

Spiritual Stagnation  
in  
God's Church



# Spiritual Stagnation in God's Church

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

*How does God provide new information to His Church? Is it through leaders in the Church or does the Bible rather show that it is through men called out directly from the world with no previous religious training or association with a religious group? Find out what your Bible says on this very important matter.*



## *Preamble*

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

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

### **The Holy Spirits of the God Family**

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### God the Father

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### God the Word and Spokesman

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Holy Ghost

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no bib-

lical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

### God is a Family

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Bible Writing Convention

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

God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the “Holy Spirit” or simply the “Holy Spirit” in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

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

### **Making Things Clearer**

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

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

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





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**W**hat is the one thing that you can rely on to be the truth and which is to be your criterion in sorting truth from error so as not to be deceived by false prophets? Through the ages, Christians have had a constant fear of losing their salvation by being deceived by unconverted men. However, God has not been nor is He now working out His plan of salvation using spirit beings. None of us have had angels appear to us to teach us or any other type of spirit beings and I don't think anyone really expects that this would occur.

Rather what we see is God using, yes you've guessed it, fallible flesh-and-blood men to carry out His plan of salvation for mankind and He used flesh-and-blood men to write the Holy Bible which is our only sure means of sorting truth from error. And, if we read into the background of the men God used to write the Bible — using the Bible itself to determine this though in many cases the authorship of books cannot be known for sure — we can see that they did not belong to any established and accepted religious group; they were not high ranking and well-respected members of any popular religious organization.

Often times, they were non-religious individuals called straight out of the world and, in the case of Paul, he was a member of a religious organization that was fighting against Christians and delivering them to the authorities to be put to death. How can anything he wrote be considered God's truth; why he wasn't even part of the original disciples taught by Christ? How can anything he wrote be the basis for the beliefs of untold

number of Christians through the ages? Matthew was a tax collector, Peter was a fisherman, Luke was a physician and James and John were also fishermen. These were hardly the kind of people according to the standards applied in the world and in organizations calling themselves churches of God who would have any credibility in terms of being the source of new truth God wanted to give to mankind. Yet, they were used by God to write the books of the New Testament.

How can a book, or several books in the case of the Bible, written by men which were not part of a duly-approved, well-respected and popular religious organizations ever be the basis for the faith of eventually millions of men. Don't you have to be part of a well-established, highly-respected popular religious group and don't you have to have been accepted by those men who have appointed themselves as leaders of that group in order for your words to not be immediately rejected and labeled as heresy that all are to avoid?

Which ones of the men who wrote the Bible did so subject to the approval of the leadership of the mainline religious group of the day? How many writers of the books of the Bible did their writing under the direction and supervision of an established church organization, even one of the pastors of God's First Century Church. Can you think of any? I can't. Paul whose conversion came after Christ's ascension to His Father wrote several epistles that form a major part of the New Testament writings of the Bible. Did he send drafts of what he wrote to Peter and John who were in Jerusalem for their approval? Paul after his conversion did go to Jerusalem but it was not to obtain their approval for anything of what he was doing. Read Galatians 2 to get the detail of what occurred on that occasion.

Does the Bible allow us to see a pattern in how God uses fallible men as His instrument in making available to mankind information about His master plan of salvation?

What kind of people has God has been calling to participate in the administration of His plan of salvation for mankind?

### **You See Your Calling**

Some of you may recall ministers \_\_\_\_\_ at different times using the following Scriptures from 1 Corinthians.

1Co 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

1Co 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

1Co 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

1Co 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

These verses make it clear that those whom God is calling in most instances are not the rich, famous and powerful of this world. Not many mighty, not many noble are called because as is explained in 1 Cor'n 1:27, God chooses the foolish things of the world (as the world defines foolishness) to confound (perplex; amaze) the wise (as the world defines wisdom) and He has chosen the weak things of the world i.e., those who are without any great power or influence over large number of people to confound (amaze; perplex) the mighty.

He has chosen the base things (1 Cor 1:28) of the world (things which are considered to be of little or no value by the world) and things which are despised (things regarded with disdain or disgust; contempt by the world) and things which are not (according to the world i.e., all things spiritual which the world cannot know) to bring to nought (nothing) things that are. This current physical-material civilization will be brought to nothing with the coming of God's Kingdom which is spiritual ; it is "not" i.e., it does not exist as far as the world is concerned but it will bring to nought this present, physical material world.

And, in 1 Cor 1: 29 God tells us He is proceeding in this way so that no flesh i.e., no man can claim before Him to be that mighty and wise person which is making possible the successful administration of His master plan of salvation for mankind.

### **Converted Men and Power — A Biblical Perspective**

Although truly converted, men are still drawn to power and all that it makes possible for those who have it. With power comes adulation, fame, money, respect and praise from those seeking favors for themselves or their friends or whose own status they feel is elevated by being seen to be close to powerful men. In the Church, holding an ordained office is a major source of pride and power. The regular members looked up to these men with a certain amount of awe and longed to be close to them so as to enjoy a kind of personal relationship that others don't have and which filled them with pride.

I will not use Old Testament examples where men lusting for power have caused havoc. In the Old Testament only certain individuals had access to the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman and so it is not unexpected that those whom they lead or came in contact with would react in a carnal-minded fashion to them but what about the truly converted.

In the New Testament, we have the Gospel and especially the epistles where we can see how well converted people exercise power and how well those over whom power is exercised reacted to the leadership in the Church.

In 1 Corinthian 12 we see Paul giving a long explanation to the brethren regarding how it is that different individuals play different roles in the body of Christ which is the Church. Why was it necessary for Paul to take the time to carefully and at length explain this? Paul was clearly responding to something that had become a problem in the Church or he would not have written about it.

What was the problem Paul was addressing?

Some of the members were unhappy with their position or role in the Church or body of Christ. They wanted to play different, more important, more prestigious roles than the one they found themselves in but Paul tells them the Church is one body composed of many members where all roles are important. The body of Christ, the Church does not consist of one person or member but of many coming and working together as one body.

1Co 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into, one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

And, in the body of the Church, the several individuals composing the body play different roles which all work together to profit the whole body according to the manifestation of the Spirit given to each member or as Paul explains in the following verses:

1Co 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1Co 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

1Co 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

1Co 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

And, most importantly of all for the members to realize and understand, is that the roles given the different members of the body of Christ are determined by God. Men do not choose for themselves the role they will play in the body; God places them in the body as it pleases Him.

1Co 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, [as it hath pleased him](#).

The members Christ's body or Church are like the members or parts of a physical body; all have a necessary role to play which all contribute to the well being of the body.

1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

1Co 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1Co 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1Co 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

1Co 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

1Co 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1Co 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

When becoming a member of God's Church we become part of one body in which the roles assigned to the different members are determined by God and where all members of the body play an important role essential to the well being of the body regardless of how important or unimportant some role may seem to the person.

It is therefore pointless to engage in carnal-minded competition in an effort to be set in one role rather than another which we consider to be more important than our own; all roles are important.

1 Cor 12 is a call to church members to stop being dissatisfied with their current role in the body of Christ or with the level of authority given them. Converted Church members need to be careful not to become involved in heated competition for different offices in the body of Christ.

It is a temptation and a problem which would not affect only the Corinthian congregations but all congregations of God's Church throughout the ages. Paul was not writing solely for the Corinthians.

### **What about today?**

Some of you reading this study are long term members of God's Church who have seen that men's tendency, even truly converted men, to want ever more power has been evident in the days when the true Church was headed up by Mr. Armstrong.

There were several defections by ministers who left the Church and took with them the majority of their congregations. These ministers wanted to be the supreme leaders of their congregation and not have to answer to a headquarters organization. Mr. Armstrong's own son rebelled and left with brethren from several congregations to found a new Church. He thought he should be the head of the Church.

Most of us have seen men competing for positions of leadership in the Church and becoming bitter when losing out to someone else. It was not all peace and cooperation.

And after the death of Mr. Armstrong we saw the creation of several "churches of God" headed up by those who were former leaders in the Church. Oddly enough these so-called "churches of God" did not all believe nor teach the same things and, over time, gradually moved away from the fundamental beliefs of God's Church to become one of the churches of this world. They have become pitiless financial exploiters of their flocks to provide lives of luxury for themselves. Others, have

gone on to be religious leaders in one of the mainstream religions of this world as they were gifted speakers who could attract members and hold their attention thus growing the flock of tithes payers for the organization and increasing the wealth of the rulers of the organization.

God's true Church is by no means safe from its leadership becoming carnal minded and using their offices and authority to exert a type and level of control over the brethren that is contrary to Biblical teachings.

Paul warned about false prophets arising from the ordained members of God's Church (the elders) (Act20:29-30).

Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Act 20:30 Also of your own selves [this is being said about the elders of the Church] shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

There have always been leaders who acted abusively toward the brethren.

We who have been in the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God have personally witnessed such events or have personally experienced abuses of authority by the ministry.

The administration of God's government in the Church is to be as described in 1 Timothei 5:

1Ti 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren;

1Ti 5:2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

1Ti 5:3 Honour widows that are widows indeed.

1Ti 5:4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

Leaders in God's Church are to treat Church members in the same way they would treat the members of their own family. Tyrannical, angry and inconsiderate ministers are not uncommon in the organizations of men calling themselves "church of God." Their behavior should raise

many red flags in the mind of those being victimized by them but most put up with it, not wanting to miss out on escaping the ever soon-to-occur Great Tribulation.

But the main point I want to make and that I will return to here is that because of the human tendency to hoard and grow power, and exclude others from sharing in it, a Church organization once it becomes established, becomes unable to grow in knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

This is a very important understanding that explains why once an organized group of men calling itself a church becomes well established it stops growing spiritually, even if that organization is a true congregation of God's Church.

We can easily see in the Bible that the main and greatest obstacle to new knowledge and understanding coming into God's Church has been the leadership in the Church.

What do I mean?

### **Entities unto Themselves**

You will recall that Jesus came to his own, the Jews, at the time of His First Coming and that He not only was rejected by the religious elite of the time but they conspired and succeeded in having Him put to death. He was showing them up before the people as not really knowing the Scriptures as well as they said and thought they did and they could not allow Him to keep on doing so. The people were starting to lose confidence in them and they did not want to lose their positions of authority over the people and their status.

In our days, Mr. Armstrong (HWA) went to the remnant of the Sardis Era Church wanting to share with them some of the wonderful truths God had revealed to him. They refused to hear him; he was not part of their organization; he had not come up through their ranks and being approved by the leaders of the Church. Even Christ coming as a young man of thirty to one of the many offshoot Churches of God after the death of Mr. Armstrong would see Himself rejected just as much as He was the first time by Pharisees and the Sadducees. The wonderful new truths HWA had been given would have to be shared with new converts that God would call to become part of a new congregation with no ties to the congregations of the remnant Sardis Era. These new converts would become the founding members of God's Philadelphia Era Church.

## Why?

The leaders in the Church, and this applies to all churches of God through the ages as well as to religious organizations in the world, are extremely protective of their power and will not let anything or anyone put it in jeopardy.

The leaders in the Church see themselves as the guardians of the truth and are totally close-minded to listening to anyone else, especially to anyone which is not part of their own organization.

Their stance is they have all the truth and that there is no more truth to be known. The truth given the Church by Mr. Armstrong as far as they are concerned is complete for all times and there is nothing in what Mr. Armstrong taught that could be in error or need correction nor is there anything that could be added to it. This way of thinking and behaving is not solely to be found in the leadership but in just about every member of the Church.

Given this mindset, the Church has become spiritually stagnant and can only repeat over and over the truth that it has. No new truth can be given it; it would be immediately rejected as the Pharisees and the Sadducees rejected Christ, the member of Sardis rejected Mr. Armstrong and, as the Jews rejected Paul. The result is that the Jews are still waiting for Christ's First Coming, Sardis is still teaching the very limited truth that it had, Philadelphia is still teaching the truth restored to it by HWA and none of them can ever have growth in spiritual knowledge.

Yet, Bible history clearly shows that God periodically adds to the Church's storehouse of truth and He does so most of the time using men that were called straight out of the world and who have never been part of any religious organization. This is pretty well the story of the OT prophets whom God sent to Israel and who were persecuted and sometimes killed and, always, fully rejected. Their words were kept for future generations by becoming one of the books of the Bible.

The pattern is clear that in just about every instance, new truth comes into the Church through perfect strangers which God has called as His instrument. And the result is always the same; they are rejected and the truth they had is recorded to be used by others who have yet to be called and who will form the next generation of God's Church and in some cases, be the founding members of a new church era.

### **The Men God Uses**

The Bible reveals that the men God used to write the Bible and to carry out different missions on His behalf were usually called to their commission straight out of the world. They were not members of the religious elite of their days nor were they students of the Scriptures or renowned scholars recognized by the religious authorities of their days. God placed His words in their mouths, He overcame any and all of their objections that they were unworthy or unclean in some way or that they had a physical impairment of one kind or another that prevented them from carrying out the mission He had for them (Moses stuttered, Jeremiah thought of himself as being too young).

These men had not been in training for the task God wanted them to perform, they were not desperately hoping that God would use them to carry out some great mission on His behalf and they were not part of the ruling religious elite of their days. The apostle Paul who fought against Christians until God called him is an exception in that he was very active in the religion of the Jews who were the religious rulers of that time. Please note that Judaism is not God's religion; the Jews are still waiting for Christ's First Coming to occur; they rejected His teachings and put Him to death as they consider Him to have been a false prophet.

The books of the Bible for the most part were written by men who had no previous formal religious training, who were not part of the accepted religious organization of their days, they were not religious scholars and they were called straight out of the world in most cases.

The books of the Bible which are the basis of your faith were written by such men yet in God's church today, there is this strongly held belief that any growth in knowledge and understanding of the Bible can only ever come from the ordained ministry in established congregations even though there is no Biblical example of that ever having occurred. God used individuals who often were not religious and who were not students of religion but who rather were busily doing their own thing in the world as His instrument in making more information available to those constituting His Church.

Knowing this, can we see a pattern in how God does things?

Is it reasonable to believe that any new knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures will come or can only come from the religious leaders

of the former congregations of God's Church before the destruction of the corporate body of the Church after the death of Mr. Armstrong? Most if not all of them have gone on to create their own mutually exclusive groups preaching their own messages which are in conflict with those of other groups with all of them calling themselves churches of God. All these new "churches of God" are all calling themselves the one true church and they are all calling each other Laodicean and themselves Philadelphians.

Is there something wrong with this picture?

It reveals a serious misunderstanding of the truth given the Church by HWA and/or a willful disregard of it.

In their respective congregations, these so-called true ministers of God brutally enforce conformity with their teachings and do not tolerate in the least anyone questioning what they teach. They are the great teachers of truth to whom is owed the greatest of honor and respect. They exercise dictatorial control over their members and quickly punish anyone perceived as not being fully supportive of everything they do and say by excluding them from services or outright disfellowshipping them.

Is that what God's government looks like in practical application?

In 1 Tim 5 as we have seen, we have a description of God's government in action; please take the time to carefully read through this chapter and decide for yourself whether God's government is being applied in your congregation but I digress.

### **How Truth Enters the Church**

The Bible was written by men who today would find themselves as totally ignored and persecuted as they were thousands of years ago and for the very same reasons. Whenever a religious organization becomes established it becomes an entity unto itself. It refuses to listen to anyone which is not one of their own group and, who in that group, is not one of the ruling elite. Christ Himself could come to them as a young man of 30 and try to teach them truth fully provable with their Bible and they would not only refuse to hear Him but they would remove Him from their meeting and prevent Him from ever coming back.

The Pharisees rejected Christ and ultimately put Him to death. More recently, the remnant of the Sardis Church rejected Mr. Armstrong's teachings which were supported by verses from the pages of their Bible but they would not listen.

Once a church becomes established, even congregations of the God's true Church, they wall themselves off from hearing anything from anyone which does not correspond with the truth that they have received at the foundation of their organization. They always think that they have all the truth that can be had and that nothing could be added to it and especially not by someone which is not one of them. This is why God periodically has to raise up new Churches to make it possible for new truth that He has for His Church to be taught.

Sardis was left behind and a new era started with those who converted at the teachings of Mr. Armstrong. The coming Laodicean Church will also be for the greatest part an entirely different group of people as God's Philadelphia Era Church congregations are as frozen in their knowledge and understanding of the truth as was Sardis, and in all likelihood, as were all previous established church era congregations. It would seem each Church era is given truth which then becomes for those having received it the total truth that no one can add to.

However, as time and events move on, they get left behind like God's Sardis Church was and like God's Philadelphia Church is now being left behind. Those making up God's Laodicean Era Church will have knowledge and understanding that God's Philadelphia Church will not have but could have had were it not so close minded and so sure they had all the truth, In fact, if they had an attitude like the Bereans (Act 17: 10-11), they could come to know what new truth God would like to give them. But, history is against them and but for a few exceptional individuals, they will remain blind to any new knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

They will remain blind because they are afraid of being misled by false teachers or prophets and because they cannot read with understanding their Bible; men are their criterion of truth. But Christ says the elect cannot be deceived (Mat 24:24) and God praised the Bereans for having an open mind and checking out with their Bible Paul's teachings to determine if they were true or not (Act 17:10-11).

**Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.**

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

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

God complimented Ephesian Era Christians who refused to follow false apostles that had arisen (Rev 2:2) within their congregations.

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

God in the parable of the talents (Matt 25) makes it very clear that Christians do not have as an option to hide with the truth they have and refuse to consider anything else fearing they could lose the truth they have. Those doing so *lose* their salvation (Matt 25: 26-30).

Mat 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Mat 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Mat 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

Mat 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

God insists on spiritual growth in His called and chosen ones; it is not optional.

Christ is pictured as knocking at the door of Christians and hoping they will open it so that He can share with them new information.

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This is spoken to the Laodicean Era Church but like all other Church Era characteristics, they are found in Christians of all eras. Christians of all era have to keep an open mind and not reject outright anything and everything coming their way which is not exactly what they have always thought or believed. Christians are to prove all things with their Bible before rejecting them as being false like the Bereans did (Act 17:10-11). Christ nor angels will appear to you to teach you; it will be done through men as has always been the case and it will be men who are not the great and mighty in the world or in God's Church. You have no choice but to keep your eyes and ears open to new truth that may come your way. These men will mostly have been raised up straight out of the world by God and not be part of any existing religious group or congregations.

### **Be Not Many Masters**

Though God's Church is mainly made up of men whom the world considers to be the base, weak and foolish there are some which are of the wise, the mighty and the noble of the world. And we who have been members of God's Church when there was an organized corporate body of the Church have known and seen some of them, many of which held ordained offices in the Church but not always.

These were truly converted men finding themselves in positions of leadership and authority over the brethren and this placed a bigger burden on them than the non-ordained members of the Church.

What is that bigger burden they had and which all leadership position entail.

Jas 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Jas 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Then James goes on to say how it is impossible to tame the tongue which James says is: ".....an unruly evil, full of deadly poison...." (Jas 3:8)

Jas 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

One who is in a position of leadership, because of the influence that per-

son exercises over the brethren, must be extremely careful not to give offense by failing to restrain his tongue. Since no man can tame the tongue, it follows that at time individuals in ordained offices will give offense to one or more brethren and will have to make amends so as not to allow the offense to linger and possibly affect the conversion of those offended.

It is a very hard thing for men in positions of authority to humble themselves, admit they spoke wrongly and ask to be forgiven by someone who is of lower status, who has no formal authority in the Church and which the leadership in the Church consider to be the base and weak people that make up the majority of those whom God calls. Yet, it must be done so that the leadership does not become a source of discouragement which may in time cause someone to go back into the world seeing that those in authority in the church are not less abusive of those they lead than the unconverted.

This is the greater condemnation of those who would be masters, teachers or leaders in God's Church. They will inevitably sometimes give offense and will have to admit it and ask to be forgiven by those they have offended.

Not an easy thing to do and not something that someone can readily admit to having done so as not to have to apologize to those they have offended.

The ordained ministry can give offense to many and cause them to sour on God's Church and eventually leave it unless the offender makes amend. This does not always happen.

### **The Lust for Power**

In the world, most of us have seen how having been given power over others can and does have a detrimental influence on most people if not everybody. Power is said to be like strong drink; the more power one has, the greater the negative impact on their behavior as they become more and more intoxicated. They're not the same person we once knew; having power changed them and not for the better.

Power becomes an end in itself. Countless wars have been fought to determine who is to rule over whom. The battle rages on between men and women, colored people and white people, straight and gay people, the rich and the poor, political parties etc. The battle is especially fierce at the political level where men and women ruthlessly compete to get

power, stay in power and increase their power over others.

In God's Church which is made up of men called straight out of the world in most cases where lusting after power and wealth is what all were doing, we also see men competing for positions of authority.

The Bible makes it clear that God's Church is not immune from men competing with all their might against one another for such positions as deacon, elder, preaching elder, pastor and evangelist and the status, prestige, money and perks (free car, travel expense reimbursement, the prestige of the office, the respect of the non-ordained Church members etc.) that come with these offices.

Once in positions of leadership, people become very protective of their status and act in such a way as to ensure others know who is the boss. They become the gatekeepers for those seeking entry into the group and will usually only allow in newcomers who are seen as non-threatening to their own status but who are also not necessarily the most capable of exercising a leadership function.

Over time, the leadership group becomes an entity unto itself which does not see itself as necessarily constrained by the same rules as their subjects and who come to expect strongly to be treated with honor and respect as they consider befit men of their stature.

Do we have Biblical examples of such occurrences in the Church?

Let's see if we can find some.

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

3Jn 1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

Diotrephes was a member of one of the congregations of God's Church but he took it over wanting to be its leader instead of John. He spoke evil of John and his associates. He would refuse to receive them and would put out of the congregation any of its members who would. He started his own version of God's Church as we have seen happen with the many different "churches of God" that have arisen since the death of Mr. Armstrong.

Then we have the Pharisees and the Sadducees who rejected Christ and had Him ultimately put to death because they didn't want to lose their power over the people and their status as great teachers of the Scriptures.

There were men who came in among God's people saying they were apostles and by saying so thought they could become their leaders. God's people tested them, found them to be liars and did not follow them.

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Then there was Simon who by sorcery made himself to be a great one and leading men to believe he was the great power of God.

Act 8:9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

Act 8:10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

Act 8:11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

But these people he had bewitched changed over to following Philip who was preaching the things about the kingdom of God.

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Act 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Act 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

Act 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Act 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

Act 8:21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Act 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Act 8:23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Simon wanted to go back to building a group of people that would follow him. He wanted to buy from the apostles the power to lay hands on men and have them receive the holy spirit. He wanted to be a great leader over people, he wanted power.

In the days of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), ministers broke away to form their own versions of God's church and took their congregation with them. After the death of Mr. Armstrong, many new "churches of God" were created and former WCG members shopped around looking for the one which in their estimation best approximated the WCG under the leadership of HWA and began attending their services.

The lure of power, money and fame are very hard to resist when the opportunity presents itself.

### **God's Apostles and Prophets**

The Bible is the one and only sure reference point that Christians can use to discern truth from error but as we have seen God is not calling the powerful, the mighty or the noble of this world and as we will see, He also has not used them to write the Bible.

Paul in speaking to the Ephesian congregations explained to the Gentiles coming in to God's Church how they had become members of God's Church and holy temple in which God dwells.

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Of particular interest to us in these verses is that God's Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ being the chief corner stone of this spiritual building.

And who were these apostles and prophets who wrote the foundational texts of the Bible?

In many cases, it cannot be definitely determined from the Bible who wrote the different books of the Bible. Where the Bible is explicit about who was the author of a specific book we do not get a lot of information on the social standing of the writer but there are some books where this is possible and these are the ones we'll look at. Where there is no specific information provided by the Bible as to who is the author of a specific book, men have resorted to what tradition says as to who was the author or have referred to scholarly studies that suggest that the author was a certain person.

As a general rule the Bible tells us the following:

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

It also tells us, that prophecy which is the word of God written in the Bible, did not come out of men's imagination but rather it was holy men who spoke under inspiration. They had the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesmen guiding them and this is why they are "holy".

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The holy men of God who wrote the books of the Bible neither are the mighty, the famous, the noble or the wealthy of the world nor are they individuals who were particularly religious or who had an interest in things religious. They were called straight out of the world as most of us were.

The men called by God often protested that they did not have the ability to fulfill the commission God wanted to give them; they tried to avoid having to do it.

Isaiah complained that he was of unclean lips but God immediately overcame his objections by cleansing his lips (Is 6:5-8) and he went on to fulfill his commission.

Isa 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Isa 6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

Isa 6:7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Jeremiah was called by God while still very young and was reluctant to take on the task that God wanted him to do.

Jer 1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Jer 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Jer 1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

Jer 1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Jer 1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Jer 1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

Eventually he accepted his commission but Jeremiah's words were not accepted by the religious elite of the day or by the king. He was persecuted and his life made miserable even to the point of being thrown in a cistern and left to die. His words were not what they wanted to hear and the priests of that time fought against him and sought to discredit him and he was forced to flee from the king.

Jeremiah was not accepted by the priests and prophets of Jerusalem. He had a disturbing message which no one wanted to hear. He could not possibly be a true prophet from God speaking the truth. They had to get rid of him one way or another.

Jonah fled trying to avoid having to fulfill the mission given him by God.

Jon 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jon 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jon 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Ultimately, Jonah accomplished the mission given him.

As previously mentioned, Christ's disciples were not part of the religious elite of the day nor were they high level and well know government functionaries. They were just ordinary people, the little people of the world, who didn't stand out from the crowd and who were not particularly concerned with religion. These are the people God used then and uses now to confound the wise and mighty of this world and so that no man can boast that without his assistance God's plan of salvation for mankind could not have been successful.

The success of God's plan of salvation does not depend on any man.

### **Conclusion**

What can be easily deduced by examining who were the authors of the books of the Bible is that God called them straight out of the world and not from any established and widely accepted religious group and their writings were not subject to review and approval by any religious leader or committee of religious scholars. Yet, they are the ones through whom God was giving more knowledge about how His plan of salvation is being worked out including sometimes, knowledge of future events.

This is how God has been proceeding from the beginning and will continue to proceed until the end of his master plan of salvation for mankind. He will use the little people of this world to bring new knowledge

and understanding of upcoming events and increase true Christians' understanding of the Bible generally.

If you keep an open mind, use your Bible as your criterion of truth, do not get in the habit of immediately rejecting anything that you have not been taught by God's Church without first having checked it out with your Bible, then you may be one of the few who will receive new knowledge and understanding that will result in spiritual growth in your life and an improved understanding of God's plan of salvation and of upcoming events as we near the end of God's 6<sup>th</sup> day of His 7,000 year plan of salvation for mankind (a prophetic day is 1,000 years in fulfillment).

