to his own apostleship.

By espousing the "apostolic succession" and the "God's one true church" doctrines, Armstrong appeared larger than life. By examining the writings of the Worldwide Church of God authors we will see the proofs and sources that they gave for this unbroken lineage of alleged Churches of God. Then it is simply up to us to verify if the authors have told their story accurately.

The first booklet that the Worldwide Church of God issued about its link to ancient history was written in 1959 by Herman L. Hoeh, Ph.D. Hoeh was one of the first four students to enter Herbert Armstrong's Ambassador College in 1947. He was the only one of the original four students who remains a member of the church at this writing. Today, Herman Hoeh (pronounced "hay") is one of the highest ranking ministers in the Worldwide Church of God. His only academic exposure, though, was within the confines of Ambassador College alone. It was there that Herbert Armstrong, a high school dropout, granted him his doctorate degree.

It seems appropriate to start our analysis of church history by giving a brief synopsis of Hoeh's story, *A TRUE HISTORY of the TRUE CHURCH*. This was his definition of who the *true* Christians were:

*Is Christ divided? There are more than 250 major denominations in America alone--and other hundreds of little groups and sects. WHY? When did this confusion originate?*

*How much do you really know about the TRUE CHURCH? Where has it been? Have you supposed it was re-established at the Protestant Reformation? IT WAS NOT! You will be ASTONISHED to see the true history of GOD'S Church. This true history, authentically documented, is breathtaking.*

*Here, then, are the astounding facts! This surprising truth is bound up in the real meaning of the SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION! (Introductory Page)*

*...Every thinking person--every denomination--realizes that, at some time in history, there has been a great apostasy or falling away from original TRUTH.*

*...Jesus Christ did not found many denominations! Christ said, "I will build my Church." He did build it! ONE Church, commissioned to preach and publish His Gospel--the very Message He brought from*

*God--to all the world!*

*..Christ's instruction to His Church, through the New Testament, was NOT to participate in this world's politics and affairs in an effort to make this world a better world.*

*...despised, persecuted, scattered BY the world--separate FROM the world!*

*...Shocking though it is, the overwhelming majority have been deceived by ministers who come in the name of Jesus Christ, proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ, but who teach a different Gospel and a different faith!*

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

*...God makes you a member of His Church--if you surrender your life to Him--even if you have no local church with which to fellowship.*

*...The true Christians, who alone comprised the true Church, were being put out of the visible, organized congregations. They were the SCATTERED ones of whom John said: "Therefore the world knoweth us not" (I John 3:1)*

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

*This is not true!*

*...THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD...was scattered, persecuted, unorganized.*

We were told of division and apostasy occurring in the New Testament church. Again it was important that the basis of *truth* was that Catholicism was a deliberate plot against the one true church, which was both scattered and unorganized. Moses' law has not yet been introduced to us to be the factor making the true church what it was. Let's continue with Hoeh's history:

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

*Now let's UNDERSTAND who they are, one by one...Jerusalem remained the headquarters church during the entire apostolic period. When the church moved to Pella, it continued as a headquarters church for the "Ephesian Era". Rome was never the parent or headquarters church.*

*...the Encyclopedia Britannica says... "Nazarenes, an obscure Jewish-Christian sect...they dated their settlement in Pella from the time of the flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, immediately before the siege in AD 70"...Jerome ( Ep. 79, to Augustine) says that they believed in Christ the Son of God,...'desiring to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other"...while adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy as regarded circumcision, Sabbaths, foods and the like, they did not refuse to recognize the apostolicity of Paul or the rights of heathen Christians."*

*Among the Gentiles the churches in Asia remained the most faithful to the word of God. We pick up the story of the true Church in the lives of such men as Polycarp and Polycrates. They were called "Quartodecimani" because they kept the true passover celebration...*

Once Hoeh had found a church "adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy" it was assumed to be the *true* church, which also seemed no longer to be scattered. It seems to be overlooked, in the above quotation about these Jewish-Christians, that the issue of circumcision had been settled by the entire church and the apostles in Jerusalem many years earlier. This is recorded in Acts 15:22-25. There is

also no reference to this Jewish-Christian sect bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit or of being able to speak in tongues.

Next Dr. Hoeh introduces us to the churches in Asia Minor under Polycarp and Polycrates. They were believed to be the "true church" because they were called "Quartodecimani," that is, they kept the Passover. What was the link between the Jewish-Christians in Pella and Polycarp? And who were these Jewish-Christians?

In lesson 50 of the original *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* the church writers Herman L. Hoeh and C. Paul Meredith, under the supervision of Herbert Armstrong, elaborated upon this question of "What Became of the Church Jesus Built?" Here is what they wrote:

*The Christian Church in Judaea fled to Pella in 69 A. D. From that date the organized proclaiming of Christ's true gospel ceased!*

*For the next hundred years, church history is virtually a blank. "Scanty and suspicious" are the records, says the historian Gibbon, which remain from this period (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire). But why?*

### **The "Lost Century"**

*It was the incredible "Lost Century" of church history!*

*And when again records commence with the earliest "church fathers" we behold a "Christian" church in most vital points of doctrine and custom the very antithesis of the Church of the original apostles.*

*Was this new and different church a continuation of that Church Jesus built? Emphatically not.*

*This was not, in fact, a different church entirely. It was a deliberate counterfeit of the True Church Jesus built! It stole the name of Christ, and called itself by His name!*

*The goal of this false church was to dominate the whole world by deception. Its leaders were out to subvert even Caesar. To that end it had established its headquarters in Rome.*

*Meanwhile, the True Church--after its first generation--became nearly invisible to the world. A few scattered individuals persecuted, living in poverty, obscurity and contempt were all that constituted the second age of God's Church. Enemies called them "Ebionites"(meaning "poor" or "poverty stricken")--though not all "Ebionites" were really Christians.*

The lost century concept seemed to lead in well with the idea that a "deliberate counterfeit of the true church" appeared after the curtain was drawn back in the third century. The reader was deliberately led to make the assumption that the church of the Ebionites was an "era" that Hoeh craftily called Smyrna. Here was what the Worldwide writers went on to say in lesson 50:

### **Why Persecuted?**

*The second age of the New Testament Church is portrayed in Revelation 2. It is typified by the local congregation of the Church in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11).*

Once the concept was established that God's one and only true church was "adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy," what would the reader be left to conclude? That religion is based primarily upon works and Jewish rituals? Yet, this is contrary to the teachings of the apostle Paul. Christianity, to Paul, was based upon something other than works of the Law (Gal. 5 and I Cor. 10). Christianity was based upon faith toward God and love toward fellow man. Because of being overly concerned with the covenant given at Sinai, Dr. Hoeh's line of reasoning had taken a detour from orthodox Christianity by looking at certain works of this Law to be the sign of God's true people. This detour led Worldwide authors to a filtering of history for supporting evidence in favor of rituals and non-orthodox practices.

The evidence for Judaizers being the *true* Christians is what the teachers and writers of the Worldwide Church of God tried to provide evidence for from the church's very founding until the middle of the 1990s. Now, the present leadership has taken a stance in defiance of decades of indoctrinating followers to believe that Judaizing was what made them a unique, in fact superior, organization.

The author D. A. Carson, who holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University wrote the following about the first century Judaizers:

*Certainly wherever Paul detected Judaizing he treated it as a heresy...Nor is Judaizing an apt term to describe the worship and attitude of countless thousands of Jews who truly trusted Jesus the Messiah but who did not give up the traditional observances of Judaism: most Jerusalem Christians fell into this category, and even in Antioch Paul does not object to the presence of a "circumcision group" that eats separately from other Christians. Judaizing refers to the pressure exerted by putative Jewish Christians on Gentile Christians to compel the latter to conform to the whole or to some part of the Mosaic law, as a necessary condition for salvation or Christian maturity (From Triumphalism to Maturity, 23).*

Now let us continue with Hoeh's original story as he searched for evidence to prove his point. It was found in the notion that this one true church was called "Quartodecimani".

*Here is what the early Catholic historians admit about the true Church:*

*"But Polycarp also was not only instructed by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church of Smyrna...He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus"--bishop of Rome around 154 A. D.--"caused many to turn away from the heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles...While at Rome Polycarp discussed with the Roman bishop the matter of the introduction of the pagan Easter in place of the Passover.*

*Irenaeus continued: "For neither could Anicetus (bishop of Rome) persuade Polycarp not to observe it"--the Passover" because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, who said that he was bound to follow the customs of the presbyters before him" (Quoted from Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, book V, chap. 24, in the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1).*

In the next chapter I would like to offer my criticism of the one-sided way Worldwide Church historians have treated their presentation of Christianity. They often did this by simply not mentioning very pertinent issues which they should have been aware. The very sources that they often quoted from contradicted the conclusions they wanted their readers to draw.

In this chapter, I simply want to convey the way that they have told their version of church history.

So, on page 16 of *TRUE HISTORY of the TRUE CHURCH*, Dr. Hoeh went on to quote from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and leads up to a fourth century controversy between the Roman Emperor Constantine and the scattered and divided Christians. The controversy was about whether Christians ought to keep the Passover on the day that the Jews kept it, Nisan 14, or should they observe the pagan day, Easter Sunday. Hoeh's contention was that those who observed Easter became what Revelation 2:9 called, "the Synagogue of Satan:"

*This synagogue of Satan is the great apostate church which developed after 80 A.D. and ultimately became recognized as the State Religion of the Roman Empire. That Church has had many Protestant daughters which are also Satan's churches (Rev. 17).*

The history now skips ahead nearly 250 years and yet the main Passover issue still remained the same.

*After the Nicean Council closed, Emperor Constantine sent the following letter to all churches:*

*"At this meeting the question concerning...Easter was discussed...First of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this...feast we should follow the practice of the Jews...Let us then have nothing in common with the Jews...It has been determined by common judgment of all, that the...feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day." The Council of Nicea decided, under his authority, that Easter must be celebrated on Sunday and that the Passover must be forbidden!*

Without becoming polarized on these issues pro or con, concerning the early Christians, without joining in on these controversies, wouldn't it be more important for us to ask some fundamental questions? What did Christianity have to do with *Passover or Easter if Judaizing was a heresy*? Was the law of Moses an issue with Christians? Is the Catholic Church "Mystery Babylon"? Can we prove that there is only one organization that was the true Christian church?

Hoeh continued on in his book with his teaching of church "eras" by leaping over three hundred years of history that was not as noteworthy as his "lost century." At about 650 AD Hoeh claimed that the era of Pergamos was founded by Constantine of Mananali. Constantine was stoned to death in 684 AD and his followers were supposed to have allowed many false teachings to infect the church. In other words, there were some inconsistencies that Hoeh or his predecessors did not want to discuss. Again, their enemies were consumed with name calling.

*The names given to these people of God by their enemies were "Athyngani"--meaning "those who understood prophecy"--and "Paulicians".*

Herman Hoeh, and some of his predecessors, continued the lineage of *true* Christians through terse references to historical figures named Peter de Bruys, Arnold and Henri. Then in the twelfth century Hoeh introduced a more accessible historical figure. The Worldwide Church of God has often referred to him as an apostle. His name was Peter Waldo.

The next chapter will delve more deeply into the first three centuries of the Christian era in Europe. We will look again at these early Judaizing-Christians and examine why the Worldwide Church of God felt that these groups were the only true church.

Since the history of Christianity from the Waldensians onward is not as scanty (even by Herman Hoeh's standards), I would like to dedicate the remainder of my analysis of the one true church doctrine from this period to the present day. We will see that there is ample material about the remaining groups to adequately test the theory of the Worldwide Church of God.

The final five churches listed in the lineage of these Jewish-Christian churches are: the Waldensians; the Lollards; the Seventh-Day Baptists; The Church of God, Seventh Day; and the Worldwide Church of God. According to the belief, these five churches have all had their turn at being God's one true church. They all failed the test by losing vital doctrines. By Worldwide Church of God reasoning, they all had kept the Passover on Nisan 14, only referred to themselves as "The Church of God," and kept the seventh day as the Sabbath.

## Chapter 7

### "Is Christ Divided?"

When evangelist Herman L. Hoeh authored his 1959 booklet *A TRUE HISTORY of the TRUE CHURCH*, the very first question he asked was, "Is Christ divided?" Assuming that proselytes could not disagree, they were led to look for the one true church outside of "organized Christianity" of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Ronald Kelly asked this same question of the readers of the *Good News* and *Plain Truth* magazines in June 1990.

Like Hoeh, Kelly is another long-time, high-ranking minister of the Worldwide Church of God. In 1990 through 1991 he authored the twelve part series, entitled "The History of the Church of God", in the *Good News* and *Plain Truth* magazines. It was, for the most part, a rehash of Hoeh's original story about the one true church that could trace a lineage from the day of Pentecost AD 31 to the present time. By comparing similarities in doctrine and then attempting to produce a chronological lineage, true Christianity was made to appear in its modern-day form as the Worldwide Church of God. In his lead article, Kelly wrote:

*But Christianity is not one harmonious group of believers. The Christian world is divided into hundreds of denominations, splits, schisms and sects.*

*What happened? How did Christianity become so divided?*

Well, the answer, of course, should have been obvious to Kelly and other Bible readers, because this question was originally asked by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 1:13.

*Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*

This is a rather familiar passage where Paul was chiding the Corinthian Christians for being contentious and claiming specific loyalties to men rather than Christ. In this entire chapter there is not one mention of the Law of Moses being a sign of the true Christians. Rather, this passage indicates that following after the man who baptized them was the source of their contention.

Ironically, this is the very passage used by Hoeh and Kelly to lead into the premise that they themselves were of Polycarp, Polycrates, and so on. They further claimed a specific group of men to be apostles throughout the ages until Herbert W. Armstrong--as God's "end-time apostle"--raised up the Worldwide Church of God.

Before examining the twelfth-century group of anti-catholic heretics called Waldensians, I would like to return to the story of the Jewish-Christians in Pella. Hoeh calls them true Christians because they were "adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy." These Christians were called "Ebionites" by their "enemies" according to Hoeh. (Hoeh felt that the title "Ebionite" which means "poor" was a slander to this religious sect. He seemed to be overlooking his own name calling in his reference to the Catholics as the "Great Whore.").

Hoeh's interpretation of history seems to be paradoxical. Here is another inconsistency that he produced. He quoted the 4th century historian Eusebius in referring to Polycarp as a faithful Christian. In doing this, Hoeh validated Eusebius as a reliable historian. By Hoeh's own standards, Eusebius would also have to have been an "enemy of the Ebionites" because he wrote favorably about Polycarp yet called the Ebionites heretics adding:

*With them [the Ebionites] the observance of the law was altogether necessary, as if they could not be saved, only by faith in Christ and a corresponding life. (Ecclesiastical History, p. 112, Baker Book House, 1981)*

This adherence to the Mosaic economy clearly made the Ebionites heretics to Eusebius and yet, in all of his writing about Polycarp, Eusebius never once placed Polycarp or his followers under the same condemnation. Why? If we are to believe Hoeh when he quoted Eusebius about Polycarp then we must also believe what Eusebius said about the Ebionites. The answer lies in this: Polycarp was not keeping the Jewish holydays and Mosaic laws as Hoeh assumed. Hoeh and his camp of theologians assumed that the fourth-century council of Nicea was a true church/false church controversy. The long-held "Quartodeciman controversy" was only one of several differences of opinions of Christians in the three centuries following Pentecost 31 AD. It was this lack of unity that caused those who wanted to control the system to convene in the Nicene council in 325 AD.

Unlike Paul's allowances in Romans 14, the fourth century Roman bishops would not allow for differences of opinion in the church. Strong church organization and government was seen as the only cure for a divided Christian community at this time. By the fourth century, Christianity was divided by its opinions about rituals. Hoeh, himself, had noted that Christians had been unorganized. It seems apparent that the New Testament apostles were not clear about what rituals their predecessors were to practice. To create *organized religion*, Christians had to unite under a set of creeds and doctrines and they had to acknowledge a hierarchial priesthood. This was accomplished by making one universal Christian church. Its proper name is the Universal Church of God. Of course we know it better by its Latin name--Catholic.

### **What Hoeh Fails to Mention About First Century Church**

According to Hoeh, some have noted that the first one to three hundred years of Christianity had a "curtain veiling" its history.

For many years history was devoid of documentation about the original Christians. With the discovery of the many thousands of scrolls in Qumran and their interpretation, the history of the first century followers of Jesus is becoming very clear to scholars. Not only has the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls enlightened scholars. Many other documents, such as the Gospel of Thomas, have surfaced in this century to substantiate what scholars have suspected for centuries, that the New Testament is primarily a fourth century creation.

It has been popular for many theologians to imagine that Christianity was purest at its initiation, during, what was casually assumed, the time of the writing of the New Testament, and declined from that period onward. This pure church came to be commonly called the "primitive church." Theoretically, its entanglement with "the pollutions of the world" caused division and impurity. The world's pollutions seemed to have the same effect on the primitive church as kryptonite had on superman. Thus, for centuries Christians have striven to reinvent what they imagined the biblical church of the apostles must have been like in order to recapture the faith once delivered and had since died out.

The concept of the "primitive church" became the ideal for later Christians to seek after. But, it is quite clear that this concept meant different things to different Christians. Later the organization of the Catholic church was an attempt to recapture the "primitive church" through the unifying of doctrine and ecumenical control. The threat of excommunication was understood to be the biblically sanctioned alternative to doctrinal disagreement. This desire for unity has been consistently pursued, since 325 AD., through their ecumenical councils.

A concept of the primitive church was also developed by Protestants:

*The 'Protestant' approach to the truth of Christianity is to look for it in a 'primitive church', where the faith was pure, free of dogmatic accretions, simple and obvious. In that golden age, says its adherents, when our Lord was present in his physical body or when the conviction of his resurrection was recent and not to be denied and the overwhelming power, his followers accepted him for what he was by*

*virtue of a personal relationship, making definition unnecessary. Thomas Didymus cried out 'My Lord and my God' because he saw and touched the wounds of the risen Christ, not because an ecumenical council had agreed on the form of words. This happy state disappeared within a few years. By the time Paul was writing, heresy and schism were beginning to appear in the churches. Since when they take this view of the Church, all developments of the original faith are departures from the norm established by Christ himself and his believers is to shed the accretions of later ages and return to this idealized and largely mythical 'primitive Christianity' (Christie-Murray, 6).*

Jones' *Church History* has been quoted frequently by Worldwide Church of God authors. Here is what he states about the first and second century Christians:

*"Let none," says Dr. Mosheim, alluding to the first and second centuries, "confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church, with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though they were both designated by the same name, yet they differed extremely, in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second centuries, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly, he acted not so much with the authority of a master, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant. The churches also, in those early times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws. Nothing is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there ever appear, in the first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin." To which we may add, that the first churches acknowledged no earthly potentate as their head. This had been expressly prohibited by their Divine master. "The kings of the Gentiles," said he, "exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise an authority upon them are termed benefactors. But with you it shall not be so;--let him that is greatest among you be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."...These divine maxims, which are in perfect unison with the whole tenor of the New Testament, were entirely disregarded by the ecclesiastics who undertook to new-model the constitution of the Christian church, under the auspices of Constantine, and whom, as a matter of courtesy, they condescended to make its earthly head. ( Jones, 287,288)*

According to William Jones, these primitive Christians: 1) Claimed no earthly leaders; 2) Were not highly organized; 3) Met in very small groups; 4) Had local autonomy; 5) Had diversity of doctrines. Again, it is ironic that the historian most quoted by Armstrong's writers claimed that early Christians were against organized religion.

Of course, William Jones was a product of the Enlightenment. In the twentieth century, one might read Jones' interpretation of early Christian attitudes and conclude that these people possessed a sense of autonomy and free will. If they did act in such a manner among their Roman dominators, they would have surely appeared as rebels. Therefore, the first century Christians suffered as martyrs until their rescue by Constantine:

*In the view that we have taken of the Christian history during the preceding period, it appears uniformly in harmony with this representation. The general character of the disciples of Christ is that of a suffering people; and, notwithstanding some intervals of repose occasionally intervening, in general the progress of the gospel is traced in the blood of the saints, and its power an evidence made conspicuous in prevailing against the most formidable opposition. Thus, the excellency of its power appeared to be of God, and not of man...But the scene is altogether changed, when we view the state of matters after the ascension of Constantine; for then, instead of the teachers of Christianity being called upon to shew their attachment to it by self-denial and suffering for its sake, we see them exalted to worldly honour and dignity; and the holy and heavenly religion of Jesus, converted into a system of pride, domination and hypocrisy, and becoming, at length, the means of gratifying the vilest lusts and*

*passions of the human heart. (263)*

The conclusion might be drawn from Jones' history that the Christian system seeking to organize itself under a banner of unity had less to do with doctrines than it did with establishing a form of government. And yet both doctrine and government seemed to have become more important issues to the council of Nicea than faith, hope, and charity had become to the Pauline authors.

It seems that the New Testament apostles, who would have instructed the "primitive church," left their successors without centralized government or a strict standard of doctrines, creeds or rituals. There appears to be no systematic theology that made counterfeit Christians easily recognizable, unless it was their attitude of independence. According to Jones, these ante-Nicene Christians knew that their bishops could not claim authority over the souls of other men. It was merely their job to be good hosts or table servers in private homes where Messianic followers would come together. It took about three hundred years for this system to come under challenge by its own bishops who now wanted all Christians to look and act alike.

The Roman emperor Constantine is clearly viewed as the first organizer of Christianity by most historians. He set up a form of church government and created a system of priests who claimed authority through apostolic succession and doctrinal interpretation. This could be seen as the very origin of the belief in one true church. Christianity is a religion that is burdened with paradoxes. By trying to establish unity in the fourth century, Constantine would receive the blame for destroying the "primitive church" by historians centuries later.

*In the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, the obstruction which had hitherto operated against the full manifestation to the antichristian power, being removed, the current of events gradually brought matters to that state in which "the man of sin" became fully revealed, "sitting in the temple of God, and shewing himself as God"(265).*

Here is where the nineteenth century historian used by Worldwide Church of God writers waxed polemical. He adopted a popular belief, festering throughout the Middle Ages, that these early organizers of the Universal Church had been predicted in New Testament prophecies as the power of the antichrist.

*Many of the errors, indeed, of several centuries, the fruit of vain philosophy, paved the way for the events which followed; but the hindrance was not effectually removed, until Constantine the emperor, on professing himself a Christian, undertook to convert the kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world, by exalting the teachers of Christianity to the same state of affluence, grandeur, and influence in the empire, as had been enjoyed by Pagan priests and secular officers in the state. The professed ministers of Jesus having now a wide field opened to them for gratifying their lusts of power, wealth, and dignity, the connection between the Christian faith and the cross, was at an end. What followed was the kingdom of the clergy, supplanting the kingdom of Jesus Christ (269, 270).*

### **Quartodeciman Controversy**

The bishops gathered at Nicea believed that Christians were commanded to observe the Lord's supper (not Jewish Passover) as a memorial. But as with many doctrinal issues confronting them, there was a lack of unity concerning when and how often this ritual was to be observed. The Asian churches had observed the Eucharist on the 14th of Nisan and said that the apostle John had set the example for them. But the Roman Christians too claimed they had received traditions from the apostles. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* the bishop listed as successor to Peter, in Rome, was Linus. Linus was the disciple of Paul (II Tim 4:21). Paul, according to tradition, was beheaded in Rome. The influence of Christianity and successors to the bishops seemed to be everywhere in the known world in the fourth century.

Just prior to the first ecumenical council of Nicea, the western Roman churches were observing the Lord's Supper closest to the spring equinox on a Sunday. There were various reasons why they came to choose a Sunday, rather than Nisan 14, to celebrate the Lord's supper on: 1) The difficulty and inaccuracy of the calculation of the Hebrew calendar; 2) The inaccurate calculation falling upon any day of the week. (Out of convenience, they argued for a set day of the week, since they knew of no command to calculate the Eucharist in agreement with the Hebrew calendar.); 3) The bishops also felt that the Jews had rejected the Messiah.

These arguments led the bishops to conclude that there was no reason for Christians to abide by any of the covenants made to the Jews in the Old Testament.

Hoeh also failed to mention that, at this juncture in history, the Hebrew Calendar had been so inaccurate that the 14th of Nisan was occurring before the spring equinox, in winter. Thus, the Passover association with the Eucharist seemed to be worthless since no one was able to calculate the day properly anyway. Notice what John Kossey pointed out in the Ambassador College textbook, "The Hebrew Calendar: A Mathematical Introduction":

*There is some evidence that an adjustment to the Hebrew calendar may have taken place during the patriarchate of Simon III (140-163). See Cyrus Adler, "Calendar, History of," in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1907), Vol. 3, p. 500.*

With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, in 70 A.D., and the Levitical priesthood abolished, the very system that the Jews had used to derive the *molad of Tishri*--the benchmark needed to calculate the complex Hebrew calendar--was now severely crippled and even they had to rely on an inferior system to maintain Judaism.

If the Jews could not properly calculate the Hebrew holydays in the first century, then what were the Christians to do? It is unreasonable to think that a just God would have placed such a burden on Christians without providing the means for them to obey him.

In the first ecumenical council (Nicea) this was one of many controversies settled among organized Christians.

The major controversy for the Council of Nicea was not about the Passover though. It was about something called Arianism.

### **Arianism**

There appears to be a very distinct dichotomy in conceptualizing the nature of God among religious people of the Greco-Roman influence and those from the Middle East. To this day, neither Moslems nor Jews have ever accepted the belief in the demigod ( someone, like Hercules who was half god and half man). So, when east met west in the fourth century council of bishops, the deity of Jesus became a major controversy. This eastern philosophy came to be known in Rome as Arianism, named after Arius, a fourth century bishop of Alexandria. Arianism was an early challenge to Catholicism protesting that the Messiah could not have been both God and man.

*But the question of how the Son was related to the Father (Himself acknowledged on all hands to be the one Supreme Deity), gave rise, between the years AD 60 and 200, to a number of Theosophic systems, called generally Gnosticism, and having for their authors Baisilides, Valentinus, Tatian, and other Greek speculators. Though all these visited Rome, they had no following in the West, which remained free from controversies of an abstract nature, and was faithful to the creed of its baptism. Intellectual centres were chiefly Alexandria and Antioch, Egyptian or Syrian, and speculation was carried on in Greek...The adaptation of a vocabulary employed by Plato and Aristotle to Christian truth was a matter of time;*

*...That disputes should spring up even among the orthodox who all held one faith, was inevitable. And of these wranglings the rationalist would take advantage in order to substitute for the ancient creed his own inventions. The drift of all he advanced was this: to deny that in any true sense God could have a Son; as Mohammed tersely said afterwards, "God neither begets nor is He begotten" ("Arianism," 707)*

Here is how William Jones records the Arian Controversy in the early organized Christian church.

*But a dispute now arose which may be said to have involved all Christendom in a flame...The occasion of this dispute, which is well known by the name of "THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY," seems to have been simply this. Alexander, one of the prelates of that church, speaking upon the subject of the Trinity, had affirmed that there was "an unity in the Trinity, and particularly that the Son was co-eternal, and consubstantial, and of the same dignity with the Father." Arius objected to this language, and argued that "If the Father begat the Son, he who was begotten must have a beginning of his existence; and from hence, says he, 'tis manifest that there was a time when (the Son) was not,"(Jones, 293).*

Arius lost the controversy and was excommunicated. Both the divinity of Christ and the Trinity were instituted into the Nicene Creed at this point in history.

In short, when Constantine became emperor of Rome in the fourth century, he made Christianity the state religion. Now it was the LAW in all Roman provinces to be a Christian. To promote unity among orthodox churches the Roman bishop was made the chief prelate and all opposing him were excommunicated. Eventually, the eastern and western orthodox churches split. (The eastern headquarters was placed in Constantinople, where it is to this day.)

From this point on in history, there were scattered groups of Christians who were opposed to Catholicism. Very little is actually known about their doctrinal practices. And what we know of these groups is often derived from legends.

It has been taught by the Worldwide Church of God, that there was always one organization among these groups that was truly pure in its generations. They claimed it was always called the "Church of God;" it always kept the Sabbath and Passover; it was always anti-Catholic.

There have actually been several interpretations offered as to who the symbolic "Mother of harlots" of the book of Revelation might be. The belief that it is the Roman Catholic system is a popular one and dates back many hundreds of years.

Another interpretation has been that the "Great Whore" of Revelation was Rabbinic Judaism of 70 AD. Old Testament prophecies had pictured Israel as a symbolic prostitute who had actually paid her lovers. According to the prophets, she was condemned, by God, to be taken captive into the land of Babylon. Little is recorded in the canonized Old Testament after her return from Babylon. It was during that period of time that the Pharisees rose up to power and established the synagogue system that existed in the time of Jesus. The Pharisees rejected Jesus as their Talmudic Messiah and, it is popularly believed, sought to have the Romans put him to death. This could certainly be seen as riding upon a beast since the Jews had actually considered Gentiles to be unclean beasts. Later the Pharisees would be taken into Babylonian captivity again where they would codify their oral traditions in what is known today as the "Babylonian Talmud." This alternate view is one that is held among groups like the preterists, who do not believe that this is the end-time.

In the next chapter we will examine the ancient church of the Waldenses. It makes the claim of being the oldest Protestant church in the world. The Worldwide Church of God disputed that claim and said that at one time it was one of its "parent" churches linking it back to the New Testament. They claimed it was, for a season, the true church of God. Could they prove it?

Was the Easter/Passover issue the indicator of true religion? Did Christ make Moses' Law even more binding on Christians? Was there one great false system of Christianity and one true system? If so, how do we distinguish between these two systems?

Is Christ divided? Or are Christians, too often, divisive?

## Chapter 8

### And He Gave Some, Apostles

It was important for Worldwide Church of God historians to establish that history drew a virtual blank in the first few centuries of the Christian movement until its organizing by Constantine. This was to emphasize Armstrong's assumption that a great counterfeit system rose up in Rome as the GREAT WHORE of the book of Revelation.

But if the Worldwide Church of God adhered to the definition of Matthew 16--the same one that the Roman Catholic system used to establish itself as the one true Christian church--then the Worldwide Church of God was limited in its search for the alleged *one true church* among obscure groups of heretics.

It was then fundamentally assumed that the flame of the "primitive church" was never extinguished, but rather it continued to burn in "scattered" groups who were keeping "*God's true Passover*" and "*Sabbath*."

These Worldwide writers did not leave room for the slightest doubt by asserting that these authentic groups were the ancient Ebionites, Paulicians, Bogomils, Cathari and so on. They asserted that these groups were NOT apostate or heretical, but indeed the authentic lineage of "God's one true church." And all this simply because the Catholics did not accept them. Their reasoning is all very circular.

What is actually written in history about these early groups of heretics is so riddled with fable and ambiguity that it is difficult for the layman to scrutinize the references adequately to verify Armstrong's claim. If we are careful, though, we will begin to see holes in Armstrong's history.

A person lacking scholarly training could easily be made to yield to someone who claims to be an erudite authority. Advertisers have long used authority as a substitute for truth in statements like, "Nine out of ten doctors use Brand X Aspirin." If we were further informed that those ten doctors may have been offered a year's free supply of Brand X Aspirin for endorsing the product, we might wonder why one doctor chose not to go along with his colleagues.

In reality, what Armstrong and his writers had attempted to produce was a construct. A construct is a concept that is neither provable nor disprovable. The fairy tale of the *Emperor's New Clothes* gives a good example of a construct in action. Convinced by two traveling salesmen, posing as "tailors," that he could parade before his subjects in fine new clothes so exquisite that only pure hearted people could see them, the emperor surrendered a fortune in gold for the magic clothes. But, the only clothes that the emperor ended up wearing in the story were the clothes that he imagined. He had fallen for an invisible construct produced by two con artists. Finally, among all of his fearful devoted subjects, only an innocent child was brave enough to declare, "The emperor's not wearing any clothes."

Since I don't want to chase after constructs, the group of Christian reformers that I would like to examine are those who rose up against an arrogant and wealthy papacy and followed a wealthy Catholic merchant named Peter Waldo. These were the Waldensians. Armstrong, as well as Joseph Tkach, have made specific claims about these Christian reformers of the Middle Ages.

In part seven of Ronald Kelly's 1991 *Plain Truth* he entitled "The Church That Loved The Bible," he wrote:

*The story is told in many treatises on Church history, but we refer our readers particularly to History of the Waldenses of Italy From Their Origin to the Reformation by Emilio Comba, and The History of the Christian Church, From the Birth of Christ to the XVII. Century; Including the Very Interesting Account of the Waldenses and Albigenses by William Jones.*

I read both histories cited above, in researching this book, and I would invite my readers to read them as well. *Let's see now if the sources, quoted by both Herman Hoeh in 1959 and Ronald Kelly in the early 90's, do indeed substantiate this story of church lineage.*

On page 22 of Herman Hoeh's 1959 history, he too focused on this group of twelfth century "heretics" called the Poor Men of Lyons or Waldenses. To follow through with the alleged apostolic succession of the Church of God, Waldo had to have been raised up among an already existing "Church of God" as an apostle. This never really happened.

Remember, the "gates of hell" could not have prevailed against the "True Church" and it has "always" preserved the *true* Sabbaths, holy days, tithing and name "Church of God". Here is what our historical guide, Hoeh wrote:

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

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

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

*God was using Peter Waldo.*

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

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

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

The book that Herman Hoeh was quoting from is the same one that Kelly had referred to, *History of the Waldenses of Italy, From Their Origin To The Reformation* by Emilio Comba, DD. (Waldensian Theological College, Florence, Italy, 1889 ed.) Therefore, this will be one of our sources as well.

Notice what Dr. Comba mentions in the preface of this same book concerning the attaching of legends of "apostolic succession" to the Waldensians:

*There has been desire on the part of some to extend backward their early history; with this only as a result, that it has been crushed out of all shape. The historian has filled it full of fables and traditions picked up at hap-hazard; then, as if with trumpet-blast and clarion ring, its antiquity was blazoned forth. But, although the sound re-echoed far and wide, it could not dispel the thick cloud that overhung that people's origin and early days. Flatterers are more to be feared than assailants. The former would have it credited or imagined that the Waldenses are of a patriarchal age--of great duration; that they are apostolic in name and in fact, but barren withal; that they had an existence, but always in the cradle; that they did not live with all the word implies, but slept for three, seven, or even ten centuries!*

*It is quite possible to conceive that such an uneventful existence--if such could be--might well have passed unnoticed; what we deny is that such an existence was possible. We shall examine facts, and after all if we find the antiquity of the Waldenses to be less far reaching than has been supposed, it is none the less grand and venerable...*

*There is an idea with some, that its origin may be traced back to the very time of the first preaching of the Gospel; but it is important that this idea be disentangled from a confused mass of legends.*

*We shall find the first authentic source appearing with Waldo, and the disciples whom tradition has called by his name. From that time onward, we shall follow the sinuous course of their followers' history down to the eve of the Reformation.*

The other major source used by the Worldwide Church of God to make an apostolic lineage for the Waldenses was William Jones' *The History of the Christian Church, from the Birth of Christ, to the XVII. Century; including the Very Interesting Account of the Waldenses and Albigenses*. To make the claim that William Jones somehow substantiated "Apostolic Succession" is untrue as well. To do so would be to quote him entirely out of context. He clearly stated his view of people who tried to read something into history that wasn't there.

*It may possibly strike some readers with surprise that no notice is taken, in the following pages, of a multiplicity of sects which arose, from time to time, in what is called the Christian world, and whose history occupies so very large space in the volumes of most of our modern writers on this subject...In tracing the kingdom of Christ in the world, I have paid no regard whatever to the long disputed subject of apostolical succession. I have, indeed, read much that has been written upon it by the Catholic writers on one side, and by Dr. Allix, Sir Samuel Morland, and several Protestants on the other; and I regret the labour that has been so fruitlessly expended by the latter, persuaded as I am that the postulatium is a mere fiction, and that the ground on which the Protestant writers have proceeded in contending for it, is altogether untenable. It is admitted, that the Most High has had his churches and people in every age, since the decease of the Apostles; but to attempt to trace a regular succession of ordained bishops in the Vallies of Piedmont, or any other country, is "labouring in the fire for very vanity," and seems to me to proceed upon mistaken views of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and the sovereignty of God, in his operations in the earth, as they have respect to it.*

*(Jones, vol. 1; p. xi)*

Both of these historians were two of the highest regarded sources used by all of the Worldwide Church of God writers in the past. And yet both of these books warn against using the history of the Waldenses to establish a form of apostolic succession.

*It has been said:--"There is hardly a sect whose origin has been more disputed over than that of the Waldenses." Disregarding the expression "a sect"--which is here more or less out of place--the above statement is not without foundation. We know that any question of origin contains inherently an element of vagueness, which fascinates the imagination. What religion, city, or family is not inclined to trace its origin back to mythical sources?...If prejudice be allowed to have a voice in the matter, it will only accumulate legends; and history can no longer disentangle herself from them. This has too often been the case. Basnage says:--"It is a weakness belonging to all Churches, as well as States, to claim for themselves great antiquity." The reason may be readily divined, for it is nothing new. Let us admit at the outset, that prejudice has taken a very active part in the researches relating to the origin of the Waldenses; it has exerted its influence, somewhat over everybody, friends as well as foes. But as prejudice has no part in true history, it must be our endeavour to free ourselves of it.*

*The following words, written more than five centuries ago, are often quoted:--"Among all the sects, there is none more pernicious to the church than that of the Leonists, and for three reasons:--In the first*

*place, because it is one of the most ancient; for some say that it dates back to the time of Sylvester; others to the time of the Apostles. In the second place, because it is the most widespread. There is hardly a country where it does not exist. In the third place, because, if other sects strike with horror those who listen to them, the Leonists, on the contrary, possess a great outward appearance of piety. As a matter of fact they lead irreproachable lives before men, and as regards their faith and the articles of their creed, they are orthodox. Their one conspicuous fault is, that they blaspheme against the Church and the clergy, points on which laymen in general are known to be too easily led away."*

*Here we have an indisputable testimony. It has been erroneously attributed to the Inquisitor Rainerius Saccho, who settled in Milan, and was in contact with the Waldenses of Italy; whereas it was rendered by one of his colleagues in the diocese of Passau in Austria, about the year 1260. We may assent to it, but on one condition, namely, that its meaning be not perverted. The writer in no wise affirms that the Waldenses date back to a period anterior to Waldo; he simply states that some claim that they do. As for himself, he believes in no such thing....Unquestionably it was, even at this early time, current among the Waldenses, that they were of ancient origin, truly apostolic...*

*The pretension to apostolic succession of the Church innate, manifests itself in the Catholic party in a way differing from that in the dissenting sections. In the former it takes a more material and gross form of expression than in the case of the latter, in which it has nevertheless a wider basis of truth, notwithstanding the little regard manifested for appearances. According to the popular tradition--which for many years has had an increasing ascendancy over men's minds--the primitive Church, faithful and canonical, goes back to the days of Constantine, under whose reign the original fall of the Church took place, and the era of apostasy began. (Comba, 3-4)*

Here we have an original version of some of the Waldensians trying to claim a link to the "primitive church." Comba refers to apostolic succession applying to the Waldensians as a pretension (a fabricated story). But one must remember that apostolic succession had been claimed by the popes for centuries by the time of Peter Waldo. If a group of heretics wanted to disarm the Catholics, claiming apostolic succession would be an effective way to do so. In actuality, what these Catholics and followers of Waldo were arguing about was who acted *more like the "primitive church," not who was descended from it*. The Waldensians were upset with the direction Christianity had been taking, during the Middle Ages, under the papal system. Here in Comba's book we find that fictional claims might be attempted to support this mysterious "Church of God" theory through the Waldensians. To do so, we would need to overlook the context, ignore history, and misquote the historians who have already debunked their plagiarists for fanning the flames of vanity.

What made the Waldensians heretics was their defiance of the Pope.

*They believe that Pope Sylvester, at the instigation of the devil, became the founder of the Roman Church. "They say," repeats the monk Moneta, "that the Church of God had declined in the time of Sylvester, and that in these days it had been re-established by their efforts, commencing with Waldo." "They call themselves successors of the Apostles," adds monk David of Augsburg, "and say they are in possession of the apostolic authority, and of the keys to bind and unbind." (Comba, p. 7)*

The above mentioned Moneta was an Inquisitor. The Church of God that had declined (or become corrupted) was the Catholic Church. This is a third party accusation by Moneta against the Waldenses. Moneta further claimed that the Waldenses were rejecting the papacy because the prelates were wealthy, loved "red wine and women" and had locked away the scriptures in the Latin language, of which no common man could read. The poor were not receiving the scriptures.

Peter Waldo, as Hoeh pointed out, was a Catholic. As one of the earliest reformers of the Catholic Church, he preceded Martin Luther by 300 years.

The popes themselves had authored the doctrine of the "primacy of Peter" or "apostolic succession" and they commonly referred to the Roman Catholic church as the "Church of God". Further, since they had canonized the Bible, it was written in Latin, the language of scholars and clerics, but not of commoners. They claimed vicarious authority from God. No one could challenge the Church of God or its bishops without being in danger of excommunication or becoming declared anathema.

Peter Waldo felt sympathy for the poor. As an example, he took on a vow of poverty (formerly kept by the early popes themselves but now abandoned). He went with a handful of followers to the Vatican. Standing in the opulent chambers before regally dressed bishops and emissaries, Waldo's ascetics, much like those of his contemporary Francis of Assisi, looked shabby and pathetic dressed only in rags. His group was received well by the Pope for their vow of poverty. It was Waldo's desire to translate the scriptures from Latin into the common language that was perceived as a threat to the clergy, resulting in his excommunication in 1183 AD.

Waldo was mentioned in Jones' History in Volume II, pages 90-92, as one of the early catholic reformers. In other words, he was a Catholic until 1183 AD.

It must be noted here that Waldo was not raised up to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, did not call himself an apostle, did not belong to any Church of God except the Catholic Church of God (from which he was excommunicated), did not commemorate the Hebrew Passover, and observed the Sunday Sabbath (sometimes simply referred to by Catholics as the Sabbath).

*What are we commanded by the third commandment? --By the third commandment we are commanded to worship in a special manner on Sunday, the Lord's day. "Keep you my Sabbath: for it is holy unto you....(My Catholic Faith, p. 202)*

Was Dr. Hoeh actually making more out of this story than really existed?

*God's Church was once again spreading the gospel! A school for ministers was established to provide the trained help to carry the gospel. (True History)*

For instance, when did Peter Waldo begin observing the Saturday Sabbath? When did he start keeping the Passover on the 14th of Nisan? All we seem to have here is a spurious legend about "apostolic succession" and the mysterious name "The Church of God." Under the heading, "Called the 'Church of God'" in *A True History of a True Church*, Hoeh wrote:

*Here is a marvelous record from these people, still preserved, dated 1404: "We do not find anywhere in the writings of the Old Testament that the light of truth and of holiness was at any time completely extinguished. There have always been men who walked faithfully in the paths of righteousness. Their number has been at times reduced to a few; but has never been altogether lost. We believe that the same has been the case from the time of Jesus Christ until now; and that it will be so unto the end. For if the Church of God was founded, it was in order that it might remain until the end of time...We do not believe that the Church of God absolutely departed from the way of truth; but one portion yielded, and, as is commonly seen, the majority was led away to evil. (Quoted in Comba's History, pp. 10-11.)" (Hoeh, 22)*

Notice that after the portion of text that Dr. Hoeh used as a proof that this alleged Church of God existed apart from the Catholic church, there is a section of quoted text deleted with an ellipsis (...). Here is the deleted section that Dr. Hoeh left out while quoting Comba.

*For if the Church of God was founded, it was in order that it might remain until the end of time. She preserved for a long time the virtue of holy religion, and, according to ancient history, her directors lived in poverty and humility for about three centuries; that is to say, down to the time of Constantine. Under the reign of this Emperor, who was a leper, there was in the Church a man named Sylvester, a*

*Roman. Constantine went to him, was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and cured of his leprosy. The Emperor finding himself healed of a loathsome disease, in the name of Jesus Christ, thought he would honour him who had wrought the cure by bestowing upon him the Crown of the Emperor. Sylvester accepted it, but his companion, it is said, refused his consent, separated from him, and continued to follow the path of poverty. Then, Constantine went away to regions beyond the sea, followed by a multitude of Romans, and built up the city to which he gave his name--Constantinople--so that from that time the Heresiarch rose to honour and dignity, and evil was multiplied upon the earth. We do not believe that the Church of God, absolutely departed from the way of truth; but one portion yielded, and, as is commonly seen, the majority was led away to evil. The other portion remaining long faithful to the truth it had received. (Hoeh's deletion of Comba's History, pp. 10-11)*

This text is obviously concerning the split between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic church. Placed back into context, these Waldensians are saying that until the Roman Catholic pope Sylvester (who reigned 314-334 AD) the Church of God (Catholic) had been pure, teaching the vow of poverty among its clergy. Constantine's founding of the Eastern Orthodox church signified the beginning of a great culpability in the Roman church to the Waldensians. One church under Constantine, in Constantinople; one under Pope Sylvester, in Rome. Comba goes on to state that this was a "traditional" view of history, or legend held by the Waldensians and:

*...has no reference to the isolated existence of any particular religious sect, and not even to their creeds; but solely to the vow of poverty, which Waldo certainly did not invent, but merely re-established. (p. 11)*

What we are concerned with here is Hoeh's accuracy as a historian. In his account he has clearly fabricated a historical "Church of God" independent of the Catholic Church. When put back into context ***Hoeh's "Church of God" becomes the Catholic Church!*** This reminds me of the pithy saying: "We have seen the enemy and it is us."

The story of an ancient origin of the Waldensian church is said to have sprung out of legend. There is no supporting evidence to conclude that the Waldensians were protesting against anything other than the papacy of the Middle Ages because of their wanton greed. They were doing exactly what Martin Luther did 300 years later. This makes the Waldensian movement a Protestant one.

And where are the critical doctrines of adhering to the law of Moses? Where was Peter Waldo ever made or called an apostle? There is no evidence.

Now this raises a serious issue for members of the Worldwide Church of God. After re-inserting the passage from Dr. Comba's history that Herman Hoeh had removed, we find that the Church of God that Hoeh claimed to be the missing link to the Worldwide Church of God is, none other than, *the Roman Catholic Church itself.*

In other words, the Waldenses were Catholics in every way except for their vow of poverty. Waldo, like Luther, was a Catholic reformer who only succeeded in being excommunicated from the Church of God. How odd that such a thing should happen to the "apostle" of the "era" Hoeh called Thyatira!

The Waldensian church still exists to this day. Their world headquarters is in Piedmont, Italy and their American Headquarters is in New York. I questioned them directly about any historical data referring to the Waldenses calling themselves "The Church of God" or of them keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath or of having kept the Passover instead of Easter. This was the reply I received from Rev. Frank G. Gibson, executive director:

*In past centuries, various writers held that the Waldensian experience runs to early centuries of the Christian era. No Waldensian scholar today holds to this line. The Waldensian Church and Witnesses authors trace their story to the movement of Valdesius in the 1100's, and not before. I am aware that*

*others--not Waldensians!--do not tend to accept this line, but unfortunately they tend to rely on very dated sources now thoroughly overtaken by historical research.*

His reference to various writers of past centuries indicates that clinging to the Waldensians for a link to the "primitive church" predated Hoeh's attempt to do so. Others have attempted this same claim in the past. There is nothing like being taken in by an old con.

Tkach was rather slow to distance himself from the claim to apostleship. As late as March 31, 1992 in the *WORLDWIDE NEWS*, Joseph Tkach had written in his "Personal" to the membership:

*From time to time Church Administration receives questions about what the Church means by its use of the term apostle in reference to Herbert W. Armstrong and me [Joseph Tkach]...Some have been confused by this terminology, assuming it connotes an office equal to that of the apostles of the first century....Mr. Armstrong was indeed an apostle, or "one sent," in the same sense as Peter Waldo was an apostle, for example, or as any other person whom God has stirred up through the ages since the first century to lead the Church in proclaiming the gospel.*

Again there is no known reference of Peter Waldo calling himself an apostle. His gospel was that church leaders should take a vow of poverty. The Waldensians also were adamantly opposed to the doctrine of tithing. This certainly doesn't present any evidence of kindred spirits between the Worldwide Church of God and the Waldensians.

I questioned Dr. Ruth Tucker (author of a book about modern cults entitled *Another Gospel*) about this use of the term of apostle by the Worldwide Church of God. Since she teaches church history, I asked her if she knew of any claim of Peter Waldo to the office of apostle. She felt that Herbert Armstrong had definitely claimed to be an apostle in the same sense of the New Testament apostles. She knew of no historical record, though, of Peter Waldo claiming apostleship. She felt that Tkach was being vague in his reference to the term. What about Joseph Tkach? Is he an apostle? In the same *Personal* he wrote:

*As you know, the original apostles formed part of what Paul called the foundation of the Church: 'Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone' (Ephesians 2:20, New International Version throughout)...When referring to Mr. Armstrong or myself, however, the Church uses the term apostle (drawn from the list of ministerial offices in Ephesians 4:11).*

Read what Ephesians 4:11 (not quoted by Tkach) says:

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;*

Notice these points: 1) There is no biblical distinction between the office of apostle; past, present, or future. Any distinction therefore would have to be imaginary. 2) Prophets? Who were the prophets since the time of the apostles? 3) The reference to apostles and prophets in Ephesians 4:11 is taken from Ephesians 2:20. Ephesians 2:20 specifically states that the foundation of the "household of God" is Christ, the apostles, and the prophets.

I would have to concede with Dr. Tucker that Joseph Tkach was confused both historically and biblically as to the definition of an apostle. This teaching of apostleship was one that the Worldwide Church of God seemed to be gradually backing away from after Armstrong's death. The January 1993 issue of the *Plain Truth* magazine managed to redefine the title *apostle* to that of a "fellow worker or messenger" and implied that the Worldwide Church of God had never participated in the practice, by laying the blame on "some Christian denominations":

*Today, some Christian denominations use the title apostle for the person who holds the chief spiritual*

*office in their church. These churches generally do not mean the term in the broadest, biblical sense--as eyewitnesses of the resurrection--but rather in the administrative sense. (p. 19, Plain Truth, January 1993)*

In making this statement, the *Plain Truth* writers were unclear in explaining exactly how these other churches came to redefine this biblical title to a sense of an administrator from the sense of an eyewitness.

If the biblical synonym of an apostle is *eyewitness*, then just as an eyewitness in a court hearing bears only one type of authority, that of being a witness to a crime, so witnessing the life ministry of Jesus granted some the title *apostle*. There appears to be no other type of apostolic authority given in the New Testament.

In the next chapter I will discuss what Herman Hoeh and Herbert Armstrong called the Sardis "era" of the alleged true church. It actually comprised three totally different churches.

## Chapter 9

### Sardis...Thou Livest, and Art Dead

The early Catholic bishops had actually nurtured the construct of a "primitive church." Later, when small groups of heretics wanted to challenge papal authority they would claim a link to the "primitive church." But such claims had no real substance to them. They were just claims.

When someone actually believes that a construct or metaphor is real, the person is practicing something known as reification. Let me give an example.

For many years, scientists could not understand certain physical properties of light. So, they devised a construct called the "ether." No one had ever seen the ether. But, the security blanket of knowing that the mysterious behavior of light could be assigned to its existence, helped scientists believe that the physics developed by Isaac Newton was applicable to all material things. Since light did not operate in Newtonian fashion, the invisible ether must have been the culprit causing its misbehavior. It wasn't until the turn of this century that a brilliant young scientist working in a patent office published five papers that changed the world dramatically. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity proved that there is simply no such thing as ether. It had never existed. Rather, the limitations of Newtonian physics required further analysis.

Like the invisible ether, the concept of the "primitive church" had only existed in the imaginations of men.

I have shown that the establishing of a lineage from the "primitive church" is a very old tactic. Both Catholic and Protestant groups have tried to invent or define their own versions of it. Their reasoning was that if they could reveal the "primitive church" observing their own doctrines, they could then create a link to that church. That would make them the only true church. Through the ages it has been perceived by a few that this unprovable concept could not really be a proper one at all.

It only took a few centuries of organized Christianity, dominated by a corrupt papacy and church government enforced by the Inquisition, to prove that "apostolic succession" was a complete fable. Thus, if there was no one true visible organized church, then there had to be another understanding to replace the old construct. This was redefined in the concept of an invisible church.

Many of the early Catholic reformers were not interested in the idea of creating an organized system of their own. They wanted to protest the idea of the "one true church" being an organized system under the control of corruptible men, one that had grown into a tyranny which could put to death its opponents.

What the theologians of the Worldwide Church of God would call the beginnings of the "Sardis Era" of God's true church was, in actual fact, the beginnings of Protestant reform in England.

In Part 8 of Ronald Kelly's 12-part series on the "History of The Church of God" (August 1991 *Plain Truth*), he drew his readers' attention to the man who was the alleged author of this "era", John Wycliff. Now it is a fact that Wycliff did not observe the Saturday Sabbath, and this did not even escape the attention of Kelly.

*Wycliff was devoted to the Ten Commandments, but interpreted the Sabbath laws as applying to Sunday. (Kelly, 18)*

Wycliff became an important link, though, to this concept of church lineage because his followers were called the Lollards, of whom Kelly wrote:

*During the early part of these dynamic centuries a group of people associated with Wycliff, and called*

*Lollards provided an interesting transition from the Waldensian period. (20)*

This transition that Wycliff and the Lollards provided was the logical link that brings the alleged one true church to England. This was important. If one was to trace a "lineage", one must find a pathway through history. In this case, the pathway led from Jerusalem and ended up in Pasadena, California. The Lollards in England only served as a stepping stone between the fourteenth century Waldensians of Europe and a seventeenth century group of Sabbatarians in England who moved to America.

Inconsistencies were overlooked by the Worldwide Church of God and similarities were pointed out.

What made the Lollards the true Church? They were anti-Catholic! They had no other similarities to the Worldwide Church of God.

Kelly neglected to point out that, just as the Waldensians believed, Wycliff and the Lollards believed that Christian ministers could not claim tithing money.

*Priests and bishops, he maintained, should be honoured because of their character and should set an example to their flocks. Clergy who tried to enforce the collection of tithes by that very fact were revealed as unworthy of their office (Latourette, 664)*

Was Wycliffe an apostle? No. Had he, in any way, stumbled upon the undying remnant of God's true church?

*Wycliffe argued that the true Church is made up only of those elected by God and is invisible, and that since it is God's choice which determines membership, no visible church or its officers can control entrance or can exclude from membership. Nor can Pope or bishop know who are true members. To his mind, salvation does not depend upon a connexion [sic] with the visible Church or upon the mediation of the priesthood, but solely upon election by God. (p. 664)*

Earlier we had seen how Herbert Armstrong felt that salvation could not have been achieved outside of the Worldwide Church of God. He felt that this would amount to an abortion from the womb of the Mother Church.

Wycliffe died in 1384. He had stirred up the Catholic community in England so much that his remains were exhumed 44 years after his death, by papal order, burned to ashes and thrown into a nearby stream.

Here is what the *Worldbook Encyclopedia* mentions about the Lollards:

*Lollards were originally a religious group of the early 1300's in Holland. About 1387, the term began to be used as a name for the followers of the English religious reformer John Wycliffe. The Lollards preached obedience to God, reliance on the Bible as a guide to Christian living, and simplicity of worship. They rejected the riches of Mass, most sacraments, and papal supremacy. They denied that an organized church was necessary for salvation. Most Lollards were poor priests or members of the laity. They wore long russet gowns, carried staves, and lived on what they could beg. Henry IV, who became king in 1399, persecuted the Lollards because their views disagreed with religious law. By 1420, their movement had been practically stamped out.*

*The Lollards had little permanent effect on religious life in England, but they had great influence in Bohemia. There, John Hus was burned at the stake in 1415 for preaching Wycliffe's doctrines. One hundred years later, Martin Luther embraced some of Hus's ideas. In this way, the Lollards helped to pave the way for the Protestant Reformation (Maehl, 381-383).*

Interestingly, it is through these early Catholic reformers that the Worldwide Church of God has founded its lineage theory and not in the Judaizers who have also existed through the centuries.

As Kelly concluded Part 9 of his series, he actually drew attention to the existence of a group of

medieval Sabbath-keeping Christians in Russia called Subbotniki. They actually had nothing to do with the story--they were neither linked to the Lollards nor the Waldensians. It is unclear why he tried to make a connection with the Worldwide Church of God and the Subbotniki in Russia. Maybe as a diversion to make it within the realm of possibility that, scattered like freckles upon the earth, both anti-Catholicism and Judaizing have always coexisted with Catholicism. And possibly in their collective form they comprised the true church.

The Russian Sabbath-keepers really only served to divert the readers' attention until Kelly could produce his first authentic group of Christian Sabbatarians in seventeenth century England. Their appearance occurred centuries after the time of the Lollards, which again seems to defy the concept that the gates of hell had never prevailed against the one true church. It was with this closing paragraph in Kelly's Part 9 of the *Plain Truth* that he introduced these Sabbatarians.

*That brings to a fitting close another chapter in the history of the New Testament Church. Next chapter, we'll pick up the Sabbatarians in England and see how they came to the New World colony of Rhode Island more than a hundred years before the American Revolution.*

*On page 23, of Hoeh's 1959 history he attempted his explanation of this Sabbath-keeping church.*

*It was not until about 1650 that there were again enough Sabbath keepers to establish local congregations. They often called themselves the Church of God, but the world termed them "Sabbatarians" and Sabbatarian Baptists.*

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

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

*In America the number of churches gradually increased as the gospel was spread from state to state. But so nearly dead were these congregations that in 1802 many began to ORGANIZE THEMSELVES together into a General Conference instead of submitting to the government of God for the carrying out of the gospel. At this serious juncture most of the local churches joined themselves together to form the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference and thereby ceased to be the true Church of God.*

Hoeh's interpretation of history had often called attention to the specific statement that God's church had to bear the official name "Church of God". Without that title, it could not be authentic.

According to Hoeh, the first third of the "Sardis era" began with Walter Lollard moving to England. The second third was when the Sabbath came to America with Stephen Mumford. We were told that he was sent to Newport, Rhode Island. We were not told who sent him there. Could it have been the "apostle in the Church of God" in England? Did Herman Hoeh or Ronald Kelly know who sent Mumford to America? It should be obvious that those who actually have read and accepted such teachings have not been sensitive to the Worldwide Church of God's aptitude for creating historical and factual gaps.

The name of Mumford's church was very carefully implied to be the "Church of God". We were told that the name was later abandoned and that this caused God to abandon the church. Why God operated this way is a mystery. Is the name of the church a test in itself? Is the very name of the church a key to salvation? Is God searching the earth as one might peruse through a phone directory and, upon discovering the proper name, capable of establishing contact?

The Seventh Day Baptists' are headquartered in Janesville, Wisconsin, where they have a historical library housing over 3,000 books. They also possess the original documents quoted by Ronald Kelly in his 1990-91 version of the "History of The Church of God" in the *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines. They have the original diaries and records of the Newport, Rhode Island church. They also know the name of Stephen Mumford's church.

I wrote to the library in December of 1991. To be absolutely fair, I kept my request simple. I did not want to reveal that I had any knowledge of the Worldwide Church of God. Here is the entire body of my letter to them.

*I am presently doing an extensive research on the history of the Sabbatarians from the time of the Apostles to the present day. A thorough understanding of the history of the Seventh Day Baptists seems to be very pivotal. If you can be of assistance as a source of study I would be most grateful.*

*I have come into some curious claims by some religious groups that you may be aware of. I would like to know what your views are in this matter. One claim is that somehow there is this continuous lineage of Sabbatarians in history. From the early church and Apostles to the Waldensians to the Puritans to the Seventh Day Baptists to the Seventh Day Adventists and so on. Another claim is to that of a name being consistently used by all of these groups through history. That name being The Church of God.*

*The conclusion drawn by the adherents to these claims is that they continue the commission and commands given to the church by Jesus Christ in the New Testament making them the only non-apostate churches and granting them historical authenticity.*

*From your historical documents, how much of this can you confirm or deny? Is there anything that I am not understanding about your history? And is there any literature that you can refer to me for a complete and accurate understanding?*

I received the following response from Dr. Donald Sanford:

*I was much interested in your letter of December 28 concerning the history of the Seventh Day Baptists, particularly as it relates to the Waldenses and etc. I assume that you have read some of the recent historical sketches of the Worldwide Church of God as published in the Plain Truth magazines of the past year. The enclosed article which I wrote for the December issue of the Sabbath Recorder, our own periodical may answer some of your questions.*

*As I stated there, we make no claim to any direct relationship with the various sects of the Middle Ages which may or may not have observed the seventh-day Sabbath. The evidence is very sketchy at best and documentation is questionable. Furthermore, it has no bearing upon our holding of the seventh-day Sabbath. We base our belief on the Scriptures rather than on any apostolic or historic succession. And as for the reference to the Puritans, this is a fictitious supposition put forth by A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd in their 1936 book, *A History of the True Church, Traced from 33 A. D. to Date*. In order to keep an unbroken succession, which they feel is essential to their belief, they had to appropriate Seventh Day Baptist history, since we were the only Christian church which observed the Sabbath during the critical years of the English Reformation.*

*It is true that some of our records did use the term "church of God" in its generic form, but they capitalized the word church to make it conform to their name. A more common designation in the early years was "The church of Christ keeping the commandments of God.." This use was to clearly identify us as Christian rather than Jewish.*

In a subsequent chapter I will discuss A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd. They are important to the story of the Worldwide Church of God claim of being the one true church.

As Dr. Sanford had mentioned, he had just written an article in response to Part 9 of Ronald Kelly's

story of the lineage of the Church of God. Here are some interesting excerpts from that article entitled "Research reveals plain truth" in the December 1991 *Sabbath Recorder*:

*During the mid-17th century, the Bible became available to the common people. Those who were known as Separatists, separated from the Church of England, giving birth to such nonconformist movements as that of the Congregationalists and the Baptists...*

*One of the first Baptists to write in support of the seventh day Sabbath was James Ockford, whose book was condemned by Parliament. He was followed by others such as William Saller and Dr. Peter Chamberlen, men associated with the Mill Yard Church which still exists as a Seventh Day Baptist church in London...*

*James Ockford, Francis Bampfield, and John James are all mentioned in Part 9 of the series in Plain Truth (September 1991), but no mention is made of their Seventh Day Baptist connection, leading people to assume from the heading that they were members of the Church of God.*

*Part 10 continues the history under the title, "The Sabbath Comes to New England." The authors credit Stephen Mumford with bringing the Sabbath to Rhode Island. They write of the separation of the Sabbathkeepers from the First Baptist Church of Newport in 1671.*

*Although the source of most of their material is taken from the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial, published in 1852-54, they avoid identifying that church as the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America.*

*Many of the existing records of that Newport Church are in the possession of the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society, with the last book beginning with the words: "A continuation of the Records of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Newport, R. I.*

*Under a section headed, "The Name of the Church," the authors correctly recognize the Hopkinton congregation (the First Hopkinton Seventh Day Baptist Church in Ashaway, R.I.) as an outgrowth of the Newport Church, but refer to it as the "Church of God," based on a couple of passages which use the term "church of God" in a generic sense...*

*The final quotes in that article from the November/December 1991 Plain Truth were taken from a more recent book, A Free People in Search of a Free Land, written in 1976 by the author of this review, and published by the SDB Historical Society. Yet no identification is made of its Seventh Day Baptist author or origin...*

### **THE SEVENTH-DAY BAPTIST STORY**

I soon learned from Dr. Sanford that Worldwide Church of God researchers had to appropriate Seventh Day Baptist documents to fill in the gaps of the true church theory. But, in doing so, they felt that they had to edit out most references to the title "Seventh-Day Baptist" and replace them with the titles "Sabbatarian" or "Church of God".

After my own personal discoveries, (some are yet to be shown), I composed a letter to Ronald Kelly at Ambassador College and encouraged Dr. Sanford, in a phone conversation, to do the same. He chuckled, "They never respond to our letters." He was right. My letter also went unanswered. Had I discovered the Achilles heel of the organization? Had they deliberately fabricated their history? Was the Worldwide Church of God a fraud?

Later Dr. Sanford informed me that the Bible Sabbath Association of Fairview, Oklahoma was going to reprint his article, in their Sentinel magazine. Out of respect for the truth, they said that they would also ask for a rebuttal from The Worldwide Church of God.

Who else would have given the rebuttal but Herman L. Hoeh. I managed to get a copy of this article.

Here was Hoeh's rebuttal:

*Your cover letter and article by Don A. Sanford point up that certain editorial inaccuracies in the early history of Sabbatarians (in the U.S.) appeared in Part 11 of the series on the history of God's church in The Plain Truth. In particular, please thank Don Sanford for addressing them in The Sabbath Recorder.*

*As you know, God's people were commonly referred to as Sabbatarians in the 17th and 18th centuries and that is how we identified them—rather than by the now common denominational term Seventh Day Baptist. We did identify these first Sabbatarians in America as having reluctantly severed connection from the parent church, the First Baptist Church of Newport. As author Don A. Sanford says of the literature of God's people, the church of God was used as a generic term, not a denominational term. We used it thus throughout our series, and do not dispute the use of other terms in the Sabbatarian churches, for the New Testament does the same.*

*The introductory paragraphs of Part 11, page 18, column 1 of the series in The Plain Truth mentioning Samuel Hubbard and Tacy Hubbard are properly corrected by Don A. Sanford. The errors arose from misreading of the text and will be correct in any future reference to the Newport church.*

*The quotation in reference to the 18th century Sabbatarian church in Pennsylvania was wrongly attributed to Clarke's History, p. 1208, due to a deletion in copy fitting. The quotations should have been attributed to Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, volume 2, page 1208.*

*We happily thank Don Sanford for drawing readers' attention to these particular oversights in Part 11 of our series.*

Please refer back to Hoeh's statements earlier and notice that we have yet another inconsistency in Herman Hoeh's story. And in case you did not notice it, Hoeh did not address himself to the main issue: Namely, why did the Worldwide Church of God remove the title "Seventh Day Baptist" from historical texts and replace it with the title "Church of God"? (He also failed to address these corrections to the readership of the *Plain Truth*.)

Was the Worldwide Church of God using the term church of God generically? Hoeh wrote to the Sentinel that it was always meant to be used in that way. Members of the Worldwide Church of God would have known that this was never the position of the Worldwide Church of God. I need only to quote what Herman Hoeh wrote in 1959 to give an example of the Church's long-held published stance:

#### **THE TRUE NAME**

*The Bible gives the true name of the Church in twelve different places. Twelve, remember, is God's complete number...Thus when speaking of the entire Church, including all its individual members on earth the name is The CHURCH OF GOD. (p. 27, The True History of The True Church)*

Concerning the church in Newport, Rhode Island, as well as the early history of the Seventh Day Baptist Church, the Seventh-Day Baptists say this:

#### **Restoring the Scriptures to the Church**

*The Protestant Reformation, of which Luther was a part, was the attempt to reform the Catholic Church of those practices which had little or no foundation in the Bible. The reformers believed that the Christian Church had taken wrong turns and neglected the truths set forth in the Bible. Seventh Day Baptists for nearly 350 years have been among those who believed that baptism upon profession of faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the seventh day Sabbath were truths which much of the Christian Church had neglected. On this they have taken their stand because their conscience has been "taken captive by God's word." (Conscience Taken Captive, A Short History of Seventh Day Baptists, Donald Sanford, p.1)*

## **Baptist Beginnings**

*Baptists trace their beginnings to John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. In 1609 John Smyth wrote that infants ought not be baptized for two scriptural reasons: first, there was no example in the New Testament that any babies were baptized by either Jesus or the disciples; and secondly, Christ had commanded that the disciples were to teach and then baptize. Thomas Helwys, founder of the first Baptist Church in England in 1611, accepted Smyth's ideas and expanded them to include the command of Jesus to witness to the faith.*

*The Baptists in seventeenth century England were dependent upon the reformers of the previous century for preparing the soil in which further reform could take place. But Baptists rejected identification with any groups such as the Anabaptists with whom they shared many beliefs. In separating from the Church of England and its reliance upon tradition and authoritarian rule, Baptists claimed their basis for belief on the unfettered interpretation of the Bible, independent of "apostolic succession." Similarly Seventh Day Baptists do not attempt to trace an unbroken succession of Sabbath observance back to the New Testament Church. The Scriptures are sufficient reason for its practice. (pp. 2, 3)*

## **American Beginnings**

*Seventh Day Baptists in America trace their origins to three centers in colonies where freedom of religion was encouraged: Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The churches at Newport, the Philadelphia area and Piscataway each have independent roots and were formed under different circumstances, but all three beginnings resulted from the study of Scriptures.*

### **Rhode Island 1671**

*The first Seventh Day Baptist Church in America was organized in December 1671 from members of a Baptist Church who had come to the conviction of the Sabbath of the Bible. Stephen and Anne Mumford were Sabbathkeeping members of the Tewksbury Baptist Church in England when they migrated to America in 1664 during a period of dissenter persecution. About the same time, according to Samuel Hubbard's journal, his wife, Tacy, "took up keeping the Lord's holy 7th day Sabbath the 10 day March 1665." Within a year her husband, their three daughters and a son-in-law followed. By the end of the decade there were nine people within the congregation who had embraced the Sabbath along with others who had moved to the western part of the colony.*

*For several years the Sabbathkeepers remained as active members of the First Baptist Church in Newport, but in 1669 two couples rejected the Sabbath and spoke against it. The others found it difficult to take communion with those who had once known the truth and then entered into apostasy. Correspondence with English Seventh Day Baptists urged caution and "love to all saints holding up general communion with them lest it be those you have the particular offense against." Finally, in 1671 when the pastor preached that the teaching of the Sabbath was causing people to leave Christ and go to Moses, the split occurred. Five members, Samuel and Tacy Hubbard with their daughter, Rachel Langworthy, William Hiscox and Roger Baster withdrew. With Stephen and Anne Mumford they covenanted together to form the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America. Within 20 years about 76 names were added to the covenant relationship which spread out to places such as Westerly, Rhode Island, and New London, Connecticut. The membership included American Indians as well as English colonists. ( pp. 8-10)*

In brief, Stephen Mumford was not a member of a Church of God but rather was a minister of the Seventh Day Baptist Church. The Hubbard's were members of the first Seventh Day Baptist Church of America. The Newport church kept a roster or diary in which it calls itself the Seventh Day Baptist Church. The historical library in Janesville, Wisconsin has the church roster which I'm sure Dr. Sanford

holds dear, since his ancestors are Samuel and Tacy Hubbard!

### Research By Others

I was not alone in my discoveries concerning the Worldwide Church of God's falsified link to the Seventh Day Baptist church of Newport, Rhode Island. As early as 1968, William T. Voyce of Des Moines, Iowa had corresponded with both the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society (located then in Plainfield, New Jersey) and the Worldwide Church of God editorial staff in Pasadena.

Miss Evalois St. John of the Historical Society provided several photocopies to Voyce of original church documents dating back to the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries proving that A. N. Dugger (and later Herbert Armstrong) had counterfeited and altered the reading of their original documents. Miss St. John informed Mr. Voyce in her June 1968 letter to him:

*A great disservice was done to both Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists by an Elder A. N. Dugger who now resides in Jerusalem. As you must know he was formerly a member of the denomination known as The Church of God (Adventist), with headquarters in Stanberry, Mo. In fact the U. S. Census of Religious Bodies 1926 carries the history/doctrine of this order which a footnote states was revised and approved by Elder A. N. Dugger, of the Church of God Publishing House. In 1934 (or 1933) Mr. Dugger separated from this group - Church of God (Adventist) - and established a new order - The Church of God (Seventh Day) - with headquarters at Salem W. Va. In the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies of 1936, one finds a history of this new order prepared - as the government states by Mr. Dugger. For the history of this group he deliberately "lifted" the history of the Seventh Day Baptists, added some Seventh Day Adventist history, and called it the History of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Because this pamphlet is put out by the U.S. Government - through its census Bureau - researchers and students of Church history have accepted his facts as true. One finds more of this "lifted" history in the book History of the True Church by A.N. Dugger and C.O. Dodd, published in 1936....*

Mr. Voyce researched every document that Dugger (and later the Worldwide Church of God) used for sources to produce a history of their true church and found them, in every case, in error and deliberately misquoted.

In 1985 Mr. Voyce wrote to the Worldwide Church of God to point out errors in their publication "The Church They Couldn't Destroy."

*I have just finished reading the reprint article "The Church They Couldn't Destroy," and am dismayed to find that you are still promulgating the long discredited Dugger-Dodd thesis of 1936, that the Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists are off-shoots of the "Church of God." The book in which this thesis first appeared, A History of the True Church, has been rightly characterized by C. F. Randolph as having been written "by ignorant hands, unskilled in historical research and interpretation" (The Sabbath Recorder, Vol. 133, No. 26, p. 447). This assessment is justified not only by the large number of misspellings, etc., in the book, but also by the fact that its central premise is false: the denomination which came to be known in history as the Church of God (Seventh Day) is not the oldest Sabbath-keeping church at all, but rather an off-shoot or outgrowth of the seventh-day adventist movement of the 19th century, having no connection whatever with the Seventh Day Baptists. This is very clearly shown by an honest examination of the pertinent historical documents; to attempt to conclude otherwise is really just a waste of time and effort....*

Voyce found misquotes by the Worldwide Church of God editorial staff in both *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, Robert Cox (published in 1865) on page 162 and Joseph Belcher's, *The Religious Denominations of the United States* (published in 1850) on pages 246 and 247. He pointed this out to them and asked for an explanation. He never received one.

There have been others who wanted to know if per chance they had read the wrong books when looking for the Church of God lineage in historical sources cited by Worldwide Church of God publications. For example, in 1991, Mr. Gene Bailey of Nicholasville, Kentucky wrote a four page letter to evangelist Ronald Kelly at Worldwide Church of God headquarters:

*...I am enclosing many copies of pages so you can see where my questions come from. I have been reading your information in the Plain Truth about the "History of the Church of God." Also I have been studying the booklets "A True History of the True Church" and "The Church They Couldn't Destroy"....*

*...I have not been able to find any evidence that William Miller ever became a Sabbath keeper. If you have information about this, please place it here.... On page 23 (Cox's Sabbath Literature, Vol. 1, p. 162. Enclosed is the page from what I think is that book, please mark on that page where that information in that paragraph is taken from what and where it is, I don't see it... Please let me know here where I can find this information. On the next page... Please explain on this page what is meant out of this paragraph... At this point please mark what state, city, where this church was located so I can do additional research on it to see if it also was involved in the Millerite movement and if it was a Sunday or Sabbath keeping church... please review and elaborate here... please at this place explain... at this place, let me know where I can locate this information... I haven't found any information that the name "Church of God" was given to any church which you mentioned coming before the Worldwide Church of God, The Church of God (Seventh Day), and the Seventh Day Baptists from about 1673-1875.... should one then say the above churches from 1673 to 1875 were counterfeit and could not have been part of the Church of God at anytime? Also, can anything that is counterfeit ever become the real true thing?...*

Mr. Bailey informed me over the phone in 1993 that he had still not received a response from the Worldwide Church of God or Ron Kelly to his 1991 letter.

And so ends our investigation into what Worldwide Church of God authors have entitled the "True History of the one true church of God" from the New Testament to the 19th century. Up to this point it has been more or less pulled out of thin air, falsified and fabricated--frustrating those who have tried to verify their sources.

In the next chapter I will review what we have learned about Christianity through the eyes of historians like Herman Hoeh and Ronald Kelly.

## Chapter 10

### Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruit

For nearly a quarter of a century, I took the ministry and leaders of the Worldwide Church of God at their word and never questioned their interpretation of Church history or the Bible. When I did begin to question, I spent a year and a half in phone conversations, correspondence and research. This led me to a peculiar discovery. As I tried to view the teachings of the Bible and nearly 2,000 years of Christian history in a non-biased way, I started drawing totally different conclusions than I had formerly accepted. I wondered, "How was it possible for Worldwide Church of God ministers to draw their conclusions about history?"

I interviewed many knowledgeable people across the country trying to piece together the real history that led up to Herbert Armstrong's radio ministry in the 1930's. In the process, I discovered many worn-down pathways. I found myself crossing paths with old friends who had been disfellowshipped years before. Friends I had shunned and felt that somehow had lost their minds to hedonism. This made me feel foolish and I apologized to them. They were cordial.

I also found myself crossing paths with another group. This was the top leadership of the Worldwide Church of God, who were spending hours in the Seventh-Day Baptist library in Wisconsin and were carefully photographing Mumford's church in Rhode Island. Why? And why were they secretly apologizing to Church of God, Seventh-Day leaders in Colorado? Why did they publish their strange apology in the *Sabbath Sentinel* magazine?

Subversive behavior on the part of my church was beginning to unfold and I saw that the only ones who were being kept in the dark about the matter were the unsuspecting members of the Worldwide Church of God. As a member of the Church, there was nothing I could do to expose this fraud.

I spoke openly to Worldwide Church of God ministers about this perversion of Church history. I spoke to several close friends that I had in the Church. Many local ministers knew that the Church had invented its history--perhaps their good salaries made them weak-kneed about confronting the issue with headquarters. The close friends that I spoke to asked for me to keep them anonymous and began to help me investigate the Church. Through long-distance phone conversations and personal correspondence, our investigation led up to the highest echelon of the Church. In fact, we were searching for anyone who could prove that we were wrong. No one in leadership positions protested. The Worldwide Church of God had falsified its history.

Everyone in this network was admitting to the error. The moment I went public with my information, I was disfellowshipped from the church I had been a member of for over 23 years. This was the way the Worldwide Church of God would take a person's credibility away. Being disfellowshipped meant that I no longer existed.

I knew what kind of control the ministry held over the membership. There was no way that Worldwide Church of God members would believe me if I exposed my discoveries to them, even though I was receiving various reports of Church evangelists and even Joseph Tkach, himself, being thoroughly aware of this fraudulent history.

**Let me condense the facts presented earlier in this book that show that this teaching is false:**

1. Worldwide Church of God historians--against the teachings of orthodoxy--assumed that ancient Judaizers were the one true church.
2. The first-century Judaizers (Ebionites) were heretics, still teaching circumcision a century after the beginning of the Christian era. The historian quoted by the Worldwide Church of God points this fact

out.

3. The Worldwide Church of God authorities completely overlook Judaism having its own pagan and traditional perversions that were taken out of the Babylonian captivity of Nebuchadnezzar. The Pharisees practiced these traditions in the days of Christ. Centuries later the Pharisees would codify their Judeo-Babylonian religion in the Talmud. The Talmud itself was written in Babylon. But the WCG views Judaism as a better Mother than Roman Catholicism.

4. In time, "The Lord's Supper" was assumed to be the same memorial as the Jewish observance of Passover. This led Herbert Armstrong to the conclusion that it is necessary for Christians to observe all Hebrew holydays.

5. Polycarp was a Christian bishop acknowledged as authentic by Eusebius. Anicetus was also acknowledged as an authentic bishop in Rome by Eusebius. Anicetus did not observe the Passover on the 14th of Nisan as the Jews did and did not persecute Polycarp for observing that date if he chose to.

6. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews could not calculate the Passover correctly. If the correct calculation for Nisan 14 is important, what were the Christians to do?

7. The Quartodeciman controversy was not a basis for a true/false church schism. It had to do with choosing a date for the observance of the Christian Eucharist. It was meant to create unity among organized Christians.

8. The groups that are believed to be the one true church between the time of Polycarp and Peter Waldo are mostly known by legends, not factual or reliable histories.

9. The early Christians were scattered and persecuted until the fourth century. They did not pay tithes, had no earthly potentate, no earthly headquarters, met in private homes, their bishops were like hosts not masters and they had diversity of doctrines (but unity in spirit).

10. Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion in the Roman Empire after the council of Nicea in 325 AD. This Council made Christianity one universal church subject to the bishop in Rome. No diversity of Christian belief was allowed upon threat of ex-communication. The Roman bishop declared himself successor to Peter based upon a misinterpretation of Matthew 16:13. This spawned the doctrines of "apostolic succession" and the teaching of "one true church."

11. This same belief system based on Matthew 16:13 was used by the Worldwide Church of God to create its own mythical lineage.

12. The Worldwide Church of God lineage completely ignores several gaps of time in history where no such "parent" church can be found. In these periods, the Worldwide Church of God always changes what was a previously organized system, such as the Ebionites, into a scattered and almost "invisible" one until our interest is shifted to another group, such as the church in Asia Minor, thus weaving an imaginary thread through history.

13. The name "Church of God" is a designation of the Roman Catholic church. The Worldwide Church of God historians have misquoted historians to invent an imaginary medieval church with that name.

14. The twelfth-century reformer Peter Waldo was a Catholic who later became excommunicated because of his desire for the Papacy to renew its ancient vow of poverty.

15. Waldo and his followers observed the Catholic Sabbath, Sunday. They did not observe Hebrew holydays, did not preach the Millennium, did not pay tithes or practice any other Old Covenant rituals.

16. The Waldensians did not call themselves the "Church of God."

17. The Waldensians cannot be linked to Polycarp in any way.

18. Neither Polycarp nor Peter Waldo are ever called "apostle."
19. The desire to create an apostolic lineage from the ancient Waldensians has been attempted by many other spurious religious groups.
20. John Wycliff did not observe the seventh-day Sabbath.
21. The Lollards were not Sabbatarians.
22. Wycliff and the Lollards were not members of a "Church of God" unless it was the Catholic Church of God.
23. Sabbatarian Christians did appear in England in the 17th century but they were never named "The Church of God"--they were Seventh-Day Baptists.
24. According to Seventh-Day Baptist documents that are still in existence, Stephen Mumford was not an apostle and did not belong to a "Church of God."
25. The Seventh-Day Baptist Church, Waldensian Church and Church of God, Seventh-Day still exist to this day and do not accept any form of this false Worldwide Church of God history.
26. The Waldensians, Seventh-Day Baptists, and the Church of God, Seventh Day all consider their churches to be Protestant churches. If the Worldwide Church of God was truly a descendant of these groups then it too had to have been a Protestant church.
27. To prove Armstrong's belief in "apostolic succession" and true church lineage, the Worldwide Church of God edited documents from other churches and overlooked key facts. These unedited documents and key facts, in reality, proved the Worldwide Church of God history was false.

It seems evident now that the one doctrine that gave Armstrong the foundation to build his church was a counterfeit of the grandiose myth of apostolic succession. This becomes painfully evident if one studies how other churches portray their own histories. Most of them make no haughty claims that they cannot document. The Worldwide Church of God saw itself larger than life but could not present accurate documentation. Other churches present records, dates, and names of key figures in their histories. The Worldwide Church of God called its leader an apostle with great authority and calling but could not prove how this had occurred. Other churches find their centrality in the teachings of the New Testament. The Worldwide Church of God found its centrality in the revelations of its self-ordained apostle.

Finally, from the eighteenth century ministry of Stephen Mumford (whom they falsely claimed as one of their own apostles), they failed to mention one key figure in history until Herbert Armstrong claimed apostolic authority in the twentieth century. There was never a mention of how the Church of God, Seventh Day ever came to be. This is suspicious because either there is no clear history of this group or the Worldwide Church of God refused to talk about it.

In Part III, we will study the real history of the religious movement that led up to the organization of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God.

## **PART III**

For I Neither Received It Of Man,

Nor Was I Taught It,

But By

The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

### **Chapter 11**

#### **This Generation Shall Not Pass Away**

After reading the previous chapters, you might now be wondering what the real history of the Worldwide Church of God is. With their fictional view of history exposed, we should again briefly review the progress of western civilization, beginning with its adoption of Christianity. As we search for an honest and objective viewpoint, it is important to realize that the only existing references about early Christianity, by first and second century historians such as Josephus, Philo, Pliny and Irenaeus, are contradictory, brief, and questionable at best. To claim that any one sect of the various first or second century known Christian sects was somehow most authentic and, therefore, most like the "primitive church," is simply not provable. There just isn't enough historical evidence. And with every new discovery of ancient documents there is growing indication of how little modern Christianity does resemble its ancient counterpart. If there were some way to prove what first century Christianity was really like, would Christianity be as divided as we find it is today?

Some Christian writers, like D. A. Carson, have implied that the original subversion of the Christian gospel was done so by Judaizers by placing far too much emphasis on the Temple system and the law of Moses. Others (like the many scholars who have labored over the interpretation of the Dead Sea scrolls) have concluded that Jesus was a student of the Qumran community (Potter, 1969) or that his followers were Jewish revolutionaries (Crossan, 1993). Many erudite figures have claimed that the Bible is full of contradictions and errors, and should be read carefully by reasoning people, if read at all. Soren Kierkegaard questioned the ethics of God testing Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. If a man had been moved by a sermon about Abraham's faithfulness and attempted to recreate the story with his own son, would he not be considered a maniac by his community? And yet, the act would still be the same. Thomas Jefferson was a Deist who decided to write his own version of the Bible. Albert Schweitzer was world renowned in each field that he had received a PhD in; medicine, music, and theology. Yet, from the age of five he saw glaring errors in the gospel stories and went on to write his own historical version of Jesus' life. Freiderich Neitzsche was an existentialist philosopher credited with making the statement "God is dead" (Kaufman, 125) The brilliant mathematician, Sir Bertrand Russell wrote, "You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of the colored races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world" (Russell, 21) Clarence Darrow was victorious in the famous Scopes trial of the 1920's. He challenged William Jennings Bryan to explain why God would have inspired scribes to indicate that the sun revolved around the earth in the story of Joshua's longest day, if the Bible were indeed infallible. Bryan was speechless (Sprague de Camp, 385-390). Joseph Campbell included Christianity among the world's religions as a set of metaphors drawn from ancient mythology and not to be taken seriously at all (Campbell).

What has happened to Christianity over the centuries?

There is mounting evidence that what has been called Christianity, from the fourth century conversion of Constantine until modern times, is not similar to what would have been called Christianity in the first century. Even the Bible supports the fact that the title "Christian" appears much later in Antioch for the followers of the apostles, supporting the idea that it took many years for the movement to take root as if it could have sprung out of something that it was not originally intended to be. The confirmations provided by archeologists and scholars is that the original followers of Jesus probably resembled the community of zealots who died at Masada more than anything else we might imagine today. And that would be our most probable discovery if we were to unearth the long fabled "primitive church."

In the fourth century, Christianity as we now know it, emerged from the early ecumenical councils (the one at Nicea being the first), from the resulting creeds, and from one other important development--the canonization of what we now call the Holy Bible. Many have been led to believe that the Bible as we now have it was preserved intact by early Christians and that the Catholic Church was determined to destroy it. Nothing could be further from the truth. The second-oldest complete Bible manuscript in existence (complete in the sense that along with the Old Testament it contains all of the New Testament) is the *Codex Vaticanus*, which, as the name implies, has long been preserved by the Vatican. And the very oldest complete Bible manuscript in existence is the *Codex Sinaiticus*, which was preserved for centuries in a Catholic monastery. According to Dr. Bruce Metzger, "some scholars believe that the two manuscripts were originally among the fifty copies of scriptures which the Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to have written..." (Metzger, 47). Scholars have demonstrated that both manuscripts were composed in the fourth century and both are considerably older than the *Textus Receptus* upon which the King James version was based. Metzger mentions in the beginning of his highly regarded book, *The New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*:

*The necessity of applying textual criticism to the books of the New Testament arises from two circumstances: (a) none of the original documents is extant, and (b) the existing copies differ from one another.*

It does seem evident that mutilation of the original Christian movement continued from the first century onward among various groups labeled as *heretics* by the church fathers. Early heretics not only included Judaizers, such as the Ebionites, but also groups such as the Gnostics (Pagels). This has presented another dilemma for modern day converts: Just what is heresy, anyway? Through much of western history, heresy has been defined as going against the orthodox view. In the Middle Ages, of course, this view was dictated by the Roman bishops. But even the Roman belief system has been rather unstable requiring its many ecumenical councils to revise its doctrines too. In modern times, 'orthodoxy' has created more complications because Protestant writers wanted to append their dissertations about heresy into mainstream belief systems as well. In the final analysis, what was once called heresy has now generally been more accepted as cultism. And this is where our history of the Worldwide Church of God must begin.

One can indeed find an ancient parallel for the Worldwide Church of God in the first century, if one seeks to draw weak analogies. But that simply does not produce any validity for a Worldwide Church of God branch grafted into an authentic genealogy; nor could it create in them, or any other group, a relationship to the mythologized "primitive church." Because so many diverse types of followers of Jesus were systematically anathematized by the orthodox church in the two centuries that led up to Nicea and during the Middle Ages, there is a great shadow of doubt cast upon the culture and practices of the original small band of Jews who began to proclaim allegiance to a Messiah prior to the destruction of Judaism in 70 AD.

Because so many throughout history have been passionately drawn to become part of Jesus' "little flock," so many have become the victims of the hungry wolves of organized Christianity as it moved through the Middle Ages. These wolves, feeding on the flock and on their own lust for power, eventually developed systems of tyranny--as William Jones claimed, *changing the Kingdom of God into the Kingdom of the clergy*. History has witnessed religious wars, Crusades, burning of heretics, Inquisitions, the relentless persecution of Jews, the slaughter of Native Americans, slavery, holocausts, and genocide all performed dutifully by dedicated Christians. Paradoxical acts of Christian inhumanity led many to desire an escape from church authority at the dawning of the Age of Reason, of which Thilly wrote:

*Slowly but surely the authority of the Church is weakened in the field of the mind, and the individual begins to assert his intellectual independence...The individual throws off the fetters of the Church and appeals to the Bible and conscience as his standards. He refuses to accept a human intermediary between himself and his God, and longs for a personal communion with the object of his faith (Thilly, 227-228).*

Protestantism rose up, during this period of enlightenment, as an antithesis to the domineering Universal Church of the Middle Ages and, for a while, Protestants participated in celebrating the new concept of freedom of the will in western culture. Yet the concept of individualism created new fertile ground for misguided interpretations of the Bible. At the same time Europe began redefining Christianity, a new continent was being colonized by English Protestants and Spanish Catholics on behalf of their kings.

Religious fanaticism soon revived in the early American colonies. There are many surviving records describing the Puritans in Massachusetts who grew from a community of authoritarian law keepers to fanatical lynch mobs executing each other as witches. Almost from its inception, America has had a problem with religious fanaticism.

During the mid-eighteenth century a time of revivalism was inspired in the Americas by preachers like Jonathan Edwards. This period was known as the Great Awakening. The writings of philosophers like Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and John Locke had challenged theologians to search for a new relationship between the creation and the creator. Although Christianity had been moving into intellectual arenas in Europe, the Great Awakening actually began to inspire emotionalism as a reaction to rationalism. This is made evident in the "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" sermon of Edwards:

*How dismal will it be, when you are under those racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them; to have no hope: when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice, if you might but have any relief, after you have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it; when after you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without any rest day or night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered...and that your souls which have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, yet will still exist to bear more wrath; your bodies, which shall have been burning and roasting all this while in these glowing flames, yet shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through an eternity yet, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past (qtd. in Smith 29-30).*

This appeal to emotion flourished during this period of time and many new doctrinal ideologies spring up loosely connected to the Bible.

There were other earlier misguided inventions that had universally infiltrated Christian thinking and would continue to do so on into the twentieth century.

The British isles had been part of the Roman Empire before its collapse. Many relics and monuments still stand in England that were built by Roman soldiers over a thousand years ago. Christianity had replaced paganism very early in Britain. Catholicism in Ireland dates back to the fourth century. In the early seventeenth century, with the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the introduction of the King James Bible, Britain began to gain the ascendancy in political, as well as Protestant matters. It was now only a matter of time before a well-meaning British subject would claim that the British were literally one of the glorious lost tribes of ancient Israel. This theory soon grew into popularity among some British people, who sought divine sanction to expand their empire while proselytizing the world.

*British-Israelism, also known variously as Anglo-Israelism and the Anglo-Saxon Federation, is an ideology that has as its central theme the identification of the Anglo-Saxon peoples as the true Israel and therefore heirs to all the promises in the Bible made by God to Israel. A man named Richard Brothers who lived in England between 1757 and 1854 is credited with the origination of the system. Brothers was an eccentric who was eventually committed to an asylum.*

*It was John Wilson's *Our Israelitish Origin* (1840) that first clearly stated the theory as held today by British-Israel enthusiasts (Chambers, 19).*

Besides British-Israelism finding its way into the repertoire of early American circuit preachers, another popular teaching that had originated in the 17th century with an Irish archbishop by the name James Ussher. Ussher used Bible genealogy to calculate that Adam had been created in the year 4004 BC and he published his discovery in *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti*.

In the early nineteenth century, John Darby (1800-1882, founder of the Plymouth Brethren) developed the doctrine of dispensationalism, in which he determined that God had been working out a dispensation of eras upon the earth. This not only breathed life back into the now 1,500 year old Christian church, it also served to place Christians back into Bible times. Dispensationalists imagined that the present Christian era was just prior to the Millennium. Undoubtedly, the ideas of Ussher and Darby were setting the stage for revivalism, the second Great Awakening, and the Millenarian groups that would soon begin to predict the "end of the world."

It was in the backdrop of the early 1800's that we find circuit preachers spreading their version of the gospel as they rode on horseback from farm to farm in rural America. These unskilled preachers thumped on their Bibles and passed the collection plates and found that donations increased if their messages threatened that "the end is near, flee from the wrath to come."

In the year 1818 an American by the name of William Miller claimed to have calculated the date for the return of Christ. This calculation, he said, was the result of an intensive 2 year study of the Bible. His source for the calculation was in Daniel 8:12--the 2300 day prophecy. By assigning a year for every day he believed the 2300 days to literally be 2300 years from the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem in 457 BC. This meant that Christ would return and set up the Kingdom of God on earth in the year 1843.

Miller managed to keep his discovery to himself for several years. Miller's first prophecy sermon was in his brother-in-law's home in August of 1831. The lecture was well received and resulted in him being invited to preach it at local congregations. In the year 1832 Miller published his first paper concerning the prophecy. Miller was only mildly successful until he met a man by the name of Joshua V. Himes in 1839. Himes became a public relations man for Miller and arranged for him to deliver his predictions in "great tent" meetings. After pressure to give an exact date for the advent of Christ, Miller reluctantly based his date on the Jewish New Year, March 21, 1843.

Himes helped Miller to organize his movement and publish a newspaper, *Signs of the Times*. In the final year before the "end of the world", a large following was built. Miller had also developed

extensive opposition and persecution but the movement continued to snowball. His followers began to sell all of their earthly goods and anticipated the coming day. Boston became the headquarters of Miller's Adventist movement where annual General Conferences were held. This final three year time limit was felt to bear significance also and was called "the midnight cry." Finally, no hall could be found large enough to house the Adventists so, in early 1843, a tabernacle was dedicated in Boston before an audience of 3500 people. Of course many enthusiastic followers--ignoring the scoffing press and public--showed their loyalty to Miller and Himes and prepared to meet their maker. When March 21, 1843 came without incident, Miller and Himes acknowledged only that they had somehow made an error in calculation.

On August 14, 1844, a Millerite by the name of Samuel S. Snow announced, during a camp meeting, that Miller had simply miscalculated the date by a year and a half. Christ was to return October 22 that year. The movement began to grow with great fervor. October 22, 1844 became known as the "Great Disappointment."

After the "Great Disappointment" many Millerites, sometimes called Adventists, were discouraged and went their separate ways. But some hung on to the movement, feeling that it had some great significance. It seemed undeniable that 1844 had a significant meaning in prophecy. But what was that meaning? On the morning of October 23, 1844 Hiram Edson and a fellow Millerite were walking through a corn field in Port Gibson, New York. They were in a quandary over Christ's failure to return the evening before. It was then that Edson claimed that he was given a vision with the answer. The meaning of the 2300 day prophecy was not that Christ was to return to earth, but that he had entered into the Holy of Holies in the sanctuary of heaven. This signaled the beginning of "the investigative judgment." It is reported that when William Miller heard of the vision of Hiram Edson, he rejected it. But Millerites, who needed an easy answer for their gullible appearance in the community, embraced this new doctrine.

Shortly after this, Edson's home became the headquarters for doctrinal discussions of the reformed Adventists. It was there that Joseph Bates introduced the observance of the Saturday Sabbath. Bates had been convinced of the Saturday Sabbath after he had read an article by Thomas M. Preble. Their adoption of the Saturday Sabbath was like a child's adoption of a puppy. As we have seen in Part One of this book, doctrines come in packages. The Sabbath is incomplete without Moses, and the covenant of Moses is not the covenant of Christ.

Bates later published his own tract on the subject. This tract was read by two people who would later become the most well-known figures in the Seventh-Day Adventist movement: James and Ellen G. White.

Because Ellen G. White claimed that she had been given the "gift of prophecy" by God around the year 1844, at the age of 15, she quickly rose to become the highest authority of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. It was her visions and prophecies that strengthened the factional Millerites.

Many followers of the early Seventh-Day Adventist Church had difficulty accepting Ellen G. White as an authentic prophetess. It was only her acceptance of the Sabbath doctrine that caused Bates to accept her as genuine.

One of these Millerites was a man by the name of Gilbert Cranmer.

*It was in 1843, while living at Augusta [Michigan] that Cranmer studied and accepted the theory of William Miller on the second advent of Jesus Christ. On October 22, 1844, he experienced the "great disappointment" with thousands of others. But unlike many who gave up their faith, Cranmer reviewed the matter of the advent and remained convinced that Jesus' second coming was imminent and sure. He continued to preach the second advent of Jesus Christ the remainder of his life (Coulter, 10).*

*Cranmer recalls in his biography that the seventh-day Sabbath was first brought to his attention in an Advent publication called The Midnight Cry, in 1843. He did not begin to observe the Sabbath, however, until he was once again confronted with the teaching of Joseph Bates, a prominent Sabbathkeeping adventist (Coulter, 11).*

It is important to note here that Gilbert Cranmer played an important part in the Church of God movement, yet he is never mentioned in any Worldwide Church of God histories. He is never called an early "apostle" in the lineage of the apostles like Peter Waldo was. Yet he is the very founder of the Church of God movement.

*It was through his acquaintance with Joseph Bates that Cranmer was introduced to the work of James and Ellen G. White. Following the great disappointment in 1844, the Whites had become convinced of the Sabbath. It was through a series of conferences in which they rallied adventists to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath that they became the dominant leaders of the Sabbathkeeping adventists. After accepting the Sabbath, they organized a series of short conferences which were held in Connecticut, New York, Maine, and Massachusetts, in the spring, summer and fall of 1848. Their leadership also was aided immensely by the fact that they published a series of papers which heralded the Sabbath and second advent message. Finally, the leadership of James and Ellen G. White was solidified for the Sabbathkeeping adventists through the visions of Mrs. White. Her visions appear to have been the means by which policy was established and doctrinal differences were settled.*

*By late 1855, the Review and Herald, the publication of James White, had been moved to Battle Creek, Michigan. It was in December, 1857, that Cranmer first met the Whites while attending a meeting at Otsego, Michigan. It appears that he fellowshiped freely with his Sabbathkeeping adventist brethren. Cranmer and the Whites had many acquaintances in the faith in common. Of the period from 1852, when he began to observe the Sabbath, until 1857, when he first became acquainted with the Whites, Cranmer said, "I now began to do more in the ministry. Several little bands of believers were raised up...The 'shut-door' doctrine formed a part of the doctrine of the church; that is, Mrs. White had seen in a vision that the day of salvation for sinners was past, and those that fully believed in her visions as coming from God, also accepted that doctrine. I did not believe the doctrine nor teach it. Up to this time no lines had been drawn in the church and the visions had not been made a test [of fellowship]. But they were fast becoming popular and some began to press them quite strongly; but matters ran quite smoothly as far as I was concerned until...I was preaching at Otsego.*

*"Among other things, I stated that I had no evidence that the door of the Holy Place had been closed. This did not meet the mind [approval] of some present. One of the brethren called my attention to the visions. I said, 'This may be evidence to you, but it is not to me.' A general discussion followed and the meeting broke up.*

*"It was reported to the officers of the church at Battle Creek. I then requested that a meeting be called to investigate, which was done, and an effort was made to bring me in subjection to the visions. I saw no way of reconciling matters. Then it was that I concluded to walk no farther with them and told them so."*

*While no formal church organization was functioning in the 1850's, Sabbathkeeping adventist ministers who preached the doctrine including the visions of Ellen G. White, were issued a "recommendation to the fellowship." This in essence was a license to preach. It was signed by one of the leading elders. Following his first meeting with the Whites in December 1857, Gilbert Cranmer saw James White again in January 1858, and requested a license. White's refusal of the license led Cranmer to make the decision to launch an independent effort apart from what was to become the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This decision was made in the winter of 1858. That spring, Cranmer started out on his own...In a little more than two years, Cranmer was able to identify ten congregations and eight*

*ministers who were associated with his efforts. He recalled that by 1860 organization was discussed and effected. This is a reference to the organization of a conference of the churches located in Michigan. Gilbert Cranmer was elected the first president of this conference. By 1863, the Michigan churches had adopted and were using the name, "Church of Christ."(Coulter, 12-14)*

Why is this "Church of Christ" important to the story? Well, because of the aforementioned criteria for the one true church. It has to bear the name mentioned 12 times in the Bible. Twelve remember, according to Hoeh, is God's complete number. God's church could only bear the name "Church of God". If that were the case, then, why would God have left the Seventh-Day Baptist Church in 1802 when they supposedly stopped calling themselves the "Church of God," only to make these Millerites his true church? They did not take on the "True Name" until between 1875 and 1884!

*The Michigan Conference of the Church of Christ convened at Irvington, Michigan, on October 3, 1884. Its president, Lemuel J. Branch, called the meeting to order.*

*The first order of business was a proposal to change the name of the church from Church of Christ to Church of God. The vote to make the change was unanimous. This was the first time in the development of the church that all its segments were to use the name, Church of God. Since its organization in 1860, the Michigan church had used the name Church of Christ. The Iowa church had originally adopted the name Church of Jesus Christ when it was organized in 1860. The Missouri Conference first adopted the name Sabbatarian Adventist in 1874. It changed its name to Church of God in 1875. (Coulter, 34)*

And so here is where the name "Church of God" seems to have its real origin. It was not handed down from any apostles. It was voted on by men who had all become ministers in the Seventh-Day Adventist group under James and Ellen G. White. One by one, as they began to see Ellen G. White as a false prophetess, they were defrocked from her church and regrouped in one of the other two splinter churches, the Church of Christ or the Church of Jesus Christ. Later those groups united in Stanberry, Missouri and voted on the name Church of God (later to become the Church of God, (Seventh Day)).

This was the same church that Herbert Armstrong came into contact with in 1927.

## Chapter 12

### The Third Angel's Message

There were many factors that led up to the development of the Sabbath-observing Church of Christ of the mid-nineteenth century. The evangelizing of the Seventh-day Baptists is believed, by some, to be a possible source for the Adventist movement being introduced to seventh-day observance. This may well be the truth. But the Sabbath issue in itself does not stand as a proof for the one true church, as we have already seen in Part II.

I have sought for consistency in the evidences given for the one true church story by the Worldwide Church of God. We have seen that there is no consistency in any of their so-called "proofs". If we are to believe that the gates of hell had never prevailed against one organization, then what can we honestly say are the distinguishing characteristics of that organization? If the organization kept changing into such varied movements as the Ebionites, the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Seventh-day Baptists-- then we must look for doctrinal consistency. That did not exist either.

Was it the Sabbath Day that the gates of hell could not prevail against? We find great periods of time in history where there are no records of Christian Sabbatarians.

Likewise, if we looked for a consistency in "the gospel" of the Middle Ages, we would not find the Millennium being taught by the reformers that the Worldwide Church of God has claimed a lineage from. Among Christian reformers like Waldo and Wycliff, the gospel was based upon giving up of one's wealth to the poor. This included the teaching that ministers could claim no tithe and were required to proclaim a vow of poverty themselves.

Finally we are drawn to the issue of honesty. Is the Worldwide Church of God honestly able to produce a lineage to the "primitive church" of the New Testament? To attempt this, they had to be carefully selective of existing histories. In fact, Worldwide Church of God authors had to make their historical sources say just the opposite of what they originally intended. By misinterpreting secular history, the Worldwide Church of God authors produced a "divinely inspired" account. Was this a good practice for a commandment-keeping church?

For followers of the Worldwide Church of God to have believed this shaded view of history, they would have had to believe that secular history is false. Then they have had to accept that their ministers can rearrange a false history to reveal the mysterious lineage of the one true church.

This was the exact frame of mind that I found with one Worldwide Church of God member who asked me to show him some of my historical documentation. He viewed it and then proclaimed to me that all of these sources were merely jealous of the Worldwide Church of God and wanted to defame it. This seems hardly credible since William Jones and Emilio Comba wrote their histories long before the Worldwide Church of God even existed. In fact, Jones wrote his book before William Miller had proclaimed the advent of Christ.

As we saw in the last chapter, denial seemed to be the trademark of these Millerites. Not being able to admit that they were duped into following a false prophet, they regrouped and created a reason for the "great disappointment" of 1844. They immediately found themselves forming the organized Seventh-day Adventist church and following prophecy again. This time it was the prophecy of Ellen G. White.

Not every one of White's ministers would continue to follow her as a prophetess. One such disappointed Seventh-day Adventist minister would break away to develop a new branch of Protestantism. His name was Gilbert Cranmer. For the lineage theory to have worked, Cranmer would had to have come into contact with an already existing "Church of God" and to have been raised up by an apostle. (Remember, we were told that the gates of hell could not prevail against this "Church of

God" if it is God's true church.) Instead, Cranmer was a Millerite who became a Seventh-day Adventist. Later, after being defrocked by the Whites, Cranmer began raising up "Churches of Christ." In our search for a thread of consistency, we are left to ask, "When did the holy mantle ever fall from the Seventh-day Baptists to Gilbert Cranmer?"

*The Church of Christ, as it was known in Michigan, organized a conference in 1860. It had congregations in Waverly, Alamo, Bangor, Hartford, Casco, Goblis, Bloomingdale, Hamilton, West Olive, and Otsego, among other places. Some of these congregations numbered more than 100 members.*

*The founder of most, if not all, of these churches was a man by the name of Gilbert Cranmer. Cranmer was born in Newfield, New York, on January 18, 1814. At the age of seventeen he was converted and joined the Methodist Church. In a short time, Cranmer was filling the position of an exhorter. He preached on occasion for two years. At that time he severed his relationship with the Methodist Church and was licensed to preach by the Christian Church. He began to travel and devoted a considerable amount of his time to preaching (Coulter, 9-10).*

Cranmer never did have personal contact with the Seventh-day Baptists. So we have no hands being laid on him by that group. Instead, Cranmer's contact with doctrines, such as the Sabbath, came through the Seventh-day Adventists and Millerites.

*It was in 1843, while living at Augusta [Michigan] that Cranmer studied and accepted the theory of William Miller on the second advent of Jesus Christ. On October 22, 1844, he experienced the "great disappointment" with thousands of others. But unlike many who gave up their faith, Cranmer reviewed the matter of the advent and remained convinced that Jesus second coming was imminent and sure. He continued to preach the second advent of Jesus Christ the remainder of his life. (Coulter, 10)*

Cranmer began observing the Sabbath after meeting Joseph Bates.

*It was through his acquaintance with Joseph Bates that Cranmer was introduced to the work of James and Ellen G. White. Following the great disappointment in 1844, the Whites had become convinced of the Sabbath. It was through a series of conferences in which they rallied adventists to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath that they became the dominant leaders in the Sabbathkeeping adventists (Coulter, 12).*

Now if Sabbath-keeping is the hallmark of God's people, we must ask ourselves, how is it being introduced at this point in history and why aren't the SDAs receiving special revelation from God?

*Finally, the leadership of James and Ellen G. White was solidified for the Sabbathkeeping adventists through the visions of Mrs. White. Her visions appear to have been the means by which policy was established and doctrinal differences were settled (Coulter, 12).*

First, we have the false prophecy of William Miller and what was called the "great disappointment." Then, we find another religious movement springing out of William Miller--Seventh-day Adventism. Both of these religious movements were rooted in the prophecies of a human instrument. Ellen G. White taught that God had literally shut the door of salvation to sinners in 1844. Cranmer began to question White's authority as an end-time prophetess. Later he would write in his own publication, *The Hope of Israel*, August 10, 1863:

*About ten years ago a Seventh-day Adventist minister, by the name of Bates, came to our town and advocated the whole Law, the gifts of the Spirit, and many other glorious truths. The gifts belonging to the Church, I had believed in for over twenty years. Hence I felt to rejoice, supposing I had found the people I had been so long looking for. He told me that the gifts were realized among them, that they had the gift of prophecy and the gift of healing the sick. But as long as I was with them I never knew of*

*any being healed. I have known them to try but they always failed. In this I was disappointed. I also found the spirit of prophecy, with them, was confined wholly to a woman. By this time I became suspicious that I had gotten on board the wrong ship. I then commenced to giving her visions a thorough investigation. I found they contradicted themselves, and that they contradicted the Bible.*

Cranmer observed that these people could talk a good talk but could not produce any evidence of their faith. They bore no fruit. How did Cranmer and fellow ministers who would leave the SDA church assign fault for the absence of fruit? Solely in the prophecies of Ellen G. White.

As the years went by, some of White's ministers would sever their relationship with the SDAs, maintaining all of the teachings but releasing themselves from the authority of the Whites. There seems to be more to this rejection of authoritarianism by those who had experienced Millerism. These outcast groups had very strong anti-organizational feelings, which were often expressed in the pages of both *The Hope of Israel* and *The Bible Advocate* during the 1860s. (These were the publications of the Church of Christ movement.)

*Many articles have been published sharply criticizing other adventists for organizing as "sectarian organizations." This opposition to organization can be traced directly to the Millerite Advent movement of more than 40 years prior to this time (Coulter, 33).*

Of course, anyone who is familiar with Herbert Armstrong's early claims to "loose association" with the Church of God, (Seventh-day), will recognize a reason why he could get away with making such a claim. In fact, in 1939 he published an article condemning organized religion. But as the Church of God, (Seventh-day) is quick to point out, "loose association" never pertained to the ordination of their ministers (of which Armstrong was one). What is important to understand, at this juncture, is that the Church of God, (Seventh-day) practices local church autonomy as opposed to the tight "government-from-the-top-down" structure taught by Herbert Armstrong.

In the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the doctrinal consistencies one might find between churches if they are related to one another. This is a natural consequence that seems unavoidable.

A glance through the directory of Sabbath-observing Christian churches, published by the Bible Sabbath Association of Fairview, Oklahoma, reveals many scores of churches that have broken away from the SDAs, Church of God, (Seventh-day), Worldwide Church of God and even from the churches that have formed after splitting off from these splinter groups. They all bear similarities in doctrines.

It is curious that during the years of Herbert Armstrong's public ministry, the Worldwide Church of God was barraged with inquiries about the similarities of his church's doctrines and those of the Seventh-day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses. To many observers, these doctrinal similarities seemed to be more than just a coincidence. In protest, Herbert Armstrong wrote in his *Plain Truth* magazine of 1953 an article entitled, "No! I Never Was a 'Jehovah's Witness,' or a Seventh-day Adventist!" In the article he made this claim:

*I have never been a member of the "Jehovah's Witnesses," nor of the Seventh-day Adventists. I have never in any manner, shape, or form had any remote connection with them, or associated with either sect or denomination. I have never had fellowship with them.*

A form of this article was reprinted as a tract and continued to be mailed out to inquirers throughout the remainder of Armstrong's ministry. This claim to no form of any "remote connection" with either group is an untrue statement on both accounts. Not only was his church in the direct lineage of the SDA church, he also picked up many of his early doctrinal beliefs from an ex-Jehovah's Witness minister whom I will reveal later.

Let us now examine the similarities in the teachings of the SDAs and the Worldwide Church of God

during the ministry of Herbert Armstrong. I want to give special credit to the research of Paul N. Benware in his 1975 book entitled, *Ambassadors of Armstrongism*. Here is what his book exposed.

### ***The Influence of Seventh-day Adventism***

*It was noted previously that Herbert Armstrong was affiliated for several years with the Church of God (Seventh-day), which is an offshoot of Seventh-day Adventism. The influence of Adventism is readily apparent by comparing quotations from Armstrong's writings and those of Adventist writers, and Mr. Armstrong himself admits studying much of their literature.*

*In comparing these teachings, a quote will be given from the literature of the Worldwide Church of God, followed by a quotation from a Seventh-day Adventist source. The subject of the quotation will precede them.*

### ***Sabbath keeping is a command and a sign today.***

*But throughout the Bible, God commands true Christians to worship Him by observing the day He made holy--the seventh-day Sabbath! Observance of the true Sabbath is the SIGN between God and His true people...(William F. Dankenbring, "Does It Matter Which Day You Keep?" Tomorrow's World (March, 1971),p. 36.)*

*Nowhere in all Scripture is there even a hint of Sabbath change. God's moral law is the foundation of the new covenant as it was the old. This new covenant calls for faithful obedience just as did the old...Christian Sabbath keepers rest in the assurance that because they love to obey God's changeless law, written in their hearts under new-covenant terms, they carry in their lives the sign of God's acceptance.("Did Christ Change the Sabbath?" Signs of the Times (August, 1966), p. 17)*

### ***Sabbath keeping is necessary for salvation.***

*Thus did God reveal which day is HIS SABBATH, and also that it DOES MAKE LIFE-AND-DEATH DIFFERENCE--for to break God's Holy Sabbath is SIN, and the penalty is eternal DEATH.(H. W. Armstrong, Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?, Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1971, p. 35)*

*One of the conditions of salvation and having our names retained in the book of life, is to keep the Sabbath.(O. A. Johnson, cited by Norman F. Douty, Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 78)*

### ***Sunday observance is the "mark of the beast."***

*Sunday observance--this is the Mark of the Beast...If you are branded with this Mark, rejecting the sign of God (the Sabbath), in your forehead and your hand, you shall be tormented by God's plagues without mercy. Yes, you! (Herbert Armstrong, The Mark of the Beast (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1957), pp. 10,11)*

*Sunday-keeping is an institution of the first beast, and all who submit to obey this institution emphatically worship the first beast and receive his mark, "the mark of the beast"...(Advent Review Extra (August, 1850), cited by D. M. Canright, Seventh-day Adventism Renounced (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), p. 43)*

*It should be noted at this point that modern Seventh-day Adventists have softened their stand on this issue, viewing the "mark" for Sunday observance as a future thing only.*

*However, in the days when Herbert Armstrong was affiliated with them, the above position was the one held.*

### ***Keeping the Ten Commandments is necessary for salvation.***

*For if you make any claim to being a Christian...you must walk according to the commandments of Almighty God if you would enter into eternal life (Matt. 19:17). (Roderick C. Meredith, The Ten Commandments (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1968), p. 17)*

*A Christian who through faith in Jesus Christ has faithfully kept the law's requirements will be acquitted: there is no condemnation, for the law finds no fault in him. If...it is found that one has broken even a single percent...he will be dealt with just as if he had broken all ten. (W. H. Branson, Drama of the Ages (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1963), pp. 308, 309)*

***A distinction is made between moral and ceremonial law.***

*Faith, the atonement, the gift of the Holy Spirit, DID take the place of, and therefore, did abolish the old Mosaic law. That was a law of physical ordinances, ceremonies, and sacrifices...But the Ten Commandments are an entirely different, separate, distinct law. The Commandments are spiritual principles which define sin. Moses' laws were sacrificial and ceremonial. (Herbert Armstrong, "Were the Ten Commandments Nailed to the Cross?" The Plain Truth (May, 1962), p.8)*

*The Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue, constitute God's eternal law. Not only is this law eternal, but it is immutable...But while this is true of the eternal law of God as expressed in the Decalogue, it would not be true of the ceremonial law that God gave to Israel...all that was typical of the sacrifice and ministry of Christ our Lord--met its end on Calvary's cross. (Questions on Doctrine, pp.129,130)*

***Man does not possess a soul.***

*Man became a living SOUL; that is what man IS--a soul. Notice there is no mention that man has a soul, but that man is a soul. (Garner Ted Armstrong, "Do You Have an Immortal Soul?," Reprint No. 290, Ambassador College Press, 1971, p. 2)*

*This basic idea of "soul" being the individual rather than a constituent part of the individual seems to underlie the various occurrences of nephesh. It is therefore more accurate to say that a certain person is a soul than to say he has a soul. (Questions on Doctrine, p. 513)*

***Man is mortal and temporal only.***

*The life of man and the life of animals is the same! MORTAL life!...The soul of man, therefore, is kept alive by the coursing of blood through his veins. (Garner Ted Armstrong, "Immortal Soul?," p. 3.)*

*...the Scriptures teach that the soul of man represents the whole man, and not a particular part independent of the other component parts of man's nature: and further, that the soul cannot exist apart from the body, for man is a unit. (Questions on Doctrine, p. 515)*

***Immortality for man is conditional.***

*In each case, immortality is something that is brought to light, that must be obtained, that God ONLY has, and in no case is something man already possesses!...The only way to live for all eternity is to REPENT... (Garner Ted Armstrong, "Immortal Soul?," p. 8.)*

*Seventh-day Adventists do not believe that the whole man or any part of him is inherently immortal. We believe the Bible picture of man is of a creature subject to death, with the possibility of eternal life because Christ has paid the penalty for sin and offers His life to the repentant sinner. (Questions on Doctrine, p. 518)*

***Death brings cessation of being and "sleep" to man.***

*Peter preached the RESURRECTION! He said NOTHING about the completely PAGAN doctrine of any...going to "hell" or "heaven" when one dies!...There is the real TRUTH about death...Death is DEATH--without consciousness. (Garner Ted Armstrong, "What Is Death?," Reprint No. 870,*

*Ambassador College Press, 1970, pp. 4, 7.)*

*That man "sleeps" between death and the resurrection is the express testimony of Scripture. (LeRoy Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers, Vol. I* (Washington, D. C.: The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), p. 467.)*

***Christ could have sinned as a man.***

*Jesus constantly had to CRY OUT to God day and night to keep Himself from falling!...the tremendous battle, the lifelong struggle Christ had with Himself, in overcoming His own human nature--the natural pulls of the flesh... (Garner Ted Armstrong, "Who--What--Was Jesus Before His Human Birth?," Reprint No. 370, Ambassador College Press, 1957, p. 2)*

*Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam's position:...But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. (Questions on Doctrine, p. 63)*

***The new birth is connected with the resurrection, and is a process.***

*The experience of conversion, in this life, is a begetting--a "conception"--an "impregnation"--but NOT YET A BIRTH....That tremendous, glorious event of being BORN of God is to take place AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST--at the time of Christ's second coming to earth!...All true Christians who have died before Christ's coming shall rise first--in a resurrection--and then all Christians still alive, in mortal flesh, shall be instantaneously--in the twinkling of an eye...at last BORN OF GOD! (Herbert Armstrong, *Just What Do You Mean...Born Again?* (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1962), pp 8, 13, 14.)*

*...the new birth comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts: First, a moral change wrought by conversion and a Christian life (John 3:5); second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. Luke 20:36; I Corinthians 15:51,52. ("Fundamental Beliefs," cited by Norman Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism*, pp. 71, 72)*

What became a distinguishing "mark" of the Adventists, which began with William Miller and is still prevalent in many of the churches descending from his movement, is their peculiar form of eschatology, that is, their view of end-time prophecy.

Ancient Talmudic writings declared that if the nation of Israel would keep the Sabbath in oneness, then the messiah would come. This too, has been the paradigm of the modern descendants of the Adventists who accepted the Sabbath day from Joseph Bates. These disciples appeared to have fixed their view on the advent of Christ and the restoration of a millennial kingdom just as the Jews had desired their own kingdom before the destruction of their temple system. Therefore, for the Adventists, the law and the prophets became their vehicle to paradise. New Testament scriptures, like Luke 16:16, seem to contradict this view.

*The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

Adventist's primary prophetic sources became the books of Daniel and Revelation. The use of prophetic symbols from these books took on special meanings to them. And, as we have already witnessed, it was of particular interest to calculate exactly when Christ would return and how believers might prepare for the event.

The seventh-day as the Sabbath became a very special way for feeling self-assured that they were

vigilantly awaiting the messiah. By simply turning to Old Testament references that demonstrated how God had originally ordained the seventh day of the week as holy time, they concluded that a vital key of obedience to God had somehow been abandoned in history. Then by noticing that the vast majority of Christians observed Sunday rather than Saturday they were further led to conclude that a type of conspiracy had taken place unknowingly. Obviously then, if one would not join in on the conspiracy--if one observed the seventh-day Sabbath--then God would put a special sign on that individual.

The mark of the beast (according to Adventist theology) became the attendance of church on Sunday. Those who observed Sunday as the Sabbath were "Babylon the Great." Therefore, it also became imperative that those prepared to meet the messiah at his return would preach the "third angel's message:"

*And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 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 Lamb: (Rev. 14:9,10)*

This message was of particular importance to Gilbert Cranmer, the founder of the modern Church of God movement. His publication, *Hope of Israel*, proclaimed the "third angel's message." Cranmer's message was only a forerunner to the twentieth-century radio ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong as well as many other Adventists. Decades later, millions would hear the voice of Art Gilmore serve as master of ceremonies to Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong with the introduction:

*The World Tomorrow! Herbert W. Armstrong brings you the plain truth about today's world news and the prophecies of the world tomorrow.*

And so the "mark" of Millerism--trying desperately to predict the end of the world--would never depart from the splinter groups that would later come out of his movement. Gilbert Cranmer later perceived that he had "gotten on board the wrong ship" with Ellen G. White and her fruitless prophecies. Yet Cranmer adhered to most Seventh-day Adventist doctrines when he raised up his "Churches of Christ."

We witness two subtle premises at work with these groups. I would like to point them out here because they will remain with all of the future splinter groups who try to re-invent the early Adventist movement.

The first premise is in the belief that God is working through a modern-day prophet to interpret the "signs of the times" for modern Christians. These self-proclaimed prophets would call themselves Elijah or John the Baptist, in a futile attempt to speed up the process. Failure upon failure would pile up around the Adventist ministers who follow in the footsteps of William Miller. Yet the movement would never die out.

The second premise is that the Sabbath is a sign of God's *true* people. The Protestant view has been to illustrate the fulfillment of the Sabbath in Christ.

This alternate view points out that the Sabbath, as being a sign for Christians, is never reflected in the teachings of Christ or the apostles. In John's prophecy in Revelation, Sabbath-breaking is not listed in the sins of those cast into the lake of fire. Colossians 2:16-17 refer to ordinances, such as the Sabbath, having a prophetic fulfillment at the cross. It, like many other Mosaic symbols, found fulfillment in Christ. And therefore, Christ--and not the Sabbath--becomes the sign for Christians.

Do Sabbatarians have a commission to deliver Sunday worshippers from the "mark of the beast"? If the Sabbath is not a sign of God's people but the faith in the messiah is, then Christians should not judge one another concerning how they keep days (Rom. 14:5, 13). If the sign for God's people is the fruit of

the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:33), then Sunday worship cannot be seen as its antithesis--"the mark of the beast." If one doesn't honestly know what the "mark of the beast" or "Babylon the great" is, then one cannot know what to tell people to "come out of." Therefore, Adventists should not take upon themselves a commission such as the "third angel's message" of Revelation 14. Notice that it is, after all, *an angel's message and not a prophet's message.*

## Chapter 13

### The Former and the Latter Rain

Years after the Church of Christ was founded by Gilbert Cranmer, the organizational name was changed to "Church of God." Headquarters was in Stanberry, Missouri. Later we would find maverick ministers who would loosely associate themselves with headquarters and teach a slightly modified version of the teachings of the General Conference. This brings us to the story of one such minister.

It had been several years after the Depression had ended. He had started his magazine on a shoestring budget, and even though he did not go out of his way to ask for contributions, his magazine had enjoyed a fair amount of success. In fact, he had even published this statement once:

*...that this movement to bring the truth of God before the people will not be launched as another begging machine... We can say for the past years, God has in a most marvelous way opened the way for us to accomplish what we have in the printing of books, and also now begin the printing of this paper, thus far we have not seen it necessary to ask any one for means.*

He prospered in spite of his rather unusual brand of Christianity. He taught that the whole law of Moses was never abolished. Even the holy days of ancient Israel were still to be observed. In fact, ancient Israel could be found in these modern times. This teaching was not entirely what the church leaders in Stanberry would have agreed upon. He taught about one true church and a false system called Babylon the Great in Revelation 17. This false system comprised the Roman Catholic Church and what he called "Protestantism".

Of all his teachings, prophecy seemed to be what he emphasized the most. He taught that the millennium was about to occur. At times he had gone so far as to set dates for the tribulation and return of Christ.

The Work was growing and now this minister looked for greener pastures.

*There is a wide field and an open door in California for the message. We are thankful indeed for the success thus far. It now looks like capable help will be left to carry forward the work. Every day our vision of both the truth and the greatness of the work enlarges in our mind.*

The work had started humbly among humble people, but now was growing. The editor of the fledgling magazine and leader of this independent Sabbath-keeping Church of God felt it was important to announce to his subscribers now that the work was "leaving the state." It would be going to Pasadena:

*Through an invitation of Sister Drury we are now located in her home town, Pasadena. Elder Leland and wife assist us in the meetings here.*

This particular magazine had carried the lead article entitled "Christ and the Passover." This article stated that Christians were to observe the Passover on the 14th day of the Jewish calendar and that,

*The manner of its observance is as follows:*

*"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses:"*

The second article simply asked,

#### ***IS THERE A TRUE CHURCH ORGANIZATION?***

*...How are we to determine who are the true Elijah? John was the man who fulfilled it in his day, for Christ said he did. But it is to be more fully fulfilled in our day all will admit...*

*...When you find a teacher who takes the whole Bible, leaving nothing to be abolished, one who has God's form of organization and church government. In short one who teaches Moses and the prophets in full as they taught and practiced, such a one will come much nearer filling the prophecy among present existing denominations, for it must be started by some individual and developed by some one individual, for that is God's way of doing. Next, that individual must have a sound doctrine in all their teaching and proclaim the whole council of God, regardless of any. Now look out for such a work; if it is not to be found, then Elijah has not yet come. The Jews did not know it when it was before their eyes. So it may be now.*

### ***Evidence Whereby to Judge the True Messenger.***

*First. Any one fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi as representative of Elijah must have some thing definite as already stated...John "spake as one having authority." A true messenger has some thing positive and knows whereof he speaks.*

*Second. The very character of the message is given us. Namely, it is based on repentance and an immediate preparation to meet the Lord...*

*Third. John was a prophet...*

*Fourth. It will not be given by any sect or denomination. John was free from them all.*

*Fifth. Malachi especially gives the law of Moses as a part of that message.*

History does tend to repeat itself. The story above is a proof of that.

Yes, the Great Depression of the 19th century had ended in 1897. There would be another Great Depression 30 years later.

The date was June, 1919 and the maverick minister was a man by the name of G. G. Rupert. Rupert was an independent minister of the Church of God, (Seventh Day) who published his "Remnant of Israel" in Britton, Oklahoma. The above quotes were taken out of his magazine.

The first issue of "Remnant of Israel" appeared in April of 1915. In that issue Rupert's lead article began by establishing the identity of ancient Israel.

On page 3, he wrote of his doctrine of the "former and latter rain." This doctrinal stance is a careful weaving of the ministries of Christ and Moses together.

*Turning first to the writings of Moses, where we find the foundation of all gospel truth, we read: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass"...[Deut. 32:1-5] tells us plainly what the rain is, namely, the doctrine of the Lord or the fundamentals governing the Christian's life...*

Christ pictured himself in a parable as a sower scattering seeds. According to Rupert, the plants that sprang from the seed were the people; the former rain was the ministry of John the Baptist and the latter rain was Rupert's own self-proclaimed ministry.

Rupert had noticed that there are also many scriptural references to harvests and blessings in the Old Testament. Rupert did not believe that there was a New Testament dispensation. He felt that what was delivered to Moses was to be observed by those to whom Christ later came to preach. Of Christ's reference to Moses, Rupert quoted from a book written by Rabbi L. Weiss, "*Did Christianity supersede Judaism?*"

*"No matter how he condemned the conduct and dealings of the Pharisees, the law of Moses was still his ideal."*

Rupert, himself, had written:

*...The outpouring of the Holy spirit was a witness to their development and of the work that had been going on for four years in the falling of the early rain prior to the event. This work of teaching began with John the Baptist, and followed up by Christ and His disciples, was the former rain, and when that rain of doctrinal teaching had developed the growth of the individuals and prepared their minds to receive the witness of the Spirit, then God witnessed to it, and we lay down this principle now as an eternal truth unalterable, and it is useless to attempt to change it: namely, no such demonstration as on the Day of Pentecost can possibly take place as a genuine thing, in our day until the genuine doctrines of the Bible precedes the manifestation and develops a company of united believers.*

Rupert felt that if the people would only return to the doctrines of Moses, they would be watered as tender plants. They would be receiving the latter rain.

Rupert did not stop with the ten commandments. He felt that it was wrong to put a break between the Old and New Testaments. To G. G. Rupert, it had not been the intent of God to do so. To him, the Bible was one complete package for mankind.

Hebrew holydays, clean and unclean meats, Sabbaths, and tithing were all in force for the followers of Rupert. Teaching these doctrines would be the latter rain and coincidentally, this teaching would be doing the work of Elijah, of whom John the Baptist was a type during the former rain period.

Rupert also had a particularly interesting view of prophecy. He believed that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 were none other than seven church "eras". The dates did not all correspond with those of the Worldwide Church of God. Sardis, he felt, began in 1798. Philadelphia was the period of William Miller: 1833 to 1844. Laodicea had begun in 1844 and would last until the end time.

As far as the nature of man, he taught that man did not have an immortal soul. Quoting Ecclesiastes 9:4-5 and Psalms 146:4, he used the same scriptures Armstrong cited in his ministry.

What did Rupert say of others who professed Christianity outside of his following?

*The Bible says these denominations are Babylon and we do not hesitate to say they are not the legitimate churches of Jesus Christ. God's church and His creed are as different as day is from night.*

Rupert died shortly before Herbert Armstrong was introduced to the Church of God, (Seventh-Day) but there is no doubt that Armstrong carefully studied all of the writings that Rupert had left behind. Rupert's literature had been discovered in Armstrong's home on various occasions by church employees, one of whom was Mike Hollman, ex-department head for Armstrong's data processing center, of whom we will read later.

In a sermon delivered to the Worldwide Church of God in August of 1992, Joseph Tkach Jr. was speaking about Herbert Armstrong's misunderstanding of the doctrine of being "born again." This is one of the many doctrines that the Tkach administration came to adamantly disagree with Armstrong on. In this sermon Joe Tkach Jr. referred to Armstrong's reliance on scholars for doctrinal understanding.

*Mr. Armstrong relied upon the scholars. His favorite Bible was the Scofield Bible. Why? Because Dr. C. I. Scofield was one of the scholars he respected. He relied upon that scholar's work more than other scholar's works.*

*Mr. Armstrong was a fan of others like Jamieson, Fausset and Brown; Charles Finney, the noted theologian of a previous century; of Rupert; of other names I could name to you. But, these are scholars. He relied upon them.*

The problem with Rupert's doctrines was that he tried to synthesize a biblical dichotomy, Judaism and

Christianity, by declaring that they were both the same religion. True to his Millerite leanings, he focused on prophecies in Revelation and Daniel.

True to Seventh-Day Adventist influences, he ascribed a mystical importance to the observance of the seventh day of the week. And it did have an importance, in that it was rooted in Moses and therefore, Judaism. For example, when he read where Paul had asked the Gentiles to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood," his comment was:

*This last clause is repeated several times in the law of Moses; are these not all evidences that Christianity was never intended to be at variance with Judaism much less opposed.*

In doing this he overlooked other passages in scripture (e.g., the circumcision controversy). Rupert's focus was on Moses being the central theme of scripture for the Christian. This is not Christianity as much as it is Judaism. Christ is the centrality of scripture for the Christian.

Rupert again referred to Rabbi Weiss:

*It seems to us too bad that these who contend for the binding obligations of the ten commandments and the Sabbath of the fourth commandment are compelled to leave untouched so many scriptures some of which Mr. Weiss refers to which could be used to close the mouths of those who teach that the law was abolished and nailed to the cross, a doctrine which there is not a scriptural text to sustain.*

Armstrong, too would use Rupert's claim that the "nailing the law to the cross" statement was not scriptural. The statement is false.

*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (Col. 2:14)*

This reference was clearly concerning the Mosaic law.

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days;*

*Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (verses 16 and 17)*

Paul made a separation of the Old and New Testaments and said that the Old was no longer binding; it was "abolished."

*And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:*

*But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament: which vail is done away in Christ. (II Cor. 3:13-14)*

But like the first century Judaizers, these nineteenth century Millerites again wanted to make Jew and Gentile one by shifting their focus to Moses rather than Christ. As we had seen in an earlier chapter, Paul had condemned the practice of Judaizing--that is, the forcing of the observances of the law upon Gentiles.

The Pauline view, drawn from the New Testament, is that Mosaic covenants were nullified when gentiles were allowed to become Christians, pagan religion was not to be feared, and the Jews were now just another religion.

*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; (I Cor. 9:20)*

This distinction between Judaism and Christianity has been understood by Christians throughout the Protestant reformation.

## Chapter 14

### Contending For The Faith Once Delivered

Originally, Gilbert Cranmer believed that he had a divine commission to publish the "Third Angel's Message." He did this in his magazine, the *Hope of Israel* (later called the *Bible Advocate*). And, as we have seen, it had been an apocalyptic message calling for Sunday-keeping Christians to observe the "whole law of Moses"--which meant the seventh-day Sabbath.

Of course, the whole law of Moses was perceived by others, such as G. G. Rupert, differently. To Rupert it included the Hebrew holydays, Levitical tithing, abstaining from unclean meats and so on. Rupert also fell easy prey to a teaching that had been popular in his youth--British-Israelism. Rupert taught this openly and was not censured. He produced his own publication called the *Remnant of Israel*. So it would not be correct to believe that Rupert's teachings had not been introduced in some form throughout the entire membership of the Church of God (Seventh Day). But officially, headquarters in Stanberry, Missouri chose not to accept them.

On October 5, 1884 the church had held its first annual meeting and, according to chairperson John Branch, "It was voted that we organize a General Conference." Among officers elected were A. C. Long, president and A. F. Dugger, Sr., vice-president.

The purpose of creating the General Conference was stated in the church constitution: "To unite the different state conferences; to take a general oversight of the wants of the cause, and supply the same; to secure unity of action and belief, so that we may be of one mind and one spirit."

A minister such as Rupert was reasonably free to preach and publish what he wanted. If the General Conference did not accept the teachings, then it would not become official church dogma. The form of church government was democratic. So it should not be perceived that Gilbert Cranmer, or anyone else, held a tight grip on the church or its teachings. The general consensus ruled. Cranmer died as a prominent church leader in Michigan on December 14, 1903.

By the fifth annual session in 1888, the General Conference first recorded its "Articles of Faith."

*The following Articles of Faith, expressing our belief in general, were adopted in lieu of former declarations.*

- 1. We believe that God, the Creator, and Jesus Christ, His Son, the Redeemer, are personal beings.*
- 2. We believe that repentance, conversion, baptism by immersion, a godly life through faith in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, and His mediatorship for us, are the essential elements of salvation.*
- 3. We believe that the law of God, contained in the ten commandments, forms the basis of a godly life, the standard by which to regulate it.*
- 4. We believe that man is mortal and has no consciousness in death.*
- 5. We believe that there will be a resurrection of the righteous to everlasting life, and the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom on the earth at the second coming of Christ.*
- 6. We believe that there will be a resurrection of the wicked to a judgment of deeds done in this life, wherein life and probation for them forever ceases.*
- 7. The prayer of faith, for the sick.*
- 8. The ordination of ministers by the laying on of hands.*

In 1892 this preamble was added:

*We take the Bible and the Bible alone as our only rule of faith and practice. The following are some of the things it teaches and that we believe.*

There would be no change to the above Articles for 29 years. For 29 years the church would stand fast by its creed of faith. And 29 years after 1892 was the year 1921, just six years before Herbert Armstrong would walk into his first Church of God Sabbath service. What Armstrong was walking into was a church that had been growing into disunity.

By 1927, the "loose association" of the State Conferences began to be perceived as a source of this disunity. The most influential figure in the Church of God at this time was Andrew N. Dugger (the son of the church's first vice president, A. F. Dugger).

*In the 1927 Conference meeting at Rich Hill, Missouri, the membership dealt with the doctrinal disunity of the Church of God (Seventh Day). A by law was adopted which stated, "No member of the conference shall teach any doctrine in public which is not believed by the conference body, without clearly stating that such belief has not been endorsed by the Church of God, but that it is his own individual opinion. (The Story Of The Church Of God (Seventh Day), p. 43)*

Realizing that Rupert had held a prominent position in the church and that he widely published his views, it is not difficult to recognize that some of the very doctrines causing such disunity would have been British-Israelism, Hebrew holyday observance, Levitical tithing, the mythical lineage of one true church, church "eras" and so forth. This must have been regarded by many old-time members, who were aware of the beliefs of their Millerite ancestors, as the "faith once delivered."

But to the General Conference, these were controversial and not provable beliefs. It was time to clear the air and use the Bible itself as a basis of beliefs, as the church had officially stated in the 1892 preamble.

One other factor that began to cause an influence upon the old guard, second generation Millerites, was the growing number of members who had been influenced by Protestantism. It is important to realize that the Adventists had deluded themselves into believing that since they were keeping the Mosaic ordinances (the Sabbath), they were not of the "Babylonian" system of influence, which some referred to as Romanism. This was an identifying sign that they were God's true people. This circular form of logic made them believe that they were God's true church.

Andrew Dugger had been a Church of God minister since 1906. By 1914 he had become both president of the General Conference and editor of the *Bible Advocate*. Dugger was of the old guard; he was now perceived by the ministers in the many State Conferences as arrogating too much power and authority to the General Conference and himself. This only created more division.

Dugger had some peculiar beliefs of his own which he wanted the church to adopt. It was Andrew Dugger who began to believe that he could raise up the continuation of "the primitive" New Testament church. In essence, he was perceiving that Rupert's "latter rain" was now evidently close. True to the nature of his Millerite ancestors, he was again going to ascribe prophetic importance to the date of 1933.

Here is how Dugger made his calculation. The ancient Hebrew calendar takes 19 years to complete its lunar cycle. The Hebrew calendar is based upon the cycles of the moon which coincidentally make it an aid to farming. (The ancient religion of the Israelites in Canaan is seldom seen for its close ties to agricultural harvests by Adventists.) To those who keep trying to predict the return of Christ, significance is often given to time cycles of the calendar and other numerological computations. Therefore, it did not go unnoticed by Andrew Dugger and his contemporaries that the year 1933 is exactly 100 19-year-time-cycles from the date that he felt the "primitive church" began in 33 A. D.

In 1931 Dugger had lost his position as president of the General Conference but he was still the editor of the *Bible Advocate*. The church had done much evangelizing in other countries during his tenure as president. But now he proposed something with apocalyptic implications: to raise up a Church of God in Jerusalem. Dugger had convinced himself and many others that this would signal the New Age.

On October 3, 1931 he delivered his farewell address in Stanberry and left for Jerusalem. Another prominent minister in the Church of God by the name of John Kiesz would fill in for Dugger as editor of the *Advocate*. Kiesz and C. O. Dodd were two of Dugger's strongest supporters at the time. Both Kiesz and Dodd were of the early Church of God members who practiced the observance of the Hebrew holydays during this period of time. Dugger, only later in his life, would consider the observance of holydays as part of the formula for resurrecting the "primitive church."

Dugger returned from Jerusalem one year later without successfully raising up the "primitive church". Again like William Miller, he would make no apologies but would only seek to recalculate his end-time speculation.

Dugger's theory was a rather crude one; it had been floating in the minds of church speculators since the days of the Adventists. But to prove his theory he had to produce a history of some sort. He had to bend reality to make it appear that the Sabbath observing Church of God was the only true Christian church on earth by lineage.

Much like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster was pieced together from corpses, Dugger felt that he could piece together a historical lineage from now-dead churches that would stretch back to 33 A. D.; then he would breathe the breath of life into them when he could establish world headquarters in Jerusalem. He did a considerable amount of research into church history and then with a definite bias he and fellow minister C. O. Dodd co-authored the 318 page book, *A History of the True Religion, Through Each Hundred Years From 33 A. D. To Date*.

Incidentally, this historical fable would only be altered slightly by Worldwide Church of God authors later, who used it to their great advantage by convincing thousands of people that they would not be able to find salvation outside their group.

It wasn't until January of 1992 that I had discovered enough data to disprove this mythical history and wrote a lengthy letter to Ronald Kelly at Worldwide Church of God headquarters. He did not return my correspondence but, beginning in mid-1994, the Worldwide Church of God backed away from Dugger's view of church history claiming that the Worldwide Church of God was the *only* true church.

Returning from Jerusalem in 1931 was somewhat embarrassing for Andrew Dugger. He found that the church was still suffering from many divisive factions. Dugger joined in on the battle which was focused on who could publish doctrinal essays in the *Bible Advocate*. There had been a growing element of ministers who had come into the church from Protestant backgrounds. These men wanted to submit articles to the *Advocate* but were being seen as a threatening "liberal" element by the old-timers.

According to Dugger, the liberal element was challenging seven doctrinal beliefs of the Church of God in the following ways: The date for observing the Lord's Supper needed to be changed; the Seven Last Plagues of Revelation 16 were neither literal nor for future fulfillment; the Third Angel's Message of Revelation 14:9 was not a message for the Church of God to proclaim; tithing was not necessary for the church; the use of tobacco should be permissible; eating unclean meats should be allowed; and certain "gifts of the Holy Spirit" should not be denied.

This divisiveness led Dugger to draft a circular letter to the membership of the church. It appeared to be an ultimatum appealing for Dugger's form of organization or else schism would result. The letter was signed by A. N. Dugger, C. O. Dodd, and W. W. McMicken and sent in October 1933. He proposed--in a thinly veiled agenda for his primitive church--that church headquarters must be located in Jerusalem

and added that its governmental structure had to resemble that of the New Testament church (e.g., twelve apostles, seventy disciples to preach the gospel, and seven to oversee the business affairs as in Acts 6:1-6). This was his statement of purpose:

*The end is very near at hand. Signs throughout the world show the Lord is soon coming. European diplomats are prophesying a world war involving all nations in 1934 which they say the League of Nations is powerless to avert. We know what this means. Conditions of the world, and also in the Holy Land, are set in order for Armageddon. Therefore the church must also be set in order, to meet the bridegroom. She must be a chaste virgin without spot or wrinkle. See II Corinthians 11:1,2. It is now time for his wife to make herself ready. Revelation 19:7,8. The New Testament organization must be arranged with no malice, hatred, or bitterness in any heart, free from debates, discord, and strife.*

This statement was then followed by an appeal for fasting and prayer and a call for a revival of the church.

As the dissidents who were now united with Dugger had suspected, the General Conference in Stanberry did not yield to Dugger's appeal and so he and his colleagues established headquarters for a competing Church of God in Salem, West Virginia on November 4, 1933.

The early founders of the group in Salem wanted to recreate a "Bible form of government; this meant the choosing of 12 apostles and 70 elders who would be commissioned to go two by two and proselytize. The choosing was done by "casting lots" in a prayer filled meeting on November 4.

Among the 12 chosen was John Kiesz. Kiesz was not entirely convinced that his friends Dugger and Dodd were doing the right thing. For example, it bothered Kiesz that they were printing a counterfeit version of the *Bible Advocate* and even claimed the same volume number as the real *Bible Advocate*. Kiesz also appealed to Dodd that he felt it was dishonest of them to claim Jerusalem as their headquarters when no such office had ever been established. C. O. Dodd promised that he would do his best to make the organization respectable and so Kiesz accepted his office as apostle.

Among the other elders to make the split was an advertising man turned minister from Eugene, Oregon--Herbert W. Armstrong. He had been chosen to be one of the seventy. When Armstrong later wrote his two volume autobiography, he tried to shade the events surrounding his defection from the Stanberry conference by making a vague reference about his being "loosely associated" with the group. In actual fact, according to official documents, he was a paid minister who was showing neither faith in God to correct the problems in doctrinal disunity at Stanberry nor was he showing loyalty to church government by his defection.

The Salem Church still functions as an independent organization to this day claiming that it is God's one and only true church. I had interviewed Chris Royer, before his death in 1994. He was then the head of the church and acting editor of *The Advocate of Truth* magazine sent free of charge upon request.

The Salem Church teaches that it is directly descended from Stephen Mumford's seventeenth century "Church of God" in Newport, Rhode Island. As we have seen in chapter 9, this is a mythical belief. Mr. Royer was unable to give me any tangible proof for this claim except as that taught by Andrew Dugger in the 1930s. Royer was not eager to talk with me about his church's history, but I was able to confirm some information I had received concerning Armstrong, Dugger, and C. O. Dodd.

Royer admitted to me that both he and his father had met Armstrong in the early 50's but he would not divulge any details about their meetings. I pressed him further for answers. I asked if he had met Armstrong in Pasadena. His answer was little more than a quick "no!". I asked if they were in Salem and again he answered the same way. "What kind of meetings were they? What was discussed?" I asked. He quickly changed the subject without answering. I was not sure why he was so evasive. Later

I learned that he had seen so much arguing among contentious ministers like Armstrong, in the early days of the Salem church, that he had chosen to answer my questions in the laconic manner that he did.

It was through Royer that I discovered who the Jehovah's Witness was that had influenced Herbert Armstrong's early beliefs. It was C. O. Dodd, the co-author of Andrew Dugger's book *A True History of A True Religion*. Dodd had studied Jehovah's Witness teachings and was convinced of the need to use "sacred names," such as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh," rather than "God." This eventually led to his being ousted from the Salem Church of God ministry who were not in agreement with his beliefs.

After being cast out of the church that he had helped to organize, he made public admissions that much of the book he co-authored with Andrew Dugger--claiming a lineage to the New Testament church--was deliberately falsified.

Dodd never did abandon his belief in sacred names and when he and Dugger had a parting of the ways over this issue later, Dodd went on to be a heavy influence on a form of Seventh Day Adventism combined with the Jehovah's Witness teachings.

Several "sacred names" Sabbatarian groups claimed to have received their teachings from C. O. Dodd, as early as 1940. The Faith Bible and Tract Society is a sacred names publishing house in Amherst, Ohio and is presently being overseen by Dodd's daughter Mary Dodd Ling.

Curiously, all of the sacred names groups that were founded by Dodd also teach the other Levitical ordinances such as Hebrew holy day observance and abstinence from unclean meats; this being a further indicator that Armstrong received these teachings from Dodd.

Some of my information for this and the following chapter was confirmed in an interview that I held with John Kiesz. He was then 89 years of age and residing in Colorado. Kiesz told me that he was one of the very few still alive who could give me an accurate story of those early days.

A gentle and devout man, he stressed his desire to be remembered as one who sought to think the best of all of those men who he reluctantly admitted were locked in a battle for domination of the Salem church.

I have also interviewed Mildred Kelvig of Kansas City, Missouri. Mildred was Andrew Dugger's personal secretary for many years and knew Dugger from the time she was a little girl. She told me that Armstrong was definitely influenced by C. O. Dodd and that it was Dodd who had convinced Armstrong and others that G. G. Rupert's belief in the observance of Hebrew holydays was mandatory.

In the final analysis, it appears that the defection of the Andrew Dugger dissidents from the Church of God, Seventh Day succeeded in purging the Stanberry Church of its more hostile Millerite faction. Although the organization still adheres to the observance of the seventh day Sabbath, they are no longer a contentious church. The many Church of God, Seventh Day members that I have met in preparation for this book have set some of the finest Christian examples I have ever seen. They have been unfairly slandered by old adversaries, such as Armstrong who referred to them as spiritually dead, in order to pull away a following and justify their own defections.

On the other hand, Dugger's group of defectors continued to have doctrinal disunity among themselves. Their conflict was rooted in a battle of headstrong personalities.

As noted above, C. O. Dodd was eventually cast out of the group because of his own pet doctrines.

Herbert Armstrong persisted in trying to force the Salem church to accept British-Israelism. Armstrong began to proselytize others in Oregon and preached his own pet doctrines in direct rebellion to the Salem organization. Once Armstrong was able to secure control of tithe money from members in the state of Oregon, he began to preach his version of Millerism. Armstrong finally succeeded in securing

some radio time so he could begin to proclaim himself a radio prophet.

Meanwhile, in Salem, West Virginia, Andrew Dugger was trying to convince the 12 apostles that church headquarters had to be in Jerusalem to fulfill his true church theory. This finally led to his defection from that group and his eventual move to Tel Aviv, Israel.

It is unclear if Dugger ever personally accomplished his lifelong desire to set up a world headquarters for his one true church in Jerusalem but eventually his followers were able to establish an address there which became headquarters for the Church of God, Jerusalem (claiming 40,000 members worldwide). Dugger died and is buried in Tel Aviv. His son is said to have carried on in his father's footsteps as one of the leading ministers of the Jerusalem Church.

As the setting for World War II began to heat up, radio prophet Armstrong stepped into the limelight he had waited for all of his life. From an early age he had been inspired with ambition to be somebody important. His Millerite-based logic led him to calculate in this fashion: If we are in the end-time; if Romanism is the great evil; if I am in God's one true church; if these people look up to me as a powerful radio minister; if, if, if...*then Mussolini must be the Beast of Revelation and therefore I am Elijah the prophet!*

And so he began to prophesy, over the airwaves, in great detail that World War II was the great tribulation and that Mussolini and Hitler would literally fight against Christ at his soon return. He also broadcast upon the airwaves wild claims, such as his prediction that Franklin Roosevelt would soon declare himself dictator of the United States.

Armstrong's early ministry was exclusively apocalyptic and some who have written biographical essays about him have outlined as many as 100 unfulfilled prophecies--with dates--that he energetically proclaimed would find fulfillment. The fact that they never did come to pass neither deterred him nor disillusioned his anxiety-filled audience which was now destined to repeat the Great Disappointment of William Miller within three decades--in 1972.

As early as 1937, Armstrong had been repeatedly warned by his superiors in Salem, West Virginia that he was not preaching biblically based doctrines. He therefore had his ministerial license revoked. He had been fired and defrocked as a minister of the Church of God.

It was then that Armstrong reorganized a loyal contingency of the Oregon Church of God. This appears to be where he received a ministerial credential, photographed in his autobiography, claiming that he was an "apostle."

In reviewing Armstrong's ministry, we might conclude that he was a man driven by his desire to leave his mark on the world. He had plummeted from a pinnacle of rubbing shoulders with influential businessmen early in the Depression. After entering a mid-life crisis in 1927, he had become a man who had suffered incredible career setbacks, a man who tried his best to cover up feelings of inferiority with an inflated ego and had now been rejected twice as a minister among men he had considered unsophisticated yokels. He decided that he would answer to no one again.

Herbert Armstrong, now recognized as the voice of the Radio Church of God, took the subscribers list of the *Plain Truth* magazine, which had been financed by the Oregon Church of God, Seventh Day and moved on to Pasadena, California to start what some would later refer to as an empire.

## Chapter 15

### I Will Build My Church

Herbert Armstrong was born in Des Moines, Iowa on July 31, 1892. He boasted that his family was of "solid Quaker stock." He spent the first half of his life struggling to be a successful advertising man (or traveling salesman). This career of his was brought to a crashing end early in the Depression of the 1920s.

What had also suffered a crushing blow was a tremendous ego and a burning ambition to be somebody, instilled in Herbert by an employer he had worked for at the age of sixteen. Herbert would later describe his business failure as a time of "hitting rock bottom." Undoubtedly the humiliation of poverty left him scarred for life.

At the age of seventeen, rather than pursue his education, Armstrong wanted to be the teacher himself. He secretly acquired a phony teaching certificate without informing his father of his grandiose scheme. Upon discovering Herbert's plans, his father met him with stern disapproval. This did not rest well with young Herbert and the following year he quit high school and turned to what he called the school of hard knocks.

His first job was in the classified section of the *Des Moines Daily Capital*. He sold advertising space. After a sum total of eleven shaky years of advertising experience, he fell into a nearly devastating personal collapse in 1922.

One thing that seems fairly clear about Herbert's childhood was that he had suffered from some sort of conflict with his father; his lifelong desire to prove his superiority over others seems to bear this out. Unlike the average man, Armstrong did not want to just earn a living and take care of his family. Armstrong wanted to be a great person. He craved power and influence over other people. But, his desire to be wildly successful was dashed when he and his family were reduced to poverty in 1922.

In 1924, his wife Loma suggested that Herbert move the family to Oregon. They arrived there on July 4. He had a short spurt of success with the *Vancouver Columbian* newspaper. Then he stepped into a laundry business scheme with a chemist in 1925.

Armstrong began to have delusions of becoming wealthy for the first time in his life. Then, in 1926, his business was suddenly and unexpectedly halted. Here is how Herbert described it: "Some 'bright' advertising man, in an advertising agency in Indianapolis, Indiana, put over on the Laundryowners National Association a \$5,000,000 advertising campaign for the entire industry." This would mean another seven years of poverty for Armstrong's family, which now was reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence. This is when he felt that he had hit "rock bottom." It seemed as though he had exhausted his resources for wealth and success.

Then a series of events led up to Armstrong being forced to eat crow before his wife. She had challenged him to prove from the Bible that the observance of the Saturday Sabbath was not still in effect. Loma had been studying privately with some Sabbath-keepers and was herself convinced that Saturday was a commanded assembly for Christians.

After what he called an "intensive study," he conceded to his wife that she was more clever than himself. She had really stumped him. Saturday Sabbath-keeping appeared to be a commandment that Christians were unaware of. Herbert was humbled by the experience but may have perceived that God was about to show him one of the best advertising angles that could have ever fallen into his lap.

Armstrong would later claim that he "researched" the doctrines of the Church of God thoroughly--actually he surveyed the various pet theories of his contemporaries and their predecessors. Then he

formulated his own set of doctrines. Each one having a distinct element of surprise: They could be made to appear as clever and simple commands, warnings, or proclamations from the pages of the Bible. Herbert then tried to convince others in the Church of God. This would have been acceptable to his brethren but Armstrong insisted that his views were the most accurate and that the entire church should yield to his arguments as he had yielded to Loma's. Armstrong sought every opportunity to place himself into the limelight and soon became a minister. His ministry was soon wracked with controversy.

### **Herbert Armstrong's Co-operative Ministry**

The account given by one of Herbert Armstrong's closest associates in the Church of God, Seventh Day, John Kiesz, shows how Armstrong was observed in his early church membership:

*Our first knowledge of him was in late 1931 or early 1932 while I was office editor of the Bible Advocate, which was then published at Stanberry, Missouri. At that time he and Robert Taylor were publishing the Messenger of Truth, in Oregon, in which appeared articles written by both of these men. One of the articles which interested me very much was on the "secret rapture" fallacy, written by Herbert Armstrong, which I in turn reprinted in the Bible Advocate. I believe some of his writings had appeared in the Bible Advocate previously, and perhaps several later.*

*As for Herbert's origins in religious matters, as far as his associations with the Church of God (7th Day), who gave Loma a Bible study on the Sabbath question: Loma rejoiced in this newfound truth, and rushed to tell Herbert about it. To him that was the worst news he had ever heard. He became very much upset, and considered divorcing her, he told me in later years, but that seemed too drastic, so he decided to study and prove to his companion from the Bible that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. After studying intensively for six months, he became convinced that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, together with the annual Sabbaths, must be observed.*

*After his conversion, Armstrong naturally began seeking for the true church. He checked out the Seventh-day Adventists, the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Church of God (7th Day). Although the latter-mentioned church was the smallest group, it had more Bible truths than any other. So he began to fellowship with the scattered few members in Oregon. It was in 1927 that he was baptized, but I do not recall his ever telling me that he was baptized by a Baptist minister, instead of a minister of the Church of God (7th Day), until I read it in one of his writings. It appears that he decided to be baptized by a minister who would not make him join that denomination.*

*The Oregon Brethren urged him from time to time to preach to them, but becoming a preacher was the very last thing he ever wanted to be, he said. However, in 1928 he preached his first sermon, and many more sermons followed at the Church to the ministry, and in 1932 he received his Ministerial License Certificate from the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, signed by O. J. Runcorn as President, and Mrs. I. E. Curtis as Secretary.*

*The headquarters of the General Conference of the Church of God (7th Day) had been at Stanberry, Missouri, since the late 1880's. In the fall of 1933 there was a division in the Church of God organization, one retaining Stanberry, Missouri. This newly formed group instituted what was termed Apostolic form of organization, with the Twelve, the Seven, and the Seventy. My name appeared in the list of the Twelve, and Herbert's in the list of the Seventy.*

*As mentioned before, Herbert and I commenced corresponding with each other from late in 1931 or early in 1932, which we kept up until the fall of 1945. Much of our correspondence during 1934 was concerning his stand as to when to baptize new converts, and the other concerning his understanding about the law of the clean and unclean foods. He wanted us to know how he stood on these matters before accepting his position on the Seventy, since he was considering working with the Salem group.*

*So, in the fall of 1934 he received his credentials from the Salem branch of the Church of God. As mentioned previously, I was then a member of the executive board of the church, which decided on who was eligible for those papers (Kiesz).*

In stating how he managed to shift sides from the Stanberry, Missouri branch of the Church of God, Seventh Day (of which he claimed to have never been a member in the first place, on page 567 of his autobiography), Armstrong further wrote:

*A short time later, I learned that they did consider me as one of "the Seventy."*

### **Co-operating--Not Joining**

*Thus we of the Church of God meeting at the Jeans school-house, along with our brethren of the Oregon Conference, decided to go along with it in co-operation, but we of the new local church near Eugene did not "join" in the sense of becoming an integral part of it.*

But both the Church of God in Stanberry, Missouri and in Salem, West Virginia concur that Armstrong did indeed defect from one to the other, receiving ministerial credentials and salary from both groups. Armstrong claimed that he was just being co-operative.

Armstrong had a couple of pet doctrines that he had been openly and defiantly preaching to his group in Oregon. During his "intensive research" he undoubtedly had been corresponding with Howard Rand's publishing house in Merrimac, Massachusetts: Destiny Publishers. Destiny Publishers provided many publications on the subject of British-Israelism. Among them was the book, *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright* by J. H. Allen. The Worldwide Church of God admitted, after Armstrong's death, that Herbert had plagiarized this book in the writing of his *United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

Part of his "intensive research" included the writings of Charles Taze Russell, Ellen G. White and G. G. Rupert (whose *Remnant of Israel* was still actively being published during Herbert's early years in the Church of God). Armstrong's ego would not prevent him from imagining that he might be Rupert's prophesied Elijah.

British-Israelism, combined with Adventism dictates that if America and Britain were the modern descendants of the ancient tribes of Israel, then the reason God would bring the "great tribulation" would be for the same reason that tribulation came upon Old Testament Israelites--disobedience to the Old Covenant laws of Sabbaths, holydays, tithing, and so on.

In formulating his dogma and by convincing others that God was opening up his understanding to biblical truths, Armstrong may have felt compelled to play out the role of an Old Testament prophet. When Armstrong became self-convinced of some matter he always took it as a personal challenge to convince others that he was right. When others would not submit to his line of reasoning, he rejected them immediately. Armstrong rarely conceded to the authority of others; when he did it wounded him.

Herbert Armstrong may have been surprised when his fellow ministers were not impressed with his claim to inspiration. John Kiesz, who had preceded Armstrong on the private observance of the Hebrew holydays (or annual Feast days), continues the story:

*It was in the fall of 1937 when Elder Armstrong's credentials were revoked by the Salem Church of God organization. The reason given by the Board of Twelve for this action was because he taught and kept the annual Feast days. But the real reason seems to have been because of his uncooperative attitude. One writer, in his published book, says that Armstrong was asked to surrender his credentials to A. N. Dugger, and that Dugger at that time was president of the Salem Church of God. That is not true. Dugger never was president of the Salem branch. I was on the Board of Twelve when Armstrong was issued ministerial credentials in 1934, and also when his credentials were revoked in 1937. May I state*

*that I personally did not participate in the revoking procedures.*

*Following this incident of revoking Armstrong's credentials, he and I remained close friends, although not in full agreement on several points of doctrine, yet we had many things in common and worked together. Without going into details why, at this time, I will state that about eight or nine months later I submitted my ministerial credentials to the Salem Church of God organization, 1938. Sister Kiesz and I assisted in the Feast of Tabernacles at Eugene, Oregon, in 1941, and again in 1944, and the last one I attended by myself at Belknap Springs, sixty miles east of Eugene, 1945. We lived in Canon City, Colorado, most of the time from 1940 to 1950. It was during part of January and part of February, 1945, that Herbert held a fairly successful evangelistic campaign in Canon City.*

Armstrong's lack of team spirit is adequately brought out in his own autobiography. He appears to be hostile, defensive and always mindful of persecution. Kiesz continues:

*It is true that Herbert was not always able to work harmoniously with other ministers. Perhaps it was not his fault alone. He had a feeling, evidently, that some folks were always undermining him, and trying to destroy his work....*

*Another area in which folks have concerned themselves with is his Autobiography. I have been asked: "Do you believe everything written in the biography is true?" Since he reported in his Autobiography, in the August, 1962 issue of the Plain Truth, the three and a half weeks meetings he held for us in Canon City, Colorado, during part of January and February, 1945, and since about half of his report was either distorted or false, I have to question his other reports too. For instance, he wrote in his Autobiography about his trying in the early 1930's to work with men like Taylor, Oberg, Ray, and Daily, and how all of them worked against him. I did not get personally acquainted with Taylor, but I did with the rest of them. I did not find them as bad as he pictured them. I'd say that not everything published in the Autobiography is reliable.*

*I used to consider Herbert a humble man, but when he began to write that for 1800 or 1900 years the true gospel was not being preached until he (Armstrong) began his work, I had to change my mind about his modesty. To me, such an attitude is too presumptuous. Our heavenly Father has always had a true and faithful people in every age, or else he would not have fed and nourished them in the wilderness for 1260 years (Rev. 12:6,14).*

*He has also indicated from time to time that what he has been preaching and publishing has been revealed to him directly by Jesus Christ, whereas the fact is that what truths he has been preaching he originally learned from the Church of God (7th Day). We must admit, however, that he has been teaching additional concepts which are not scriptural truths.*

*I remember the time when Herbert wrote and taught strongly against church organization as it was generally carried on, but later became so strongly organized that he became to his followers what the Pope of Rome is to the Catholic Church. Many of his followers have come to believe that he is God's prophet, and these actually fear him. We have heard some of his people say, after they were shown some of the discrepancies, "Well, if Mr. Armstrong says it, then it is so."*

*When one claims that he has been ordained of God, baptized by Jesus Christ, and has consistently, for many years, been preaching the one true gospel of the Kingdom of God, and dared to tell in specific, point-by-point, and in detailed order, the events that are to occur, the real meaning of the mysterious books of prophecy, and that his work is the only genuine work which is carrying out Jesus' very commission--he ought not have preached and published contradictory messages, nor should he have made predictions which never came to pass, nor ever will.*

Kiesz touched upon a number of perplexing issues about Armstrong. One of the most disturbing was that Armstrong was able to hold sway over his congregation, convincing them that he was the

spokesman for Christ on earth, in spite of glaring inconsistencies in his teachings. By that we might conclude that he held sway over his people by force of his personality alone. He was adept in his ability to sell his point of view to simple people.

By 1937 Herbert Armstrong was not perpetuating the doctrines of the church that his wife challenged him to accept in 1926 nor was he cooperating with their leaders or government. When they were not convinced by his viewpoint, he sarcastically rejected them as dead and fruitless. He accused that they personified the spirit of the "Sardis" church in Revelation 3:1.

Herbert was a proud, cocky man, as he himself admitted, who was determined to make a financial success of his life. His background was in advertising. He lost almost everything in the great Depression. He had learned through many of his professional contacts something he later called "the Seven Laws of Success." This gave him the tenacity to build his own Radio Church of God against all odds.

The one thing he was able to prove in his life is that perseverance really can bring success. This was true of William Miller's followers; this was also true of those Herbert had rubbed shoulders with in the business world. Herbert attempted to impress upon his followers that the pursuit of success was not contradictory to the Christian way of life.

John Kiesz also had an uncanny perception of what the future would be for Herbert Armstrong's Radio Church of God when he observed this in the early 70's:

*In time, I observed that he possessed (and probably still does) a "persecution complex." Not long before he decided to drop me, he told me at his Eugene, Oregon office, that he will start a college and train his own men for the ministry, so they will all speak the same thing, and his problems in that area will be over. I did not say it then, but felt sure that his proposed course would work nicely for a while--until some of these men would think for themselves, and then trouble would start in his own organization. I did not think then, however, that it would take so many years until his movement would be fractured...*

*Another question often asked is: "Brother Kiesz, what do you think will be the outcome of the Worldwide Church of God?" This has been questioned especially since the recent fractures in what some have termed the "Armstrong Empire." I have no answer for this, except that I know that quite a number of splinter groups have been formed (perhaps about thirty), while some have joined the Church of God (7th Day)....*

*I knew him as a humble man. But things have changed over the years. He grew too big for his own or anyone else's good, as adherents have been thoroughly brain-washed, and there is nothing anyone can do for them anymore, as far as directing them into the right channels is concerned. His claiming that the Church of God (7th Day) is "the dead Sardis church," has affected many thousands, so that their prejudices keep them from investigating what the disclaimed church is really like. So, with all the apparent good that has been accomplished, much harm has also been done. The final judgment remains with the Creator.*

In Armstrong's early ministry in Oregon, he seemed to grope somewhat with various doctrinal issues. At first he would not embrace the teaching of abstaining from "unclean meats." He resolved it later in a rather peculiar way. He would not accept it as a biblical command but as a health issue. Later he was challenged by his own ministers who cited that it was only a ceremonial ritual in the Old Testament and was never once called a health issue.

Armstrong also accepted altar calls and "speaking in tongues" at first but later began to reverse those beliefs.

After making the break from the Salem organization, Armstrong set up his own Church of God in Oregon. John Kiesz was still a loyal friend of his and assisted him periodically. I asked Kiesz if he had any special insight into Armstrong's claim to divine inspiration.

Kiesz tells a story of walking into Armstrong's office in Eugene one day, where Herbert was busy composing a story for his *Plain Truth* magazine. Kiesz was startled because he had just read that same story in the *Bible Advocate*. When Kiesz inquired about Armstrong's source Armstrong replied that it was by divine inspiration. Then Kiesz pointed out to him that he had just read that article, word for word, in the *Bible Advocate*. "So did I," replied Armstrong. "When I read this article, I understood it to be true. Therefore God has led me to understand this by divine revelation."

Wars with the Church of God, Seventh Day were now closing in on Armstrong. The brethren in Oregon who supported him financially were not pleased with his track record of false prophecies made throughout World War II. The tribulation had not materialized and the undaunted Armstrong was now making up even more stories about secret Catholic plots to resurrect Hitler and cause the whole world to stand in wonder and worship Hitler as "the Beast." The members began to chide with Armstrong, who had two choices: admit that he was wrong or get out of town. He chose the latter.

Shortly after World War II Herbert took the mailing list of the *Plain Truth* magazine and the Radio program he entitled, "*The World Tomorrow*" and headed for California. His income must have been fairly good because upon moving to Pasadena the Armstrong family purchased a mansion on "Millionaire's Row" just off the route of the Rose Parade on Orange Grove Boulevard. This is where Armstrong would begin a new phase of his great commission--to build a college to train ministers and expand his ministry worldwide. His three story home was large enough to become what he dubbed Ambassador College.

In the early years, Armstrong relied on prophecy and scare tactics to build his church. Claiming to hold the mysterious keys to the book of Revelation, as well as claiming that the observance of Old Testament Sabbaths would bring God's blessings on crops, raised the eyebrows of many mid-western farmers and common folk who well remembered the dust bowl days.

Not only did he capitalize upon the national phobia created by a devastating worldwide Depression, he also jumped onto the bandwagon of playing upon national fears of Nazism during World War II. He got extremely carried away with his predictions, claiming that World War II was the "great tribulation" of Revelation, that Nazis had secretly invented powerful death ray guns, that Mussolini and Hitler would fight against Christ at his return and so on. Even in the fifties Armstrong was still clinging to secret Nazi plot theories that involved the faked resurrection of Adolf Hitler who Armstrong felt was alive and well and living in Argentina or Antarctica.

His phobic claim that Nazism would rise again remained as a church teaching even after his death in 1986. This was one of many "keys to prophecy" that he claimed God had revealed to him alone.

Another source that Armstrong used to develop his prophetic dogma, centered around his visit to San Francisco to report on the first meeting of the United Nations in 1945. It was there that he heard many discussions from statesmen about their desire to build a United States of Europe under the Marshall plan. Armstrong leaped to faulty conclusions. He wrote about it later in the December 1948 issue of his *Plain Truth* magazine. In this article Armstrong went on to tell his readers that the true power behind the United Nations was the Catholic Church whose agenda was to resurrect the Holy Roman Empire and bring about World War III.

*This was the Roman Catholic bid to resurrect the so-called "HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE!"...*

*Thru [sic] this political movement, he [the pope] will UNIFY ten nations in Europe. It will be a "The UNITED STATES OF EUROPE," but that probably will never become its official name....*

*Once Europe is economically revived, and powerfully armed, a new Hitler will appear upon the scene-- and it could be Hitler himself, claiming to have been resurrected from the dead!...*

*Thus, once this EMPIRE is revived in Europe--AND BY UNITED STATES HELP AT THAT--so gullible are we and dull of UNDERSTANDING!--the new-born Fascist-Nazi military power will without warning DESTROY AMERICAN AND BRITISH CITIES OVERNIGHT WITH ATOMIC BOMBS, conquering our peoples, taking our survivors to Europe as THEIR SLAVES! [Emphasis Armstrong's]*

And so Armstrong was now ready to build his church. His knowledge of sales and advertising would help. His experience with Dugger and Dodd and the Church of God, Seventh Day taught him what to be on guard for among his own ministers. His research into Millerism gave him a unique and controversial angle.

The most important factor was that Armstrong really did appear to believe that God was using him to accomplish a "great work." His strong self-confidence led many thousands of people to sacrifice greatly to him, follow loyally behind him, and try to prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 16

### The Church of Brotherly Love

In my many interviews with past acquaintances of Herbert Armstrong, I was surprised to hear this same description repeated so many times about him: "He was a man with such a tremendous ego." Adding that to his background in advertising and business, his strongly held opinions in philosophy and religion, his flair for quality and culture, his tireless zeal for success, his distinct mid-western dialect and deep resonating broadcaster's voice would explain why a man could make so many mistakes and yet still hold a charismatic sway over thousands of followers a decade after his death.

The force of his personality alone became the catalyst building his Worldwide Church of God into an international multi-million dollar corporation eventually luring hundreds of thousands into the organization believing he was an apostle and prophet of God. After luring in his believers, they would be held captive by their own fears.

In 1936, Armstrong had actually started mimeographing his *Plain Truth* magazine and had eventually built up a subscription list with the help of the Oregon Church of God. With his move to Pasadena in 1946, Armstrong began to develop a vanguard of true believers who paid homage to their leader by helping him reproduce his version of the "primitive church." He announced to his subscribers that he was beginning a college to train ministers.

The church was now called by the same name as the original radio program: "the Radio Church of God." It wasn't until 1964 that its name would be changed to the "Worldwide Church of God."

The first year of Ambassador College produced a total of five pioneering students. Upon graduation three of these students were raised up as evangelists (Armstrong's highest rank of reward): Herman Hoeh, Raymond Cole and Herbert's oldest son, Richard. Hoeh served as a type of minister of propaganda for Armstrong. Becoming part of Armstrong's faculty, he began to exemplify the absent minded professor image. For decades, he traversed the college campus with a dowdy appearance, befuddled and lost in his own thoughts. Rumors about his eccentricities included the story that one morning he walked into his office wearing a brown shoe on one foot and a black one on the other. His quirky manner led him to refuse to drive a church-provided fleet car, opting rather for public transit until a church widow died and willed him her black 1957 Chrysler which some students began to call Hoeh's batmobile. The only thing that Hoeh lacked, in his role as the bookish intellectual, was the necessary disciplined and meticulous scholarship. In that area, as we have seen, he was rather sloppy. As for the other inaugural graduates: Richard Armstrong was killed in a car crash just a few years later when fellow minister Don Billingsley fell asleep while driving, exhausted during a baptizing tour in California; Raymond Cole was disfellowshipped in 1975, starting his own church, the Church Of God, The Eternal.

Probably the second most influential disciple of Armstrong was Roderick Meredith, who came to study at Ambassador College in 1949 from Joplin, Missouri. Meredith was a feisty young ex-golden gloves boxer and ROTC student who rose quickly in the organization, being made an evangelist upon graduation in 1952. An evangelist-ranked minister was only outranked by Armstrong himself. Later ministers would be ranked in lower positions of authority: pastor, local elder and local church elder respectively. Local church elder was an elevation in rank from church deacon. Men were not raised in position because of spiritual knowledge or ability. Loyalty and willingness to obey and to dote upon those of higher status came first.

Meredith trained hundreds of future church leaders and ministers in the confines of Ambassador College where he taught the Epistles of Paul and leadership classes. These classes were all spiced with as much blind loyalty to founder Armstrong as soldiers are taught to show for their commanding

officers in the military. Meredith and other upwardly motivated disciples, unwittingly adapted to their apostle's desire to be adored as an end-time prophet and tried to mimick his personality. As one ex-minister commented to me, "No man in the organization had ever patterned his own character and personality after Herbert Armstrong more than Rod Meredith." The crude sycophantic behavior of Armstrong's immature evangelists magnified what would soon become a phobic bastion of mind control.

Also raised up to evangelist in 1952 were Rod's uncle, C. Paul Meredith, Marion McNair and his brother Raymond.

From the outset, Armstrong covered up for an inward fear of failure by requiring unquestioning loyalty from his ministers who, as early as 1951, referred to him as an apostle. Armstrong still maintained the aura of being a prophet of God, even though he had already developed an embarrassing track record of prophecies that had never come to pass. This reveals another quality about his nature. He was a man who had great difficulty owning up to his mistakes.

As churches began to be raised up away from Pasadena by his young evangelists, Armstrong saw the need to build heightened loyalty to him and "headquarters" in his followers. Therefore he employed a roving evangelist by the name of Gerald Waterhouse to make sure outside congregations were always pointed toward Pasadena. Herbert had learned by early experience that he needed to do this. Before he had organized his college, he had raised up a couple of prototype field churches in the mid-40's. So eager to build a large following with his radio program, he shortly lost control to the pastor he had abandoned the congregation to. He thus needed to maintain the concept of headquarters as a hub of activity and growth in the minds of the members in his field churches.

Waterhouse's job was to bolster up blind loyalty and obedience through exaggerated predictions about Armstrong. He taught members to fear disobeying church authorities, intimidated members who did, and mocked those who would "fall away" and leave the church. Leaving God's church and apostle soon became the biggest sin a member could ever commit. Once convinced that Armstrong was God's earthly apostle, rebellion to him was equated with criticism toward God. Once ministers learned that no asinine statement would be challenged by their colleagues, as long as it exalted Armstrong, the game was afoot to outdo Machiavelli.

Ministers were prone to make such statements to their congregations as, "If Mr. Armstrong asked me to shave my head I would do it," or "If Mr. Armstrong said, 'Jump!' I would answer, 'How high?'" Waterhouse himself was so good at such adoration tactics that his boss rewarded him with a carte blanche expense account to travel to every church area around the world more than a dozen times, acting as a one-man cheerleading squad for his boss.

Those who abstained from doting on the apostle soon aroused suspicion. Suspicion led to insecurity, insecurity to gossip, gossip to accusation, accusation to intimidation, intimidation to ultimatum, and finally, ultimatums were carried out in the form of ex-communication called disfellowshipping. Disfellowshipping became like a self-defense plea in the process of removing an offender's salvation to protect the church. In justifying its use, ministers reminded members that one rotten apple can spoil a whole bushel basket full; one member who questions church authorities can quickly unleash the rebellion of Lucifer upon the congregation and all would suffer God's damnation. A benevolent ministry was practicing self-defense on behalf of the flock to remove the offender. The disfellowshipped were to be shunned by all loyal members and everyone learned not to be too critical of those in authority. Later the disfellowshipped were referred to as "fallen away"--as if God had noticed that they were rotten apples too and cast them away from the good.

Yet, gushing in Armstrong's presence would bring a stinging public rebuke from him. He would fly into a rage before the entire church, blasting both minister and church for not recognizing that Jesus Christ

had divinely raised up the church through him and that he was nothing of himself. He encouraged personal adulation only if he were not present when it was happening.

Herbert Armstrong carried himself with an air of regal sophistication. Always well groomed, he wore the finest handmade suits, many purchased in Hong Kong. He stressed the need to dress well among his ministry. Dressing in the finest quality one could afford would command respect from worldly sophisticated moguls as well as the struggling tithe-payers in his congregations.

Armstrong's forte was that he was an experienced salesman and had a natural flare for broadcasting. He had purchased radio time on powerful stations in Mexico, like XERB, that were capable of blanketing several states. In 1955, he was able to do a similar feat in Europe by purchasing time on super-powerful Radio Luxembourg.

In 1957 Herbert Armstrong was introduced to a brilliant CPA by the name of Stanley Rader. He was a graduate of UCLA and from a prominent Jewish family. Armstrong was attracted to Rader and felt that he had accomplished a great deal when Rader later accepted the invitation to become Armstrong's chief legal counsel and church treasurer. It was not until 1969 that Armstrong could hire Rader full time. Not being a baptized member would cast a shadow of suspicion on him for many years with a congregation trained to distrust outsiders.

Eventually Armstrong was able to bring his second son, Garner Ted, into the "Work." Ted was a little rebellious toward his dad's religion at first but soon became mesmerized by the organization and what it might offer him as heir apparent.

The strikingly handsome Ted had left home after high school and joined the Navy against his father's wishes. In late May of 1952 he returned home and eventually came under his father's control. He was talked into attending Ambassador College as a stipulation for working for his dad. He needed money for beer and cigarettes so he complied.

The college kids considered Ted a suave and sophisticated man of the world. With his dynamic baritone voice and gift of gab, he was soon made the glib commentator for both the church's radio and television programs entitled, "*The World Tomorrow*." Once granted his own private jet and free-flowing expense account, he became the second most powerful man in his father's organization. Rising as a celebrity, he was constantly hounded by press members, admirers and groupies. This adulation would contribute to Ted's downfall.

Next to personality aggrandizement, doctrine and unique Bible interpretations served to magnify the Armstrongs as men of inspiration. Early in their ministry, a doctrine was developed inside the Armstrong church which exposed the group's Millerite roots. Oddly, at the same time that the Jehovah's Witnesses began to predict the return of Jesus Christ to occur in 1975, the Radio Church of God writers and ministers began to do the same thing. And just like William Miller and his followers had done a century earlier, the date was set to the day--Feast of Trumpets--1975.

To add to this prediction, three and a half years of divine protection, in a "place of safety," was offered to loyal members of the church during the coming "great tribulation." Armstrong would cite Matthew 24:21 and warn that it was going to be a time so dreadful that the Nazi holocaust would pale into insignificance. Those who would not heed Armstrong's warnings were destined to be taken captive by Nazis who were secretly preparing to dominate the world. The "mark of the beast" would rest symbolically on the foreheads of those who were not in the Radio Church of God.

The tribulation and the time of divine protection in a "place of safety" was predicted to begin three and a half years before Christ was to return in the fall of 1975. It was therefore easy to calculate that the church would flee around the spring of 1972, or even as early as January. (Armstrong had even discovered where the church was to flee to--the rose red city of Petra in Jordan.)

Requests for membership began to skyrocket throughout the sixties in response to the dire predictions made in print and over the airwaves by the Armstrongs.

By accepting the church "era" theory, extrapolated from Revelation 3, and by examining parables and prophecies with their own peculiar bias, it was inferred that there were two types of Christians: those who were loyally following God's apostle and those who were not. Those who lived by Armstrong's inspired teachings were believed to be "Philadelphians"; that is, according to the Radio Church of God interpretation of Revelation 3, they would be accounted worthy to flee to safety during the approaching worldwide holocaust. Those who were unworthy to flee were fence-sitters--caught between zealotry to the church and carnal worldly passions. Between the rock and the hard place of God's wrath and the Devil's temptations, these "Laodiceans" would be tortured, thrown into gas chambers, or beheaded by Nazis.

Needless to say, church members neurotically wondered if they were loyal enough to their local ministers and Armstrong's teachings. Members obsessively wondered if God would save their earthly lives. This consequently gave church ministers the irresistible desire to exercise their unquestioned authority to judge and interfere in the affairs of their growing population of proselytes.

With such emphasis being placed upon the need for blind loyalty to church leaders being the pathway to God's approval, the whole church was soon caught in the momentum of authoritarianism. Ministers began to fall into the role of pushing loyalty to the limit by harshly ruling over the members. This produced a domino effect. Husbands domineered their wives. Parents would likewise treat their children sternly with strict discipline. They had seen this behavior from the leaders they had come to look to for guidance and felt justified.

When godliness was equated to being a good soldier who never questioned superiors, individuality became highly suspect. Everyone had to measure up to rigid church-imposed standards. Therefore, anyone in any position of authority imagined that if the standards for obedience were made more rigid, it only followed that the congregation would be more prepared to flee to a place of safety. The vortex was beginning to churn.

All types of "worldliness" and "paganism" were to be cautiously avoided. This included Christmas, Easter, Sunday church, certain types of education and books, the theory of evolution, philosophy, psychology, certain clothing styles and prints, certain hairstyles, and excessive association with the outside world. Ultra-conservative dress codes were enforced regularly by deacons and elders. Those who did not obediently conform were shamed and made examples of before the congregation.

New converts were often taught to cut off all relations with family members and others who disagreed with their new-found religion. These people were "worldly," owned by Satan himself. It was pointed out that they would find "God's way" weird and strange. God had not opened their minds to his "truth" and fraternizing with them could jeopardize one's chances of eligibility to flee.

As the rank and file membership of the Radio Church of God began to grow, incredulous former acquaintances were shocked at Armstrong's ability to turn those who were once familiar to them into distrusting strangers.

Strict legalism grew unchecked. Because church teachings on Mosaic laws and ordinances were stressed, a prudish holier-than-thou attitude could not be avoided among members who tried to outdo one another in their obedience to Old Testament mandates. Not only were Leviticus 11 dietary laws being called health laws, members became obsessed with diet in general. Many expanded food laws to include processed foods such as white flour and sugar. It then grew to be, by implication, that to eat a donut was somehow to sin.

Since this world was not God's world but belonged to Satan, all forms of politics were sinful, therefore

members were told they should never vote. Birthdays, facial make-up, and medicine were also seen as evil, sensual, seductive or selfish. Self-denial was godly behavior for members.

Although his church had once operated on a shoe string budget and Armstrong had maintained his filing system in shoe boxes, it soon began to garner millions of dollars in donations only to be absorbed insatiably by the expanding dominion of Ambassador College and its many functions.

Armstrong had a particular method for financing his "work." It was an interpretation on tithing which had never existed before in history. By the time a member was baptized he would be taught that God required him to give as much as 30% of his gross income, plus generous offerings seven times per year, to church activities. The use of these funds was seldom accounted for but primarily ended up in the pockets of the Armstrongs, Rader (each salaried at approximately \$300,000 per year) and the ministry. This unorthodox teaching was seasoned with threats upon members of being cursed by God if one did not comply and empty promises of gaining God's blessings if one did. Members were told that if they cheated on their tithes they were "stealing from God." This accusation was lobbed at members for nearly a decade after Armstrong's death.

The stories are countless of the many financial calamities to loyal members who persisted in trying to tithe the right way to gain God's favor and blessings. Many early converts were promised that the world would not be around long enough for them to pass on the family farm to their children and sadly signed the deed over to Armstrong.

The ministry was not required to live by the same standard though. Ministers were of the Melchisedek priesthood. The priesthood (Armstrong's "spiritual Levites") had been hand-picked by God to partake of the tithe. This gave ministers a lifestyle that was more comfortable and luxurious than the average member. Not only were they well-paid, they were provided new church-leased vehicles, church-financed homes and special expense accounts. Ministers were also only subject to one tithe; whereas members were required to give as many as three tithes of their gross income, as well as generous holyday offerings at the seven annual festivals, special offerings, participate in yard sales and bake sales, donate used clothing and canned goods, and contribute to the building funds in Pasadena, California and Big Sandy, Texas. They were often goaded by the ministry to "give until it really hurts" and be cheerful about it because "God loves a cheerful giver."

One of Armstrong's ex-ministers, Marion McNair, documented through several years of Armstrong's co-worker letters that Armstrong used a strong guilt tactic to always portray the church in financial calamity, just short of collapse, thus squeezing every last penny from his supporters. Members did not want God's wrath falling upon them for not supporting the one true church so they gave until it hurt and did so cheerfully as commanded.

By emphasizing Old Testament laws and statutes, Armstrong's doctrinal conclusions mimicked those of G. G. Rupert. Paganism was to be avoided; Judaism was to be performed as a Christian duty. All other forms of Christianity were viewed as counterfeits, originating out of ancient Roman Catholic paganism. Church steeples, for example, were obviously phallic in origin; they were the mark of an ancient Roman system of worship disguised as "Christian." Members might argue whether or not Christ really was nailed to a cross, since a cross was shaped like the pagan Egyptian ankh. They would ponder less often the Protestant view of the crucifixion. Members were more concerned with proving whether or not Jesus had long hair than understanding the impact of his mercy upon the thief on the cross or the woman caught in adultery.

One of the cruelest teachings enforced upon hundreds of families, during the first 20 years of the Radio Church of God, was what ministers referred to as D and R (short for divorce and remarriage). It was the rigid teaching that God could not forgive any form of "adultery" or previous marriage that members may have been involved in before baptism into the church. Ministers were under orders to break up any

marriage that may have been suspect. The violators were then condemned to a life of celibacy. This left many hundreds of children broken-hearted to see their happy families demolished.

Finally, in desperation, one member barged into Armstrong's Pasadena office suite in 1972 and asked, "Mr. Armstrong, how could God forgive me for killing men in the Korean War and yet not forgive my divorce from my first wife?" In compliance to the D and R doctrine he had abandoned his second wife and children in Illinois for several years. Armstrong agreed to consider the matter. D and R was finally stopped in 1973 after a bitter struggle by conscientious ministers to convince Armstrong that legalistic wresting of scripture was destroying hundreds of happy church homes. A few years later Armstrong himself would marry a divorced woman, violating his own previously held hard line stance.

Legalism and Old Covenant dietary rules grew into fetishes among many members. On church feast days members would crowd into rented halls in major cities for all-day church services. Afterward they would converge on local restaurants. This often became a fiasco for waitresses and waiters. Besides pork and all pork derivatives (such as lard) being untouchable, some holydays required the complete abstinence from leavening (crackers, breads, donuts, baking powder, ice cream cones, tortillas, batter, pancakes and so on). Frustrated restaurant employees would be barraged with inquiries about bacon being in their split pea soup or lard being used on the grill. Savvy waiters and waitresses would ad lib answers to naive church families unfamiliar with the hustle and bustle in public kitchens.

On the day of Atonement members were required to perform a complete fast for 24 hours. For most, this was tolerable but it became a

supreme test of faith for diabetics, hypoglycemics, the elderly and some children.

Threats were often issued upon members for every imagined infraction of the Old Testament rules by vigilant ministers. And if a member being corrected for ambiguous sins could not be found guilty of anything specific, there was always the accusation of being in a "bad attitude." Authority conscious ministers claimed that the Holy Spirit gave them special powers. These ministers were often perceived of by members as having a Christ-like ability to read the hearts and minds of those they counseled.

When one became sick one was required to ask a minister for anointing and prayer rather than visit a doctor's office. If a member ended up in the hospital, he or she was judged to be weak in faith. Many hundreds died early in life ridden with the guilt that their faith in God and Armstrong was not sufficient to save them. There were even accounts of children who were refused medical attention by misguided parents. One church member, who had lost two children because of refusing medical attention for them, later realized what he had done and had to be talked out of murdering Armstrong by Ambassador College graduate John Trechak.

The practice of spiritual authoritarianism, just like any other abusiveness, made those who joined the church easy prey to those who wielded the authority. Ministers saw themselves as spiritual military officers. Some were known to show up unexpectedly at member's homes, put on white gloves, and inspect for dust above the cabinets. Personal boundaries were not allowed to members in those early years. Later everyone would acknowledge that the whole church had grown out of control. But the church's ministry would never really know who to blame for this behavior because they were not allowed to point accusations inward or upward in the organization.

More incredible was that many of the ministers who would eagerly lambaste members for their sins were frequently discovered to possess mistresses in the flock or be found to be chronic alcoholics. If these men were ever chastised by Armstrong, it is not common knowledge.

Children were often forbidden inoculations for diseases. Medication was deemed destructive to faith. Doctors were claimed to have their ancient beginnings in pagan cultures. The serpent draped on the cross that came to symbolize the medical practice was the mark that a deceitful Satan had placed upon

their profession. If one became sick, healing would come only upon those who were faithful to God and were anointed by the Worldwide Church of God ministry. Although many had claimed to be healed through faith, there were also many early deaths and years of suffering among many church members and their children.

Herbert Armstrong liked the control that his doctrines placed upon his followers. Fear was the common denominator for their beliefs. Why would parents abandon their children or refuse medical aid unless made to fear great imaginary consequences? Yet, over the years many saw Armstrong break every single one of these rules (or laws as he liked to call them). His daughter claimed that he took her out dancing on Friday nights; he was seen eating unclean meat by his staff; he was caught having coffee on the day of Atonement once; he maintained an on-call doctor or nurse and took medication; he was inoculated; he violated the tithe by maintaining an expensive private art collection, private jet, three luxurious mansions, private chauffeur and limousines; he observed the birthdays of his relatives; and was dogged by rumors of illicit sexual escapades--(rumors he admitted were true to close associates and in court testimony during his divorce to his second wife).

This was the behind-the-scenes reality of the institution that broadcast about a peace-filled "World Tomorrow" on both the radio and television in many countries. Armstrong's first objective was to get listeners on a mailing list for the *Plain Truth* magazine and literature that offered proof-texted biblical answers about every conceivable subject. For example, an article had been cleverly written by Herman Hoeh (circa 1950's) to explain how the American Indians were the ancient Canaanites; another article by Rod Meredith was unabashedly entitled "The *Plain Truth* About Queer Men"; another by Herbert Armstrong was entitled "Who Is The Beast?" and claimed to solve the ancient riddle of what the number 666 really meant. These titillating articles were designed to string the reader along until he was clued into the idea that he was required to donate to "the work." Later it would crystalize in his mind that there was a church behind "the work" and that it was God's only true church. This was perceived to be a grand revelation, a divine calling to participate.

For someone to have become a member of the Radio Church of God (later renamed the Worldwide Church of God) they had to figure out, on their own, the necessary protocol. There were no buildings in any towns that were strictly used for church services. Unmarked rented halls (usually Masonic temples) were used for their meetings. Phone books had no listed addresses or phone numbers of church pastors or church offices. This had to be because of their church administration's long-held fear of public ridicule and persecution. Pasadena was the only source for information about membership.

To become a member one had to write or phone Pasadena and solicit a visit from a minister. This would result in two well-dressed and neatly groomed men inviting themselves into the solicitor's home. A series of counseling sessions would then follow until these ministers

felt they were dealing with a good "PM" (prospective member). An invitation would then be granted.

In Pasadena the PM would be monitored by a highly sophisticated computer system. Confidential counseling sessions would be relayed to Pasadena to be entered into his personal file. Letters sent could be microfilmed with the originals passed on to his local ministry. This "spy" network was deemed necessary for the protection of "the church" and could be used against the PM, if necessary. Every penny of contribution would be recorded and if the contribution level dropped drastically, the donor's status would be tagged.

One of the designers of Armstrong's computerized spy system was Mike Hollman. Hollman had worked on the early space program for NASA and later abandoned his career to manage the Ambassador College data processing center. Hollman became disillusioned when he was personally asked by Armstrong to do a computer check on the contributions of some specific church members and then on the following Sabbath heard Armstrong tell the congregation that he had never practiced such

tactics. Knowing first hand that his boss had been willing to lie to the membership, Hollman began to investigate the organization further which resulted in his resignation from his job and the church.

In the mid-sixties Armstrong realized that his church had become well established in several foreign countries so he changed the name of the Radio Church of God to the Worldwide Church of God.

As a prospective member began to be drawn into the organization, he was usually over-awed by the notion that he had been called by God to discover the descendant of the original New Testament church. This could only be compared to falling in love. When someone falls in love, reason is often abandoned in place of the desire for a new meaning and purpose to be found in life. In ignorance, it is easy to overlook that the question, "Why was I born?" has been pondered by every other human being on earth at some point in conscious awareness, and in particular every known philosopher since Socrates (who claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living).

Armstrong offered two solutions for the survivalist mind. The first was the promise that spiritual conversion was only possible through baptism and membership in his organization. The second was that God offered physical protection from tribulation to those who were loyal to his one true church and its apostle.

When a prospective member was invited to attend, he discovered that church services were held in private rented halls, such as Masonic temples. Upon arriving at the hall the PM would notice that he was surrounded by people who had no physical appearance of being special. (In fact, many seemed to suffer from low self-esteem.) There seemed to be an uncanny fraternity among the people but they seldom spoke to each other about spiritual issues, deferring religious matters to the ministry. Vying for recognition, the men of the church preoccupied themselves with the cacophonous shuffling and meticulous aligning of metal folding chairs with all the scrupulousness of an archeological unearthing until told to take their seats for church services.

On his first visit, the PM would be approached several times by people who simply wanted to know why he was there. Of course these deacons had already been alerted that the PM was to arrive. They were just required to make sure that he was the one. No stranger was ever allowed to enter the building without prior invitation by the ministry and every church was required to have an outer guard of church-appointed "security men" and an inner guard of church deacons to protect the group from dissidents and outsiders.

John Kiesz told me that he and his wife once tried to fellowship on the Sabbath with the Worldwide Church of God brethren in St. Louis in the 60's. The elderly couple were immediately met at the door by several imposing deacons who wanted to know what their business was there. He introduced himself as a close personal friend of Herbert Armstrong's and a member of the Church of God, Seventh Day. He and his wife were barred entrance. Kiesz apologized for causing them any trouble and departed.

This is not the only Church of God, Seventh Day member who told me this type of story. Israel Hager told me of a similar experience that he had. Hager is also a prominent and well respected minister with the Church of God, Seventh Day.

Ken Lawson is one of three brothers who are Church of God, Seventh Day ministers. Their fourth brother, Don, is a minister in the Worldwide. Ken told me, "Years ago my brothers and I could not even visit Don unless he got permission from his superiors in advance."

Such was the closed-door policy of the group always on guard against non-members. Even if they did have spiritual truth, they were not willing to suffer persecution for it and so they remained guarded and fearful of outsiders who might discover the real church behind "*The World Tomorrow*" radio broadcast and the *Plain Truth* magazine. Both were facades used to lure outsiders. Both never revealed the extent of the Old Covenant restrictions required of the group. Instead, church literature offered prophetic

proclamations and "keys to success." It became evident to a small number of people, lured into the church, that they were misled by an old advertising ploy known as "bait and switch."

Occasionally Worldwide Church of God members and ministers would reflect upon their past extreme behavior, yet justify such actions based upon their belief that they were the one and only true church--the end would justify the means. This is the vortex reasoning that I mentioned earlier in the book. If church leaders were caught in sin, Bibles could be cracked open to reveal that king David and other patriarchs had sinned also. Ministers could shut their Bibles at that point; nothing more had to be said.

One might wonder why the Worldwide Church of God had developed such a collective persecution complex. Had they absorbed the guilt of their founder?

The Armstrongs built the church into a powerful worldwide religious empire, eventually controlling three liberal arts colleges in Pasadena, California; Big Sandy, Texas; and Bricket Wood, England. Congregations began to be established all over the earth.

Despite Armstrong's success in building his empire, years of proclaiming that physical ailments were the direct result of sinning set the church up for another disappointment. In 1967 Herbert's first wife Loma became ill. She had refused medical attention when diagnosed with an intestinal impaction. The church fasted and prayed for God's intervention and healing. However, her condition did not improve and she soon passed away; perhaps Herbert's conscience may have passed away with her.

Inside what Kiesz called Armstrong's "own organization," anti-Armstrong views began crystallizing as early as 1962, with men such as Earnest Martin attempting to explain serious doctrinal errors to Armstrong. Martin was then the head of the Ambassador College theology department in Bricket Wood, England.

Although he desired to be loyal, Martin clearly displayed a keener ability toward scriptural exegesis. He tried respectfully to point out to Armstrong that he had made a semantic misinterpretation of the English words "from the morrow" in Leviticus 23:15 and this resulted in a calculation error in the way the church was determining the date for the Feast of Pentecost. In short, Herbert Armstrong had been clumsy with the very doctrines that he had claimed gave him the spiritual edge over the Church of God, Seventh Day. The best source for the interpretation of the Old Testament canon should have been obvious. The chief Rabbis had preserved the scriptures in Hebrew for centuries; they had also authoritatively calculated the holy days. Armstrong read the King James translation and arrogantly felt that his interpretations were the most authoritative.

The paranoid Armstrong soon perceived his subordinate as a threat. Maybe the ghosts of his past were now coming back to haunt him. Armstrong chose to ignore Martin. After 10 years of persisting and being ignored, Dr. Martin resigned his position in 1972. This sent shock waves through the church and the ministry. Seeds of discord were now sown among Armstrong's ministers who were well aware of Martin's credibility and Armstrong's stubbornness.

As the 70's approached, Armstrong's weakness for making prophetic blunders were also about to come crashing in upon him. He had earlier gone so far as to pinpoint the exact date for the return of Christ in booklets such as, *The Wonderful World Tomorrow*, *What It Will Be Like* and *1975 In Prophecy*. The latter booklet had been prolifically illustrated, by ex-*Mad Magazine* artist (and church member) Basil Wolverton, with displays of eyeless corpses rotting in the debris of bombed buildings, tidal waves larger than skyscrapers, and emaciated starvation victims trying to grub for food. The vast majority of Armstrong's tithe-paying membership had become members as a result of being scared by such predictions.

But now that it appeared that such prophecies might fail, a new thrust needed to be emphasized. In 1969 this happened when the German office of the *Plain Truth* magazine was contacted by the

throneless king of Belgium--Leopold III. Leopold had abdicated his throne after World War II because he had been a Nazi sympathizer. He had a love for nature photography and was contacting magazines that might want to use some of his safari photos.

Armstrong was ecstatic. He sought the opportunity to use the king as a liaison to arrange meetings for him with other heads of state. One thing led to another until Armstrong was portrayed to the church as the modern apostle Paul who was travelling the globe "preaching the gospel" to royalty about the soon-coming millennium.

He lectured men like Anwar Sadat, saying patronizingly, "Allah's way was a way of giving." Sadat was cordial and accepted expensive gifts, such as Steuben crystal, from Armstrong. Armstrong was happy because he got to associate with royalty and be seen as a man of destiny to his followers.

When he addressed the Rotary Club in Athens, Greece, he proclaimed, as he had done on other occasions, that a great European combine of 10 nations was about to unite and dominate the world. Was this Armstrong's primordial fear of Adolph Hitler rising up again? Or was it the same misguided self-confidence that had led William Miller, Ellen G. White, G. G. Rupert, and Andrew Dugger?

His preaching and prophesying to heads of state can be seen as his third attempt to make himself a biblical prophet. The first was during his predictions of World War II and his claiming that it was the great tribulation of the book of Revelation. And his second attempt was in trying to predict the return of Christ by 1975.

To add to his other woes in 1972, there was the slipping credibility of his son Garner Ted, who was now being accused by the ministry of being involved in immoral conduct. 1972 was hoped to be the year that the church was to flee into hiding in Petra, Jordan just before the great tribulation. Instead it was the beginning of the unraveling of the Armstrong organization.

1972 came and went without incident, but like the Millerites, Herbert's followers looked for a deeper meaning to their beliefs. This was basically transferred to the idea that the church itself was not yet ready and that God had postponed the tribulation until the "bride" could become without spot and wrinkle. Now the church had to work harder.

But in reality, it was not the church that had been spotted and wrinkled, it was the Armstrongs and their ministry. Recognizing this culpability led many to walk out of the Worldwide Church of God door for good at this time. The following is an excerpt from Paul Benware's *Ambassadors of Armstrongism* describing the events of this time. Of course, the members were kept in the dark about why turmoil was occurring in 1975 and had to rely on their apostle's explanation of events.

*It has been the pattern in the past for a cult to experience some splinter movements at the death of its founder. History has shown that while one main body may remain, several other groups will form also. In the case of the Worldwide Church of God this fragmentation has begun before the death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA). Towards the end of 1973, dissension of major proportions exploded within this church. The shock waves will be felt for years, perhaps triggering further explosions.*

*The revolt against the Armstrongs by some of the leaders within the Worldwide Church came as a result of certain specific charges leveled against the two Armstrongs. First, it was charged that Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA) had been engaging in "profoundly immoral activities" over a period of years. The dissident leaders further accused HWA and other high ranking leaders of concealing and covering up the alleged adultery of Garner Ted Armstrong (Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1974). The alleged adulterous conduct of the younger Armstrong is said to be the main reason for disfellowshipping him early in 1972. Garner Ted Armstrong was later declared to be repentant and restored four months later to his former positions. HWA soon after appointed him as the "anointed heir." But it was claimed by*

some that Garner Ted Armstrong still had his "problem" (*Chicago Sun Times*, May 31, 1974)...

*The open revolt against the Armstrongs was not a sudden thing. Internal strife had been present since early 1972. However, open division occurred in November, 1973 with the resignations of important Worldwide Church leaders. Six ministers had resigned by February of 1974. The defection of Alfred Carrozzo, once director of ministers for the western half of the United States, shook the movement. The revolt seemed ready to engulf the entire church as the six ministers prepared an angry twelve page letter for the information of the membership of the Worldwide Church of God. Sunday, February 24th, HWA cut short a visit to the Philippines and hurried home to stem the tide. Monday, the 25th, Garner Ted Armstrong announced the suspension of twenty ministers. He also announced that the sabbath services of March 2nd were cancelled and the day was set aside for fasting and prayer. The next sabbath (March 9th) was declared a day of solemn assembly. Tuesday, the 26th, David Antion, a church vice president, issued a statement that denied he was in harmony with the dissident ministers. However, he, also with another vice president, Albert Portune, submitted their resignations the next day and the revolt seemed to be spreading rapidly (they later retracted their resignations and took a two month leave of absence). On this same Wednesday, HWA spoke to some 2,000 members at Pasadena. Taking a hard line attitude, he called the defection a work of Satan. However, the next week (March 8, 1974) a new group was formed by thirty-five former ministers of the Worldwide Church. This splinter group took the name of Associated Churches of God. This group which was formed in Washington, D.C. was estimated to have between 2,000 and 2,500 former members of the Worldwide Church. These had obtained their goal of liberation from the Armstrongs. (Benware, 153-155)*

Of course as time progressed Antion and Portune and many others in high-ranking positions did leave the Worldwide Church of God. John Kiesz's early perception was indeed happening. Kiesz had wondered how long it would take for Armstrong's followers to question his doctrines as Armstrong had questioned the leadership of the Church of God, Seventh Day. Armstrong was now being treated the way he had treated his superiors in the church he had rebelled against.

One such dissident evangelist was Richard Plache. Plache also was forced to resign because he began to see the light on doctrinal errors concerning the interpretation of the New Covenant. It appeared that a clearer understanding of the New Covenant destroyed the tenets of Armstrong's beliefs altogether. This enlightenment came to many as time went on; when they turned to show their understanding to the church, they were met with censorship and disfellowshipped. But, eventually several evangelists, protesting Armstrong's stubborn lack of grace began to put together a doctrinal package that they subversively enforced upon the lower ranking field ministry (and therefore the entire membership) without the apostle's approval. This coup was an attempt to lead the church away from its hard-line fundamentalist stance and was called the Systematic Theology Project--STP for short.

In 1975 a group of Ambassador College alumni decided to expose the inner corruption of the Worldwide Church of God. In 1976 they published the *Ambassador Review* magazine later becoming the *Ambassador Report*. Finally, one particular member of the group, John Trechak, would continue to monitor the activities of Armstrong's church. There has been so much controversy and scandal inside the organization that Trechak still publishes the *Report* to this day.

Trechak and his associates went deeply into debt with the optimistic belief that they could expose the sins of the Armstrong organization to an unwary membership. Later he would warn others not to follow in his footsteps. The church had teams of lawyers and millions of dollars to use to protect its first amendment right to freedom of religion. It was just too futile. (Those who would like to research the Worldwide Church of God in detail may purchase back issues of the *Ambassador Report* by writing to P. O. Box 60068, Pasadena, California 91106.)

Ted, having been restored to his evangelist status after returning from his 1972 disfellowshipping,

proceeded to change his weekly telecast to a daily one in 1973. Requiring three contrary directors and an uncooperative committee of writers and producers who competed for Ted's attention resulted in a fiasco. Ted's focus was eventually drawn back to his playboy antics, excusing his frequent disappearances from the television studio to "deer hunting trips" in Colorado. The abandoned production crew in Pasadena callously joked, during his absence, that he was actually hunting the two-legged variety.

On April 17, 1977, the eighty four year old Herbert Armstrong married his second wife, Ramona Martin. Still in her thirties, Ramona had worked for Stanley Rader and later began to travel with the Armstrong party. This led to a romance between her and Herbert. The romance was viewed by many in Armstrong's staff, as well as Garner Ted, as a cunning power play by Rader and his ex-staff member Ramona. The love-struck Herbert would not listen to his subordinates. Reluctantly, Ted performed the marriage ceremony and the newlyweds soon took up residence in Tucson, Arizona.

Finally, Herbert Armstrong's veil began to wear thin as problems persisted between his heir apparent and conservative ministers. After dramatically ousting his son and other "liberals" from the church in 1978, Armstrong proclaimed that he was going to put the church "back on the track" once and for all and remove the "blemishes from the bride" to prepare it for the soon coming World Tomorrow. Old recordings of Herbert's were taken out of the archives and substituted for Ted's more professional broadcast. Not to be thwarted, it wasn't long before Ted was back on the air with the financial backing of Worldwide Church of God defectors and sympathizers to his cause. Ted began a competing church in Tyler, Texas dubbed the Church of God International.

Dissension grew, yet Herbert Armstrong held on tightly to the reins of the church. Once he discovered that a coup had been under way to lead his church into the Protestant mainstream, he redubbed the STP the "Satanic Theology Project." He used the "Satan is attacking us" technique to close the ranks of his Christian soldiers. They had been drilled to respond to such a call from their leader from the beginning of his ministry. To them, this was the battle cry to prepare for flight to the place of safety. Like Perseus, who could not look upon the face of Medussa without being turned to stone, members sought to avoid the allure of Satan to question Armstrong's ministry and therefore miss out on their secret flight to Petra. Fear that they might fall prey to Satan's master deception (counterfeit Christianity) and lose out on their salvation, if they weren't loyal enough to Armstrong, was drawn from the subconscious level. Years of sermons laced with paranoid delusions served Armstrong's purposes very well. Few questions were dared asked by the members.

For about a decade Armstrong had stressed to his church that he was the end-time apostle being used by God to preach the final warning to the entire world. This he appeared to be accomplishing by pumping millions of dollars into the pockets of world leaders under the auspices of an organization that he and his unbaptized attorney/advisor Stanley Rader called the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation. As Armstrong himself admitted, he created the organization because he found it somewhat embarrassing to confront dignitaries as a minister of Christ and preferred to be seen as a great benefactor instead.

The church had been told that when Herbert Armstrong had witnessed to all world leaders, Christ would return and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. But what about the church itself? While the members were being pacified with references to the place of safety, they were otherwise being neglected.

Armstrong's closest companion for many years had been his shadowy "unconverted" legal counsel, Stanley Rader. Not only did this begin to look suspicious to many lay members, Armstrong's leading evangelists were now feeling that Rader had blocked every access to their boss. This they resented but felt unable to remedy. Worries about the aging Armstrong leaving the reins of the church in the hands

of an unconverted Jewish accountant were more than they could bear. This led to yet another schism.

In 1975 Armstrong baptized Stanley Rader in the bathtub of a Hong Kong hotel room and proclaimed him a member. And in 1981 he was declared to be an evangelist of the church--although Rader had never once given a sermon and seemed very unfamiliar with church doctrines.

A member of the church in New Jersey by the name of John Tuit had gotten involved in serving in his local church and discovered that, although the annual income of the Worldwide Church of God was nearly 70 million dollars per year, no money was allotted to local congregations for the instruction of the children. This led him to question his superiors about church expenditures.

Later his personal investigation uncovered many questionable practices by Rader and Armstrong. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were being funnelled through Rader's pet investments such as *Quest Magazine*, his own travel agency, private trips to the orient, and many thousands of dollars were secretly passed to a man with possible criminal connections in Japan, Osamu Gotoh. Church income was also diverted to Rader's and Armstrong's private treasuries of fine wines, oil paintings, home furnishings, silver, gold, secret bank accounts and so on. It was also discovered that some extortion of funds had taken place by others in the organization and used to finance private business ventures.

Being a businessman, Tuit felt that the church should be above board and fully accountable to shareholders (tithe payers). Tuit's attorneys felt that they had so much evidence against Armstrong and Rader that they alerted the State Attorney General's office in California. This led them to take legal action which resulted in a widely publicized trial early in 1979.

In spite of the tremendous evidence against Armstrong and Rader of misuse of funds, the uphill battle proved too much for Tuit's attorneys and the State of California when it came to a church's Constitutional freedom.

They were pitted against the legal team of an extremely well-financed organization not willing to examine its own wrongdoings. If church members were not complaining of Armstrong's behavior, what could the Attorney General do? Shrewdly, Rader had managed to convince members that the church itself was being wrongfully persecuted and that their Constitutional rights were being violated. Angry members went to the forefront to protect their apostle and his loyal assistant.

How did the Worldwide ministry subtly control its membership? Gerald Waterhouse, in a typical 1979 sermon in Fresno, California exhibited the phobia implantation technique practiced on members for decades. This is a partial transcript of his sermon:

*Now He says because we hold fast to what He set up through the apostle; verse 9, He's gonna make the rest of the world, starting with the so-called Christians come up and bow down and worship at our feet and acknowledge God loved us. So they learn from us.*

*Now to get us ready, He says in verse 10, we're gonna be taken to a place of safety; so the program Christ has raised up through us cannot be stopped. Otherwise, when the great tribulation comes that would stop God's work, His apostle and His people; except He says I'll protect because what I'm doing through you is toward the World Tomorrow so I have to get it there.*

*Consequently, I'm gonna protect you through the tribulation so you continue to live. And I pioneer you over into the World Tomorrow and through you introduce that to the nations that are brought into the land of Palestine and are ready to be taught.*

*Then verse 11, He says, "Behold I come quickly, better hold fast to what you have." Why? Because Christ is preparing through the messenger, the apostle, the Zerubbabel, the Elijah; the way through a team. And He says hold fast to what you have.*

*Christ is preparing through Mr. Armstrong, so you must hold fast to the messenger because its Christ preparing through him and you can only be right as long as your in step with Jesus Christ and His preparing through the messenger.*

*I don't care if...if anyone who's ever left this work has had ten billion excuses. God would never choose them over Jesus Christ. Any one who thinks God would choose them over Jesus Christ ought to be swinging from a limb down in Africa holding by his tail. If you think God would choose someone in preference to His Son; now His Son is preparing for His coming THROUGH A MESSENGER!...*

And then later, in describing that those who rebel against the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong wouldn't get to go to the place of safety, he provided this prophetic carrot/stick scenario:

*And then they can't argue and justify rebellion at all. Then they have to go in the tribulation and lose their heads on the guillotines the first two or three weeks: Because they either worship the Beast or lose salvation or lose their heads and testify against him. So when they can no longer argue; they're close to God, most of them I think will repent and say, "God forgive me and give me the help to testify to what your doing to Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian era."*

*Then they go in the tribulation and they testify against the devil, the Pope, the Beast, and the United States of Europe. And God makes sure He gets His message in there. He couldn't get it in there by radio waves because the Beast and the False Prophet, until a little bit later, the Beast and False Prophet will control propaganda and only let the Europeans hear what they want them to hear.*

*So God's gonna have this set up to bring others to repentance so when we leave, then they go into captivity they've got the power of God's spirit and they stand up and say, "We don't believe in your Pope. We don't believe in your Beast. And we don't believe in your United States of Europe. And we don't believe that this is of God it's of the devil!"*

*On the other hand we believe that the true Jesus Christ is witnessing through Mr. Herbert Armstrong in Jerusalem and he has a team under him that believe in the word of God and He's going to bring peace about through that system in the World Tomorrow and it has not begun in Europe as you claim.*

*Then when they go to the guillotine and die on the guillotine that will prove they believe in what they're saying. 'Cause you can't prove anymore substantially, that you believe in something, then if you give your head for it. You ever notice; your head is the last thing you can give. So don't wait to try to give something to God after you lost your head. You must always keep your head. Always remember that. If you expect to do something, keep your head until you've done it. So God makes them give their heads to prove they really mean business and that sets up a counter witness to the Devil through the Pope.*

By this time the world had been made keenly aware of religious cults. (In 1978 Jim Jones had inspired more than 900 of his followers to kill themselves after murdering U. S. representative Leo J. Ryan of California in a "place of safety" called Jonestown in Guyana. This was the worst display of cult mind control ever witnessed in modern Christianity.) By tolerating sermons like the one above, cult-like behavior was clearly being displayed by Worldwidiers who felt that no matter what the evidence was against Armstrong, the end justified his means.

For many years writers and theologians, such as the late Walter Martin of the Christian Research Institute, had been trying to warn society against the potential hazards of religious cults. One of Martin's chief targets was the Worldwide Church of God in his book *Kingdom of the Cults*.

Knowing that his church was referred to as a cult, Armstrong was still undaunted. "*Brainwashing...Yes! God's people are brainwashed. Their brains are washed clean of Satan's world!*" he bellowed.

A long questionable history was now beginning to stack up against Herbert Armstrong himself. But the great majority of church members still hid their eyes because of induced fears.

The final attack came on the now elderly and ailing Armstrong, during his divorce from wife Ramona in 1982. Evidence came forth from the trial that should have destroyed Armstrong's reputation permanently.

Years earlier Herbert had justified the disfellowshipping of his son, Garner Ted, to the congregation by claiming that Ted had stood over his father in a rage and shouted, "I could destroy you, Dad!" The members were led to believe that Ted's confidence in his popularity with the church had led him to make this arrogant threat against his father.

In the trial the truth came out. Armstrong had only partially quoted his son's statement to his congregation. For years Stanley Rader had been driving a wedge between Herbert Armstrong and his son, Ted.

By the time Ted knew what had been happening it was too late. Because of Rader's manipulation, Herbert had grown frightened of his son's power in the church and had cut him off from the organization. In a bitter rage to convince his father that he was being manipulated by Stanley Rader, Ted surprised his father by revealing something to him that Herbert must have felt Ted had no knowledge of. "I could destroy you, Dad!" he cried out. He revealed at that time to his father that he knew his dark secret. Ted's sister Dorothy confided in her brother that her father had forced her to have sexual intercourse with him for a ten year period until she left home and got married. This had been Armstrong's biggest and darkest secret.

Ted had been deeply hurt upon discovering what his father had done to his sister. Later Ted confided in fellow minister David Robinson who authored the book, *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*. After hearing of the incest from Ted, Robinson confronted Herbert at his Tucson home about the issue. In the presence of Henry Cornwall, Stanley Rader and David Robinson, Armstrong admitted openly that he had committed the incest during ten of the early years that he had been founding his radio ministry. Although he was not ashamed to confess this before these three men, he did not want his wife Ramona to know about his dark secret. Robinson told me, later, that Herbert had strictly ordered his staff to prevent his wife from getting a copy of the book and learning of the incest. But in spite of his attempts, Ramona Armstrong was passed a copy by her sister and had already read it before Armstrong had received his own copy. Robinson and Garner Ted were personally disfellowshipped by Herbert.

After his divorce from Ramona, Armstrong moved back to Pasadena from Tucson, a broken man. He began to give the same cryptic sermon over and over again. No one had ever attempted to interpret it. He talked about the "original sin" of Adam and Eve and what that meant for mankind. He always centered the theme of the sermon on the two trees in Eden and their symbolic meaning.

He completed his last book, *Mystery of the Ages*, in 1985. He felt that *Mystery of the Ages* was his crowning achievement in life and would be his legacy of restored truths to the world.

Around the fall of 1985, Herbert Armstrong returned from one of his many travels complaining of flu-like symptoms. He had disbursed his final book *Mystery of the Ages* to all the membership at the Feast of Tabernacles. His ministers, of course, praised it as his greatest achievement in life, encapsulating all of his life's personal revelations from God.

On his death bed, Armstrong was still paranoid. Years prior to his death he had appointed a council of the church's leading elders. One of the council's main tasks was to choose a successor to Armstrong upon his death. As he lay slowly growing weaker, he decided that he would choose his own successor and force the council to approve.

One of the men that he thought of was church evangelist and treasurer, Leroy Neff.

Then he realized that the young minister Aaron Dean had been one of his most loyal and devoted

assistants. Armstrong had chosen Dean as a traveling companion after ousting Stanley Rader. Dean had begged Armstrong to choose someone else for the job but Armstrong was never to be denied.

Armstrong could conjure up a horrific anger at a moment's notice. On occasion, Armstrong had been known to fly into fiery rages and lash out at Dean before the entire congregation. Knowing Armstrong's eccentricity, Dean shrugged the abuse off as part of his job. Maybe on his deathbed, Armstrong felt a twinge of remorse and decided to reward Dean.

Another minister, Joseph Tkach, had grown in popularity over the years and appeared to be fanatically supportive of Armstrong's policies. He was a product of the church in every way. Among members he was virtually unknown. Armstrong was soon convinced that he would choose Joseph Tkach to succeed him. Tkach had been a low-ranking minister in Pasadena until 1979. It is said that he exposed a plot to Herbert Armstrong convincing him that Ramona, Armstrong's second wife, and his assistant Stanley Rader were making inroads to take over the control of the church. Armstrong was convinced that his two closest companions were traitors when a taped conversation was produced by Tkach of the two plotting behind Armstrong's back. This resulted in Armstrong's divorce from Ramona and the ousting of Rader. It is not clear what other reasons Armstrong would have had for bestowing his 200 million dollar per year empire upon Tkach. But it is also unclear why Rader was not disfellowshipped or defrocked from the Worldwide Church of God or how the shrewd Rader was seemingly outwitted by the likes of Joe Tkach.

In June 1985, as if he had had a premonition that his "commission" was near its end, Armstrong wrote a final documentation about church history in the *Worldwide News* (the church newspaper) entitled **"RECENT HISTORY OF THE PHILADELPHIA ERA OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD."**

In his last article he still maintained all of his doctrines as truth delivered to him from God. He maintained that his church was God's one true church and sternly warned against the infiltration of, what he called, "Protestantism." Would his successor be true to his memory?

Strangely, Joseph Tkach will choose not to. At first this was accepted as a healthy move toward orthodoxy on his part. Tkach shelved many of Armstrong's publications, never to be circulated by the church again. Among them was *Mystery of the Ages*. What became even more curious was that Tkach chose later to confess to certain members of his ministry that Armstrong had plagiarized the doctrine of British-Israelism and that the church was no longer to teach it. Why he chose not to inform the membership added to the dissonance of the group. Although Armstrong founded the Worldwide Church of God and dubbed it the "Philadelphian era," his teachings would all begin to fall by the wayside with no accurate explanation being given to his followers.

What had Armstrong accomplished in his 50-year maverick ministry if his followers could so easily abandon his "truths?" Apparently little more than the creation of a fear-based religion that left many without answers after his death. The church soon became adrift and confused. Without Armstrong, like Humpty Dumpty sitting on the wall of his doctrines, all of his horses and all of his men might never be able to put his personal ministry back together again.

As I had stated earlier, by the time of Herbert Armstrong's death, many people had been influenced by the organization he founded. A variety of accounts are available in several books, television and radio reports, magazine articles and publications. None of them tell of abundant living, blessings and happiness being produced by acceptance of Armstrong's doctrines and the domination of his ministers. How could such a plethora of witnesses be ignored by those who still remained confident in Armstrong's authority? The Worldwide Church of God had never produced sufficient fruit to back up its promises, yet many members convinced of their need to display loyalty, in spite of the church's fraudulence, would cling on.

No one is exempt from the clutches of any cult. Many intelligent and capable people were led to believe that the Worldwide Church of God could show mankind the way to peace. (Among those caught in the vortex of Armstrong's logic and control were one movie star and one world class chess champion, both later resigning from the group.)

Among the many stories relayed to me by members and former members of the Worldwide Church of God, the following one is among the strangest. Whether it has any relevance or not I am not sure but I decided to leave it in for the novelty of it.

In January 1986 a Seventh-Day Adventist nurse was routinely doing her work at Martin Luther King General/Drew Medical Center hospital in Los Angeles. Attached to the main hospital is Augusta Hawkins Psychiatric Hospital. Many psychotic patients were admitted to these hospital wards during this time. On this day there was an unusually hysterical patient screaming in torment down the hallway from the nurse's station. One nurse there became so intimidated by the man's screaming that she avoided walking into the man's room, in spite of the fact that he had been restrained to his bed and drugged.

To his attending nurse he looked up and shouted, "I am going to go down under!" When the nurse asked him, "Where's down under?" he shouted back, "I am Herbert W. Armstrong and I am going to go to hell!" Two days later, the nurses discovered that Herbert W. Armstrong had indeed died in his Pasadena home. The nurse, who had been too intimidated to go into the man's room, had once been a member of the Worldwide Church of God.

Many doctrinal revisions have been made within the Worldwide Church of God since 1986. Most, Armstrong would never have approved of. Old-timers are aware of this, yet are unsure how they should react. Since Armstrong's death, definite moves have been made toward what he called "Protestantism." Members are aware that Armstrong taught against these things yet remain helpless to question the authority of the church. What does this all mean?

*The effectiveness of a doctrine does not come from its meaning but from its certitude. No doctrine however profound and sublime will be effective unless it is presented as the embodiment of the one and only truth. It must be the one word from which all things are and all things speak. Crude absurdities, trivial nonsense and sublime truths are equally potent in readying people for self-sacrifice if they are accepted as the sole, eternal truth. (The True Believer, Eric Hoffer, p. 76)*

The final analysis is that it doesn't matter what the church teaches as long as the members are convinced that they are in God's one true church. History does not bear out this claim to apostolic succession in any way for any organization.

As Steve Hassan pointed out in his book, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, the fear of ever leaving the "true church" becomes so great that members of abusive religions are held captive against their own wills. Hassan refers to this as an implanted phobia that opens a person's mind up to brain washing and control.

After the death of its founder, the direction taken by Armstrong's successor would prove to be critical to the growth of the institution. Would it continue to maintain the spirit of Millerism or would it abandon its claim that the Roman Catholic Church is the Great Whore, Babylon of the book of Revelation.

If it chooses the latter, would it not become what it had always condemned, by its own definition, *a harlot daughter of Babylon*? Trapped by their fabled history and condemned by their predecessors, to correct their past paradigms, the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God turn to Protestants for help after their founder's death.

## Chapter 17

### The Daughter of Babylon

*It is quite perplexing to watch events as the Worldwide Church of God (Worldwide Church of God) unfolds [sic]. Since founder Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, the new leader, Joseph Tkach and company have tried to correct many of the obvious errors in doctrine that the church held for so long.*

*But, how can the leadership make changes when the church had entrenched the belief that Armstrong was God's apostle who had restored the church which was lost with these same "inspired" doctrines?*

*What many inside and outside fail to understand is that many cults are not only cultic in doctrine, but cultic in practice as well. When dissension came from members who objected to the changes, a number of leaders began to implement the heavy-handed tactics of summary disfellowshipping and shunning, demonstrating an unhealthy continuation of abuse of power.*

*Apparently some in leadership felt that they could no longer appeal to doctrine as a point of loyalty because the doctrines were changing. Instead there was an appeal to loyalty based on the concept that the Worldwide Church of God is God's "only true church," that there is no salvation outside of the organization, and that to question the leaders is to question God. (6, The Watchman Expositor, Vol. 10, No. 7)*

Herbert Armstrong had moved from Eugene, Oregon in 1946 to establish his college with only 5 inaugural students. By 1986, The *Plain Truth* magazine was well known and circulated throughout the world. It was being published in 7 different languages. Ambassador College had become an architectural dream come true. The mayors of both Pasadena and neighboring Los Angeles had often given the institution praise.

In the community, Ambassador College was a cultural mecca with its beautiful and luxurious concert hall, Ambassador Auditorium. The greatest performers and symphonies of the world had graced its stage, bringing prominence to both Pasadena and the Worldwide Church of God. Luciano Pavarotti, Vladimir Horowitz, Beverly Sills, Arthur Reubenstein had all been among the mass of celebrities who had performed at the Ambassador Auditorium.

The 56 acre estate that was once known as "millionaires row" in Pasadena had been purchased, mansion by mansion, in the 40 years of Ambassador College. Exquisite landscaping and architectural additions continued until the campus was finally completed in the early eighties. The small liberal arts college had been dubbed the most beautiful campus on earth in landscaping journals.

Millionaire's row began at the corner of Orange Grove Boulevard and Green Street. This is where the major television networks set up their cameras every New Year's Day to broadcast one of the biggest media events of the year--the Rose Parade. Armstrong's stately residence overlooked the passing parade on Orange Grove boulevard as he lay ebbing away. On January 16, 1986 he died. It was officially stated that he was reclining in his first wife's favorite chair. Even though he had often referred to himself as the Elijah who would cause the hearts of the children to be turned toward their fathers (Mal. 4:6), not one of his children was by his side at his death.

On the CBS evening news, Dan Rather announced to the country, "Evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong, founder and pastor general of the 80,000 member Worldwide Church of God died today at his home in Pasadena, California. Herbert W. Armstrong was 93. In addition to the radio and television program, 'The World Tomorrow', the church publishes *Plain Truth* magazine and runs Ambassador College in Pasadena." The other major networks also paid their last respects to Armstrong. Seven years earlier Dan Rather's colleague, Mike Wallace and his "60 minutes" staff had done an investigative report on the church entitled "God and Mammon." The report had ended with a tirade by Stanley Rader

threatening to sue Mike Wallace. Now Armstrong's feared persecutors paid brief homage to the controversial man.

Earlier that day, an employee meeting was held at Ambassador Auditorium and Armstrong's death was announced by the new Pastor General, Joseph Tkach. Tkach had been introduced by fellow evangelist Ellis LaRavia, who was visibly disturbed when calling his new boss to the stage.

Back stage, someone goaded Tkach by saying, "You'll have a hard time filling Mr. Armstrong's shoes." This irritated Tkach for more than one reason. He had succeeded in grabbing the brass ring by inheriting the \$200,000,000 per year empire of Armstrong but, in the eyes of the church, he possessed nowhere near the stature nor charisma of the man.

The other reason Tkach was so irritated by the goading statement was clear. Tkach had known the dark side of Herbert Armstrong during his final years. "They were the most miserable years of my life," he confided to some of his ministers.

In Tkach's address to the 3,000 employees and church members that day, he seized the opportunity to claim that he "might not be able to fill Mr. Armstrong's shoes but at least I can walk in his footsteps."

At Armstrong's funeral on the following Sunday, Herman Hoeh rose to deliver the eulogy before thousands of onlookers. He repeated the worn and tiring story about Armstrong being raised up to prepare the way for the Messiah. He began with the story of Abraham and led up to the New Testament church. He recited the fabled "history" of the one true church, beginning on the day of Pentecost in 31 AD. He spoke confidently about Peter Waldo and Stephen Mumford being predecessors to Armstrong, the end-time apostle.

Among the many dignitaries and aging evangelists seated at the grave side was the silver-haired estranged son of the apostle, Garner Ted. When Ted and family had stepped out of their limousine, a chilling hush of respect came over the crowd. Before scandal had destroyed his reputation, he had been held in the same reverence as his father. Rod Meredith grabbed Ted off to the side and made an appeal for his repentance.

After Armstrong's burial, the first task facing Joseph Tkach was simply to introduce himself to the church. He needed a persona to survive in a church that had been held together by the charisma of its former leader. This required a year long media blitz turned inward on the church's membership.

Who was Joe Tkach? The Tkach party decided to use Armstrong's private jet to travel to each local congregation introducing the new pastor general. The job would be enormous. In 1986, there were Worldwide congregations all over the earth except for most of the orient. As Tkach travelled, his way was prepared by his staff in a fashion usually reserved for royalty.

Larry Omasta, the head of Television Productions, had followed the Armstrongs for several years with his film crew and was now a well-seasoned producer/director. With the deep pockets of the church to finance their efforts, Tkach could now be portrayed as the equivalent to Santa Claus. This was all orchestrated to the theme, "We Are Family" eerily familiar to George Orwell's "Big Brother loves you." Tkach promised to be the loving papa that Armstrong had never been.

After media productions were completed, church members would walk into services to be told that they had a very important program for that day; they were to watch a special movie from headquarters. The famous announcer's voice of Art Gilmore would introduce and narrate the films to the fanfare of the title and theme, "We Are Family!" The films utilized superimposed Hollywood title company graphics and special effects. No expense was spared to thrill the congregation, introducing their new benevolent leader. With stirring music and drum rolls, Tkach was portrayed before the grass roots congregations as a humble man shirking his V. I. P. status, preferring to shake hands with toddlers and embrace the

elderly. This was the personality that headquarters wanted the church to imagine belonged to their new pastor general. But was this the real Tkach?

Was this the same Tkach that had bragged a few years earlier to the Pasadena congregation that he had just confronted a member's unconverted husband? He had threatened to go to the hospital with him so he could get his cowboy boot back after it had been removed from the man's ass! Was this the same Tkach who had claimed to have Mafia connections in Chicago? Was this the same Tkach that many had claimed was the very personification of the dreaded and feared "super-deacon?" The super-deacon was the type of man who would not be opposed to physical violence to enforce church rules.

Those church members who had lived in Pasadena in the late 60's and early 70's were familiar with a different Joe Tkach. He would often burst into member homes unannounced and in military fashion place the home under his rigid inspection. This would include checking the sink for dirty dishes, looking into cupboards and examining the contents of the refrigerator. When the home failed inspection, Tkach would fly into lecture mode. One member was caught by surprise once and had to listen to one of Tkach's lectures after stepping out of the shower and only draped in a towel.

Gerald Waterhouse was now on the spot with all of those church members that he had told would never see Armstrong die. But he quickly revised his prophetic rambling to include Tkach. "I just didn't know at the time that God had a greater plan." Not willing to confess that he was not really inspired by God, he chose to drop all former biblical titles that he had given Armstrong. All but one. Armstrong was now surely the biblical type of Moses who had not been allowed to go into the promised land (millennium). Who was Tkach? The successor to Moses was Joshua, who led God's people into the promised land. Tkach *had* to be the modern day Joshua. Now the kingdom of God was back on schedule, according to Waterhouse. He had just been mistaken about when and how it would arrive and who would lead the church there.

Waterhouse stroked his new boss by calling him a great World War II hero who fought kamikazes aboard the USS Austin. In actual fact, though, the USS Austin never did participate in any battles with the Japanese during the time Tkach was on board.

John Trechak of the *Ambassador Report* conducted a detailed investigation on Tkach's background and discovered that the Worldwide Church of God has falsified nearly every aspect of his official biography.

Tkach personally possessed very few leadership qualities. He was neither articulate nor well-educated. It became readily apparent that he was, by no stretch of the imagination, the author of the many editorials and personals that the Worldwide Church of God placed his signature on in their publications.

During the legal attack launched against Stanley Rader and the Worldwide Church of God by the California State Attorney General's office in 1979, Joe Tkach and Ellis LaRavia came to the forefront by helping manage church affairs in the absence of Herbert Armstrong, who had fled to Arizona. Both men were later rewarded by Armstrong by being raised to evangelists, the highest rank of the ministry. Stanley Rader was also raised to evangelist the same day as Tkach and LaRavia.

LaRavia and Tkach seemed to display a rivalry. They had much in common and may have been competitive with one another. Besides both being rewarded with rank simultaneously, they were also given luxurious neighboring homes on "millionaire's row" by Armstrong. Coincidentally, they also had wives who had suffered mental breakdowns.

After Tkach took office, the leadership of the well-equipped security force used at the college had been granted to Dennis Van Deventer. Van Deventer became fanatical about his department and began drilling his security guards like military men. He had their uniforms changed from a standard security guard outfit to one that could not be distinguished from a police officer's. The officers were issued

mace and trained by local police in self-defense and arrest procedures. Using her alleged mental instability as an excuse, guards were told that Ellis LaRavia's wife had become a threat to the church and was not allowed on church property. This included her home on millionaire's row. LaRavia seemed to have conformed to this restriction. But this seemed too suspicious to Tkach's staff, so they issued the guards binoculars and told them to hide in LaRavia's backyard late at night and spy on the home. The guards obeyed their superiors and shortly discovered that LaRavia was smuggling his wife in.

One night a guard noticed LaRavia's actions and was ready to report his findings over his radio to his superiors. Suddenly, he saw the minister grab his wife's hand and lead her into the bedroom. There he witnessed, as he spied on these two without their knowledge, that they both knelt down and began to pray. This unexpected incident so convicted the security guard that he began to question his presence there and later began to question his superiors. The guard was fired. LaRavia and wife were banished to Wisconsin.

After Armstrong's death, Roderick Meredith had been teaching classes at the sister campus of Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas. Tkach had been closely observing his activities too. One of the things Tkach had ordered his instructors to downplay was their speculations about the end of the world. Maybe Tkach knew that this was an impossible task for older ministers. When the word got out that Meredith had violated this order, he was pulled out of an ongoing class and suspended from active participation in all college and ministerial duties.

Meredith and his family were then relocated about 20 miles east of Pasadena in Glendora, California, where the founding evangelist was reduced to the status of a laymember. Tkach chose to keep Meredith on the payroll but took away his responsibilities in the church.

Tkach had commented on occasion that he had many past clashes with his superiors before Armstrong's death and his subsequent elevation to power. Rod Meredith would have been a very likely antagonist of his. Many ministers had experienced a lack of compassion from both Armstrong and Meredith.

Meredith had once been supervisor of the church's ministry and had been known to comment that Tkach held the lowest I. Q. in all of the ministry. There is no doubt that Tkach was getting a little pleasure out of benching an old rival.

Now Tkach had to begin to secure his base of power over the church. He chose to ignore the council of elders that Armstrong had established to advise him and brought from Arizona two young ministers that he felt he could trust, raising them in rank and power just below himself. The two men were Mike Fezell and Tkach's son, Joe Tkach Jr.

A powerful irritation to Tkach had been the constant reminders that "Mr. Armstrong didn't do things that way," from those in the ministry who were now taking orders from him. Even though Tkach wanted to be perceived as being in charge of the international corporation, he found himself being haunted by the ghost of Armstrong instead.

Armstrong had left Tkach with a gluttonous institution that was costing nearly two hundred million dollars per year to maintain. Headquarters had steadily grown into its own microcosmic community within Pasadena. Besides maintaining a complete liberal arts college with faculty and staff, the Worldwide Church of God also provided educational services for the children of local ministers. The kindergarten through high-school institution was known as Imperial Schools. Many ministers, including Tkach's son, Joe Jr., and his boyhood chum, Michael Fezell, had been trained, pampered, and abused completely within the system, from Imperial Schools to Ambassador College (which led them into the ministry).

Also within the microcosm, the church had to maintain what it called a physical plant: Painters, carpenters, electricians, maintenance men and custodians. An elaborate landscape and horticultural

department with its own nursery and growing grounds, full time gardeners, arborists, and horticulturalists.

The media productions department was housed in a three story building on Green Street. It contains a complete television studio and two editing facilities. The church also had an on-call remote production unit that it could take anywhere in the world for location shooting. The staff included: Producer, director, film and video editors, writers, artists, audio engineers, musicians, technical engineers, camera men, announcers, and well paid televangelists--David Albert, Richard Ames, David Hulme and Ronald Kelly.

In the four story Hall of Administration were the offices for the various managers and ministers who oversaw operations of the church in several countries and in several languages. Here was where the plush offices of Tkach and staff were located. Tkach, like Armstrong, could be chauffeur driven into his private parking area in the basement of the building and then taken to his fourth floor suite by his own private elevator. Campus security and dispatch ("Control") offices were in the Hall of Administration too; operating 24 hours a day dispatching patrol cars and electric carts that were constantly driven around and through the grounds by a team of watchful security men.

In the two story office facilities building such operations as the production of the church's internal newspaper, the *Worldwide News*, was produced. Church publications such as the *Plain Truth* magazine were brainstormed there in the editorial offices.

Also to be maintained were the college bookstore, dormitories, faculty and student dining hall, physical education facilities, natatorium, basketball courts, handball courts, tennis courts, track and field (which all required staff members). Radio facilities and studios, postal operations, mail opening and correspondence teams, and church operators in the large WATS line facility (capable of processing thousands of calls per day), publishing and printing departments, typesetters, pressmen, artists, camera people, managers, writers, photography studios and photographers. Computer operations, data processors, programmers, accounting departments, accountants, bookkeepers, personnel department and job interviewers. Auto mechanics, auto shop, auto body repair and painting, auto leasing and sales, gas station and pump operators, purchasers, and on and on.

Ambassador Auditorium was rival to Los Angeles' Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Ambassador was elaborately and expensively constructed. Its designers and decorators searched the world over for exotic rosewood, onyx and the finest handcrafted materials and artifacts imported from the four corners of the earth to adorn one of the world's most opulent tributes to the performing arts. The ceilings in the foyer were adorned in pure gold leafing. During its construction, members were coerced into giving offerings above and beyond tithes and holyday offerings to ensure its financing.

After Armstrong's death, the grounds and buildings of the Worldwide Church of God, in Pasadena, were appraised to be worth three hundred million dollars without its artwork and treasures. It was with that price tag that the Pasadena property was put on the market to be liquidated. The campus was closed down and church members' children, hoping to some day become ministers or ministers wives with their unaccredited Ambassador College diplomas, were transferred to the Big Sandy campus.

Armstrong had also maintained flight attendants, pilots and private jet aircraft in Burbank, California; offices and staff members throughout Europe, Britain, Scandinavia, Australia, Canada, the Philippines and Africa; a sister campus in Big Sandy, Texas; and private resorts and cabins.

Requiring nearly a billion dollars in revenue every four years, this was the inherited responsibility of Joe Tkach. All financed by a 100,000 member church deceived into believing that if they did not sacrifice and tithe to the institution they were "stealing from God" and would consequently lose their salvation and eternal lives. The members sacrificed valiantly over the years of Armstrong's radio

ministry, but all in vain. Tkach would soon possess the legal documents and deeds to all of Armstrong's empire.

Tkach realized that all this church sponsored activity could destroy millions in assets, so he decided to do some further replacing of his old inherited staff, and asked his new staff how he might go about redesigning church operations, making them financially secure. Among his trusted new vanguard were Bernie Schnippert, Donald Ward, David Hulme, Michael Snyder, Greg Albrecht, and Kyriacos Stavrinos. Their advice resulted in the devising of an agenda referred to in the beginning as the "five year plan." Although the five year plan was presented to college department heads as a budgetary constraint for the church to cut wastefulness in spending, it was also a plan to revise the church's questionable doctrines as well and make them appear more mainstream.

Church members had been particularly naive and trusting of apostle Armstrong, who had lavishly furnished his home with treasures from his trips overseas. One of his favorite games was to challenge dinner guests to estimate the combined value in gold, silver, and artwork in his dining room. After guesses made the circuit of his dining table, he would dazzle them with a price tag in excess of a hundred thousand dollars.

Tkach had the Armstrong mansion sealed after the passing of the baton. The treasures acquired by the apostle then began to vanish.

Armstrong had also maintained several million dollars in a Swiss bank account. Tkach was startled to find that no one in his staff could produce the account number for him. Desperately he had a staff member phone a dissident ex-member, who had once published the fact that he knew the number, offering him a substantial reward for it. He refused to cooperate. Eventually, Tkach was able to gain access to the Swiss account by other means and share the spoil.

One of the first changes made in the doctrinal area had to do with the long-held view of faith healing. Armstrong had claimed that Christ's passover sacrifice was in two parts: the destruction of Christ's flesh (symbolized by the Passover bread) was for the forgiveness of "physical sin;" the pouring out of his blood (or Passover wine) was for the forgiveness of "spiritual sin." Physical sin was understood by him as the cause of sickness, therefore the observance of Passover offered a conditional promise of faith healing.

Armstrong's adherence to the physical ordinances of the Old Covenant caused him to see duality in all aspects of Christianity. He used the term "duality" when referring to himself as the modern version of Elijah just as he felt the apostle Paul had used duality in referring to Christ as the second Adam (I Cor. 15). Armstrong was not consistent in his interpretation, though, since the type/antitype references in scripture refer more in context to opposites rather than parallels. For example, Armstrong could have acknowledged that there was a reference to Christ and Antichrist in scripture. In this context Armstrong would have been the antitype of Elijah and not a type,.

Noting that the church could not guarantee healing to those who kept the Passover was wise on the part of Tkach and his administration. Churches have gotten themselves into legal trouble for unfulfilled healing promises. By advising Tkach to make this doctrinal change, the Worldwide lawyers were obviously trying to protect church finances from being drained by future lawsuits.

The church had accumulated a mountain of damaging doctrinal challenges over the years from without and within. The church was maintained by the grip of Armstrong's controlling personality and misunderstandings about Old Covenant practices for Christians. Now local elders were beginning to embarrass the older evangelists in ministerial conferences. The church's old guard was beginning to lose control to the younger men who had grown up under a system of legalism that they knew first hand did not work.

In one annual ministerial conference at Ambassador College, Herman Hoeh was informing his young ministers that church farmers were commanded to let their land rest every seventh year according to Leviticus 25 and 26. Failure to do so would bring a curse from God. This had been another long-held church doctrine under Armstrong.

One minister politely spoke out and asked Hoeh if he could guarantee the curse from God. Hoeh had never been challenged in such a way. "No sir, I...I can't." "Well, Dr. Hoeh, can you guarantee that our church farmers will be blessed if they do refuse to plant crops every seventh year?" the young minister persisted. Hoeh paused. The classroom full of ministers felt embarrassed for him. "No sir, I can't do that either." Then looking over the room of men Hoeh responded, "This is not the same young man that I knew in Ambassador College, years ago. Let's break for lunch."

It was advantageous for the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God to review its doctrines in order to focus upon Joseph Tkach as the new spiritual leader. This process helped to take the heat off of the group that had accumulated from the outside secular and religious community. Many groups had either spoken or written about the church, placing it in a usually well-deserved, bad light.

Who would want to be known as the spiritual leader of a cult? Certainly not Tkach. In the eyes of the learned religious community, the doctrines of the Worldwide Church of God were easily disprovable and their behavior was clearly cult-like. In earlier years, groups like the Worldwide Church of God were not taken seriously by orthodox theologians. This would soon become a hard lesson for them. Religious leaders had to begin to do their homework. By the death of Herbert Armstrong, nearly every book one might pick up and glance through in the cult section of religious bookstores contained whole passages describing the unorthodox views of the Worldwide Church of God. These books gave varying definitions of cultism. Almost all of the definitions of cult behavior have been practiced within the Worldwide Church of God at one time or another. But, in particular, the one doctrine that theologians claimed to mark the Worldwide Church of God as a cult was their refusal to accept the Trinity.

Dr. Ruth Tucker of Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois authored a book entitled *Another Gospel*. In it she explained the teachings of the major religious cults in detail. Curiously, in her description of the Armstrong cult, she opened the door for Joseph Tkach to lead the Worldwide Church of God into orthodoxy. This gave the Worldwide Church of God leaders the chance to clear the group's name. But if they moved too quickly it could spell disaster with loss of members and income. The church had to be kept in the dark until it could emerge from its cocoon as a legitimate Christian institution.

Sensing this possible agenda, one of Tkach's ministers came to believe that the administration was now becoming the predicted "Laodicean era." Gerald Flurry decided to exit the Worldwide Church of God, fearing that it had strayed too far from Armstrongism and feeling that he had to salvage those few faithful Philadelphians. He incorporated a new spin-off branch of the Worldwide that he called the "Philadelphia Church of God." Intent on antagonizing Tkach, he accumulated an immediate audience of dissident sympathizers.

Flurry felt that Dr. Tucker was in league with Tkach to make the Worldwide Church of God "Protestant" and began to write about this theory in his *Philadelphia Trumpet* magazine. This solicited a response from her which he ignored. Tkach publicly ignored Flurry's accusations.

Like so many other Protestant cult-watchers, Tucker's naiveté lay in her defining a cult strictly by the group's doctrinal unorthodoxy. If one were to choose doctrine as the sole basis of a cult, then most churches would be cults because they all disagree with one another. Yet there is a more foreboding aspect to religious cults which I will discuss later.

In typical fashion, the Worldwide Church of God had not sent a doctrinal committee to visit with Trinity College or other groups who sought to advise them. Instead, the church sent their two public

relations experts, Michael Snyder and David Hulme. This should have been suspicious in itself to Tucker. Others who were receiving well-rehearsed public relations announcements were suspicious.

Bob Allen and Dr. James Kennedy had interviewed Michael Snyder on the Christian radio talk show entitled "Truths That Transform." The program is produced in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida by Coral Ridge Ministries. The two interviewers questioned Snyder on the church's move toward orthodoxy. Snyder mentioned that every doctrine was presently under scrutiny. He confessed that *Mystery of the Ages* had been pulled from circulation because of errors. When asked for examples of doctrinal revisions by the church, Snyder commented,

*The Church has recently reemphasized the central position of Jesus Christ in our gospel. In the gospel as revealed in the Bible. And His role in each individual's life, bringing about salvation and bringing a fuller Christian life to an individual.*

*Smaller changes that have occurred that are of less issue are our changes in make-up and in the celebration of birthdays. The Church has withdrawn from taking positions on those topics. A major reclarification occurred a couple of years ago as well in our understanding of healing, faith healing, and also in the application of medical practice. The Church encourages that all members should seek appropriate medical attention from qualified physicians and reemphasizes this need. In prior years this was always permitted, but never emphasized in the way that it is now.*

Kennedy and Allen remained cautious. Having a public relations man speak to them, rather than a theologian, from a church long held to be a cult, was a good reason for them to suspect a smoke screen was being used.

In December of 1990, both Michael Snyder and Dr. Ruth Tucker joined forces in a radio interview with Al Cresta on KMUZ in Detroit, Michigan. Snyder sidestepped issues during the interview to make it appear that the Worldwide Church of God was never cult-like but simply misunderstood. He led listeners to believe that the Worldwide Church of God had never taught British-Israelism and that the Sabbath was never a salvation issue with the church's founder Herbert Armstrong, who believed in salvation by grace alone, according to Snyder. He added, if there was a misunderstanding it was to be taken that critics had misquoted Armstrong. Tucker apologetically stated that she regretted calling the Worldwide Church of God a cult in her book *Another Gospel*.

James Walker and Philip Arnn of Watchman Fellowship in Arlington, Texas have also closely monitored the activities of the Worldwide and noticed that there was something vitally missing from the church's stated desires to change. Tkach was not being entirely honest with his own congregation. Neither was he owning up to the past sins of the church. This appeared more like cover-up than change of heart to them.

Doctrinal views that Worldwide's representatives had discussed with Ruth Tucker and her colleagues concerned the nature of Christ, the Trinity, salvation by grace, and the spiritual rebirth. These were areas that Tkach's committee expressed some desire to review and improve and this impressed theologians like Tucker.

The committee later chose to make superficial changes based on semantics which might please outside adversaries yet not alarm the church's membership. This backfired though, causing suspicion within the church, mostly among those who had studied theology at Ambassador College. Distrust began to grow mainly based upon their insight that Tkach was being used by his committee to change doctrinal issues that neither he himself could explain nor were the field ministry adequately prepared to teach.

The result was that old-time ministers simply denied that Tkach was making any changes, young ministers hoped that the church would proceed further from past abusiveness and members remained confused. This was not healthy.

Tkach made no effort to redress the abusiveness of the church toward its membership past or present. He maintained the tight-fisted control over the members that had been the real mark of Armstrong. Doctrinal changes had occurred throughout Armstrong's years. They had always been disguised as "New Truth." This saved face for the administration and convinced followers that no other organization had divine guidance outside of the Worldwide Church of God. Tkach's ghost writers wasted little time introducing doctrinal changes in the disguise of "New Truth." Yet Tkach's New Truth had a strange resemblance to Old Protestantism.

When the church finally changed its view of being "born again" in 1991, the leaders chose to blame its past misunderstanding of the doctrine on the late Armstrong. Members began to feel betrayed. They began to ask: *"What else will Tkach change?" "How wrong could Armstrong have been?" "Wasn't Armstrong the Elijah?" "Who will preach the Gospel?"*

Members had been fed myths about their leaders and their church and had been controlled in areas of food, clothing, make-up, doctors, education, holidays, celebration of birthdays, finances, marriage, sex, child rearing and even how to purchase cars and homes. They had learned to accept everything their leaders had mandated to them without question--relinquishing personal responsibility and losing the ability to think independently. Now the administration was claiming that Armstrong was fallible and that members should accept a new leader--one Armstrong had raised up--as infallible. This created further dissonance.

Tkach continued to ignore the church itself, forging ahead with mysterious doctrinal changes. His shifts were clearly anti-Armstrong. Without making any apologies for past administrative abuse, he continued to push doctrinal changes into mainstream acceptance. All the while threatening members that if they shirked their responsibility to tithe between twenty to thirty percent of their personal gross incomes to him that they were "stealing from God."

Finally in 1992 cracks began to appear in Tkach's facade. Tkach gave a sermon to the entire church worldwide via satellite transmission at the church's annual convention--the Feast of Tabernacles. No more Mr. Nice Guy, he began to lash out about the previous administration and its restrictions and "how dumb we were" to believe such things. This was accurately interpreted by many as a clear attack on Armstrong himself. This aroused angry comments from the members. Tkach had gone too far. So now, he had to attempt an apology before a complete schism would occur.

His apology sermon was video taped in Pasadena and sent to all churches. He denied attacking Armstrong personally and then began to argue that Armstrong, on his death bed, had ordered him to do the very things he had been doing--change all church doctrines because they were in error. It was only on his deathbed that Armstrong allegedly realized his errors. No witnesses could affirm Armstrong's deathbed statement. No record existed of such statements. Tkach was requiring the church to take him at his word that he was the sole witness to such an unlikely occurrence. Tkach was not effective at publicly representing the persona that his committee had created for him.

The only other minister present with Armstrong, in his final days, was Aaron Dean. Dean admitted privately that Tkach had fabricated the stories of Armstrong's deathbed confessions.

Herman Hoeh, Rod Meredith and Raymond McNair knew Armstrong well enough to see through Tkach's ruse.

I obtained a copy of a personal memo sent from Joe Tkach Jr. to a field minister offering reasons why the church will not teach British-Israelism. No references were made by Tkach Jr. as to Armstrong's deathbed desire to have the doctrine changed. But, Armstrong was accused of plagiarizing J. H. Allen's book, *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*. When I inquired as to the source of the memo, I was informed that it was leaked by Herman Hoeh to church dissidents. This might adequately display

Hoeh's support for Tkach's anti-Armstrong stance.

In December of 1992, Rod Meredith asked to have a face to face conference with Tkach. In the two hour confrontation, Meredith pointed out to Tkach that he knew Armstrong well enough to say that he would never have made the alleged changes to his lifelong doctrinal tenets. Meredith was immediately fired and disfellowshipped from the Worldwide Church of God after serving 40 years as a leading and well-respected evangelist.

Meredith had obviously been preparing to start his own spinoff church. It sprang to life upon his disfellowshipping and was named the Global Church of God. Meredith immediately claimed that he was raising up a legitimate successor to the one true church and that it was of the lineage that descended from the New Testament church of the apostles. Meredith proceeded to proclaim Tkach's Worldwide Church of God apostate, abandoning Armstrongism and refusing to preach the Gospel message of soon-coming worldwide tribulation. This he would do himself on the radio as the voice of the radio program, *The World Ahead*. On page 18 of his first published booklet-- *Church Government and Church Unity*, Meredith likened Tkach to Diotrefes (III John 9-10), who Meredith claims was one of the wolves in sheep's clothing, misleading the New Testament church, casting out old-time genuine Christians. On page 25 of the same publication he accused Tkach's administration of destroying the legacy of Armstrong. Meredith, one of Armstrong's very first evangelists, was clearly not amused with Tkach's alleged commission from Armstrong.

Rod Meredith struck at the very heart of the Worldwide Church of God. Income began to be diverted to Global from members in the Worldwide, contributing to the Worldwide Church of God suffering an 11% year-to-date decrease during Meredith's third month of operations. Meredith claimed that his first booklet netted a request for 3,000 copies as it rolled off the presses. He has chosen to model his church as an exact clone of the church that he came into in the late 40's and early 50's.

In April, one of the final founding evangelists of the Worldwide Church of God, Raymond McNair, joined ranks with Meredith's Global Church.

In the spring of 1993, cult awareness continued. Few counter-cult groups had been fully convinced of sincerity inside the Worldwide Church of God. Philip Arnn, Craig Branch and James Walker of Watchman Fellowship claimed that in spite of the Worldwide Church of God's changes in doctrines, more than 150 members had written to them complaining of church abuse and mind control tactics still being practiced under Tkach.

Finally there came a confirmation from inside Church Administration that the group had indeed been putting up a front. Michael Snyder, Worldwide Church of God spokesperson and PR man disappeared without a trace. Representatives from group's like Watchman Fellowship and *Ambassador Report* sought to find him but could not. The Worldwide Church of God would not make comments. Rumors began to flow. One of Michael's co-workers claimed that he had confided in him that the church was indeed a cult before he decided to vanish. Another minister stated that he knew Michael just could not continue to lie for Joe Tkach. David Hulme took over Snyder's position and refused to comment on the status or whereabouts of Snyder also. Possibly Michael did not want his neck in the noose with the media in the light of what had been headline news for nearly two months before his vanishing.

In April of 1993, after 51 days of siege in Waco, Texas, FBI agents raided the religious compound of David Koresh. This resulted in the deaths of 78 members of the Branch Davidian cult. The Branch Davidians are also a descendant group of the William Miller/Seventh-Day Adventist movement. They observe the annual feast day convocations and the Saturday Sabbath. Like many Millerites, they were heavily involved in an apocalyptic belief that they were the only authentic Christians awaiting the return of Christ and the establishment of his millennial reign. Among the strangest of their doctrinal beliefs is that the Holy Spirit is a female.

With minor revolutions brewing inside the Worldwide Church of God, by tight-lipped disgruntled old-time members who were hearing rumors of Tkach's agenda for change, and outside the organization with pricking challenges from John Trechak, Bill Dankenbring, Rod Meredith and Gerald Flurry, Tkach was being forced to lay his cards on the table. The next step for him was to tell the church that Herbert Armstrong had been preaching the wrong gospel. Armstrong had always preached what he called a gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel that he declared had not been preached for nineteen hundred years until 1936 when Armstrong claimed he was given the divine commission to deliver it to the world. This gospel message was the proclamation of the advent of Jesus to reign over the world. Once delivered to the entire world, the apocalypse would occur.

But Tkach declared that Armstrong was in error. The real gospel was the same one that the Protestants had been preaching for centuries, the gospel of grace. This realization was undoubtedly the result of the years of influence that Azusa Pacific University had imparted to Michael Feazell, Tkach's chief theologian.

Members were now placed in another quandary. What made them so special? If the Worldwide Church of God gospel was the same one being proclaimed by Methodists, Baptists, and Lutherans, then why had Worldwidens been shunning these Christians?

Colleen Miller, a member of the Gardnerville, Nevada church, wrote to the Pastor General seeking clarification on this issue and she received a personal reply from Tkach in February of 1993. Tkach claimed, "The criterion for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, not membership in a particular denomination." The Worldwide Church of God had never once taught this to its members. Upon discovering this, Randy Schreiber, Colleen Miller's pastor, wrote a five page letter to Tkach to ask if Christians could also be found in the spin-off groups that had separated from the Worldwide Church of God. Tkach was not amused and Schreiber was relieved of his job.

In July of 1993, the Tkach's theologians startled the mainstream community by accepting the Trinity doctrine. While the Tkach team continued to move their Pasadena based church toward mainstream beliefs, Meredith continued to build his own team determined to salvage the Armstrong legacy. After his defection to Global, ex-Worldwide minister David Pack produced a list of 150 doctrines that had been abandoned by Tkach. Although Tkach had managed to appeal to candid deathbed confessions of Armstrong and the past ignorance of the congregation to justify changing long-held doctrinal positions such as British-Israelism, it seemed evident that at some point he might go too far and cause a major hemorrhage that would bleed his credibility dry. He had already begun to appear anemic but hemorrhage began when the Tkachs would privately accept the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is the belief in one God composed of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The confession in the "hypostasis" or Trinity was officially adopted by the Catholic Church in 325 AD upon the request of Emperor Constantine; it was adopted by the Worldwide Church of God in July of 1993.

In the July 27 *Pastor General's Report* Tkach touted a new booklet, *God Is*, as a red herring to assure the ministry that they would accept the new teaching once they saw all the facts:

*It is true that the Catholic Church teaches the Trinity (though we don't agree entirely with the Catholic view--the booklet will explain why). It is also true that the Nicene Creed was formulated at a council of bishops convened by the Roman Emperor, but those facts don't prove the teaching to be either right or wrong. The teaching stands or falls on whether it is consistent with the Bible, not on who formulated or taught it.*

Indeed the teaching is consistent with the Bible because, as I explained in Chapter 11, the Bible was edited and canonized by commission of Constantine in the fourth century.

*Watchman Expositor* scooped Tkach's doctrinal move in June before he could install a series of glibly

crafted articles in the *Worldwide News*. The cover of the *Expositor* bore the portrait of Tkach with subtitle "Insiders Report: Worldwide poised to adopt Doctrine of the Trinity." When James Walker contacted David Hulme in Pasadena and asked him to confirm the story that had leaked to them from some of Tkach's aides, Hulme proceeded to threaten a lawsuit over what he called the "unscrupulous scoop."

In November of 1993, I had been interviewed by *Christianity Today* magazine. Along with Rod Meredith, David Hulme and John Trechak, I had been asked to comment on Tkach's move toward orthodoxy and acceptance of the Trinity. "I wouldn't be surprised if 50 percent --at least-- walk out the door..." was the comment that Mark Kellner quoted from me after about two hours of being interviewed. Had I been too hasty? It would be another year and a half before the real schism would occur. Although the comment seemed impetuous, I knew all too well that for years a 50 percent division of the church had been awaited by members who read the parable of the ten virgins in the book of Matthew. For those disgruntled members that I knew were very willing to produce self-fulfilling prophecies, the number seemed good to me.

By the spring of 1994 photo-copies of the Colleen Miller-Randy Scribeber-Joe Tkach letters had been circulating throughout the Worldwide grapevine as debating members were raging on the Internet about Tkach's motives. Before the church, Joe Tkach's sermons and private conversations contained so much duplicity that confusion continued to climb. He would openly condemn rumors that had circulated claiming he was "doing away with the law," that he no longer believed in strict tithing, or that Sabbath observance was not for Christians. He boasted that he never made such claims but many of his ministers had witnessed him make the statements and wondered now if Tkach was losing his mind.

In the April 27, 1993 *Worldwide News*, Joe Tkach Jr. made similar duplicitous statements. Two months after his father had written to Colleen Miller, "The criterion for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, not membership in a particular denomination," Joe Jr. wrote:

*A rumor that has been circulated is that we now believe that all churches are God's churches. That is most certainly not our belief....*

*Our validity as the true Church of God is not in question. We know who we are and we know that our motives are pure as we strive to faithfully emulate all that the Bible teaches us....*

But in speaking about others who made the same claim (the Pharisees), Tkach Jr. wrote in the same article:

*Who was it that Jesus called the children of the devil? It was the ones who thought they had a corner on the market on spiritual values and truth.*

*Those who thought they were the only ones who could possibly have a relationship with God. It was that attitude of spiritual superiority that made them partakers of the attitude of the devil. (Joseph Tkach Jr., Worldwide News, April 27, 1993, pp. 4,5)*

In the fall of 1994, prior to the Feast of Tabernacles, Worldwide Church of God minister Earl Williams delivered a sermon in which he proclaimed that under the New Covenant the law is done away. Infuriated, David Hulme immediately asked Tkach to disfellowship Williams and his assistant Joe McNair, who had been telling members "that the food laws, Sabbath, and Holy Days are done away..." (Hulme, 3). But, Tkach refused to chastise Williams or his assistant.

In preparation for the next big doctrinal revision, church headquarters suggested that their ministers read Dale Ratzlaff's book *Sabbath in Crisis* and by January 5 they were informed by the *Pastor General's Report* that, to the Worldwide Church of God, the law was officially done away and "there is no scriptural requirement for Christians to abstain from unclean meat" (Hulme, 2).

By the end of January 1995, Worldwidens everywhere had been informed that they were not required to tithe or observe other Old Testament commands.

The repercussion caused a predictable collapse in church income which resulted in the inevitable closing of the prized accomplishment of Herbert Armstrong, Ambassador Auditorium. Tkach's team of administrators wasted little time in draining away assets that could be diverted elsewhere. Not only would members suffer by the losses, the greater community of Los Angeles would lament the loss of Ambassador Auditorium. The January 28 *Los Angeles Times* reported:

*Ambassador Auditorium--one of the Southland's most acclaimed concert halls and for more than 20 years a center for fine classical, jazz and folk music--is canceling its 1995-1996 season because of financial woes and will shut its doors in May, owners of the Pasadena landmark said Friday....The church has been subsidizing the auditorium's operating budget, providing 50% --about \$2.5 million--of its overhead in recent years.*

*But with dwindling church income, officials said, they "now reluctantly must cease funding the arts." David Hulme, director of performing arts at Ambassador and an ordained minister in the church, said religious donations have dropped 30%. (Ambassador Auditorium, A1)*

No longer requiring members to tithe also meant the layoffs of hundreds of loyal church employees. Many had worked for the church most of their adult lives. The February 7 *Pasadena Star News* reported,

*The cuts are necessary because the church suffered a huge loss in January income, said Tom Lapacka, a church spokesman. A change in the church's tithing doctrine led to the losses. Now members are not required to tithe 10 percent of their income....Two weeks ago, the church, which claims 92,000 members, announced that it will no longer support the world-renowned concert series at the Ambassador Auditorium, which church donations supported for 20 years (Sharon and Kendall, A1).*

Members were not aware that their hard earned tithe money had been paying celebrities at Ambassador Auditorium at the rate of \$60,000 per evening's performance. "In January, after the tithing change was announced, the church immediately lost 30 percent of its monthly income" (Sharon and Kendall).

Under the headline "Financial Crisis Threatens Worldwide Church of God," the Los Angeles Times reported on February 9:

*Rocked by members' reactions to major reversals of its most fundamental doctrines--including a new declaration that tithing is no longer mandatory--the Worldwide Church of God is facing the most severe financial crisis in its history (Crisis, B1).*

The church administration of Tkach had now reached its critical mass, Tkach having accomplished everything that he said he would never do. Nearly ten years earlier he had claimed that he would walk in Armstrong's footsteps, that he would trim the waste out of the church, and make it a financially efficient organization because his forte was in administration. Now his Titanic was sinking. Only Tkach and a few of his hand-picked favorite sycophants were cashing in on the Worldwide Church of God tragedy.

The "work" had already been severely crippled in Europe. Canada had boasted financial security and independence for several years until disaster struck in 1995. Frank Brown, Regional Director of the church's Canadian offices sent out an immediate appeal to his brethren in a February 21 co-worker letter:

*This letter is a difficult and painful one for me to write but I cannot delay doing so. As you may have heard from your minister, the income for the Church in Canada is down sharply and will require a number of adjustments to our expenditures to bring things into balance. In fact, income has been*

*declining steadily for the past four years and each year the budget has had to be prepared to reflect this.*

The members were now divided and confused. Some angrily defected from Worldwide to the various splinter groups, some reveled in their new-found freedom from the law, and some refused to believe that any changes had occurred since the death of Herbert Armstrong.

The general ministry could see that the handwriting was on the wall for their once securely held jobs and lavish salaries. But in Pasadena, Tkach had moved into the old Armstrong residence hiring an interior decorator to renovate it. He purchased several big-screen televisions and had a Jacuzzi installed in the back yard behind a secure new cinder-block wall. He and his entourage could now view the passing parade on Orange Grove boulevard after observing Christmas for the first time in their mansions on Millionaires row. William Miller's year of doom was just a historical fantasy. Just four years away from the year 2,000, the new millennium would bring paradise to just this chosen few.

With the imminent closing of Ambassador Auditorium in May, evangelist David Hulme the director of performing arts, submitted his resignation from both the ministry and the Worldwide Church of God on April 21. By April 30 a Conference of Elders was convened in Indianapolis and on the first of May, 265 defecting Worldwide Church of God elders elected Hulme chairman of the board of the new spin-off church, United Church of God. Even Gerald Waterhouse, who was never remiss to criticize past defectors from the Worldwide Church of God avowed his allegiance to United. Tkach's son-in-law Doug Horchak and many other close acquaintances had also forsaken their former institution.

Rumors were now circulating that Tkach was thinking of changing the name of the Worldwide Church of God. Whether or not he does so, Herbert Armstrong's prophecy based ministry has met its end. But, Millerism will continue to live on.

## Conclusion

After my first publication of *Daughter of Babylon*, I began to receive correspondence from people who had been, or were at the time, members of the Worldwide Church of God. Sadly, even after reading my book, people still ventured to ask me if I had found the one true church yet. Let me be blunt. It took me several years to accept the reality that there is no organization that is the one and only group to join. To insist that there is, is to have a concept of God as a monster. Did God, from the beginning of time, develop a plan to restrict salvation to just a very few privileged souls?

Actually, when we witness our world full of elitist groups, organizations, and churches, what we are noticing is that there are a lot of people in this world who, like those in the Worldwide Church of God, are overtaken in the vain pursuit of perfectionism in an imperfect world. As the psychologist Wayne W. Dyer explains it:

*Defending our separateness gives us a tremendous opportunity to practice blame as a way of life. When you believe in and live oneness, blame literally becomes impossible, for we are all connected, and therefore life energy is directed to finding solutions for the good of the self and the whole. When separateness is the goal, we tend to view others as responsible for whatever is lacking in our life. "They" are easy targets for blame. You may not be*

*willing to give up this business of blaming "them," particularly those who reside in a completely different chorus of the onesong [universe], whom you will likely never see in person, and who look so different from you. It is up to you to decide if it feels more convenient for you to have enemies and people to hate and blame than to feel that we are all one. As long as we need others to take the rap for the problems in our lives, we will find this notion of oneness easy to resist. (Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*, p. 100)*

Not only is it cult-like to insulate oneself inside that perfect institution but it is also cult-like to condemn those who do. In my research, I have discovered that there are many self-proclaimed Christian cult-watchers who have sought to discover cults by pointing to the fact that some Christians are not Trinitarian. In doing this, they are exposing their ignorance. They are really confusing the word *cult* with the word *heretic*. In their view the cult is the group that does not acknowledge the Nicene Creed.

Cultism is not restricted to religious ideology alone. Those who fall under the hypnotic sway of the demagogue at the sacrifice of their own individuality are the ones who quickly become absorbed into the cultic movement. Fifty years ago many who did so were called Nazis. After W.W.II, Americans found themselves caught in the Grand Inquisition of Joseph McCarthy. Today, many follow the new pied pipers of the Christian Coalition or thumb their noses at "environmentalist wackos" because Rush Limbaugh tells them that scientists and educators are in a conspiracy against big business and American prosperity. Ignoring the fact that we live on a biosphere with limited resources, it is much more popular to jump on the "us against them" bandwagon blindly marching toward world annihilation superstitiously deluded that God will protect our own perfect group despite its massive stupidity.

How shall we ever escape this vortex? We must realize that we are all prone to behave like the so-called cult member. Go to your university library and find the psychological studies done by Solomon Asche or Stanley Milgram on conformity and obedience and you will understand how vulnerable you are. In Milgram's research sixty to eighty percent of subjects tested were willing to electrocute a stranger because an authoritative person asked for their compliance. What is impressive are those who had the strength of will to refuse to conform.

Why are people drawn to organizations like the Worldwide Church of God? The late Richard Hoffstadter explained it as the paranoid style of an individual who sees history as a conspiracy.

*The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms--he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization. He constantly lives at a turning point: It is now or never in organizing resistance to conspiracy. Time is forever running out. Like religious millenarians, he expresses the anxiety of those who are living through the last days and he is sometimes disposed to set a date for the apocalypse....*

*The apocalypticism of the paranoid style runs dangerously near to hopeless pessimism, but usually stops short of it. Apocalyptic warnings arouse passions and militancy, and strike at susceptibility to similar themes in Christianity. Properly expressed, such warnings serve somewhat the same functions as a description of the horrible consequences of sin in a revivalist sermon: They portray that which impends but which may still be avoided. They are a secular and demonic version of Adventism.*

*As a member of the avant-garde who is capable of perceiving the conspiracy before it is fully obvious to an as yet unaroused public, the paranoid is a militant leader. He does not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of the working politician. Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, the quality needed is not a willingness to compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Nothing but complete victory will do (Hoffstadter, title chapter).*

The question often arises among those who leave the cult, "Where do we go now?" The answer is one that is not easy to accept because it takes some work. You go to your public library and begin to arm yourself against those who want to take advantage of your ignorance. You have heard the pithy saying by George Santayana that if we refuse to learn from the lessons of history, we are condemned to repeat them. This book stands as a tribute to that statement.

In researching this book, I found that it is possible to request any book, if I know its title, through something called the inter-library loan system. Through this system all libraries are linked together. So if your library does not have Festinger's *When Prophecy Fails*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Orwell's *1984*, Mark Twain's *Letters From Planet Earth*, or Flesch's *The Art of Clear Thinking* you can ask your librarian to order it for you. This is what your librarian is paid to do. Peruse through my bibliography. Many of the books in it were put there with the hope that my readers will seek to discover their treasures.

There is so much more that I could have written about my experiences in the Worldwide Church of God. Hopefully this book contains what you need to understand the Babylonian systems that have been created by misguided individuals like Armstrong. In the days when I was challenging the teachings that had been enforced upon me by his group, I would often reflect upon John Kennedy's inaugural speech in which he said, "Here on earth, God's work must truly be our own." The truth seems to ring clear from that statement that God's work is something very personal and unique to each and every one of us. The other saying that seemed to haunt me was from the play Hamlet, "To thine ownself be true." This is where I discovered the truth in the end.

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*Ambassador Report*, (P.O. Box 60068, Pasadena, CA 91116)

*Bible Advocate*, (330 West 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80020)

*The Discerner*, (821 Washington St., Brainard, MN 56401), Article: "Early Leaders of Seventh-Day Adventism, January-March 1991, pp. 4-8

*The Remnant of Israel*, (Britton, Oklahoma), Vol. 1, No. 1 through Vol. 10, No. 11; 1915-29

*The Sabbath Recorder*, 3120 Kennedy Road, P O Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678

*The Sabbath Sentinel*, (RD 1 Box 222, Fairview, Oklahoma 73737)

*Watchman Expositor*, (P.O. Box 13251, Arlington, TX 76094-0251), Article: What In The Worldwide Church of God Is Going On? Vol. 8, No. 5-SP

### **Associations and Churches**

The American Waldensian Society, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1850, New York, NY 10115

Association For Scriptural Knowledge, P O Box 25000, Portland, OR 97225-5000

Badillo, Tony, P O Box 45411, Dallas, TX 75245

Bible Sabbath Association, RD 1 Box 222, Fairview, Oklahoma 73737

Church of God, International, P O Box 2525, Tyler, TX 75710

Church of God (Seventh Day), 330 West 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80020

Church of God, 7th Day, P. O. Box 328, Salem, W VA 26426

Destiny Publishers, Merrimac, Mass. 01860

Global Church of God, P O Box 40160, Pasadena, CA 91114

Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society, P O Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678

Watchman Fellowship, Inc., P O Box 13251, Arlington TX 76094-0251

The American Waldensian Society Letter

## THE AMERICAN WALDENSIAN SOCIETY

MISSION SOLIDARITY WITH METHODIST CHURCHES IN ITALY,  
WALDENSIAN CHURCHES IN ITALY, ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

49 RIVERSIDE DRIVE • ROOM 1850 • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10115 • TELEPHONE 212-870-2671



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*Executive Director*

16 January 1992

Bruce G. Renehan  
49502 Alan Ave  
Tehachapi, California, 93561

Dear Mr. Renehan:

Thank you for your inquiry.

I recommend your securing You Are My Witnesses, word concerning which is enclosed. It is the definitive current statement of the Waldensian experience in English, written by scholars who are themselves Waldensians.

In past centuries, various writers held that the Waldensian experience runs to early centuries of the Christian era. No Waldensian scholar today holds to this line. The Waldensian Church and Witnesses authors trace their story to the movement of Waldesius in the late 1100s, and not before. I am aware that others -- not Waldensians! -- do not tend to accept this line, but unfortunately they tend to rely upon very dated sources now thoroughly overtaken by historical research.

Grace to you, and peace.

Frank G. Gibson, Jr.

Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society Letter



1st Seventh Day  
Baptist Church  
founded at  
Newport, Rhode  
Island in 1671

Rev. Don A. Sanford  
*Historian*

Janet Thorngate  
*Librarian*

## **Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society**

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January 3, 1992

Bruce G. Renenan  
49502 Alan Ave.  
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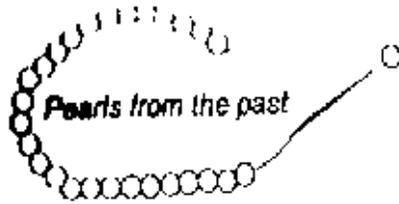
Dear Mr. Renenan,

I was much interested in your letter of December 28 concerning the history of Seventh Day Baptists, particularly as it relates to the Waldenses and etc. I assume that you have read some of the recent historical sketches of the World Wide Church of God as published in the *Plain Truth* magazines of the past year. The enclosed article which I wrote for the December issue of the *Sabbath Recorder*, our own periodical may answer some of your questions.

As I stated there, we make no claim to any direct relationship with the various sects of the Middle Ages which may or may not have observed the seventh-day Sabbath. The evidence is very sketchy at best and documentation is questionable. Furthermore, it has no bearing upon our holding of the seventh-day Sabbath. We base our belief on the Scriptures rather than on any apostolic or historic succession. And as for the reference to the Puritans, this is a fictitious supposition put forth by A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd in their 1938 book, *A History of the True Church, Traced from 33 A. D. to Date*. In order to keep an unbroken succession, which they feel is essential to their belief, they had to appropriate Seventh Day Baptist history, since we were the only Christian church which observed the Sabbath during the critical years of the English Reformation.

It is true that some of our records did use the term "church of God" in its generic form, but they capitalized the word *church* to make it conform to their name. A more common designation in the early years was "The church of Christ keeping the commandments of God..." This use was to clearly identify us as Christian rather than Jewish.

(over)



Pearls from the past

## Research reveals plain truth

by Don A. Sanford, historian

The Worldwide Church of God is running a series of articles in their *Plain Truth* magazine under the heading, "History of the Church of God." The Historical Society has received several letters questioning their use of Seventh Day Baptist history in establishing an unhroken claim to New Testament origins.

Seventh Day Baptists do not believe that the validity of the Sabbath is dependent upon any "apostolic succession" of an organized church. Attempts to prove such dependence on human institutions sometimes detract from the divine origin of the Sabbath.

Seventh Day Baptists believe that it is far more important to base the belief and practice of Sabbath observance upon the study of Scriptures rather than a succession of human authority or practice.

During the mid-17th century, the Bible became available to the common people. Those who were known as Separatists, separated from the Church of England, giving birth to such nonconformist movements as that of the Congregationalists and the Baptists.

Baptist historian William Brackney recognizes the beginning of Seventh Day Baptists by noting that "in the biblicism of the age when the Scriptures were being constantly reexamined as a standard of Free Church doctrine and practice, it is not surprising that a person or church should conclude that keeping the Sabbath was an inescapable requirement of biblical Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

One of the first Baptists to write in support of the seventh day Sabbath was James Ockford, whose book was condemned by Parlia-

ment. He was followed by others such as William Saller and Dr. Peter Chamberlon, men associated with the Mill Yard Church which still exists as a Seventh Day Baptist church in London.

Francis Bampffield, Edward and Joseph Stennett were leaders in the Pinners' Hall Church which existed as an SDB church until about 1850.

John James was another leader who has long been associated with the movement leading to the Sev-

land. They write of the separation of the Sabbathkeepers from the First Baptist Church of Newport in 1671.

Although the source of most of their material is taken from the *Seventh Day Baptist Memorial*, published in 1852-54, they avoid identifying that church as the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the existing records of that Newport Church are in the possession of the Seventh Day Rap-

---

***Seventh Day Baptists believe that it is far more important to base the belief and practice of Sabbath observance upon the study of Scriptures rather than a succession of human authority or practice.***

---

enth Day Baptist cause in England. He was forcibly taken from his pulpit in Bull Stake Alley, arrested and martyred in 1661. Although the charge was largely political, he gave a strong testimony to the Sabbath and believers' baptism in his statement at the foot of the gallows.

James Ockford, Francis Bampffield, and John James are all mentioned in Part 9 of the series in *Plain Truth* (September 1991), but no mention is made of their Seventh Day Baptist connection, leading people to assume from the heading that they were members of the Church of God.<sup>2</sup>

Part 10 continues the history under the title, "The Sabbath Comes to New England." The authors credit Stephen Mumford with bringing the Sabbath to Rhode Is-

land. They write of the separation of the Sabbathkeepers from the First Baptist Church of Newport, R. I.<sup>4</sup>

Part 11 of the series in *Plain Truth* magazine is entitled, "War and the New Frontier." Samuel Hubbard is erroneously listed as one of the founders of the Newport Baptist Church which was founded in 1644, whereas the records show he was baptized and joined in 1648. The authors identify Samuel's wife, Lucy, as "the first native-born American to convert to Sabbath-keeping,"<sup>5</sup> yet she was born in 1609 in England, 11 years before the Pilgrims came to America. According to Samuel Hubbard's journal, the first native-born Ameri-

cont. on page 22

**Research reveals** (cont. from page 12)

cans to accept the Sabbath would have to have been the Hubbard's three daughters, Ruth, Rachel, and Bethiah.

"My wife took up the Lord's holy 7th day Sabbath the 10 day March 1665. I took it up 1 day April 1665. Our daughter Ruth — 25 October 1685, Rachel — Jan. 15 day 1665, Bethiah — Feb. 1688. Our son Joseph Clarke — 23 Feb. 1666."<sup>6</sup>

Ruth later married Robert Burdick. Rachel married Andrew Langworthy and was one of the charter members of the Newport Seventh Day Baptist church. Bethiah was the wife of Joseph Clarke. Many of today's Seventh Day Baptists have documented direct lineage to these early Sabbathkeepers in Rhode Island.

Under a section headed, "The Name of the Church," the authors

correctly recognize the Hopkinton congregation (the First Hopkinton Seventh Day Baptist Church in Ashaway, R.I.) as an outgrowth of the Newport Church, but refer to it as the "Church of God," based on a couple of passages which use the term "church of God" in a generic sense.

They correctly date the founding of the church at Piscataway, N.J., from the study of the Scriptures by Edmund Danham in 1705. The authors call it "the Church of God," but a check of the record books clearly show that the early minutes all begin with the phrase, "The Church of Christ keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ." Several early Seventh Day Baptist churches did use the name Church of Christ, possibly to clearly identify the church as Christian rather than Jewish because of their Sabbath observance.

The authors make use of several

Seventh Day Baptist books including the *Seventh Day Baptist Memorial*, and Henry Clarke's *A History of the Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists in America*, published in 1811. However, several passages are quoted as being from Clarke's book, when in reality they are from vol. 2 of *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*. Again there is a marked avoidance of identifying the people and events as being Seventh Day Baptist.

The final quotes in that article from the November/December 1991 *Plain Truth* were taken from a more recent book, *A Free People in Search of a Free Land*, written in 1976 by the author of this review, and published by the SDB Historical Society. Yet no identification is made of its Seventh Day Baptist author or origin.

Seventh Day Baptists are anxious for the claims of the Sabbath to be proclaimed throughout the world. The Sabbath is not limited to any one denomination. But in the interest of "the plain truth," falsehoods or misleading information do not advance the cause of truth in the world. *SP*

**SR Reaction**

*Letters may be edited for length and clarity*

Dear Kevin,

The Recorder (September 1991) was full of interesting things this time. Just for the record, I would like to add two doxologies to Victor Skaggs' list. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). A comparison of these with those printed would tell us what kind of theology William Vis ("Dunderhook fan") was referring to "that would lead one to think he could commit murder without remorse, and not face eternal judgment."

But what I wanted to write about was Andrew Danham's "Freedom" in the Beacon. I appreciate his positive refer-

ence to my daughter's sabbath experience. He said, "we need to recognize that our standing up for what is right is not legalism." Now said it is that "to recognize that standing up for right is not legalism" is one of the needs of SDBs.

I have been at a loss to understand why not one of the SDB committees without leadership has been willing to consider inviting us to live among them, even free of financial obligations.

Whether or not I agree with all of my daughter's positions (what parent does?), I am certainly proud that she has the courage "to stand up for what is right," even if she steps on some "non-legalistic" Seventh Day Baptist toes in her hurry to get on her feet.

Sincerely, Thomas McFlawn

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> William Henry Brackney, *The Baptists* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1983) 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald D. Kelly, "Free at Last" in *The Plain Truth*, vol. 58:8 (September 1991) 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald D. Kelley and Jimmy Franks, "The Sabbath Comes to New England," in *The Plain Truth*, vol. 58:9 (October 1991) 18-21.

<sup>4</sup> *Records of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Newport, R.I. to June 6, 1892* (CRR 1922.1).

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Kelly and Charles Vorhes, "War and the New Frontier," in *The Plain Truth*, vol. 56:10 November/December 1991, pp. 18-21.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Hubbard's Journal circa 1633-1636. Manuscript relating to Samuel Hubbard of Newport, R.I., transcribed from copies known by Isaac Backus, p. 10

# *The Plain Truth Responds*

by Herman L. Hoeh

Your cover letter and the article by Don A. Sanford point up that certain editorial inaccuracies in the early history of Sabbatarians (in the U.S.) appeared in Part 11 of the series on the history of God's church in *The Plain Truth*. In particular, please thank Don Sanford for addressing them in *The Sabbath Recorder*.

As you know, God's people were commonly referred to as Sabbatarians in the 17th and 18th centuries and that is how we identified them—rather than by the now common denominational term Seventh Day Baptist. We did identify these first Sabbatarians in America as having reluctantly severed connection from the parent church, the First Baptist Church of Newport. As author Don A. Sanford says of the literature of God's people, the church of God was used as a generic term, not a denominational term. We used it thus throughout our series, and do not dispute the use of

other terms in the Sabbatarian churches, for the New Testament does the same.

The introductory paragraphs of Part 11, page 18, column 1 of the series in *The Plain Truth* mentioning Samuel Hubbard and Tacy Hubbard are properly corrected by Don A. Sanford. The errors arose from misreading of the text and will be correct in any future reference to the Newport church.

The quotation in reference to the 18th century Sabbatarian church in Pennsylvania was wrongly attributed to Clarke's *History*, p. 1208, due to a deletion in copy fitting. The quotations should have been attributed to *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, volume 2, page 1208.

We happily thank Don Sanford for drawing readers' attention to these particular oversights in Part 11 of our series.



Entered as second class matter February 2, 1923, at Oklahoma City, Okla., under the Act of March 3, 1879."

"If ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, see ye: when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountain and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye."—Isaiah, 18:3.

V. 1. 10

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA., SEPTEMBER, 1929

No. 11

# The "Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets"

(LEV. 23:24-26) COMING THIS YEAR 1929 BEGINNING AT SUNDOWN TUESDAY NIGHT AND ALL DAY WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1929

By John S. Stanford

To be notified ahead of a coming event is a thing of value. Aviation is glad and is benefited if the bad weather ahead is predicted for them.

Navigation is helped and saved from danger, if told of icebergs or violent storms in the way.

Men develop systems to provide for these very things. And the plan and wisdom is of God. It is God's way, and Loving Kindness so to do. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7).

The thing predicted may be of vast or of slight importance, but the prediction can always be appreciated and it gives confidence and a feeling of safety and of respect if we know we have a reliable and faithful predictor.

Now to find out that God is that very kind is worth everything to us. God wants us to know that He is. He doesn't want us to drift along with no idea, thought, nor knowledge that He is so faithful to and careful of His people, that He will not let events of importance nor danger nor love come upon them without notifying them ahead.

The system of blowing of trumpets in the days of the Kingdom of and the encampments of Israel was a repeated demonstration of God's disposition in this matter. Some occasions stirring and some ordinary. But all showing, conclusively, that God always NOTIFIES.

If the leaders were to be gathered together, then a certain trumpet was blown. If the whole congregation, another certain trumpet. If the camp was to move forward a trumpet was blown. If they were to go to war, a trumpet. All moves and concerted actions and interests were given due notice.

"Is the Lord's Hand shortened that it cannot save? Or, 'Is His ear heavy that He cannot (or will not) hear?' (Is. 59:1). Do not His eyes still "Run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him?"

Is He not "the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow?" Surely all this can be said of Him. Therefore we can confidently and gladly look forward to be NOTIFIED of all coming, important events.

The practical, physical system of the blowing of the trumpets, having (for whatever reason) ceased is no sign that God has ceased to notify. We are a scattered people. But God still notifies through "His servants, the prophets. (Amos 3:7). If we do not look these notifications up and thereby be notified, it is our own fault. For all these things are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." (I Cor. 10:11).

So we can see that God is a faithful NOTIFIER And He wants us to remember this.

The only way that the human race (changing generation as it constantly does) can be made to remember a thing is to establish a memorial. Very likely the Independence days of a nation here on earth would have (by this time) been (largely) forgotten if there had not been established memorial days (4th of July, and the like).

The creation of the Heavens and the earth were long ago been entirely forgotten, only that we established a weekly memorial (the Holy Sabbath Day). The crucifixion and death of Jesus could easily be forgotten only that God has given us a memorial. "As oft as ye do this ye do show my death till I come," (I Cor. 11:25-26). So to show we constantly remind us that God's loving care over us

# The PLAIN TRUTH

*A magazine of understanding*

VOL. XIII NUMBER 6

DECEMBER, 1948

**NOW it Can Be Told!**

*... behind the scenes at the San Francisco Conference!*

IT COULD not be broadcast. You read nothing of it in newspapers. But now it can be told to readers of **THE PLAIN TRUTH**—the inside facts of the most significant event at the San Francisco Conference. It was prophetic. Already it is changing the course of the world.

Soon the entire world will gasp with WONDER, when they behold, full blown, the amazing thing that was germinated at this special meeting.

I was there. I saw this spectacle. I heard the startling pronouncement. Top diplomats of many European and South American nations were there. Other thousands were there. It was, in fact, the largest crowd to attend any meeting during the Conference, though this was not an official United Nations meeting—and probably few grasped the prophetic significance.

But Mrs. Armstrong and I recognized instantly its full import. We hurried immediately to our apartment where I wrote of what we had just seen and heard.

### World Drift Already Altered

Now, three and a half years later, the germ we saw planted there has rooted into the most dynamic political movement in Europe. It will grow with increasing momentum.

Had we published these facts at the time people would not have believed. Now, in the light of developing world events, it may be understood.

Here is what I wrote:

This is Sunday, April 29th, 1943. It is a grave moment in history. Mrs. Armstrong and I have just returned from a significant special meeting. It is destined to change the course of world events.

It will have far greater ultimate impress upon the world's future than the official meetings at this Conference.

② We are in the last days of World War I. The Nazis are disintegrating on all fronts. It appears only a matter of days, now. But already world leaders are looking toward World War III. This historic San Francisco Conference is the world's effort to prevent it and bring in World Peace. "The world's last chance," says Anthony Eden of this Conference.

### Power Politics in Action

Never in the history of mankind has anything like this taken place. It is the greatest, most elaborate conference of world leaders ever held. I have had the rare privilege of being one of the very few writers and speakers of prophecy credentialled to the Conference. Here I have been seeing power politics in action. Here I have witnessed something of the subtle yet fateful arts, skill, and strategy called statecraft and diplomacy—in living action as instruments for selfish national advantage.

In the plenary sessions of the Conference we hear beautiful oratory enunciating lofty aims of altruism and world peace—to be printed in newspapers throughout the world for public consumption. But the real sessions are behind locked doors of committee council chambers, and there the savage battle for national interests rages fiercely.

Already I see the clouds of World War III gathering at this conference. I saw it first as it was injected indirectly into every press conference. We learn of it in private talks with delegates in hotel lobbies. The nations can have peace—IF

THEY WANT IT. But they don't want it. They want GAIN at the expense of others.

### Injustices to Minorities

Yes, the efforts to form a world PEACE-ENFORCING government here are proving, in themselves, a continuing CONTEST, punctuated by constant strife.

The firebrand here is Stalin's top man, Molotov. I've attended press conferences here where protesting representatives of Lithuania, Latvia, Esthonia, cry out against grave injustices forced on their people by the overpowering Russian boot. Three million from Lithuania have been torn from their homes and families, and deported to Siberia!

In a private interview with Constantin Fotich, pre-Tito ambassador to the U. S. from Yugoslavia, I learned that 30,000 small farm owners in Yugoslavia have seen their homes and farms confiscated by Stalin's puppet government. Some of these remain on their farms as slaves, some have been driven to Siberia—many have been "liquidated"—killed!

I do not see PEACE being germinated here, but the seeds of the next WAR!

Success of the United Nations' effort for world peace requires complete HARMONY between the Big Three. But if America and Britain are to achieve harmony with Russia, it is already apparent it will have to be at the cost of justice in the smaller Baltic and Balkan nations, and Poland. And if the rights of these helpless millions are to be trampled upon with impunity as the price of peace with Russia, THEN WE STILL HAVE NO PEACE!

There can be no REAL PEACE until we have justice for all. To achieve that,

# The PLAIN TRUTH

A magazine of understanding

VOL. XVII, NUMBER 2

AUGUST, 1952

## HITLER *Did Not Die*

Adolph Hitler's fake suicide in his Berlin Bunker now is exposed as History's greatest hoax! Positive evidence comes to light Hitler did not die—here's new evidence that Hitler is alive, directing Nazi Underground, today!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

**A**DOLPH HITLER probably is still alive, today. Evidence piles up that he is this minute secretly directing the powerful Nazi Underground!

There is absolutely NO EVIDENCE that Hitler committed suicide, and, as the world was led to believe, his body with that of Eva Braun burned in the Reichschancellery garden.

And now, it is revealed at last, there is definite evidence that Hitler's body was not burned in the Reichschancellery garden, as Nazis told the world.

### Hitler's Thousand-Year Plan Not Dead

Adolph Hitler planned to conquer and to rule the world. Most of our readers of long standing are familiar with Hitler's "Thousand-Year Plan." It was a diabolical counterfeit of God's PLAN for the Thousand-Year Rule of Christ!

But Hitler made one fatal mistake. This blunder brought down to the first Nazi try for world domination. That error is wrapped up in the very essence of Nazism. The term "Nazism" is merely a contraction for "National Socialism."

Hitler's mistake which foredoomed his World War II effort was his fierce nationalism! He envisioned a thousand-year rule by Germans over all other nationalities and races, with Hitler himself

the Supreme world Ruler. It was "Deutschland Uber Alles!"—GERMANY over all!

In this fatal blunder Hitler underestimated the vast influence and power of the Papacy. Instead of cooperating with the Vatican, as he might have done, and effecting a cooperative UNION of European nations, Hitler set up his own personal religion, attempted to deify himself as a GOD, opposed Roman Catholicism, and attacked and invaded neighboring European nations. Instead of bringing in, under him, and utilizing the armed power of other European nations, Hitler DESTROYED that power, and attempted to hold opposing European peoples in conquered subjection by his Gestapo!

Hitler envisioned himself as a *Man of Destiny*—and so he is! For he is who started the first phase of what is to lead, very soon now, into the prophesied rise of the "BRASS" out of "the bottomless pit."

But the PROPHECY of this event reveals that when it is accomplished it will be by a UNION of ten nations in Europe, uniting Church and State—not by a single German nation destroying the other nations and opposing the Roman Church. Therefore that first effort of Hitler had to fail!

But HITLER'S PLAN FOR WORLD RULE

IS NOT DEAD! Before Germany surrendered, in May, 1945, the Nazis went underground! Hitler had made elaborate preparations for carrying on his crusade underground in the event of defeat in his first attempt.

### To Be Resurrected

Soon, now, prophecy reveals, the very movement Hitler started will emerge above ground before a stunned and awe-struck world! But the body that shall be resurrected will not be the same body that went underground. It will reappear not as a NAZI movement, but as purely FASCIST!

And what's the difference? Nazism has always been defined as the GERMAN form of Fascism. And so it is, with one slight shade of difference! Nazism was purely a national GERMAN fascism—whereas pure Fascism, as it has existed since 600 years before Christ, is an INTERNATIONAL Fascism! And pure Fascism always UNITED with the Roman Church!

There is every evidence that the NAZISM which went underground—very possibly directed this minute by a much alive Adolph Hitler—now realizes its sad mistake. Evidence is revealed in Mr. Hoeh's article in this number, written from London, that secret plans and agreements already are being worked

# The PLAIN TRUTH

*A magazine of understanding*

VOL. XXI, NUMBER 2

February, 1956

## U.S.A. Riding to Total Collapse in 20 Short Years!

**Here are the naked FACTS that ought to astonish  
and shock you into immediate action.**

**by Herbert W. Armstrong**

**Y**OU'RE GOING to be *shocked* to read what goes on *undercover* in the United States. Five major vices threaten the *total collapse* of our country inside of 20 years. The handwriting is on the wall of America, now!

### Lifting the LID Off Vice

Five major vices are combining to bring America to *total collapse*, to a fall greater than that of ancient Rome, because we are now *more WEALTHY, more POWERFUL* than ancient Rome—and the bigger they come, the harder they fall.

Now I use the word "undercover" paradoxically. These gigantic fatal vices are *not* hidden, actually, and yet, we don't see them, because we don't recognize them for what they are. We are totally *oblivious* to what they are *doing* to us.

First, what was it, specifically, that caused the fall of ancient Rome?

The acknowledged authority on the history of that period is Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of 165 years ago. His famous textbook, *The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, is the standard recognized authority. Gibbon lists five chief reasons for the fall of Rome. You probably never read them, but you would think he was writing a description of America *today*, if you did.

These five specific causes for the fall of Rome are the five outstanding characteristics of American life today. It's

time we wake up and take a look at them.

### The Number ONE Vice

**FIRST**, there was the rapid **INCREASE IN DIVORCE**, homes being broken up. Look at America today! Here are the actual figures: In 1890 there was one divorce for every 18 marriages. But the divorce rate began to rise. Twenty years later, by 1910, we were having one divorce to every eleven marriages. By 1930, the divorce rate in America had risen to one in every six, and by 1945, this tragedy of divorce had skyrocketed to *one divorce out of every THREE AND ONE-HALF MARRIAGES!* That was the year that the *war* ended, and a lot of hasty marriages ended the same year.

Since, the rate has leveled off in a fairly constant one in every four, with more divorces, of course, in the metropolitan areas. In some, it's at least one in three.

Do you realize that the **HOME** is the very foundation of any society, and when our homes are being broken up, the very foundation is crumbling away beneath us. *The United States is going the way of ancient Rome.*

### What TAXES Are Doing to YOU

**SECOND**, just before Rome collapsed, there was a rapid **INCREASE IN TAXES**. Rome had grown fat and pro-

perous; and people sought leisure, less work, more play, idleness, and as they shirked work, they began looking to the government to provide. Today, we call it doles, relief, pensions, and government aid. When any nation begins to look to its government to provide, that nation is on a greased toboggan-slide to decay and to oblivion. It brought about the fall of Rome. It brought about the fall of proud Babylon long before. *And it's bringing about the fall of America today.*

Now, **LOOK AT US TODAY!** Like Rome, we've grown fat and prosperous and lazy. We Americans are rolling in money. We have more money than any people ever had. Money has come **SO EASY!** Too many of us are trying to get it the easy way with less work. Business is raising prices. Labour demands shorter hours, more pay.

Yes, we've grown prosperous and lazy. We've started on the way of ancient Rome, seeking government aid, relief, pensions. We're looking to the *government* to take care of us, and just like that of ancient Rome, our government has grown **TOO BIG**, and we've had a *rapid increase in taxes.*

### What Are the Facts?

Brace yourself for a shock. How much money do you suppose it cost to run the United States government, through *all*

# Amazing 2000-Year History of the Church of God

*How much do you really know about GOD'S CHURCH? Where has it been? Have you supposed it was re-established after 1900 years through the efforts of Herbert W. Armstrong? IT WAS NOT! You will be ASTONISHED to see the true history of GOD'S Church. This true history, authentically documented WITH NEW FACTS which our older members should re-read, is breathtaking. Here are the astounding facts! This surprising truth is bound up in the real meaning of the SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION!*

by Herman L. Hueb

**H**ERE—for two thousand new readers—is the TRUTH about our Church! Almost two thousand years ago a Messenger came to this earth bringing startling news of a coming world government!

That messenger was Jesus Christ! Jesus came to deliver this message from God to man. He did not come to preach it personally to the whole world. Instead, Jesus spent His ministry preparing the foundation for THE CHURCH which would carry His gospel of the Kingdom to all nations.

### Why Jesus Promised to Build Church

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

Before Jesus ascended to the throne of God, He commanded the apostles and disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were imbued with the Holy Spirit, which made them the begotten sons of God, put them into His Church (1 Cor. 12:13), and endued them with the POWER OF GOD to carry out His work!

Jesus founded His Church by sending the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Monday, June 18, 31 A.D.—a date absolutely established by the exact and inspired mathematical and astronomical computations of God's Sacred Calendar.

It was an inspired Church, a Church in which Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, was being His life and truthfulness which JESUS BEGAN, TO BRING, AND TO USE HIS GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

### What Is the True Church?

The true Church is the collective body

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

The true Church is not some politically organized denomination which one joins or becomes a member of in order to be "saved." Jesus did not die for some one organization called a Church (Acts 20:28).

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

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

Notice that from the very beginning the Church was subject to the rule of God. It was not a government by the will of man or boards of men. Jesus is the Head of the Church. He rules the Church. Read the accompanying article in this issue.

### Church Grows in Truth

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus prayed that His Church would be kept ONE in the Father's name. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be ONE, as we are" (John 17:11).

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

No denomination could be the true Church, because man has been willing to differ with a Father who is wrong, and

has received God's correction, none has allowed the Holy Spirit to guide it into truth. The Church which Jesus is building is composed of those scattered individuals who have God's Holy Spirit, who admit it when they are wrong, as the apostle Peter did when he made a serious mistake (Gal. 2:11).

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

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

### False Teachers Prophesied

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

Jesus warned that there would be a great falling away—MANY false ministers deceiving the MANY (Mat. 24:4, 5). Paul earnestly warned the elders that from their own number some would depart from the faith (Acts 2:29, 30). False apostles and false brethren arose within local church assemblies (11 Cor. 11:13-15, 26). Soon they outnumbered the faithful who alone made up the TRUE Church of God.

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

But that did not mean the scattered individuals were not part of the Church. They were the Church because they were joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Those who have Him can be called the true church, the church of the gospel of the world. "The synagogue of Satan!"