



## Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God

By Herbert W. Armstrong

All members need to be updated on the history of the Philadelphia era of God's one original Church as founded in A.D. 31 by Jesus Christ — especially the past 15 years of its life.

Jesus Christ said that in the world His Church would have tribulations and persecutions. He did not foretell clear sailing. NO PEACEFUL EXISTENCE IN A HOSTILE WORLD. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," He said. Again in God's Word we are warned, "It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the Kingdom of God."

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). The apostle Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus that grievous wolves would enter in among them to destroy the flock, and also of their own selves some would seek to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:29-30).

Why is this so? Why has God's Church in this Philadelphia era gone through a period of friction, controversy within the Church and split-offs, with certain ministers leaving the Church to take followers after themselves during the 1970s? It was even so during the preceding Sardis era. And why has the Church withstood this controversy and even a certain amount of division in our midst and emerged into unity, harmony, oneness and thriving progress of the present?

Why did the *Los Angeles Times* recently publish a story with a full six-column headline clear across the page, saying Worldwide Church of God "Thriving on Controversy"?

These are actual events affecting our own very lives during the past 15 years. To understand, we must refresh our minds briefly on how it all first started, 6,000 years ago, at the very foundation of the world and of the human family on earth with the creation of the first man Adam.

God was beginning His greatest all-time accomplishment — to reproduce Himself. God had first created angels. The great archangel Lucifer had been placed on the throne of the earth when God created the earth and the vast universe. Lucifer had rebelled against God's government and led a third of all angels into rebellion. He became Satan the devil, and his angels became perverted demons. Then God created the first human, Adam, mortal, out of the dust of the earth, with only a physicochemical temporary existence, but offering Adam eternal God-life and opportunity to replace Satan on earth's throne. Adam also rebelled against God and His government, rejecting the tree of life, and choosing to take to himself the knowledge of good and evil, relying on himself instead of God for knowledge and the way of life.

Thereupon God closed off the tree of life (the Holy

Spirit), except for those specially called, until Christ the second Adam yet in the future should replace Satan on the throne, as the first Adam should have done.

Traditional Christianity, theologians and Bible scholars seem never to have noticed that the tree of life — which was the Holy Spirit imparting God-life — was closed to the world and still today remains closed. God had said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). "Image" refers to spiritual character; likeness refers to form and shape. God creates in dual stages. To make man in God's image means spiritual image — a spiritual being with God's perfect divine character.

But the first stage of this creation was the physical human man, mortal, having temporary physical existence. Yet in that man, God created the human spirit to empower the physical brain with intellect. This spirit gave mortal man not only physical and material intelligence and mind power, but also the capacity for good or evil, but on the human level — the carnal or selfish level. Through the symbolic tree of life God made accessible to Adam God's Holy Spirit to beget in him God-life of immortality and also the God-mind for acquiring God's spiritual knowledge and spiritual character. When God closed the tree of life He closed off from mankind this contact with God the Father, immortality, the God-mind and what the world calls "salvation."

But the second personage of the God family, the Word, gave up His divinity and was born as a human of the virgin Mary. He was God in the human flesh, both God and man, but functioning as a human man in His ministry on earth. He came to qualify, as the first Adam had failed to do, to replace Satan on the throne of the earth. He came also to call out of the world God's Church, also to qualify to sit with Him on this throne, and to qualify to teach and rule with Him as divine beings — the very firstfruits of God's harvest in reproducing Himself. He came also to ransom the world of humans from Satan, who had kidnapped all humanity. He paid this ransom price by His life's blood on the cross.

Jesus said He would build His Church. The word *church*, in the Greek language of the New Testament, is *ekklesia*, which means "called-out ones." As Jesus had to qualify for the throne by overcoming Satan, so did His Church that is to sit with Him on that throne and be given power over the nations to rule, teach and convert into the family of God.

The original Adam could have been begotten as a son of God — converted — had he taken of the tree of life. This begetting would have come through the Holy Spirit. When God closed off the tree of life, He closed off reconciliation to God the Father — that is, conversion or begetting of divine God-life. The world as a whole is still cut off to this day from that begetting, commonly spoken of by Protestants as "being saved." No such salvation is even yet available to the world. The world of traditional

Christianity is blinded to this fact.

But the Church was called out of the world, to be separate in living by God's law instead of Satan's way of self-centeredness, competition and strife, following the first Adam. That is why Jesus said the Church would be persecuted, even as He had been. Those called into the Church would live by God's way of love, not the world's way of selfishness, contention and strife. This required the presence and flowing into them of the Holy Spirit of God, giving them a different purpose in life and a different mind and attitude than formerly in the world.

Why did Christ call the Church out of the world, to be separate from the world? They were called as students. The Bible calls them disciples. The word *disciple* means student or learner. The Church was like a school, and Jesus was the original teacher. He called out of the world His 12 disciples, or students, for the very purpose of educating them to become teachers, and also rulers with and under Christ, when Jesus comes in power and glory to sit on Satan's throne over all the earth and to rule as well as to convert all nations.

To those in the Church who are growing in grace and spiritual knowledge, Jesus says He will give power over the nations to rule them — they shall sit with Him on His earthly throne, and they shall be made priests or teachers and kings and rule with Christ on the earth (Revelation 2:26-27, 3:21 and 5:10).

The Church is actually a school teaching students to become teachers and rulers in God's Kingdom.

But these students — or Church members — must first themselves be converted, begotten as children of God, having received the Holy Spirit (tree of life) that Adam rejected. Why? Because the natural-born carnal mind cannot understand the spiritual knowledge and truths of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14). Therefore God has made special provision, predestining those He calls out of the world to be called now, in the Church age, BEFORE God opens the tree of life and salvation to the world as a whole. That is why the Church is called the "firstfruits" of God's harvest for His Kingdom.

Let it be emphasized again. As Christ the second Adam came to qualify to replace Satan on earth's throne, God chose and called certain ones out of the world also to qualify to sit with Christ on that throne. This is not the time God is trying to "save the world." God's judgment day for the world has not yet come. But to those specially called for the very purpose of sitting on that throne with Christ, it was necessary that they receive the Holy Spirit before they could learn God's truth, which the first Adam had rejected. That is why the Church is only the "firstfruits" of those ultimately to receive salvation.

We receive the Holy Spirit ONLY after complete repentance of the way we were living. We must come out of this world to live a life separate from the life and ways of the world, with our minds on things of God, not things of this world.

# Philadelphia Era

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That is why we are opposed and persecuted by the world. That is why they persecuted Jesus Christ. That is why some who become somewhat interested, are baptized and start in the Church, drift back into the world and leave the Church. Many professed to repent and be baptized who had not repented, but were accepted by Church members as brethren. These false brethren did and always have entered into the Church professing to be members.

Jesus preached a definite Gospel. That and that alone is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was a Gospel message about the Kingdom of God — the begotten and finally to be born family of God — a family of divine persons, begotten and finally to be born of God.

Jesus came. He called and taught His disciples. One of the original 12 turned against Him, Judas Iscariot. Jesus taught His students. Then He died for the sins of the world and commissioned those He had taught to go into all the world and teach in all nations the same message He had taught them.

They were to baptize those who repented and believed. But Jesus Himself said plainly, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Through predestination God chooses and calls those He nominates to qualify to sit with Christ on the earth's throne when Satan is removed. At that time, beginning with the Second Coming of Christ, God will open the tree of life to everyone then living. For the previously uncalled, judgment will be on them by a resurrection from the dead after the thousand years' reign with Christ. Judgment will then have come to all who ever lived. But at the present time judgment is on the Church only (1 Peter 4:17).

After Jesus' death and resurrection He ascended to heaven to sit with God on God's throne, where He is today. Ten days after His ascension — 53 days after His death — the Holy Spirit descended and filled His disciples. That day of "firstfruits" the Church was born.

It thrived and grew amazingly, but soon opposition and persecution set in. By A.D. 51, much of the Church in Galatia had turned to another gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). A violent controversy arose over whether the Gospel to be preached was the Gospel of Christ or a gospel ABOUT Christ. The latter won out. There ensued a "lost century" in the history of the Church, from about A.D. 70 to 170. The original true Church survived, but gradually lost much of Jesus' teaching and biblical truth. By the early part of the 20th century much of God's purpose and truth had been lost — but the struggling true Church still had the name Church of God, the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath, and also tithing.

I came among the brethren of the Sardis era upon conversion from 1927. I never did become a member of that era of the Church. In 1930 a division occurred among the Oregon brethren, resulting in the formation of the Oregon Conference of the Church of God. The Sardis era of the Church had become, virtually spiritually dead. That was the beginning of a gradual transition to the Philadelphia era. I was ordained in June of 1931 — precisely a century of time cycles after the original apostles were ordained — in this transition era by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God. I continued to work with and fellowship with West Coast members of the Sardis era until 1942, when the rapidly growing work of the fledgling Philadelphia era required my full time. The present era was officially begun in October, 1933. For the next 35 years it grew steadily at the average rate of approximately 30 percent per year.

Ambassador College was founded Oct. 8, 1947, amid a life-and-death financial struggle for existence.

Ever since 1930 in the Sardis church there had been opposition and political infighting among some ministers.

In 1927 God opened my eyes to the continuing command to observe the annual Sabbaths, as well as the weekly Sabbath. None of the Sardis era brethren in the United States would accept this truth of the

annual Sabbaths, except for two or three families. As God continued to restore lost truths to His Church through me, the Sardis era brethren rejected all restored truths.

After two years of Ambassador College teaching in preparing new young ministers, the Church started its rapid growth and soon new local churches were being raised up in ever-increasing number as ministers were trained to pastor them.

The radio broadcasts, started January, 1934, continued, to bring an ever-increasing number of candidates for baptism and conversion. The end time had come. God was preparing a Church, well organized on His own pattern, to be prepared as kings and priests to reign with Christ at His coming. Beside the growth of the *Plain Truth* magazine, I was continuing to write many booklets on various important doctrines and truths. Television did not go on the air until after World War II ended in 1945. We did not go on TV until July of 1955, but discontinued it after six months. Radio broadcasting had increased greatly, and in the latter 1950s the *World Tomorrow* program was using more wattage of radio power than any program on earth. The Church was broadcasting daily, seven nights a week.

In 1960 the second Ambassador campus was started at Brickett Wood, 19 miles northwest of London, in England. My elder son, Richard David Armstrong, had become the most-loved minister in the Church, but he died as the result of a head-on automobile crash while on a baptizing trip in late July, 1958, while in his 30th year.

In 1964, the third college campus was opened at Big Sandy, Tex.

The Work of the Church was fast developing worldwide. In 1967, April 15, my beloved wife, Loma, died after a happy marriage of 50 years. It was her challenge about the Sabbath in late 1926 that had led to my conversion, and she had been an important half of my ministry.

The growth of the Church was continuing until about 1972.

In 1968 word came to me through our German Office that King Leopold III of Belgium had said he would like to meet me. I visited him at his chateau in Belgium, and a long friendship developed affectionately until his death in late September, 1983.

This led to meetings with many heads of governments of many nations until my heart failure in August, 1977. During those years the Ambassador Foundation was developing with projects in different nations in many parts of the world. I had been traveling overseas about 300 out of the 365 days a year.

Up through the 1960s, with new lost truths being continually restored to this era of God's Church, there had been little contention or opposition within the Church. But the wily Satan was not to allow this growth in harmony and peace and unity to continue without opposition. We were to learn the truth of Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed (Luke 8).

The seed sown was the Word of God — the Bible. The Word was being proclaimed over the United States, Canada, Britain, Europe and some other parts of the world. It fell on four types or classifications of people. The first and largest number were those by the wayside. They heard, but "then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." These were the millions who heard, but the truth of God's Word never sank in. There was no response from this largest number, though they did hear, at least in part.

The second group were those on the rocks, who, when they heard, were interested and received the message with joy. Many of these were baptized. But they had no root, and temporarily believed, but because they lacked depth of purpose or capacity to grow spiritually, soon dropped out.

The third group were among thorns. When they heard the message they were baptized. But the cares and interests of the world choked them. They still wanted to be like the world. They were liberals. They brought forth "no fruit to perfection."

The fourth group, smallest of all, were those on "good ground," which kept the word and came out of the world, growing spiritually in character and bibli-

cal knowledge. They brought forth "fruit with patience," in various degrees (see also Matthew 13:23).

So it has been, especially since about 1969 in God's Church.

The world looks on such events occurring in any church as evidence of corruption or wrongdoing or something wrong and reprehensible in the church. Worldly clubs, societies or churches do not generally seem to have such troubles or controversies. Satan does not bother them. They are already on his side, but Satan seeks to destroy God's one and only true Church.

Now how did these controversies, troubles or divisions occur? It's time our members knew the truth.

Late in 1971 many of our members became confused over propaganda reaching our people over a "sacred names" teaching. This purported that whenever the names of God or of Jesus are mentioned, they must not be spoken by their names in the English language, but in the Hebrew language.

In other words, we could read and discuss the Bible as translated into the English language in all terms except the names of God or of Jesus Christ. Then we must speak Hebrew.

God's name, they had come to believe, could not be spoken except in the Hebrew language. They overlooked the fact that all original copies of the New Testament were inspired by the same God through Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Greek language. In numerous instances the inspired New Testament, inspired in the Greek language, quoted Old Testament passages containing the names of God. And in every case God through the Holy Spirit used the Greek names for God and the One who became Jesus, and NOT THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

Certain ones were leaving the Church to join this false movement, being misled into believing God's Church to be in error.

At that time, it was suggested that a special Doctrinal Team be appointed to research the question more technically to verify the real truth. We wanted the teaching and doctrines of the Church to be verified beyond any room for doubts. I appointed a Doctrinal Research Committee to pursue an in-depth research of the subject.

A small few Ambassador graduates who had become ministers in the Church were somewhat scholarly inclined, especially one who had a specific problem. He suffered from an inferiority complex. Because some of our graduates at the time were enrolling in outside universities for higher degrees, a few came to conceive that a "scholar" was in the loftiest position of humanity.

If this inferiority sufferer could feel in his own mind that he was a scholar he would feel elevated above other people and therefore delivered from feelings of inferiority. He began to question some of the established doctrines of the Church of God, such as counting the day of Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, tithing and others.

Soon he was entering into what he considered a scholarly research to disprove some of the Church's basic teachings. Gradually one or two others, then even more, joined in a self-appointed "scholarly research" to disprove plain biblical truths.

It became evident that those attending other universities came to consider Ambassador College as inferior and substandard intellectually and academically because of our belief in God. Secularism and the anti-God approach of evolution seemed to them far superior to the revealed knowledge of God.

The first committee I had assigned to research the "sacred names" error did reaffirm the truth on that question beyond doubt. But soon a few would-be scholars had established themselves into a "Doctrinal Team." What started as an honest effort to find and establish real TRUTH in due time turned into a group of "would-be scholars" not appointed by me, seeking to destroy the true doctrines of the Church.

This brought controversy into the Church. These self-professed "scholars," influenced by teaching in universities in which they were enrolling for higher

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degrees, were becoming more and more liberal. They wanted to skirt as close as possible to the precipice of secularism, falling off the cliff into Satan's world.

These were the years when my commission required that I be absent from Pasadena, and traveling overseas to almost all parts of the world as many as 300 of the 365 days of the year. This liberal group, small at first, came to be in executive positions at Pasadena, surrounding and influencing the one responsible for day-to-day administration at headquarters during my absence. Much of what they did was carefully kept from me.

Those of higher rank, but subject to the one in day-to-day executive administration at Pasadena, who were steadfastly loyal to the Church and its true teachings, were suppressed or gradually removed from Pasadena and sent "into the field," pastoring single churches in other locations. So much of what was going on in Pasadena was kept from me that I did not realize the direction the Church was actually traveling into controversy, liberalism and either Protestantism or total secularism.

It was then that the matter of obtaining accreditation from the organized accreditation societies of secular education became a problem. The liberals at Pasadena wanted accreditation. They did not want to be accredited as a Bible college, but as a full competing college or university. As such the college would fall under the rules of the secular accrediting society, which would more or less determine policy and curricula.

Finally this effort on the part of the liberals increased the enrollment of the college from the approximate 500 limit that I had set to about 1,400 and going up. It was no longer God's college. I had realized the danger of a student body in excess of 500 students, in residence on campus, and had set that as a definite college policy. But during those years when I was absent from Pasadena headquarters most of the time, changes were being gradually made in college policies as well as Church doctrines.

Jesus Christ had founded this college through me as God's college. I had realized the state into which higher education had drifted into materialism. Moral and spiritual values were being overlooked almost entirely in colleges and universities. I had realized the tremendous responsibility to avoid neglecting this missing dimension in education at the time of founding Ambassador College.

From its founding I had made the slogan of the college, "Recapture True Values." The college started with the highest moral and spiritual values. It was God's college. A high moral and spiritual conduct had been vigorously taught and maintained. There was much teaching against "necking," and any sort of lovemaking among students. "Going steady" toward marriage was forbidden until the end of the first semester of the senior year. Smoking and the use of drugs were positively prohibited.

But as the liberal element gained control of the campus administration during those years of my long absences from Pasadena, the high standard of student conduct was more and more liberalized through lack of discipline or enforcement. The college was coming to be more like other college campuses.

At this juncture let me jump ahead of the sequence of events a bit to say that, after sufficient recovery from my heart failure in August of 1977, I found it necessary in 1978 to close the college at Pasadena completely (the colleges in Bricket Wood, England, and at Big Sandy had then already been closed) and to start Ambassador College in Pasadena all over again with one freshman class only, except for a few in proper attitude and character who were retained to allow them to complete their studies until graduation. Also on Aug. 21, 1981, the campus in Big Sandy was reopened.

But now back to the sequence of events.

I quote now from a memorandum by Leroy Neff, the current treasurer, who was on the first Doctrinal Research Committee and wrote concerning others on the committee. I am quoting this to give an example of

the direction some of the liberals on the doctrinal committee were taking.

1. Any marriage where the people are unconverted, or did not fully know what they were getting into, was not a valid marriage.

2. Polygamy was tacitly approved by God in Old Testament times, so multiple marriages or divorces in modern times might just be a form of polygamy by having wives sequentially rather than concurrently.

3. God divorced ancient Israel and then both parties were free to remarry.

4. The ministry should be able to loose marriages that God had joined.

These liberals wanted complete freedom in the Church for divorce and remarriage at will. Other questions raised by the liberals were complete freedom for any type marriage, some more and some less freedom from tithing, doing away with or modifying Church teachings on healing by direct prayer as in James 5:14, complete freedom for women in facial makeup, and even the approval of celebrating birthdays (never approved in the Bible) and even of voting in elections as part of the world.

On the Pasadena campus more and more friction developed between the liberals and those loyal ministers and members who held to the biblical truths God had placed in His Church. It was a sort of cold war of nerves.

It had become custom to hold an annual ministerial conference of ministers at Pasadena headquarters. In the 1974 to 1977 conferences, these meetings had been marred by controversies over doctrinal issues.

Just before the January, 1978, conference I was determined to prevent doctrinal controversy. I was also due to leave on another "round-the-world" trip. I had decided to postpone the trip until after the conference in order to keep controversy out of the conference. But the one to be left in charge in my absence urged me to remain for the opening morning session, so that I could open the conference, and keep my departure at 12 noon, and he gave me his word no doctrines would be discussed in the conference, only administrative matters.

I agreed to this. I opened the conference, left immediately for the airport and had lunch on the plane. I was going first to Japan, then across the north pole to Europe, and into western Africa before returning to Pasadena.

I had not gotten very far out over the Pacific Ocean that afternoon, until in the afternoon session of the conference a voluminous printed work called "Systematic Theology Project," or "STP" for short, was distributed to the ministry with specific instructions that this was a definite outline of basic Church doctrines, and no minister was to preach anything contrary to this treatise.

I knew absolutely nothing of this STP, or that it had been in preparation. It had been carefully concealed from me. It was a flagrant violation of the promise made to induce me to leave so this doctrinal change in Church teaching could be given to all ministers without my knowledge. I knew nothing of this STP, in spite of claims made by others, until a copy was brought to me by some loyal ministers in late April or early May of 1978 when I then notified every minister in the world to return his copy immediately and ignore all its liberal doctrines and teachings.

It has come to my attention that some of the liberals, no longer members of God's Church, have claimed that I did know of this infamous STP project. That is positively NOT TRUE. A few papers on one or two subjects, which were not liberal, had been brought to me in Tucson, Ariz., but no clear mention was made of the preparations under way for producing this STP project. None of the liberalized teachings in the STP were shown to me or approved by me at any time.

Some of these liberal ministers who worked on and produced the STP and the one who was in charge of executive administration in my absence were disestablished and others left the Church.

At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles that fall, 1978, at a Festival held by one of these split-off liberals and a few who followed, in their own Feast of Tabernacles, a conspiracy was hatched to attack and destroy the Church by the legal process of a class action law-

suit. Some six or seven liberals, former members, signed the suit against the Church. This resulted in an ex parte order by a judge. Secretly without prior notice, deputies on order of the Attorney General's office swooped down on the Church on the morning of Jan. 3, 1979. The ex parte order had been signed by a judge late the day before.

A very severe struggle for the existence and life of the Church ensued. Some months later the State dropped the case, and still later an appellate court judge issued a declaration from the bench that the lawsuit was groundless and should never have been filed. Even to this day some newspaper comments mention the false charges accusing me of misuse of millions of dollars of Church funds, but they never mention our vindication of these false charges.

However, this class action State of California lawsuit brought on by dissident members and former members did, virtually, result in a housecleaning of the liberals, malcontents and troublemakers, who were causing division in the Church of the living God. And the Church has enjoyed a most healthy development and growth in these past five years since.

Now a recap of what has happened to the Church and its work.

God had blessed His Church with an unprecedented approximate increase of 30 percent per year for 35 years. As these liberals began gaining more and more control God removed His blessing. I have often said that God blesses us as we please Him. During these liberal years in the 1970s, the income virtually stagnated. In 1974 the Church experienced a 1.6 percent decrease in income under 1973, the first negative growth in the Church's history. It fell another 4.8 percent the following year.

Since God brought me back from total heart failure, and directed me in removing these liberals, and putting the Church back on track, He has restored His blessings. Income for the Church this year will run two times the dollar volume of 1978. Income growth is allowing the Church to get the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness as never before. These physical blessings are matched by new spiritual growth and new truth added to His Church.

For 35 years the Church grew at the average rate of nearly 30 percent per year—a phenomenal and so far as I know unprecedented growth for almost any kind of organization. When I gradually started handing over the broadcasting of the *World Tomorrow* program, it was primarily radio and had grown to be by far the largest program, especially classified as religious, in the world, using more wattage of radio power than any other program.

But by 1978, it had become virtually the smallest. Meanwhile, the work had again started on TV in 1967. I had first gone on TV in June, 1955, but discontinued TV after six months. We restarted in 1967 with one or two stations, but my voice was not then heard on television. It gradually increased to about 90 stations in 1975.

During most of these years the telecasting was ineffective in getting out the real Gospel.

By 1978 we went down to about 50 stations weekly. At that period following my heart failure while in Tucson, I once again took over TV broadcasting. We held steady while I was stuck in Tucson until 1981, when I came back to headquarters at Pasadena. From that time the TV program has produced steady growth, until today we are the second in the world in the religious category, with over 300 TV stations worldwide. Hopefully we shall soon be the largest.

Since the beginning of 1985, we have averaged around 13,000 telephone responses per program. Four times this year so far we have received over 17,000 telephone responses and once over 18,000.

Now look at the facts of the *Plain Truth* circulation. From its peak worldwide circulation in 1973, during the liberal years the number of subscriptions went from 3.1 million down to just over one million in January, 1977. In 1974, funding for preaching of the Gospel in international areas was cut off because of financial crises in Pasadena. In Europe at the time, it meant the untimely end of a newsstand program that had taken two years to build across the Continent.

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Personnel from Pasadena were sent to the U.K. to cut off these funds and make reductions as part of an overall policy of making all international areas self-supporting. The result was a decline in *Plain Truth* circulations around the world.

During that period in 1975, the fine quality of *The Plain Truth* was reduced down to a tabloid, printed on cheap newsprint paper.

In 1976, I restored *The Plain Truth* to the high quality magazine standard.

It is now clearly evident that God brought me back for a vital purpose, by CPR, from death by heart failure. Had I remained dead the Church of the living God would have been virtually destroyed by the liberal element that had crept in, especially in headquarters administration during my absence from Pasadena. During those liberal years, much of what was going on in policy changing and doctrinal liberalization had been carefully kept from me.

The Church of God was being systematically liberalized, the broadcasting had gone from top to bottom in the world, and from spiritual effectiveness to almost total ineffectiveness. God says we are to judge by the fruits. During those liberal years, the Church was bearing virtually no fruit. *The Plain Truth* and publishing work also had become almost totally ineffective. Ambassador College had been destroyed as God's college. In 1978, after my "resurrection" from total heart failure, I had to completely close Ambassador College at Pasadena, starting all over again, as in 1947, with one freshman class. The colleges in England and in Texas had already been closed.

It is very evident to those led by the Holy Spirit of God that there was a very significant reason why God brought me back to life at age 85 in 1977 to once again take over the reins and remove this liberal element—to once again recapture the true values and to prepare this Philadelphia era of God's Church for the coming of Christ and the reign of the Kingdom of God.

Today the bona fide *Plain Truth* circulation is over 7.5 million.

The *Youth* magazine has gained an already large circulation nearing 200,000. The *Good News* magazine circulation is projected to reach close to one million subscribers monthly by the end of this year. The Bible Correspondence Course has been rejuvenated with a present enrollment of approximately 130,000 students worldwide.

God has revealed much vitally important new biblical truth. The Church has taken on a new spiritual vitality. Ambassador College is once again God's college and students are serving in a number of important projects in other nations around the world. Many of the important new biblical truths will be covered in the new book *Mystery of the Ages*.

Those liberals who went out or were put out of the Church through 1979 have no idea of the difference in the Church today. It is as different as white is from black or up is from down. In those years, headquarters was filled with contention, political striving for status and power. The atmosphere was rife with doctrinal disputations and contentions. There's an old saying, "When the cat's away, the mice begin to play."

While I was away from headquarters, there were strivings and contentions over policy, doctrines, not only on the headquarters campus but in many local churches. A liberal minority of members was causing contention. The membership dipped slightly since a certain number followed these liberals who left. God was weeding out these members and liberal ministers who were causing division in the Church. The contenders, the disgruntled, the liberals did not want God's government in the Church.

Speaking primarily of religious leaders, Jesus said: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matthew 7:16-17).

The "fruits" of the rebel leaders and "liberals" of the 1970s should now be clear to all. After some 35 years of steady growth in all facets of the Work of God's Church, the rate of growth began to slow, then ceased entirely in some areas, and, finally, even decreases began to be experienced in the number of radio and television stations, *Plain Truth* circulation, number of prospective members, number of co-workers, amount of income for the Work, etc.—all under

the "leadership" of the liberal element. These are well-documented facts that cannot be denied.

I want you, brethren, to think about and understand what happened to God's Church in the 1970s *lest history repeat itself!* I want you to see the "fruits" of rebelling against God's way and God's government.

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

Those liberals, who are no longer in God's Church, actually seem to be more interested in news of the Church—especially false accusations, criticisms and persecutions of enemies—than are the loyal members of the Church. It would seem the chief interest in their lives is to hear false reports, accusations and innuendos against the Church.

Daniel prophesied of our time: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10). Truly this has been a time of trying and testing. We are the firstfruits called to be students that we may become kings and priests and rule with Christ (Revelation 5:10). We in the Church are students, and we are in the time of final exams.

Little groups, splintering off, centered in Washington, D.C.; Eugene, Ore.; Tyler, Tex.; Monterey, Calif.; and other places with groups too small to mention. They are not bearing fruit for the Kingdom. They are not pleasing God or being blessed by Him. Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." They usually claim to be "branches" of the Church of God. But Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). He did not say denominations, sects, cults, branches or a church divided against itself. Rather He said a house divided against itself cannot stand. There is one true Church and one only. The apostle Paul pictured humanly self-appointed "branches" when he said to the elders of the local church at Ephesus that some of their own selves would depart to draw a following after themselves.

Paul said, "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20). How was that one body organized? Did it have one government? "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (verse 28). Verse 25 shows there should be no divisions in the body—no branches or branch organizations.

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

Notice Ephesians 4, there is only one organized church "fitly joined together and compacted" (verse 16)—compacted as if welded together into one well-organized body. And how did He organize this body? How was it governed? "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . (Ephesians 4:11-13). It is not DISunity or some other type of organization and government. Paul also said "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

A primary reason for the contentions and slowing down in the growth of the Church during the liberal years is the fact that, in our desire to hold rebellious and liberal ministers and members within our fellowship, we did not rigidly obey the command of Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Also in 1 Corinthians 5:11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

To make clear one of the reasons—if not the primary reason—for the conflict caused by the liberal ele-

ment, I quote from a Western newspaper. In an interview with a former minister, who had sought to draw away a following of members after himself, it was stated concerning this split-off church that they have "a completely different administrative structure."

The story continued to explain that they totally differ with the governmental structure of God's Church. He was quoted as saying "he also does not believe in expelling people from the church if they do not live up to its teachings." It also stated they believe "the church is where people belong to help them overcome their problems." In other words the liberal idea is to disobey God's instruction to disfellowship and avoid those who are contentious and cause division and accept members who believe and live contrary to the teachings of Christ and the Bible.

Most of the dissension of the past in the Church has been over the matter of government. The dissenters believe in a very liberal government—the way of Satan and his world. The whole purpose of the Gospel is to call those chosen by God out of this world and its ways into the ways of God. God's government is based on God's law. All government, even in the world's nations, is based on a foundation of law. A law is simply the rules of human conduct and behavior. The righteousness of God merely means righteous conduct and behavior based on the great spiritual law of God.

Christ said, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). And the apostle John also stated, "They went out from us, but they were not of us . . ." (1 John 2:19).

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

But sadly we remember that part of the responsibility is ours in not strictly heeding the admonition in Romans 16:17 to note those that cause division and avoid them. We love them all and pray for them. Some of them who have gone out from us were parents, children, brothers, sisters or close relatives to those who remain steadfast.

Meanwhile, we pray also that God will keep those of us who remain loyal, constantly steadfast, growing in grace and spiritual character and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, overcoming self, the world and Satan and enduring to the end. Pray that you, the loyal members of God's Church, remain dedicated to the Kingdom of God—which is the government of God.

Now one final reminder to the Church and all loyal ministers. If any who have gone out from this wonderful fellowship that we have in God's one and only true Church, profess repentance and wish to come back, they must now, as John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance" or prove their repentance by performance over an adequate period of time. I personally do, and hope all of our loyal members will, pray for their repentance and ultimate return.

The Church is the embryo of the coming Kingdom of God, which is the family of God. There will be no divisions in that Kingdom. There must be none in the Church.

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

And Jesus Christ will never receive any of those who have gone out to draw a following after themselves to come back and lead God's Church into Satan's liberalism. It would be no longer God's Church, even as Ambassador College was no longer God's college, and Christ had to start it all over again through me with one freshman class.

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