



Church of God-21st Century

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IDENTIFYING THE REAL “LAODICEANS”

by **Raymond F. McNair**

I wish to extend a big **“thank you”** to all who have sent letters, cards and e-mail messages, or have called to let me know that, during my recent illness, you are remembering me in your prayers. Over 400 brethren from various “Churches of God” have written assuring me that you are praying for God Almighty to restore me to health—so I can continue serving Him and His people. I appreciate your loving concern.

Many of you brethren have also mentioned that my many years of experience as an evangelist in God’s Work are badly needed in helping to guide God’s sheep during these “perilous times” of *confusion* and *division*. Sadly, in recent years, many have lost their “first love,” while others have departed from “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3-4)! Many brethren feel betrayed by the ministry!

My wife and I have also been encouraged to receive a number of calls and messages from numerous pastors of the “Churches of God,” whose congregations have graciously sent get-well cards. We have endeavored to answer all cards and letters, except those few which did not include a return address. During my recent illness, it was also encouraging to welcome a number of ministers from several “Churches of God”, who visited me in my home here in San Diego, CA. Some of them had *doctrinal issues* to discuss with me. In addition, several had requested that I assist them in *editing* some of their literature, with primary emphasis on *doctrinal accuracy!*

Some have asked that I update them concerning the state of my health. I am happy to report that my health has greatly improved. I am now able to keep a fairly normal work schedule—writing letters and articles, answering my e-mails, and spending many hours on the phone encouraging and guiding those who ask for my assistance. I am pleased to assist some of the churches leaders in this regard.

Who Are the Real “Laodiceans”

Why are many in the “Churches of God” so *confused* concerning the *true*

identity of the end-time “Laodiceans”? And why do many Church leaders insist *they* and *their people* are “the remnant of the Philadelphians,” while teaching that members of the other “Churches of God” are “lukewarm Laodiceans”?

Over 400 “churches” and religious “entities” have sprung from the Worldwide Church of God! I have often mentioned in sermons and private conversations with the brethren, that I have experienced *much sorrow* in seeing certain men attempting to *dismantle* the Worldwide Church of God. However, we must remember that Jesus Christ said He would “build” His Church and the gates of “hell” would never prevail against it (Matt. 16:18)!

Even though some have wanted to *obliterate* nearly everything Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong stood for, God has kept His Church alive, and will continue to do so! Clearly, God Almighty had a purpose in *allowing* certain ones to be in charge of the “corporate organization” of the WCG—men who would drastically subvert the doctrines of Worldwide. By permitting this to happen, God would *test* us all. He wants to know if we will hold fast to the true, biblical doctrines and traditions of the Bible as taught by God’s faithful Apostle for over half a century. Will we “endure to the very end” (Matt. 24:13)? Or, will we let God’s precious truths slip from us (Heb. 2:1-3)?

God’s End-time Church to be “Scattered”!

One of the sad things we have had to cope with in recent years is the “*scattering*” of God’s people, thereby hindering the preaching of the Gospel and feeding the flock. (Dan. 12:7). This “scattering” (KJV), or “shattering” (NKJV) of the power of the “holy people” could only happen *if* God *permitted* it. Thankfully, if anyone ever thought he could destroy the teachings which God’s Apostle taught for over 50 years, he was sadly mistaken. Nearly *everything* Mr. Armstrong ever wrote—plus many of his sermons, Bible studies, radio and TV broadcasts, and public addresses—has been preserved on various *computer websites* all over the world, and will be preserved for generations to come! But the shocking fact is that this *wholesale abandonment* of the true doctrines of the Bible, and this “scattering” of God’s sheep, has occurred primarily through the clever stratagems of those who managed to worm their way into the *physical congregations* of God’s Church (Jude 3-4). However, subsequent events prove they did *not* really *believe* what Mr. Armstrong taught through the powerful 1.5 billion pieces of literature that were published, including his final masterpiece, the *Mystery of the Ages* book.

What Problems Did the “Laodiceans” Have?

I have been greatly concerned about the tendency for some leaders of the “Churches of God” to believe *their people* comprise, not “*a* remnant,” but

“*the* remnant of the Philadelphians in the Laodicean era,” all the while claiming that brethren in other Churches of God are lukewarm “Laodiceans.” Let us notice Christ’s own words to the “Laodiceans” to see what their problems really were. Did they only have a problem with “lukewarmness”—being *laid-back* and *spiritually lax*? Or were they ensnared in numerous spiritual problems—which Christ detested, and about which He solemnly warned them: “**I know your works, that you are *neither cold nor hot***. I could wish that you were cold or hot. So... because you are *lukewarm*, I will spew you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:15-16).

But that’s not all. Christ then warns the Laodiceans: “Because you say, ‘I am *rich*, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ and do not know that you are *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*—I counsel you to buy from Me *gold* refined in the fire, that you may be *rich*, and *white garments* [God’s righteousness!], that you may be *clothed* [spiritually], that the shame of *your nakedness* may not be revealed; and *anoint your eyes* with eye salve, that you may *see* [your wretched spiritual condition]. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, **be zealous and repent**” (vv. 17-20). Jesus reveals that many of God’s people in the *last era* of His Church have these serious problems: **1) lukewarmness, 2) wretchedness and miserableness, 3) being spiritually poor** and destitute of true Christian *character*, **4) while also being spiritually blind, 5) at the same time, being spiritually naked**, that is, yet in their sins—which they don’t even *see*, much less *acknowledge* (Rev. 19:7-8).

If these complacent *Laodiceans* can’t see their *spiritual blindness*, and if that *blindness* prevents them being able to see their own *wretchedness* and *misery*, and if they don’t realize that they, in God’s eyes, are *spiritually poor* and *destitute* of Christian character, then they will remain in their sins. And if they miserably fail to see that they are *spiritually naked*—then they will continue in their wretched condition until Christ’s Second Coming, at which time they will be denied entrance into the Kingdom of God. Instead, they will be thrust aside as destitute of “*oil* [God’s Spirit] in their lamps” (Matt. 25:1-13). Unless and until *all* of us in the Churches of God come to see that without God we are **absolutely “nothing”** in His sight (John 15:5)—except as He *inspires* and *empowers* us—then we are surely standing on very dangerous ground!

God’s Church Must be Without “Spot or Wrinkle”

The 19th chapter of Revelation speaks of the coming “marriage” of the Lamb and His “bride”: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the *marriage of the Lamb* has come, and *His wife* has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). The Apostle John then says, “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in *fine linen*, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the *righteous acts* of the saints” (v. 8). At His Second Coming, Christ will “present [His Church] to Himself a *glorious church*, not having *spot or wrinkle*... but that it should be *holy* and *without blemish*” (Eph. 5:27).

Many are amazed, and turned off, to see the statements of the leaders of several “Churches of God” who boast of being the *best*, and the *most saintly*, thinking they are **the true “Philadelphians,”** while often *assuming* that those in the other “Churches of God” comprise the lukewarm **Laodiceans**, who will have to go through the “Great Tribulation”—whereas *they*, the true Philadelphians, and their flock, will be taken to a “place of safety.”

A careful study of Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34:1-31 reveals that, unfortunately many of the “shepherds” (pastors) “lord it over” God’s end-time *flock*, and have been guilty of “**scattering**” His sheep. Some of the “shepherds” living in the *modern-day* nations of “*Israel*”—primarily those of Northwest Europe and the English-speaking world—have ruled over God’s flock in an abrasive, *harsh* manner: “**Woe to the shepherds...** who feed themselves! Should not the *shepherds* feed the flock? You eat the *fat* and clothe yourselves with the *wool* [paying *themselves* handsomely].... The *weak* you have not strengthened, nor have you *healed* those who were *sick*, nor bound up the *broken*, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was *lost*; but **with force and cruelty you have ruled them.** So they were **scattered** because there was **no shepherd**”—who was sincerely concerned for the sheep of God’s pasture (Ezek. 34:2-5).

We can thank Almighty God that there are still a number of *faithful ministers* who are *truly concerned* about the welfare of the “flocks” under their supervision. Sadly, many brethren have come to me during the past few years, telling me that some ministers are indeed “*harsh taskmasters*” who have “*betrayed*” God’s sheep. They have little concern for the welfare of the *brethren*, and are *not* afraid to assassinate the character of some of God’s ministers. Just last evening, a disillusioned woman called me saying, “**We have been betrayed by the ministers!**” Are some ministers more concerned about getting a **large following**, and having a **big income** so they can shake the nations, rather than showing loving concern for God’s flock? But, as Mr. Armstrong often said, “God’s Word reveals that *Almighty God Himself*—not *puny men*—will be the One Who ‘shakes the nations’” (Isa. 2:19-21, 13:13; Hag. 2:6-7, 21; Rev. 6:12-17).

God warns those careless shepherds, “Because *you* have **pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock...**” (Ezek. 34:21-22). He then solemnly promises that He Himself will deliver *His sheep* from the clutches of those under them, often ruling over God’s sheep with “harshness” and with seemingly little or no *love* or genuine concern—all the while feigning *humility* (vv. 4-19)! Jesus Christ, the *Great Shepherd* of the flock, specifically instructed His apostles *never* to “**lord it over**” His sheep (Matt. 20:20-28)! We ministers must all remember that our brethren are “*God’s sheep*”—not *ours* (Psa. 79:13; 95:17; 100:3). The Apostle Peter tells God’s ministers to “*shepherd* [that is, “feed” KJV] the **flock of God** which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; *nor* as being **lords over those entrusted to you**, but being *examples* to the *flock*; and when the *Chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the *crown of*

glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 5:2-4)!

It is truly grievous to see that, in some cases, those who claim to be **true servants of God** have been very *judgmental* of others, and have not hesitated to *harshly criticize* their own fellow ministers and/or their wives. What does Jesus, the Judge of mankind, have to say concerning those who “*smite*” with the tongue? “But and if that *evil servant*...shall begin to *smite his fellowservants*...The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him...And shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be *weeping* and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:48-51 KJV)!

Let us Provoke Others unto “Good Works”

I urge all of us ministers to take the words of our *Chief Shepherd* very seriously, and make certain that we *never* rule over the brethren with severity. God Almighty will *not* permit “harsh taskmasters” to rule over His people in the wonderful millennial age to come. Let us remember Christ’s words, “A new commandment I give to you, that you *love one another*; as I have loved you, that you **love one another**. By this [genuine Christian *love*] all will know that you are My disciples” (John 13:34-35). And the Apostle Paul clearly tells us that even though a man may work *miracles*, preach *powerful sermons*, understand *prophecy* or have other gifts, yet if he doesn’t have Christian *charity*, that is, genuine *love*, he is “nothing” (I Cor. 13)! Paul also tells us that “... *evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse*, *deceiving* and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13)! May God Almighty and His Son help all of us to “*Test* [that is, “prove” KJV] all things; *hold fast* what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV)! Remember, we are living in very “perilous times” when “false prophets” and *deceivers* are rapidly multiplying (Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; 2 Tim. 3:13). Christ reveals that, if we aren’t vigilant, we—His own elect—could be deceived (Matt. 24:22)! We, God’s people scattered throughout the “Churches of God,” must make certain this doesn’t happen!

So many of God’s flock have been *hurt*, or have become *confused* by a flurry of “new doctrines” which are circulating among the many Churches of God fellowships. As a *senior evangelist* for over half a century, it is my God-given duty to help *awaken* those who have already gone to sleep (Matt. 25:5-6). The *midnight hour* has come! Many of God’s people need to be *roused* from their slumber. God’s Word says, “... it is high time to *awake* out of sleep” (Rom. 13:11)—“Awake, you who sleep... and Christ will give you light” (Eph. 5:14). Those who are *slumbering* must wake up before it is too late! It is my intention to do everything within my power to continue to help *re-invigorate*, *unify* and *strengthen* the *ministry* and *brethren* of the Churches of God. Surely, Jesus Christ—the Head of God’s Church—cannot be pleased with the current spiritual *drowsiness*, *confusion*, *division* and weakened *spiritual condition* of the “Churches of God” today!

Once again, brethren, I would very much appreciate your *continued prayers* that God will restore me to full health, so I can continue to serve Him and His people. I am very grateful that God has graciously allowed me to continue serving in His work for 55 years—and continues to use me in preaching His Gospel and strengthening God’s people! I intend to continue to **encourage, uplift** and **guide** as many of God’s people as I can.

God is well-pleased when we have genuine love and respect for our brethren, never looking upon ourselves as spiritually *superior*, while considering others in the “Churches of God” fellowships to be spiritually *inferior*. May the Great God continue to give all of us a sincere, unfeigned “love of the brethren”!

Sincerely, in Christ’s name,

Raymond F. McNair

A PERSONAL NOTE. Here is a brief note regarding my varied experiences in the Work of God during the past 55 years. Most of you will have become familiar with my articles in various Church publications (the *Good News*, *Plain Truth*, *Tomorrow’s World*, etc), and more recently in articles which were published in other “Church of God” publications. I have served for nearly 50 years as a *writer* and *editor*.

My appointment to serve on the WCG Doctrinal Teams. Mr. H.W. Armstrong appointed me to serve *under him* over the Headquarters Doctrinal Team in 1974, knowing that I would not introduce “liberal” doctrines into God’s Church. After Mr. Armstrong’s decease, the Pastor General who succeeded Mr. him appointed me to be over the Doctrinal Team in Pasadena; but shortly afterward, my wife and I were sent to the South Pacific to head the Work of God in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, etc. Since I would not endorse the *strange doctrines* then being seriously considered at our Pasadena Headquarters, my continued presence would have been a big obstacle in the eyes of those who planned to make sweeping doctrinal changes in the WCG.

My ordination as an Evangelist in the WCG. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong ordained me as an Evangelist—over 51 years ago. During those 51 eventful years I served as the pastor of 14 churches in the U.S., Britain and New Zealand, and in 1954-1955, I founded the Chicago Church of God, the first WCG Church east of the Mississippi River. I also served as Director of the Work of God in Britain (1958-1973).

Appointed Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador Colleges in England, and Pasadena, CA. In 1960, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong appointed me Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College, near London. Later, in 1978, Mr. Armstrong asked me to serve as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College in Pasadena, California—in order to help him put Ambassador College *back on track*. I continued serving God’s Work in that position for nearly ten years—until 2 years after Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986. I was gratified to hear him say, before his decease, that **he was very pleased to see Ambassador College back on track**. I always counted it a great honor and a fantastic privilege to work with God’s end-time Apostle for over 36 years, from the time I entered Ambassador College in 1948, until his death in 1986—approximately 36 years.

I was privileged to conduct many baptismal tours while serving in the Worldwide Church of God. In the summer of 1949, Mr. Armstrong sent Raymond Cole and me on the first student-led, nation-wide baptismal tour, during which time we baptized about 125 brethren. In the following years, I conducted *seven* more baptismal tours in the U.S. and

Canada before being sent to London, England in 1958 to take charge of God's Work in Britain, where I continued to serve the Work of Jesus Christ during the next 15 years. After arriving in London, England, I conducted several baptismal tours in the British Isles, and was later sent to Southern Africa with another minister to baptize a number of people in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and in South Africa.

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