

Eight Studies:

Ordination, Laying on of Hands, Tithing, Nicolaitans, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Teachers

August 1998

These eight studies (also known as *Iconoclastic Broadsides*) were written by an anonymous “Living Room Church of God” elder. They were originally distributed on computer disk and are “public domain”—they may be freely copied. The studies are designed to answer questions arising from the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God and the emerging of its daughter Churches and related organizations. Issues that the religious leadership prefer to ignore are made plain. These issues will not “go away” until they are addressed. The Holy Scriptures are applied to these issues. They are not interpreted to conform to a partisan viewpoint but studied to gain understanding. The author has requested that if you find these writings informative, that you please share them with others.

Table of Contents

<p>A Word on These Studies..... 2</p> <p>Author’s Personal Information..... 3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Background 3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">This “Work” 4</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Era of Confusion..... 5</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Churches Remiss 6</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Members’ Quandary 6</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Past and Future 7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Disturbing Facts..... 8</p> <p>Study #1: Ordinations 9</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Word Study: Ordain, Ordained, Ordaineth in the Old Testament..... 9</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Summary 10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Word Study: Ordain, Ordained in the New Testament 11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Summary 13</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 13</p> <p>Study #2: The Laying on of Hands 16</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Word Study on “Laying on Hands” from Strong’s Concordance 16</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Summary 19</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 20</p> <p>Study #3: Tithing 22</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Word Study of “Tithe, Tithes, Tithing” from Strong’s Concordance. 22</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Summary 24</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 25</p>	<p style="padding-left: 20px;">Exodus 6 Genealogy of the Levites..... 26</p> <p>Study #4: Who Are the Nicolaitans?..... 27</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">A Personal Reading 27</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The Doctrine of Balaam..... 28</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 29</p> <p>Study #5: What Is the Way of Cain?..... 32</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Scriptures on Cain in Both Testaments ... 32</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 34</p> <p>Study #6: Balaam..... 35</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Numbers 22-24—A Personal Reading 35</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 40</p> <p>Study #7: What Was “The Gainsaying of Korah” in Jude 11?..... 42</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Korah in the Scriptures 42</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 46</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The Machinations of Korah..... 46</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">In Perspective..... 47</p> <p>Study #8: Teachers..... 48</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Selected Scriptures on False Teachers... 48</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Comment..... 53</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Teaching from God, Selected Scriptures. 53</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Origin of False Teachers 55</p> <p>Personal Analysis: The Church of God Organizations 56</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Modus Operandi..... 56</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The Way Out 58</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Accountability 59</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">In Perspective..... 60</p>
--	---

A Word on These Studies

The object of these eight studies, placed in the public domain by our anonymous elder, is twofold: 1) to identify the nature of the idolatry foisted almost universally on the church of God, and 2) to help individual Spirit-led brethren transcend their consequent unwitting idol-worship.

That is a very difficult task, given that the idolatry consists of about 85% truth intermixed with about 15% subtle error deliberately added by Nicolaitans for the purpose of exploiting the laity. It likely prevails wherever money changes hands between the people and the religious organizations they look up to as their “Churches.” True ministers of Jesus Christ give freely; false imposter-hirelings charge very handsomely for their deceptive services—indeed, they have their reward. Religion is big business that deals in big money, contrary to Jesus’ command, “Freely you have received, freely give,” (Mat 10:8). We are to test the spirits of the prophets before we lend them our support, (1Jn 4:1). Many false ministers have run, and solicited our money, but God has not sent them, (Jer 23:21). The burden is on the individual Christian to make sure he is not backing the wrong horse and risking loss of his reward, if not his eternal salvation.

It is not mere coincidence that these studies are dedicated to the individual Christian’s need to transcend the idolatry of the Nicolaitans. Jesus’ own mission, at His first advent, was in part to preach deliverance to the captives, to preach recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the bruised—the abused, and to comfort all who mourn, (Luke 14:17-20 with Isa 61:1-2). In preaching His gospel to the poor and the meek, He addresses it to those who humbly and repentantly see

their need, not to vain and huffy, proud know-it-alls who think they already have the answers. Not to pharisaical- and Nicolaitan-types beyond the point of recovery—recovery of their sight, blind leaders of the blind.

The studies here presented are solidly based on careful readings of the cited Scriptures. The appended comments attempt to apply these lessons to ourselves practically, without violating their overall, general intent. The reader should do the same for his individual circumstances. Together may we all transcend the rank and abusive idolatries to which we have allowed ourselves to become enslaved. May we break through to deliverance, to the liberty that God’s Anointed One came to bring us, to freedom from the prisons of idolatry and idol-worship imposed on us by abusive false ministers and idolatrous, covetous false priesthoods.

These Eight Studies are very different from the confusing sermons one hears from the pulpits of the Churches of God, because they attempt to make plain the 15% error covered over by false ministers with truth. For this reason, the studies should not be rejected out of hand before one understands what they are saying. One should go over them again and articulate for oneself one’s reasons for agreeing or disagreeing, before one makes up one’s mind. They should not be rejected merely because they are different, but perhaps should be accepted for that reason. In the final analysis, one answers to one’s own informed conscience, and to one’s God, as opposed to some pharisaical false Nicolaitan and his false entrepreneurial “Work.” It has been the author’s experience that, once one opens one’s mind to accept a true understanding of the false doctrines that have been perpetrated against him or her, and boldly makes the appropriate changes in one’s life, God will continue to open up heretofore unimagined vistas of truth to one’s understanding. (See Jer 29:13)

Norman Edwards’ Comment about These Studies

These Studies strongly condemn corporate church leaders for serving themselves rather than serving the brethren. In the case of church leaders who knowingly do this, the condemnation is deserved. However, many of these leaders sincerely believe that the Eternal requires them to work in the manner that they do. They are aware of problems in their organizations, but they feel justified in remaining there from seeing fruit in the lives of members who trust Christ. The leaders are often blind to the foundational error of their organizations. As Jesus said of others practicing error “...If you were blind, you would have no sin...” (John 9:41). With the continual decline of the Worldwide Church of God and its daughter church organizations, many of these leaders are gradually beginning to see that the Eternal is **not in the organizations, but in the people.**

These *Eight Studies* do a good job of pointing out the error of these organizations, but should not be considered a judgment against **each individual minister or member** who has participated in them. Christ will judge everyone in the future (2Cor 5:10). However, those who truly want to follow Christ will not try to remain blind to error in hopes of receiving a lighter judgment. They will want to know what the Bible says about church leadership and they will want **to be or to follow** Biblical leaders. Please read and learn!

Author's Personal Information

Background

These studies were undertaken to answer disturbing questions that have arisen in the church of God upon the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) into various and sundry split-off groups and organizations that often call themselves Churches of God (COGs). They deal only incidentally with the doctrinal innovations made by Joseph W. Tkach and his associates, who will answer for themselves at a higher tribunal. It has become evident that there are problems of crisis proportion plaguing the COG organizations, and the scattered brethren who are beginning to wonder which organization is right and which ones are wrong, where they should attend services, and where to send in their tithes and offerings. These issues are by their nature confrontational and controversial, and one can't avoid stepping on some toes. All I can say is, if the shoe fits, wear it. It has not been my intention to offend any specific individual, but rather to provide some orientation for the confused and scattered brethren of God's true church, scattered abroad, the genuine body of Christ, as opposed to various corporations of dubiously-credentialed ministers who style themselves "Churches of God."

To avoid ambiguity, I have tried to use the lower case "c" when referring to the church in the biblical sense as the spiritual body of Christ, and the upper case letter in referring to formally organized corporate entities that employ the term in their official legal names. It is also my usual practice to rather bluntly call a spade a spade, though that technique may at first tend to shock certain of our tender sensibilities. This is done in the interest of pointing up meanings otherwise likely to be overlooked, and to preclude the tendency to read one's own preconceived ideas into the subject at hand. The reader is requested to withhold judgment on any topic until having thoughtfully considered the context and the cited scriptural passages. Some of the perspectives presented here come only gradually into full view.

New truths, or truths with which one happens to be unfamiliar, are often emotionally upsetting, but that is insufficient cause for rejecting them without due consideration. Sincere Christians should al-

ways follow the Spirit of truth in their hearts and minds where-ever it may lead, as long as the way is illumined by the Word of God. That has been the author's intention throughout this treatise, imperfect though it be. The Spirit of God will eventually lead us into all truth, if we continue to follow (John 16:13). But it won't always be easy.

These articles are presented from the standpoint of one who first came in contact with the WCG in the late sixties. Although I had attended church and Sunday school throughout my childhood, and had read the Bible through two or three times before ever hearing that there was a WCG, I adopted the idea that upon baptism into "God's Church" I became a mere spiritual babe, that any previous preparation was worldly and coincidental. Even a degree from a secular university counted for little or nothing by comparison to Ambassador College training. I would have to, as Mr. Armstrong put it, "unlearn" all the error I had been taught in order to learn the truth that HWA had discovered. I dutifully discounted my previous experience, insofar as I could, as part of my understanding of what repentance was, and thus yielded my mind as a sort of clean slate for the WCG to write on. I listened to the "World Tomorrow" broadcast on radio and sent in for "The Plain Truth" magazine, the booklets and reprint articles published by WCG, the old "Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course," receiving also "The Good News" and "Tomorrow's World" magazines. After nearly three years of diligent study I was accepted for baptism into the WCG, as I thought the exclusive body of Christ.

During this period I was studying and proving out of the Bible the many doctrines that Mr. Armstrong claimed to have learned through original research. I was taught that God was not a trinity, that Sunday was not the Sabbath, that the annual Holy Days portrayed the plan of God, that the identity of modern Israel was known, as opposed to that of Judah, that the New Testament did not do away with the Laws of God, and many other truths that I could prove for myself out of the Bible. Uncritically and unconsciously I made the assumption that everything taught by this work, which was said to be God's work, or "The Work," was God's truth, or "The Truth." We were taught that the WCG constituted God's work on earth for the end time. Salvation and a place of safety from the coming Great Tribulation were said to be contingent upon one's being a member in good standing of this Church. In all likelihood, according to Mr.

Armstrong's end-time scenario, based upon his nineteen year cycle theory, the Work would end in 1972, the WCG would be taken on eagles' wings to its place of safety in Petra, Jordan, and Christ would show up on schedule on the Feast of Trumpets in 1975 (see the booklet "1975 in Prophecy" by HWA).

Herbert W. Armstrong taught emphatically, up until the end of his life, that the Worldwide Church of God was God's exclusive Church, and that it constituted specifically the "Philadelphia Era" of the New Testament church of God (see *The Worldwide News*, special edition of June 24, 1985). All other Churches were only false organizations of Satan the devil. The WCG was the government of God on earth in embryo, soon to be incorporated into God's Kingdom. Any member so foolish as to leave "God's Church" would by virtue of that fact forgo salvation. To become saved, one had to yield to God's government as embodied in the WCG and docilely obey its every dictate. In effect one was expected to keep one's mouth shut and pay one's tithes and offerings to Church headquarters on a regular basis—I know, after having done this for 25 years. Noncompliance was grounds for disfellowshipment, but compliance would in all likelihood qualify one to be taken on eagle's wings to the "Place of Safety" at Petra, Jordan and escape danger as the world went to hell in the hand-basket of the Great Tribulation. WCG members were effectively locked into the "WCG cult" by these ingenious "carrot and stick" doctrines.

This scenario failed to materialize of course and variants of it continued to be bandied about by some, the date being pushed back to 1982, 1985 and even to any one of several possible future dates spaced at seven year intervals. Mr. Armstrong never explained why his scenario didn't work out. There were vague rumors that all was not well at Church headquarters in Pasadena, California. High ranking officers and others began leaving the Church or being what was known as "disfellowshipped" from the Church. This was essentially the same thing that the Catholic Church does when it excommunicates dissidents or heretics. GTA was out and then in again, and pretty soon he was out for good, and Stanley Rader was in, now suddenly an "evangelist" in the Church, even though he had never been a minister. The turmoil in the Church was ascribed to the attacks of Satan the devil who was said to be influencing several high ranking ministers to disrupt the Church of God. During the receivership crisis, we

were instructed to send our tithe money in to HWA at Tucson, Arizona. It was hard for the membership to understand how so many high ranking ministers and evangelists in "God's Church" could one day be regarded as stalwart servants of, God, and the next day be thrown out of the Church and regarded as evil instruments of Satan the devil who were now relegated to *Gehenna* fire and eternal damnation.

Having never set foot in Pasadena, California, or been directly associated in the administration of the WCG, I have no firsthand knowledge of affairs that took place in the hierarchy of the Church. It is not my purpose to attempt to set forth a history of those years in the WCG. I have read HWA's autobiography and other incidental materials about WCG, but my primary interest is in the effect the teachings of the Church have had on individual members of the church of God scattered abroad.

The recurring crises in the seventies, eighties, and on into the nineties, have made it increasingly evident that although the WCG was right in regard to many fundamental doctrines of the church that could be proven from the Word of God, it was also wrong in regard to some of its beliefs and practices in other areas, and especially in regard to its manner of Church government. It attempted to justify its practices in Church government by references to biblical examples, especially that of Moses' administration of Israel during the wanderings in the wilderness. Yet somehow this subject never received the objective and definitive treatment it deserved, and the reason is not far to seek once one sets out to research it for oneself—it has to do with power in the Church, and cash flow. It seems in retrospect, strangely enough, that WCG dealt in the truth at the same time that it was perpetuating error, the same way all other Churches do. Whether this was deliberately done or just "grown like Topsy" is not mine to judge. As HWA used to point out, however, all organizations are a reflection of the top man. It is easy to assign blame in retrospect, but there is enough blame to go around—on the leadership for perpetuating the errors and on the membership for continuing to believe in them.

This "Work"

These associated articles then are merely an attempt to help individual Christians to hold on to what was right and good about the WCG and its offshoots, and to revise and correct or dismiss what was wrong about them. They represent one per-

son's approximation of the truth of these matters as one sees it, and are not intended to be definitive doctrinal exposition on any subject. I am not sure any doctrinal treatise exists that has the last word on any subject.

These papers were originally presented on disk in the interest of economy, since on principle I do not wish to sell the truth. As a retired individual, I can afford to copy and mail disks, but not to print and mail manuscripts. The subjects covered here will never see the light of day in the established COG organizations and so need to be passed along from one informed individual to another on a kind of "multi-level" basis where nobody loses—nobody at least who has no axe to grind. The total cost to purchase, copy, and mail a disk to any address in the USA can be under one dollar if one makes up one's own mailers using poster-board. Multi-million dollar religious corporations will, by their nature, not publish the whole truth about certain topics, but independent Christians are free to do so because the truth has made them free. (John 8:32). No copyright has been procured on these studies, and anyone who wishes may copy and use or distribute them in anyway one desires: e.g., via computer, print, or audio tape. Any particular difficulties in understanding any point of doctrine may be taken up with one's local pastor, who is, of course, there to help one (isn't he?) for clarification. My sole concern is that we mutually arrive at the truth of these matters.

Neither cleric nor professional, my preference is to be known merely as a "lay person," for various personal reasons. I feel no urge to set up a commercial "Ministry" with catchy name and logo, or an advertised "Work" with a P.O. Box and covert bank and checking accounts against which one may draw at will for whatever one's personal reasons. A personal ministry, it seems to me, ought not to degenerate into a mail order business for profit. Let it rather be a giving work of faith that depends upon God to provide for His own. My feeling is that any diminution in credibility brought about by anonymity may be offset by the quality of the studies themselves—truth can stand on its own. Suffice it to say, one lives near the Chicago metropolitan area.

Era of Confusion

In recent years, thousands of members who never dreamed they would ever do such a thing have severed their ties with the WCG. They were in most cases either disfellowshipped for non-

compliance with the Church's authoritarian demands or left because of doctrinal changes introduced arbitrarily by the Church administration. Some simply outgrew the doctrinal approaches taken by these Churches. After the initial shock wears off, and they are able to take an objective view of their situation, many came to realize that they personally still believed pretty much the same doctrines they had been taught in WCG, some of which the WCG had since abandoned. They began to ask themselves, "Who moved?"

In many cases, my own included, those leaving WCG found a split-off organization that taught essentially the same doctrines that Worldwide had abandoned, and began to fellowship with them. I personally, after over two decades in WCG, associated with the Church of God, International (CGI), until the sexual harassment lawsuit was brought against that Church. It began to become apparent to me that the top leadership in these Church organizations did not really seem to believe in the doctrines they taught, at least not strongly enough to practice what they were preaching. I began to ask myself, who are these people really, and if their faith doesn't motivate them, what does? Were such entities worthy of the name "Church of God"?

The various leaders of the COG organizations all purported to be ordained ministers of Jesus Christ, but how could they all be if they were teaching conflicting doctrines? And if they were truly ministers of Jesus Christ, why did some of them at least not seem to feel obligated to follow His moral precepts? I began to realize that, COG ministers or not, men who were willing to preach false doctrines, and men who lived after the flesh, could not truly be ministers of Jesus Christ. That is why I undertook the accompanying word studies on ordination, the laying on of hands, tithing, and others. These studies proved to me that not only were these Church leaders not ordained elders at all, but that their Church organizations were not valid churches of God, as their names proclaimed. In all the years that the WCG taught doctrines to its membership, the plain truth on ordination of elders was never treated definitively, lest it upset their authoritarian apple-cart. Why the selectivity? Why not teach all of the truth, and not just part of it? Could it be that these men were cloaking themselves in a part of the truth in order to promote a personal agenda? Indeed, false ministers have done this from the days of Balaam and Simon Magus, and down to the present day.

A Bible study on tithing was undertaken in order to answer the question: If the Church of God authoritarian organizations are not legitimate churches after all, what right have they to collect tithing money from God's scattered people? This study, too, led to rather surprising results, and here also it became apparent that COG organizations have been very careful not to teach the definitive truth in regard to tithing. The scriptural truth about this subject pierces to the joints and marrow of the *raison d'être* for these organizations—they are in it to make money, though they wrap themselves in their versions of “the Truth.” An organized religion is not a church of God; it is a business that trades in its members' gullibility. Individual members of the body of Christ may be scattered sheep, but they need not remain dumb sheep. They should administer their own “tithing money” on an individual basis.

Churches Remiss

With the fragmenting of the WCG and the emergence of its various daughter organizations, many of the myths that were able to be perpetrated by the WCG may no longer be maintained. Any minister worth his salt should be able to identify and resolve these myths or false doctrines, but the silence remains deafening.

The treatment of these subjects by the COG organizations, viz. ordination of elders, the laying on of hands, and tithing, amounts to a self-serving and willful disregard of biblical truths, if not a selective suppression of them. (See Rom 1:18 in the RSV, NKJ, or NAS versions.) The following studies attempt to make plain the reasons why these and other scriptural topics are ignored in the COG organizations. Individual members should be asking the questions their ministers fail to address and requiring straight answers to them, so that all may progress toward the truth in these matters.

This is not meant to imply that all of the ministers in all of the COG organizations are knowing imposters and charlatans. Many of them are doubtless sincere, and feel that they have been doing the right things. But when their idols are broken, and they learn the plain truth about the religious organizations and deceptive masters they have been serving, they have crucial decisions to make, and their own consciences to answer to. In most cases they have been sucked into these systems the same way the rest of us have. But theirs is the greater responsibility and the more severe standard of judgment, because as teachers of others they are

required to know whereof they speak. They may not indulge themselves in the luxury of remaining ignorant of biblical truths for which Christ is going to hold them accountable in the judgment (Jas 3:1).

Members' Quandary

When we as individual members of God's church come to realize that our Church organization has gone astray, we may pause to ask, was my conversion for real? I think that we may take comfort in the fact that God looks upon the heart. If we were sincerely repentant, then He will have honored that sincerity according to His promise in Acts 2:38. Paradoxical as it may seem, a false prophet whose intention is to fleece you of your substance can lead you to conversion—read Jer 23:21-22. The individual's responsibility is to discern and follow the Word of God whenever a conflict arises between what the false teacher promotes and what the Word of God actually says, but this is a tall order for a spiritual babe. One acquires this facility gradually as one studies the Bible personally and seeks God's answers to one's spiritual questions. It is God's word that cleanses and converts one, not the preacher or organization through whom one happens to hear it, who may have personal interests extending beyond the free dissemination of the truth. One must not continue to follow any man whom one discerns to be a false teacher, as Jesus' parable warns us in Luke 6:39, even when he preaches 85% truth.

Like many others, I had to disassociate myself from the WCG as it shifted its doctrinal positions. I had to leave the CGI, in turn, when the moral caliber of its leadership was exposed. I had struck out twice on COG organizations; what was I to do next? My instinct was to affiliate with a third one, but which one? If some of the COG organizations were false, why hook up with another one that might also turn out to be false? If some of these organizations were false, what of the ministers who served them? Were they false, too? Well, at least some of them had to be—those who were teaching false doctrines, and those who lived after the flesh (Eph 5:3-7). Where was Christ's true church and His true ministry?

So what was I to do? Where was I to go? Well, I was to cling to the truth and come out of error, that is what I was to do. And why go to another COG organization? The Ethiopian eunuch went back home, all by himself, after his encounter with Philip (Acts 8:26-28, 39). I could go it alone, too, if need be, at least until I got things sorted out. In-

deed, that is what I would have to do, not knowing which COG organization was for real. Well, I'm still looking. Religious corporations that bill themselves "Churches of God" are not God's churches at all—scattered believers in Jesus Christ are God's churches. They should meet together if feasible, but often they can not. Nevertheless they can endure, and they can grow. They still have the same Bible they had before the crises developed in God's church.

What of the unified "work" that we were supposed to be doing by sending our tithe and offering money, and donations and contributions, in to a headquarters P.O. Box number in order to enhance corporate coffers and bank accounts? This is a very disturbing question, best answered by a definitive Bible study on tithing. The Church of God corporations are bureaucracies that suffer from all the inherent inefficiencies of such organizations. That is the charitable reading. The studies on the subjects of ordination and the laying on of hands show, however, that they are not legitimate. If this is true, why do they seek our tithe money? Why do their top ministers draw six figure salaries annually? What really is their primary work? Do they deal in their own tailored versions of the truth of the Bible for their own selfish ends? Let the reader decide for himself.

A Christian may keep the weekly Sabbath day by himself if need be, but what of the annual holy days? Is he not supposed to show up at commanded holy day convocations with generous offerings? If so, which convocations? WCG's? CGI's? PCG's? GCG's? UCG's? ECG's? None of the above? One can't show up at all of them and give all of them one's generous offerings, can one? Some of these organizations have proven false. What of the others? Which idol should one serve? Which has legitimate authority to require that you show up at its commanded assembly and bring your generous offering with you? One begins to wonder if this is really necessary—might it not be just as well to observe the annual Sabbaths quietly at home? Are the Old Testament feasts of the LORD, with associated monetary offerings to be donated to the religious corporations who sponsor them, truly incumbent upon the memberships of these organizations? These are logical questions, but hard ones to answer when one has been indoctrinated over the years instead of truly educated—when one has let others tell him what to do and what to think rather than thinking and deciding

for oneself. The associated Bible studies may be helpful in that regard.

Past and Future

The COG organizations have in common that they revere the memory of Herbert W. Armstrong, and the sound biblical doctrines he taught. Granted, he had a lot of doctrine right, though he had some things wrong as well. A little research shows, however, that he does not deserve to be idolized and idealized by the Church of God organizations. He had feet of clay. He seems to have suffered from the sexual aberration apparently involving his own young daughter in earlier days (see *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web* by Mr. Dave Robinson, a former associate in the WCG who found it necessary to blow the whistle on HWA). His son, leader of the CGI split-off of the WCG, appears to have had an ongoing history of "going after strange flesh" as documented in the "Ambassador Report" newsletter (op. cit. inter alia.) How many other such COG leaders there may be has not yet come to light. There is no doubt that all of us fall into sex sin on occasion as we learn to properly channel our instinctual needs and drives, but we had better not be causing others to sin by using them to gratify our own sex lusts—I doubt that such an idea would even occur to the great majority of church members. How on earth can a Church leader justify such conduct to his own conscience, much less enter the pulpit and admonish others how to live? It is all well and good for church members to be tolerant, understanding, and charitable, but it may be quite another thing for them to remain stupidly gullible.

The Churches of God, in common with the evangelical Churches, the Protestants, and the Catholics, have their central cores of belief beyond which they are reluctant to go. They are in effect frozen in their various respective doctrinaire positions like so many political parties. Any who dare stray from the reservation become suspect, off limits, dangerous. It is well and good to be conservative about doctrinal change, but the Spirit of God, Jesus said, will lead you into all truth (John 16:13). It cannot lead us into "all truth" if we fail to follow its lead. It would seem rather presumptuous of us to assume that since we already have "the Truth" that we need look no further. Our faith should on the contrary be Spirit-led, dynamic, and growing rather than static, sterile, and convoluted. The fact that a Church deals in the truth of God does not necessarily make it "God's Church."

Where are the COG corporate entities going? Down the tubes? The WCG has fragmented into many splinter groups—five or six main ones and literally dozens of minor ones. It seems to have become a cottage industry to form organizations to garner a piece of the WCG's action. They come out of the woodwork, organizations with a "Work" to do that requires your tithe and offering money to do it. Is it not high time that individual Christians wised up and took control of their own purse strings? None of the COG corporations is "God's Work." Each is its own work. They are men's businesses. When you find God's work, it will be giving freely, not soliciting your money. I look for the COG organizations to diminish as individual members educate themselves beyond the need any longer to rely upon them.

Although the order in which you read these studies is not critical, some do provide background material useful for others. The suggested order of reading is the order that they appear in this document.

Disturbing Facts

The following statements are appended at random as a sampler of ideas brought out by the accompanying Bible studies:

- Falsely ordained ministers are false ministers.
- The church of God has been engaging in idol worship.
- No rites of ordination are prescribed in the Scriptures for the church of God.
- Ministers of Jesus Christ do not solicit tithe money.
- Christians are not required to attend meetings convoked by false Church organizations.
- Spiritual gifts are given by God regardless of men's ordinations.
- Genuine Christian elders are mostly non-ordained individuals except in the sense that all Christians are ordained.
- Elders are persons mature in the faith, whether men or women.
- God has placed no price tag on His truth.
- Congregations of God's church should ordain their own elders, if any are required.
- Valid ordination of elders is a democratic process.
- Congregations of Christians should not submit to or support any so-called elder from a remote Church organization who seeks to act as their spiritual leader.
- We should submit to civil governments, but not to the governance of a body of incorporated ministers.
- Nicolaitans and Balaamites erect false priesthoods that seek ascendancy over the "laity" for the purpose of perpetuating themselves.
- Large bureaucratic organizations with massive budgets are not required in order to disseminate the truth of God.
- Religious corporations are idols in need of breaking.
- Have we not seen enough of California- and Texas-based religious corporate entities who bill themselves "Churches of God," but are not?
- The Scriptures do not support the idea of a tithing system being instituted by the church of God.
- The Levitical Priesthood in the Old Testament collected only a "tithe of the tithe" or one percent of the people's increase for the "Headquarters Work" at Jerusalem.
- False ministers turn the grace of God into license to pursue the error of Balaam and the gainsaying of Korah for monetary reward.
- Practitioners of the perverse way of Balaam earn their remuneration by making merchandise of God's people.
- True Christians are those who will follow the Spirit of God wherever it may lead—others are only nominally Christians (Rom 8:14).
- In the judgment, false ministers will not be permitted to plead ignorance of the word of God.
- It is a lot easier to learn error than it is to straighten it out later.

Study #1: Ordinations

Word Study: Ordain, Ordained, Ordaineth in the Old Testament

See Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* for full information.

Num 28:6 It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. (KJV) 6213 Heb. *asah*—to do or make [established].

Sacrifices of the morning and evening lambs were ordained or established by the LORD's commands at Sinai. The same word is used in 1 Kings 12:32 where Jeroboam establishes a pagan festival in Israel.

1Kngs 12:32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. (KJV) 6213 Heb. *asah*—as above [established].

Jeroboam ordains or establishes a pagan feast in Israel.

2Kngs 23:5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. (KJV) 5414 Heb. *nathan*—to give, put, make, appoint or establish [appointed].

Josiah here kicked out the pagan priests who had been ordained or appointed by the former kings of Judah.

1Chr 9:22 All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. (KJV) 3245 Heb. *yacad*—to set, to found, establish [establish].

Here and in Pslm 8:2 the same Hebrew word is used; in this passage Levite porters are established in their offices by David and Samuel according to their genealogical descent from Korah.

1Chr 17:9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither

shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning, (KJV) 7760 Heb. *soom* or *seem*, to put, appoint [establish].

God promises to establish a land wherein he will plant the people of Israel.

2Chr 11:15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. (KJV) 5975 Heb. *amad*—to stand, appoint, establish [appointed].

Jeroboam ordains or establishes his false priests to administer the false religion he institutes in Israel, an idolatrous prototype since often patterned upon. These false priests may have been in fact mediums through whom the evil spirits of the calf-idols taught false doctrines.

2Chr 23:18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. (KJV)

The word is not in the original text.

2Chr 29:27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. (KJV)

The word is not in the original text.

Esth 9:27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; (KJV) 6965 Heb. *koom*—to decree, establish [established].

The Jewish feast of Purim is ordained or established to commemorate the Jew's deliverance from the plot of Haman.

Pslm 7:13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. (KJV) 6466 Heb. *paal*—to make [wrought].

God has ordained, made, or wrought the arrows He will use against His adversaries in the Day of the LORD.

Pslm 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. (KJV) 3245 Heb. *yacad*—as above [perfected].

Strength was ordained, or "praise perfected" as it is translated in Mat 21:16, out of the mouths of babes rather than of the high and the mighty. Their

strength derives from their motivating Power from on High.

Pslm 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained...(KJV) 3559 Heb. *koon*—to set up, establish, prepare [established].

God has ordained or established the order of the heavens as it has pleased Him.

Pslm 81:5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. (KJV) 7760 Heb. *soom* or *seem*—as above [established].

The Psalmist reminds Israel that God's laws were ordained in Israel when they came out of Egypt, but they would not obey.

Pslm 132:17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. (KJV) 6186 Heb. *arak*—to arrange, put in order, set, prepare [prepared].

The lamp is symbolic of the law of God which He prepared to illumine David's pathway, and ours as well.

Isa 26:12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. (KJV) 8239 Heb. *shaphath*—to locate, establish, bring [establish].

The LORD will ordain or establish peace for His people Israel.

Isa 30:33 For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. (KJV) 6186 Heb. *arak*—as above [prepared].

God has ordained or prepared the fires of Tophet for the destruction of the kings that invade the land of Israel.

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. (KJV) 5414 Heb. *nathan*—as above [appointed].

Jeremiah was ordained or appointed a prophet by God before his birth, while still in the womb of his mother—where were here ordination by laying on of hands?

Dan 2:24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. (KJV) (4483 Chald. *mena*—to count, number, ap-

point, set [appoint]).

Arioch was ordained or appointed executioner in charge of killing the wise men of Babylon, who failed to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Hab 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. (KJV) 7760 Heb. *soom* or *seem*—as above [established].

This prophecy is against the Chaldeans whom God has appointed for destruction and established for correction when they come against His people.

Summary

In the Old Testament "ordain" is usually used in the sense of to establish, to appoint, to make, or to prepare. Lambs are ordained as sacrifices. Jeroboam ordains a prototypical idolatry in Israel. Pagan priests are ordained by the kings of Judah. Jeremiah is ordained a prophet by God from the womb. David and Samuel ordain the Levitical descendants of Korah as porters. God ordains praise out of the mouths of babes. God ordains a land in which He will plant His people Israel. God ordains His Law when Israel comes out of Egypt. Chaldean and Assyrian invaders of Israel are ordained for destruction. Jeroboam ordains a false priesthood to administer his corrupted religion in Israel. In the days of Esther, the Jews ordain the feast of Purim to commemorate their deliverance from the plot of Haman for their extermination. God ordains the arrows He will use against His enemies in the last days. God ordains the arrangement of the heavenly bodies. God ordains a lamp for his anointed. God ordains the fires of Tophet for his enemies. God ordains peace for His people. Nebuchadnezzar ordains a chief executioner to execute the wise men of Babylon.

Comment

One of the most interesting aspects of ordination as used in the Old Testament is that it disappoints our expectation of finding God's ministers, priests, or prophets being ordained by the laying on of men's hands. Neither does the Old Testament indicate that the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts are transferred by a rite of ordination.

The only priests said to be ordained in the Old Testament are the idolatrous pagan priests ordained by the kings of Judah in 2 Kings 23:5, and the pagan priests ordained for his high places, demons, and idols by Jeroboam. The clear implication is

that these false priesthoods functioned in part as mediums through whom demons taught deceptive false doctrines to Israel. (See 1Kngs 12:32 and 2Chr 11:15.) Satan and his demons are no less active in our sophisticated and blase' scientific era than they were in ancient times. John shows us that they speak through deceptive false prophets (1Jn 4:1).

The only prophet in the Old Testament who is said to be ordained is the prophet Jeremiah, ordained or appointed by God while yet in his mother's womb.

It is interesting to note that Levitical porters are ordained by David and Samuel, but the Levitical priests are not mentioned.

The only ordained person mentioned by name in the Old Testament, other than Jeremiah, was Arioch, appointed as Nebuchadnezzar's chief executioner.

It seems evident that the rite of ordination as practiced in the Christian Churches is not derived from the Old Testament Scriptures. Interestingly enough, the only ministers or priests ordained by men in the Old Testament were those of the false pagan or corrupted religions of Judah and Israel. Jeremiah, the ordained prophet of God, was not ordained by the interposition of men's hands, as practiced in modern Churches, but was ordained by God from the womb.

Word Study: Ordain, Ordained in the New Testament

See Zodhiades, *The Complete Word Study New Testament*.

Mark 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, (KJV) 4160 Gr. *poieo*—to make or do [chose].

This verse and John 15:16 relate that Jesus ordained, chose, or selected twelve disciples, to become apostles.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (KJV) 5087 Gr. *tithemi*—to place, put, settle [chose].

Here again, Jesus chose twelve disciples to train for apostleship.

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. (KJV) 1096 Gr. *ginomai*—to cause to

be, become [chosen, selected]

One from among the hundred and twenty assembled had to be ordained or elected as a witness, to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

Acts 10:42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (KJV) 3724 Gr. *horizo*—to appoint, declare, determine [appointed].

Christ has been ordained or selected or appointed of God to be the Judge of all.

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the LORD: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (KJV) 5021 Gr. *tasso, tatto*—to arrange, assign, dispose, appoint [appointed].

Christians are ordained or appointed unto eternal life.

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the LORD, on whom they believed. (KJV) 5500 Gr. *cheirotoneo*—to select, appoint, choose [appointed].

Paul and Barnabas ordained, selected, chose elders in every local church in the region of Galatia.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. (KJV) 2919 Gr. *krino*—to distinguish, decide, try, condemn, call in question [approved].

In Acts 15 the church at Jerusalem had arrived at four principles that Gentile converts should be careful to observe, which are probably the ordained or approved decrees referred to here.

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (KJV) 3724 Gr. *horizo*—as above [appointed].

Christ is ordained or appointed by God as Judge of the world as evidenced by His resurrection from the dead.

Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (KJV) The word is not in the original text.

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (KJV) 5021 Gr. *tasso, tatto*—as above [appointed].

Secular powers or governments of men are ordained or appointed by God to maintain an orderly

and peaceful society.

1Cor 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

(KJV) 4309 Gr. *proorizo*—to limit in advance, determine before, predestinate [predetermined]. God has ordained or predetermined His plan from the beginning.

1Cor 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the LORD hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. (KJV) 1299 Gr. *diatasso*—to appoint, command, give, set in order, institute, prescribe [appointed].

Paul ordains or prescribes that men should continue in the occupations they pursued before conversion.

1Cor 9:14 Even so hath the LORD ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (KJV) 1299 Gr. *diatasso*—as above [prescribed].

God has ordained or prescribed that preachers of the Gospel are “worthy of their hire,” and should receive compensation for the work that they do (1Tim 2:7), that is, those whom He has sent, not those who ran but were not sent (Jer 23:21).

Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (KJV) 1299 Gr. *diatasso*—as above [given].

This is a difficult scripture (compare with Acts 7:53). Stephen confronts the Jews who had “received the law by the disposition of angels.” In Heb 2:2 “the word spoken by angels was steadfast.” Moses says in Deut 33:2 “The LORD...came with ten thousand of his saints [angels].” The sense seems to be that God ordained or delivered his laws using various of the angels as His agents.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV) 4282 Gr. *proetoimazo*—ordain before, prepare before [predetermined].

As new creatures in Christ, God has predetermined that we are to do good works as a way of life.

1Tim 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. (KJV) 5087 Gr. *tithemi*—to place, put, settle [appointed].

A paraphrase might be, “Unto Christ am I ordained or appointed [by the will of God] a

preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” In contrast to false apostles, Paul did not lie about his ordination.

Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (KJV) 2525 Gr. *kathistemi*—to appoint, be, conduct, make [appoint]. Note that the word “appointed” in this verse is the Greek *diatasso* elsewhere translated “ordain.”

Titus was to ordain or appoint elders in the churches as he had himself been appointed or ordained by Paul. The procedure is not described in this passage.

Heb 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: (KJV) 2525 Gr. *kathistemi*—as above [appointed].

High priests are ordained or appointed to mediate between men and God. Re: Ex 40, Lev 8, and Num 3.

Heb 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. (KJV) 2525 Gr. *kathistemi*—as above [appointed].

High priests are ordained or appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. The Levitical priests were divinely ordained or appointed by genealogical descent. Re: Num 3.

Heb 9:6 Now when [the tabernacle and its furniture] were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, according to the service of God. (KJV) 2680 Gr. *kataskueazo*—build, make, prepare [prepared].

The tabernacle was ordained or prepared in such a manner that the priests might enter the holy place, but not the holiest place. See Ex 40. The tabernacle complex and the Levitical priests were hallowed and consecrated by anointing and by sprinkling with blood and oil, seemingly as a sign of their dedication to the service of God.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our LORD Jesus Christ. (KJV) 4270 Gr. *prographo*—to write previously, evidently set forth, write aforetime, with 3819 Gr. *palai*—formerly, a great while ago, of old [predetermined].

Jude goes on to characterize these false ministers in one of the most eloquent and impassioned scriptures in the Bible. False ministers turn grace into license to pursue the error of Balaam for re-

ward, or for money (v. 11, 2Pet 2:1,3). These ungodly imposters of whom Peter and Jude write are not motivated by the Spirit of God (Jude 19).

Summary

In Mark 3:14 and John 15:16, Jesus ordains or chooses twelve disciples to be trained for apostleship. In Acts chapter one, Matthias is ordained or chosen from among the assembly of the hundred and twenty to take Judas Iscariot's place as an apostle. Christ is ordained or chosen by the Father to be Judge of all, as evidenced by His resurrection from the dead. Christian believers are ordained or appointed by God to receive eternal life. Paul and Barnabas ordain elders in every church in Galatia. Titus ordains elders in the churches on Crete. The procedure used to ordain elders is not described in Acts 14 or in the Epistle to Titus, chapter one. Decrees for the conduct of gentile believers are ordained or approved by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Secular powers are ordained or approved by God. The hidden wisdom of God was ordained or predetermined by God from the beginning. Paul ordains or prescribes that converts continue in the occupations they pursued prior to conversion. God ordains or prescribes that those sent forth to preach the Gospel should receive payment for their work. The Law of Moses was ordained or established by angels acting as agents for God. God has foreordained or predetermined that new creatures in Christ, or Christians, should pursue good works as a way of life. Paul is ordained or appointed an apostle by Christ's calling. The Levitical high priests were ordained or appointed by God through genealogical descent. The tabernacle in the wilderness was ordained or established by the commandment of God. False ministers of Christ are ordained or appointed for destruction.

Comment

In the New Testament, "ordain" is used in the sense of to choose, to appoint, to approve, to determine, to prescribe, or to establish.

Jesus Christ is ordained by the Father to be the Judge of the quick and the dead in the resurrection. Christ's ordination or appointment by the Father, as proven by His resurrection from the dead, is that to which the apostles were called to testify, Acts 10:42, 17:31. The Twelve Apostles were ordained or chosen personally by Jesus, John 15:16. After Judas Iscariot disqualified himself as an ordained apostle of Christ, Matthias was ordained to take his place.

The account of Matthias' ordination as an apostle in Acts one is the only specific description of a man's ordination in the New Testament, Acts 1:13-26. Note that throughout this passage of Scripture the pronoun "they" refers back to the eleven apostles and the disciples who assembled together with them, one hundred and twenty in number. It is they who appointed the two candidates in verse 23, and they who gave forth their lots to ordain or choose Matthias in verse 26. This is the democratic process as opposed to an arbitrary ordination or appointment by an established authority figure or chief apostle. It is also noteworthy that, although the eleven apostles are present at this ordination, no mention is made of their laying of hands on Matthias. See the related study on the laying on of hands.

Individual gentile believers, and all Christians, are divinely ordained or chosen for eternal life, Acts 13:48. They are to walk in the good works ordained or appointed for them by God, Eph 2:10.

In the New Testament, elders, in the plural, are ordained in the local churches, which would seem to indicate that they are elected by the assembly much as Matthias was ordained in Acts one. Nowhere is it indicated that elders are appointed by a central headquarters and then assigned to local churches, as practiced in modern Christian Churches. Paul and Barnabas, or Titus, may have effected their ordinations by chairing democratic assemblies who elected their own elders, to which they gave their approval, somewhat as James seems to have done in Acts 15. Since a procedure for ordination is not described in Acts 14 or Titus one, it is not necessary to assume that these ordinations were done by authoritative appointment by either Titus or the apostles.

The word "elder" in the above cited two passages is the Greek *presbuteros*—older, a senior, a Sanhedrin, member of the celestial council, old; compare this to the Greek *presbutos*—an old man, and *presbutis*—an aged woman. In Judaism the term was applied to a member of the Sanhedrin, mature religionists and experts in the Jewish law. The word properly means an older person. There may be any number of older persons in a given congregation. There is no basis for assuming that elders must all be ordained persons. Neither must we make the assumption that all elders need be men. When the scriptures cited say they "ordained elders" in the individual local churches, the sense is that individual Christians older in the faith were elected from among the elders of the congregation

to serve in a capacity determined by their gifts or abilities. We need not assume that they were appointed to an official position called “elder” within a hierarchy of such “elders.” They were ordained, or elected, to enlist their abilities or gifts on behalf of the local congregation, whose object was to attain to salvation and to help others attain it also, which is the essence of the Great Commission.

Decrees were ordained or approved by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for the guidance of gentile converts, Acts 16:4. In Acts 15:1-20 the so-called Jerusalem conference is described. This is not a Ministerial Conference of church officials, as is often carelessly assumed. In actuality, Paul and Barnabas, in company with others from the church at Antioch, journeyed to Jerusalem and met in assembly with the Jerusalem church, verse four, including the apostles and elders. In verse seven, Peter addresses the “men and brethren” of the assembly, and in verse 12 “all the multitude” kept silence while attending to what Paul and Barnabas had to say. Note that in verse 13 it says, “And after they [the assembly or multitude] had held their peace...” This implies that after Peter, Paul, and Barnabas had had their say, they had not “held their peace” but had engaged in a discussion of the issues at hand. When the discussion period was over, James, as chairman of the assembly, gave his summary of what had been agreed upon or ordained by the assembly, including of course the apostles and elders. This meeting or conference was conducted by the democratic process in an orderly manner, as was the meeting in Acts chapter one where the election of Matthias took place.

Apostles ordained to preach the Gospel were entitled to accept support from the churches to maintain their ministries. There is no indication in these passages that elders in local churches received payment for their services, though expenses may have been the church’s responsibility. The paid professional elder seems not to be a New Testament concept. The Twelve Apostles were ordained to be eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection, therefore there can be no modern apostles in that sense. It would be a very audacious person indeed who would claim to be a latter day Apostle of Jesus Christ, yet some have done so.

The wisdom of God was ordained or predetermined before the world was. The Law of God was ordained in the time of Moses by angels acting on behalf of God.

Jude speaks of the ordination or appointment to condemnation of imposters who pose as true min-

isters of Christ. These seek power and money, and are noted for their speaking ability, mentioned several times in Jude. These are false ministers who have had the temerity to insinuate themselves into positions of advantage in the church of God. Such men are known to God, and ordained or predetermined for destruction. Since they creep in unawares and are gifted speakers, whose heresies are not immediately apparent, they are not easily distinguishable by the brethren, whom they regard as the “laity,” but Jesus assures us that in time their fruits will make them known, Mat 7:16. We will find them, of course, where money and power are concentrated.

The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ was ordained by God the Father. He in turn chose or ordained the Twelve Apostles. We find that Paul was ordained an apostle by the calling of God.

When Matthias was ordained an apostle to replace Judas, it was not done by a unilateral authoritative appointment by the laying on of the hands of a chief apostle or of a group of church elders, but seems rather to have been a democratic election by the assembly of the hundred and twenty disciples, the apostles included. Valid ordination seems always to be either election by God or by a group of Spirit-led believers, but never appointment by human authority.

Elders were ordained in local church congregations. In the absence of descriptions of the manner in which ordination was done, we may logically assume they would have followed a procedure much like that outlined in Acts one. Such ordinations were probably in effect work assignments that expired upon completion of the job rather than permanent salaried positions.

Careful reading of Acts 15 shows that it is describing the democratic process in action as the problems of gentile converts are discussed and a consensus of opinion arrived at in regard to them. James summarizes their decisions before the assembly disbands.

Individual Christians are ordained or appointed by God for eternal life, not by men. They receive the Holy Spirit, but not by the necessary interposition of men’s hands, as shown in Acts 10:44-48.

In modern Christian Churches rites of ordination are practiced wherein inductees are called forward, hands are laid on them, they are prayed over, and then declared to have been ordained “elder” or to have been raised in rank and ordained into a higher Church office. In this manner they erect a hierarchy or gradation of Church officers.

Congregations have no role in these rites of ordination, other than that of spectators. The difficulty with this practice is that there is no scriptural basis for it, and therefore no authority for it in the Bible. Neither do the Scriptures substantiate the erection of authoritative bureaucratic hierarchies of such ranked “elders” headed up by a chief “apostle” at a remote church headquarters. These ideas are carelessly, or perhaps not always so carelessly, read into the New Testament, but in reality they are not there.

In the New Testament the only ordinations of elders are those done in the local churches. No instance is mentioned of an elder ordained at a Church headquarters and then sent out to pastor a local congregation in a remote area. The wording in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 says that elders, more than one, are ordained in each of the local churches. Neither the apostles Paul and Barnabas nor Titus appointed one man to assume authority over a local church, but rather two or more individuals were elected as ordained elders in each of the local churches in Galatia and on the island of Crete. They were not appointed to lord it over the congregation but to participate with the brethren in their common cooperative endeavor. Note, for example, that there were three or more elders who were serving in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17,25).

There is no instance in the New Testament where ordination of elders is specifically equated with a rite of the laying on of hands. This seems to have been done for blessings, dedications, healings or to symbolize the receiving of the Holy Spirit by believers, but not for ordaining elders. Were the laying on of hands a part of the ordination procedure, surely Peter or others of the eleven apostles would have used it in the ordination of Matthias. We read rather of a democratic election of Matthias by the assembly.

It would appear that the Churches of God should re-examine their beliefs and practices re-

garding ordination of elders as well as their administrative practices concerning Church government, or “governance,” as some now prefer to call it. Study shows that local churches need not be governed by remote centralized Church authorities as the Churches of God have traditionally assumed. The New Testament examples seem rather to show that local church assemblies governed themselves by the democratic process. And why would a body of praying, Spirit-led believers in a local church congregation in assembly not be capable of arriving at a consensus that would reflect the will of God?

There is no instance in the Bible of a prophet of God being ordained to an office in a hierarchical structure of priests or elders by the laying on of men’s hands. Prophecy is a gift of God and not a Church office. Jeremiah was ordained a prophet of God from the womb. The other gifts of God, listed in 1Cor 12 and Eph 4, are bestowed at God’s discretion on whomever He will without regard to the interposition of men’s hands in a presumptuous rite of ordination. There is no rite of ordination as such to be found in the pages of Holy Scripture. The practice may have been adopted into the Roman Church from one of the pagan priesthoods in the First or Second Centuries, but that is beyond the scope of this inquiry. It should be instructive to note, however, that the only religious ordinations done specifically by human authority in the Holy Scriptures were ordinations of the idolatrous priesthood of the high places of Baal in Judah (2Kngs 12:32) and the priesthood of the calf idols erected in Israel by Jeroboam (2Chr 11:15). One may well wonder whether idolatry in modern Church organizations is all that much different today from the pagan idolatry of ancient Israel and Judah? Perhaps they were as deceived as we, and as fully adept as we at rationalizing to themselves the idolatry they elected to espouse, urged on and encouraged by their falsely ordained teachers.

Study #2: The Laying on of Hands

Word Study on "Laying on Hands" from Strong's Concordance

Gen 48:14-16 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. (KJV)

Jacob laid his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh when he conferred the birthright blessings of the Abrahamic covenant upon Joseph and his descendants. In previous instances where the blessings were transferred laying on of hands was not used.

Ex 29:1 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish, (KJV) Ex 29:10 And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. (KJV) Ex 29:15 Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. (KJV) Ex 29:19 And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. (KJV)

The commands here issued to Moses were carried out in Lev 8.

Lev 4:13-15 And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; 14 When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation. 15 And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the LORD: and the bullock shall be killed before the LORD. (KJV)

The laying on of hands was used to symbolically transfer the guilt of Israel to the bullock of-

fered in their stead.

Lev 8:14 And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering. (KJV)

Lev 8:18 And he brought the ram for the burnt offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram. (KJV) Lev 8:22 And he brought the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram. (KJV)

Three sacrificial animals, a bullock and two rams, as commanded in Ex 29, were sacrificed by Moses after Aaron and his sons had laid hands on them, symbolizing their purification by transfer of their sins to the animals, so that they might serve before the LORD as His priests.

Lev 16:21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: (KJV)

Here Aaron, acting on behalf of God, places the sins of the of the people symbolically upon the head of the live goat by the laying on of his hands.

Lev 24:14 Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. (KJV)

This laying on of hands symbolized that the man's sin rested upon his own head.

Num 8:9-12 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: 10 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: 11 And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. 12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. (KJV)

Laying on of hands is done twice in this passage. The people laid hands upon the Levites, that is the entire tribe of Levi, to symbolize their commission as servants of the LORD. The Levites in turn laid their hands upon the bullocks as a symbolic atonement for their sins.

Num 27:18-23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is

the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; 19 And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. 20 And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. 22 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: 23 And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses. (KJV)

Moses laid his hands upon Joshua, a man in whom was the Spirit, to give him a charge, and some of his own honor to carry it out. This was his commission to lead the people into the Promised Land.

Josh 18:7 But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them. (KJV)

The priesthood is the Levites' inheritance, much as Judah's inheritance was the scepter and Joseph's the birthright.

Deut 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. (KJV)

In Num 27:18 it says that Joshua was a man in whom was the Spirit before Moses laid hands upon him. The laying on of hands was done to symbolize his charge or commission to lead the people.

2Chr 22:10 But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. (KJV)

2Chr 23:13-15 And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason. 14 Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the

priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. 15 So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there. (KJV)

In this instance the laying on of hands means that they apprehended Athaliah and brought her to execution for her crimes.

2Chr 29:23 And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them: (KJV)

These were among the sacrifices made by the priests when Hezekiah sanctified the House of the LORD.

Mat 19:13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. (KJV)

Mat 19:14-15 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence. (KJV)

Parents had brought their little children and asked Jesus to lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples thought this was a nuisance, but Jesus corrected them and did as He was requested.

Mark 5:23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

(KJV) Mark 5:38-42 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. (KJV)

Jesus raised her from the dead. He did not lay hands upon her as Jairus had requested, but took her by the hand and spoke to her.

Mark 8:23-25 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man

clearly. (KJV)

Jesus used hands when healing. Here again he took the person by the hand. He likely placed his hands over the man's eyes, on the eyelids, forehead, and temple area as He healed him.

Mark 16:15-18 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (KJV)

Jesus tells us that laying on of hands by believers in Him may be used for healing of the sick.

Luke 4:40-41 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. (KJV)

Jesus healed and cast out demons by laying hands on the sick.

The demons knew he was Christ the Son of God.

Luke 13:10-16 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. 15 The LORD then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? 16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? (KJV)

Jesus laid hands upon the woman and cast the spirit or demon of infirmity out of her on the Sabbath day. This healing was effected by casting out a demon who was distressing her.

Acts 6:1-6 And in those days, when the number

of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. (KJV)

These seven men were "looked out," or elected by the assembly of believers, and the apostles laid hands upon them after prayer. These men were full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom before hands were laid on them, v.3. The laying on of the apostles' hands symbolized their appointment to the task of looking after the widows. This is often viewed as "ordination of deacons," but it was not.

Acts 8:14-20 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the LORD Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 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. (KJV)

In answer to prayer these believers were given the Holy Spirit, v.15,17. Laying on of hands was a symbol of receiving the Holy Spirit. Simon the sorcerer thought the Holy Spirit was transferable by the laying on of hands, and wanted to buy this power.

Acts 13:1-4 1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the LORD, and fasted, the Holy

Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (KJV)

The laying on of hands symbolized the separation of Paul and Barnabas to get on with their commission to the gentiles.

Acts 19:1-7 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the LORD Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve. (KJV)

Compare this to Acts 2:38. Upon repentance and baptism believers are promised that they will receive the Holy Spirit. Two baptisms are mentioned, John's and Jesus'. John's was with water unto repentance. Now they receive Jesus' promised baptism of the Holy Spirit as well.

1Tim 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (KJV) 4244 Gr. *presbuterion*—a word used to refer to the council of the Sanhedrin, or simply to elders [elders].

Elders had laid hands on Timothy and he had received the Holy Spirit, much as had occurred in Samaria, Acts 8, when the apostles laid their hands on the believers there. We need not assume that these elders were all ordained persons or church officials.

1Tim 5:21-23 I charge thee before God, and the LORD Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. 22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. 23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. (KJV)

Paul advises Timothy to make sure of a person's sincerity before laying hands upon him.

2Tim 1:6-7 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. 7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (KJV)

Paul had been among the elders who laid hands upon Timothy for his receiving of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God, Power from on high.

Heb 6:1-2 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

The laying on of hands is a foundational principle of the doctrine of Christ. Jesus used it for healings and blessings, and the apostles used it as a symbol of the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the Samaritans, and to confirm the commission of the seven elected to serve the widows.

Summary

When the birthright promises were conferred upon Ephraim and Manasseh, the transfer was accompanied by the laying on of Jacob's hands. In Ex 29 and Lev 8 Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the sacrificial animals before Moses kills them. If the entire nation of Israel sinned, transfer of their guilt could be made by their elders laying their hands upon a sacrificial bullock before it was killed. On the Day of Atonement the sins of the people were placed upon the head of the Azazel goat by the laying on of Aaron's hands. When the blasphemer of God was stoned, hands were laid on him by the witnesses, indicating his guilt was on his own head. All Israel laid their hands on the tribe of Levi when they were offered to God for His service. The Levites in turn laid their hands on the sacrificial animals, offered to purify them for service. Moses laid hands on Joshua, a man in whom was God's Spirit, to dedicate him as the new leader of Israel. Athaliah had hands laid on her to bring her to execution for killing the royal heirs. Jesus laid hands upon little children at the request of their parents. Jesus did not lay hands on Jairus' daughter, but took her by the hand when he raised her from the dead. Jesus healed the Centurion's servant without the need to lay hands on him. Jesus said His disciples would employ laying on of hands to heal the sick. In Acts 6 the seven were men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom before hands were laid on them to confirm their commission to take care of the widows. The laying on of

hands symbolized the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the Samaritan believers, which Simon Magus misunderstood. Paul and Barnabas were separated for Christ's work by the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands symbolized the Ephesians' receiving of the Holy Spirit. Timothy's receiving of the Holy Spirit came with the laying on of hands of elders, including Paul. Timothy was not to cheapen the laying on of hands by doing it without due consideration. The laying on of hands is one of the foundational doctrines of the church of God. Why has it not been definitively treated?

Comment

Nearly every time we do some physical act we lay our hands on something. In the Scriptures laying on of hands is sometimes used as a symbolic gesture. It is not some kind of magic whereby the Holy Spirit is transferred from one person to another, as Simon Magus believed, and as many others seem to think. Since the Holy Spirit is the gift of God and not of men, it comes only from God, albeit sometimes at the request of men. It need not always be accompanied by the laying on of hands, as it was not in the case of Cornelius' household, the thief on the cross, and indeed in the case of Jesus when He was baptized by John and the Spirit descended like a dove upon Him. Neither were hands laid on the apostles and disciples at Pentecost in Acts two. It would seem that in the general case of conversion, the laying on of hands may and perhaps should be done if the fruits of repentance are evident, but that it is not done for the purpose of transferring the Holy Spirit, but, like baptism, as a symbolic act.

Does the laying on of hands, in order to be valid, have to be done by a priest or by a representative of some Church organization? Apparently not, because in the Scriptures the laying on of hands was done by various people for various reasons. It seems in general to be a gesture symbolic of some spiritual act or event. Elders laid hands on Timothy for his receiving of the Holy Spirit, and we have seen in the study on ordination that elders need not necessarily be "ordained" persons. Jesus had His disciples do His baptizing for Him (John 4:2). The attitude of the believer is what is important, not the person who performs these symbolic offices for him. Baptism and the laying on of hands may be effected by any mature Christian who knows what he or she is about. The Bible does not say specifically that all elders need be men. Women, of course, mature in the faith just as men

do and become elders just as they do by virtue of the fact that they grow older. "Elder" simply means "an older person," regardless of sex. A false minister, whether Nicolaitan or Balaamite, is not required in order to perform baptism and the laying on of hands.

Jesus said that believers would lay hands upon the sick, who would then be made well. A primary use of the laying on of hands therefore is for healing. We find no instance of healing by the laying on of hands in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands is symbolic of the receiving of blessings, the transfer of guilt to a sacrificial victim, or the conferring of a special commission, as in the case of Joshua.

Jesus sometimes used the laying on of hands for blessing little children or in healing the sick and infirm. He said that believers in Him would be able to heal the sick by the laying on of hands, though He also asked if He would find faith on the earth at His return—good question. Where is healing today in the Churches of God?

In Acts 6 the seven men were elected by the democratic process (see Acts 1 and 15) and their commissions confirmed by the laying on of the apostles' hands, much as Joshua's commission was given him in the Old Testament. The wording of this passage of Scripture does not make this ceremony an "ordination of deacons" (vs. 1-6). The word "deacon" (Gr. *diakonos* [1249], a minister or servant) is not scripturally used to designate an official ranking in a lower echelon of a religious hierarchy, as the term is customarily used in modern Churches, since the New Testament churches were locally autonomous—think about it.

Simon Magus in Acts 8 superstitiously thought that the Holy Spirit was transferred by a sort of magic power from one person to another. Church organizations and priesthoods often seem to think that they have this ability, but only God can give of His Holy Spirit. The idea in many Churches is that the Holy Spirit has come down through the ages by the laying on of hands, beginning with the original apostles themselves. This is the same sort of superstition that Simon Magus was deceived by—that the Holy Spirit is transferable from one person to another. Coincidence? The WCG used to believe that Herbert W. Armstrong was God's latter day Apostle in a direct line of succession from the original apostles by this method. In point of fact the Holy Spirit comes from God at His discretion, without any need for human intermediaries, though He doubtless honors sincere prayer as He will.

The laying on of hands is a foundational doctrine of the church of God, one of the elementary principles that Paul says should be there to build on toward perfection (Heb 6:2). Why does it seem to be so little understood in the Churches? Is it that they are spiritual babes, or that they are unconverted? The reason it is so little understood is that it is a taboo doctrine; the truth about it would upset their practice of authoritative ordination, so called, of Church elders, so called, by their unscriptural rites of ordination. They find it expedient to ignore definitive investigation of this subject, among several others. This is one of the scriptural truths the COG organizations elect to ignore, if not to suppress. (See Rom 1:18 NKJ.)

There is no instance of the rite of ordination of elders by the laying on of hands to be found in the Bible. As a word study on ordination will show, such elders as were ordained in the New Testament were elected by the congregation, not appointed by a hierarchy of Church officials. Many, or even most, elders were not “ordained” and had no desire to be ordained. The only model for ordination given in the New Testament is that of Matthias to replace Judas in Acts one, which was a democratic election without the laying on of their hands by the apostles. The apostles were there, but they did not ordain Matthias by the laying on of hands. If there were such a rite of ordination, why was it not used? Religious priesthoods were officially ordained by religious or political authority, but such ordination was not of God. Jeroboam’s false priesthood was in fact dedicated to his high places, demons, and idols (1Kngs 12:32; 2Kngs 23:5; 2Chr 11:15). Such may be said to be ordained in

the sense of Jude 4, though they have not the Spirit of God, but a different spirit (Jude 11,19).

Acts six is cited as justification for this practice, but it, too, relates a democratic election of the seven, who were then approved by the apostles. Hands were laid on the seven to confirm their commission to serve the widows, much as Joshua had been commissioned by Moses, and Barnabas and Paul by the church at Antioch.

This study confirms the conclusion drawn in the study on ordination, that rites of ordination as practiced in the Churches of God, and in other Churches for that matter, are unscriptural, and that hierarchical corporate religious organizations of such men, who are not elders at all, in the scriptural sense, are invalid. These organizations are not “Churches of God,” as they bill themselves, but are rather artificial religious bureaucracies that seek to maintain themselves at the expense of those whom they regard as the “laity.” One wonders if indeed they may not constitute a modern counterpart of the sect of the Nicolaitans, the synagogue of Satan mentioned by Jesus in His letters to the seven churches, and associated by Him with the followers of the doctrine of Balaam, which Peter in turn says characterizes the false teachers who were to appear in the Churches of God. Rather a stark concept, indeed, but one ought to follow where the Scriptures lead and not believe only what one might desire to believe. There are many so-called Christian religions, but they fail to practice pure Christianity. They are not really Churches of God, but rather hierarchical organizations of paid professional ministers—in essence idolatrous priesthoods. (See studies on Ordination and Nicolaitans.)

Study #3: Tithing

Word Study of “Tithe, Tithes, Tithing” from Strong’s Concordance.

Gen 14:20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*—a tenth, a tithe.

Abraham delivered a tithe of the spoils of battle to Melchizedek after defeating the confederacy of the kings.

Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

This is not a command of God, per se, but a personal vow taken by Jacob as seen in verse. 20.

Lev 27:30-32 And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’s: it is holy unto the LORD. 31 And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. 32 And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

A tithe of the increase of the land was holy unto the LORD. Holy 6944 Heb. *godesh*—consecrated, dedicated, hallowed. The tithe was dedicated to the LORD to be used in whatever way He commanded.

Num 18:24-28 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress. 28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD’s heave offering to Aaron the priest. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

A tithe of the national increase in the land of Israel was to be delivered to the Levites in their cities—there were 48 of them in all Israel (Josh 21:41), with their outlying fields. Of the tithe received by the tribe of Levi, a tithe was to be given

in turn to the priesthood of Aaron for temple use (see Neh 10:37-38, below).

Num 18:30-31 Therefore thou shalt say unto [the Levites], When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress. 31 And ye shall eat of it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

After the Levites would have met their obligation to the Aaronic priesthood by giving them their tithe, the remainder would be theirs to consume in all their households in all their scattered communities.

Deut 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above. Deut 12:11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above. Deut 12:17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: (KJV) Heb. 4682, as above.

After destroying the pagan religious shrines and their religious abominations, Israel were to save up a tithe to take with them to celebrate God’s festivals in the place that He would designate after their arrival in the Promised Land.

Deut 14:22-23 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe...(KJV) 6237 Heb. *asar*—to tithe, take or give a tenth.

This again refers to a tithe to be consumed by the people at God’s annual festivals after their establishment in the Promised Land. This “festival tithe” was contingent upon Israel’s settlement in and continued occupation of the land of Canaan.

Deut 26:12 When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; (KJV) 6237 *asar*, as above, and 4682 *maaser*, as

above are used.

The sense may be that this special tithe was to be given to the Levites for distribution among the needy. Remember, Jesus said, “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do good unto them...” (Mark 14:7, KJV). That good was done for them largely through the distribution of this “third tithe.”

1Sam 8:15,17 [The king] will take the tenth of your [increase].

Samuel relates to Israel what the cost will be of making for themselves a king—another tenth would need to be paid to the king, to support a government bureaucracy.

2Chr 31:5-6 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the fields; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. 6 And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

A tithe of the national increase was again received in the cities of Judah under the reforms of King Hezekiah.

2Chr 31:11-12 Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them. 12 And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next. (KJV) Heb 4683, as above.

Hezekiah had chambers prepared in the temple complex to receive the abundance of tithes, offerings, and dedicated things. Under God’s national economy there was more than enough for everyone, v.10.

Neh 10:37-38 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. (KJV) Heb. 4683 *maaser*, with 6237 Heb. *asar*, as above.

The tithe of the increase of the Jewish nation was delivered to the cities of the Levites and over-

seen by the Aaronic priests. The Levites were to have their tithes in all the cities of their tillage. Tithes were not delivered to Jerusalem—a tithe of the national tithe was delivered there to the Temple complex.

Neh 12:44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

The tithe of the produce of the land was gathered into the storehouses in the cities for the priests and Levites.

Neh 13:4-11 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: 5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. 6 But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: 7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. 9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. 10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. 11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. (KJV) 4643 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

Eliashib the priest and Tobiah had abused the tithe for the Levites (v.5,10), until Nehemiah found out what they were doing and made reforms. This is what happened when all the tithes went to a central “Headquarters” instead of to the cities designated for the Levites as commanded in Num 18:24-28,31.

Neh 13:12-13 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasures. And I made treasurers over the treasures...and their office was to distribute to their brethren.

ren. (KJV) 4643 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

After Nehemiah's reforms the tithes were taken to the outlying treasuries, more than one, not a central treasury at the Temple. From the treasuries distribution was made to the Levites, and to the Aaronic priesthood (see Neh 10:37).

Amos 4:4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: (KJV) 4643 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

The prophet implies that sacrifices and the tithe given after three years are transgression if given at Gilgal or at Bethel, to the false shrines in Israel.

Mal 3:8-10 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (KJV) 4683 Heb. *maaser*, as above.

Tithes were not being given and the Temple service was being neglected. The nation would not be blessed unless the tithes were given and received as God had commanded. This is speaking nationally of blessings God would give for obedience to Him. It leaves us with the question, are tithes required where there are no Levitical cities or Temple to receive them?

The Temple service would suffer were the national tithe not delivered to the Levites in their cities, because the Levites were obliged to tithe of their increase to supply the Temple service at Jerusalem (see Num 18:28).

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (KJV) 586 Gr. *apodekatoo*—to tithe (as a debtor or creditor), tithe.

The Pharisees tithed scrupulously according to Judaic laws.

Luke 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (KJV) 586 Gr. *apodekatoo*, as above.

Jesus brings the same indictment as above. Tithing according to legal minutiae didn't carry much weight with Jesus, but it made the Pharisees

feel self-righteous.

Luke 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (KJV) 586 Gr. *apodekatoo*, as above.

Jesus gives the parable wherein the Pharisee is feeling self righteous about all the legalisms he observes, including tithing. But the humble tax collector was justified, not the scrupulous tithe giver.

Heb 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: (KJV) 586 Gr. *apodekatoo*, as above.

Compare this to Joshua 18:7. The Tribe of Levi inherited the priesthood, much as Joseph inherited the birthright (1Chr 5:2) and Judah inherited the scepter (Gen 49:10). The Aaronic priests were of the Tribe of Levi, though only a small fraction of it. The tithe of the national increase went to the Levites to sustain them in all their cities (see Num 18:30-31, Neh 10:37).

Heb 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. (KJV) 1183 Gr. *dekato*—to tithe, give or take a tenth, pay or receive tithes.

Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils of his victory over the kings to Melchisedec, who was not a Levite, but Priest of God Most High.

Heb 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. (KJV) Gr. 1181 *dekate*—a tenth or tithe.

Heb 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. (KJV) 1183 Gr. *dekato*, as above.

Abraham figuratively paid tithes on behalf of Levi, showing that Melchisedec is greater than Levi, being the Priest of God Most High.

Summary

Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils of battle to Melchizedek. Jacob vowed to give a tenth of his increase to the LORD. The nation of Israel was commanded to tithe of the produce of the land to the Tribe of Levi when they came into the Promised Land. The tithe of the produce of the land was to include the crops of the fields, the fruits of the orchards and vineyards, as well as the increase of their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats. This tithe was holy unto the LORD and dedicated to Him as His own (Lev 27:30). The LORD specified

that it was to be given to the Levites (Num 18:24).

Another tithe was to be used yearly by the people for their own consumption at the annual festivals of the LORD in a place that He would designate in the Land of Promise. Yet another tithe was to be given after three years to provide for the needy (Deut 26:12).

The prophet Amos implies that it is transgression to give of one's tithe to false religions such as that existing in Israel at the time. Israel had not turned from the false religion set up by Jeroboam after his rebellion against Rehoboam.

When the remnant of Judah returned to Judea after the Babylonian captivity, a tithing economy was established in Judea. The tithe of the produce of the fields was delivered to the Levites in the cities, of which a tithe was given to the Aaronic priests for the Temple service at Jerusalem. Under the management of Eliashib and Tobiah, the Levites' portion of the tithe was diverted to Tobiah's warehouse at the Temple instead of to the Levites. Nehemiah had to straighten the problem out when he returned from Babylon. Then the tithe was restored to the Levites in the city treasuries. These were not banks or financial institutions where money was stashed in safes, but storehouses for produce. The word for "treasuries" in Neh 12:44 and Neh 13:12 is the Heb. *owtsar*—armory, cellar, garner, storehouse, treasure house; from the Heb. *atsar*—to store up, to lay up in store, treasure. Here it refers to the warehouses or storage facilities where the produce of the land was kept.

In the Gospel accounts, Jesus chides the Pharisees for their meticulous tithing of each of the little herbs of the garden as contrasted to their gross neglect of the spiritual obligations of their religious profession.

Comment

In general the tithes spoken of in the Bible do not refer to money per se, but to the agricultural produce of the land. God designated the tithe of the increase of the land to go to the Tribe of Levi so that they would be provided with food and the means of livelihood in all their households in return for their service in His behalf. In turn the Levites tithed to the Aaronic Priesthood for the Temple and its related services and activities. Since the priesthood were part of the Tribe of Levi, they too tithed for the Temple service, which they were called upon to perform in their courses (see 1Chr 23).

Herbert W. Armstrong used to teach that since

Melchizedek received tithes of Abraham, and Christ was Melchizedek, Church members should therefore pay tithes to Christ. The manner in which this was to be done was to send one's money in to the Worldwide Church of God at Pasadena, California in the amount of a first tithe of one's gross income, plus a third tithe amounting to another 2/7 of a tithe of one's gross income, plus a tithe of a second tithe of one's gross income, plus generous offerings to be collected at festival sites, plus whatever additional contributions one could scrape together. When one considers that all this would be exacted before taxes were paid, one begins to understand God's indignation toward those who would enrich themselves by grinding the faces of the poor, as He says in Isaiah 3:14-15. The Scriptures on tithing were distorted for the purpose of making merchandise of God's people (2Pet 2:3). Herbert W. Armstrong paid himself an annual salary of at least two hundred thousand dollars (see *In Transition*, March 25, 1996). In today's economy that would be the equivalent of around half a million dollars. I suppose one could speculate as to whether the man was motivated altogether by altruistic considerations or whether selfish materialistic factors came into play, but that may best be left to the reader's discretion.

By stark contrast to Church organizations that instruct their adherents to send in a tithe of their incomes in cash to a centralized headquarters, the tithes in ancient Israel were delivered to the scattered cities of the Tribe of Levi in the form of produce of the land. Of the tithe received by the Levites for their livelihood, a tithe was in turn given to the priesthood for the Temple, so that only one percent went to the central Jerusalem "Headquarters." One gets the feeling that something may be rotten in the State of Denmark, or at least in the state of Church organizations that solicit a tithe of their members' income to be sent in to their central offices.

Tithing was a national "taxing system" used to support the Tribe of Levi and the Temple complex in Jerusalem. The Levitical Priesthood were a small percentage of the Levites, and may have received expense money when it came their turn to serve at the Temple. Other than that they received their prorated proportion of the national tithe that went to their tribe. On average the Levites would have had an income about 10% above that of the other tribes. Of the national income, one tenth went to the Tribe of Levi, who in turn gave one tenth of that to support the Temple complex, which ab-

sorbed only one percent of the national income.

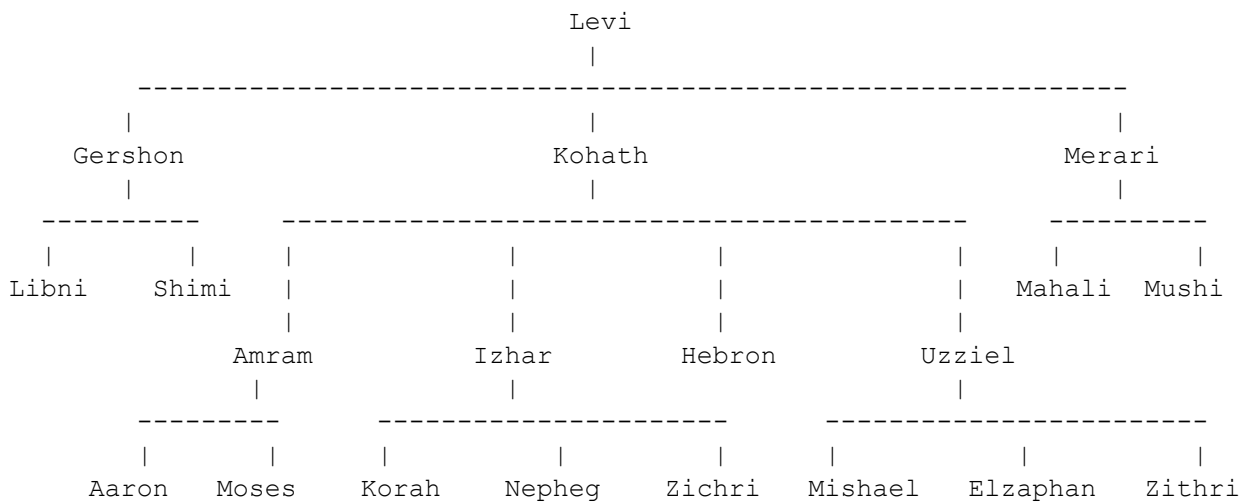
The tithing system ended with the captivities, but was re-instituted in Judah with the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah insofar as it could be made to work without ten tribes. The system ended when the Jewish state was destroyed by the Romans.

In the Old Testament, the tithe was essentially a national tax, of which one percent went to support the Temple. Modern religious charlatans often maintain that they need their parishioner's "tithe money" in order to do their "Work," but it was never done in that manner in the Bible. In practice the lions' share of the money garnered under such pretenses goes to support the preacher and his organization. A person who feels duty bound to give a tithe of his income for religious purposes would

be well advised to administer it personally. Otherwise all he has is some false prophet's word that his money is being wisely spent. In Amos 4:4 the prophet says that the tithe spent on false religions is transgression.

The Scriptures do not support the idea of a tithing system being instituted by the church of God. There is no New Testament example of this being done. Human nature being what it is, however, Nicolaitan religious practitioners of the ancient doctrine of Balaam, the synagogue of Satan, find it needful to erect corporate entities, or idols called "Churches of God," to which they instruct the laity to sacrifice in order to maintain their mystic mediating priesthoods, the various "ministries" of these Churches. See the associated studies on the Nicolaitans, Balaamites, and Teachers.

Exodus 6 Genealogy of the Levites



This is not the complete genealogy given in Exodus 6. Of Aaron and Moses' generation of the Levites, eight persons are mentioned, which would indicate that the Aaronic Priesthood would have been on the order of one eighth or 12½% of the Levites. The likelihood is that they comprised less than one tenth, since individual descendents of Gershon and Merari are not mentioned here. Ten percent or less seems a likely proportion of Levitical Aaronic priests to Levites.

It is not difficult to reckon that since one twelfth of the people, that is the Tribe of Levi, received one tenth of the national income, of which they gave a tenth to the priests and the Temple,

that the average Levite, including the priests, earned about 10% more than the average citizen of Israel. The priests of ancient Israel then, as long as they observed this God-ordained system of tithing, could not enrich themselves at the "laity's" expense as has seemed to be the practice in modern Church organizations. This was a national economic system and is not directly applicable to modern Church organizations, who might do well to recall that Jesus said, in Mat 10:8, "...freely ye have received, freely give..." and that He also said in Mat 6:24, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." How much more blessed it is to give rather than to receive!

Study #4: Who Are the Nicolaitans?

A Personal Reading

Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (KJV)

Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (KJV)

Gr. *Nikolaites*—an adherent of Nicolaus, a Nicolaitan. from the words: *nike*—conquest, and *laos*—a people; literally conquest of a people.

Gr. *Nikolaus*—victorious over the people; a heretic named Nicolaus. See Zodhiates “The Complete Word Study New Testament”

Unger’s New Bible Dictionary: Nicolaitans - A sect or party that arose in the apostolic period; the general voice of antiquity accuses them of

- 1) eating things sacrificed unto idols
- 2) attributing creation to a power other than God
- 3) holding the doctrine of “community of women” (?);

their conduct was said to be in the highest degree licentious

Evidence is uncertain as to whether the doctrine was founded by an actual man named Nicolaus.

Bullinger says history does not record who the Nicolaitans were, but that tradition says a lot about them. The tradition is that they were followers of a Nicolas. One may speculate as to whether they were followers of Nicolas the “deacon,” gone apostate, or whether this is the Saint Nicolaus canonized by the Catholic Church, etc.

Rev 2:15 may be read “in like manner,” Bullinger says instead of “which thing I hate”:

Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, in like manner. (KJV)

The phrase “in like manner” then would refer back to verse 14:

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. (KJV)

The meaning would be that some in Pergamos held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner as some held the doctrine of Balaam. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans must therefore go hand in hand with the doctrine of Balaam. Since God would not

allow Balaam to curse Israel, he thought that if Israel were taught to sin, they would come under the curse of sin and God would abandon them to their fate. He seems to have had little regard for the grace of God and the majestic sweep of His overall plan.

The church at Pergamos, Jesus says, has those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, and those who likewise hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, whose deeds, He tells the Ephesians, he hates. Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, as He does. Hebrews 1:9 tells us what it is that Jesus hates: “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity...” Therefore the doctrine of the Nicolaitans would be characterized by iniquity, which Jesus hates. The Nicolaitans teach iniquity, in like manner, we may say, as do the followers of Balaam, who taught Balac how to cause Israel to sin. Since Jesus seems to associate those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans with those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, He may be telling us that the ancient doctrine of Balaam is not dead, but continues in the doctrine of the Nicolaitans [It may be spelled either way]. The letters to the seven churches being prophetic, as well as historical, we may safely assume that the Nicolaitans are alive and well, are tolerated within the churches of God, and are still teaching their doctrines to this day. The Scriptures tell us nothing more directly about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but they do tell us about the doctrine of Balaam with which Jesus seems to associate it in Rev 2:14-15.

Rev 2:20-23 ...I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols...and she repented not...and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Jesus raises the same problem in regard to the woman Jezebel that he has with the Nicolaitans and Balaamites. The woman Jezebel represents the false church, the synagogue of Satan, which teaches the same doctrine of Balaam mentioned in verse 14, “...to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (v. 20). It may be profitable to look at the other references Jesus makes to this false church and its ministers in chapters two and three.

Rev 2:2,6 ...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...thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I

also hate.

The Ephesian Church recognizes and rejects false teachers, who are liars claiming to be apostles or witnesses sent forth by God. They abhor the iniquitous works of the Nicolaitans.

Rev 2:9-10 ...I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried...

The false church, the synagogue of Satan, claim to be Jews, or genuine Christians (Rom 2:29), but they are deceiving liars. They are of the devil and bring severe trials on the true church of God.

Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is...Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Satan had a famous seat in the temple of Zeus on the acropolis at Pergamum, symbolic of his chief seat in the synagogue of Satan, the false church that claims to be the true church of God. Their central doctrine (v.14) is the doctrine of Balaam.

Rev 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments...

Sardis is off guard and nearly overcome by this false religious system.

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Philadelphia is alert, and cannot be taken in by this false religious system.

Rev 3:16 ...because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

The Laodicean Church thinks there is no need to get worked up about false teachers and their doctrines—God will work it all out in His good time, so they need not bother.

The Doctrine of Balaam

It becomes evident that the enemies to whom Jesus refers in the third person in Revelation two and three constitute one system, a false church, a synagogue of Satan, with its adherents, the false teachers who deceive the church of God by means of the false doctrine of Balaam. It is noteworthy that the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, though convened to address the problem of circumcision, also found it necessary to address some aspects of this strange doctrine of Balaam (see Acts 15:19-20,

28-29 and Rev 2:14,20.)

As background to the doctrine of Balaam, it is advisable to read Numbers 22 through 24, and the first part of Numbers 25, as well as to note that Balaam fell in battle against Israel among the princes of Midian, Num 31:8. (Refer to the study on Balaam.) With this general historical background in mind, let us turn to the few other Scriptural references to Balaam and his enigmatic story.

Num 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. (KJV)

These were the women of Moab who seduced Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam. What this counsel was is shown in Num 25.

Num 25:1-9 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. 4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. 5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. 6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. (KJV)

Balaam's counsel to Balak entailed tempting Israel to engage in Baal worship with its temple prostitution as it had come down from the Babylonian Mysteries. This was of course also spiritual fornication against God. Jesus summarizes the doctrine of Balaam in Rev 2:14 "...[Balaam] taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Deut 23:3-5 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not

enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: 4 Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. 5 Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. (KJV)

Balaam had intended to curse Israel for his hire, but God made him pronounce blessings upon them instead.

Josh 13:22 Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them. (KJV)

We learn here that Balaam was a soothsayer. In Num 23:23, Balaam says there is no enchantment or divination against Israel, arts he may have attempted to use against them along with the sacrificial offerings that were made.

“Soothsayer” is the Hebrew *qacam* [7080], to divine, to use divination, diviner. Balaam’s error or false doctrine has recourse to evil spirits of lying divination or false prophecy.

Josh 24:9-10 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: 10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. (KJV)

God restrained Balaam and delivered Israel out of his hand. It seems doubtful that his soothsaying, enchantments, or divinations would have had any direct effect upon Israel. They may have been efficacious, however, in inciting other enemy nations against Israel, had the LORD permitted them.

Neh 13:1-2 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; 2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. (KJV)

Balaam would have cursed Israel for hire, for the reward Balac offered to pay him.

Mic 6:5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD. (KJV)

God wants His people to remember the evil

counsel of Balaam and avoid it, turning to His righteousness instead. Remember, Balaam counseled Balac to teach the children of Israel to practice idolatry (Rev 2:14, Num 25:1-3).

2Pet 2:15-16 [False teachers] have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbade the madness of the prophet. (KJV)

Peter prophesies of false teachers in God’s church, who follow the way of Balaam, who loved his hire, or his wages, above the truth of God. The “way of Balaam” is perverse before God (Num 22:32). Web: perverse—self-willed, contrary. It is a stubborn, self-willed way contrary to the way of God.

Jude 1:11,19 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core...having not the Spirit.” (KJV)

Jude speaks of the same ungodly men, who pose as true ministers, but who turn grace into license in order to pursue the error of Balaam for reward or for remuneration. Such are not of God.

One may read Rev 2:14 as “...Balaam...taught Balac...to eat things sacrificed unto idols...” Similarly, verse 20 may be read, “...thou sufferest that woman Jezebel [symbolic of false teachers]...to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” These false teachers, then, consume things sacrificed unto idols, and teach this as a major feature of the false doctrine of Balaam.

Comment

If we may assume an affinity between those who hold the doctrine of Balaam and those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, as the words of Jesus seem to suggest, then we may draw several conclusions about them from the Scriptures cited.

The Nicolaitans are teachers within the churches of God, false teachers, who palm themselves off as genuine. They are followed by the many, and not by only a few (2Pet 2:1-2). As teachers, they constitute the false ministry over the churches of God, as opposed to the laity, whom they deceive with their false doctrine, the ancient doctrine of Balaam in modern guise. According to Jude, these run greedily after reward, or money, just as Balaam did (Jude 11). Peter tells us they earn their money by “making merchandise of you,” the laity, the people of God (2Pet 2:3). The associ-

ated studies in this series, on ordination and tithing, expose these false teachers, and the manner in which they obtain monetary reward at the expense of God's people. Like all false religionists, they sugar coat their false doctrines with enough truth to make them palatable for their adherents, who in turn lend them their support. Their method is one of teaching truth corrupted by error.

After Balaam failed in his intention to bring a curse upon the children of Israel, he taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel so they would come under the curse of sin. As a consequence of their sin, Balaam thought God would revoke the blessings He had promised to His people Israel. He seems to have had no adequate concept of the broad plan and purpose of God for His people and eventually for the whole world.

Stumblingblock 4625 Gr. *skandalon*, probably from 2578 Gr. *kampto*— a snare; occasion to fall (of stumbling), offense, thing that offends, stumblingblock; cause of sin. Balac learned through Balaam's instruction how to cause Israel to sin. Balac learned how to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication (Rev 2:14). Following Balaam's lead, he taught the children of Israel to practice the mystery religion of Baalpeor and to commit fornication with the Moabite women, the temple prostitutes.

In the ancient Babylonian mystery religion and its modern Roman counterpart, eating things sacrificed unto idols is a central feature of worship as they partake of their round wafers dedicated in the mass to the sun god. To commit fornication is biblical symbolism for engaging in the world's religious practices, which derive ultimately from the mystery religion of ancient Babylon. These things are traced out in detail in Hislop's "The Two Babylons."

The false teachers in the modern Churches of God, then, must teach some variation on the ancient doctrine of Balaam, the Babylonian mystery religion of Baalpeor, and in this manner cause spiritual Israel, God's scattered true church, to sin. Small wonder that Jesus asks, "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Having freely received God's truth, it ought always to be freely given, and never made merchandise of, or sold for profit. The error of Balaam was, Jude says, that he sold his religion, which consisted, as all erroneous religions do, of truth corrupted by falsehood. Balaam was the quintessential hireling. What of the hired ministry of the Church

of God organizations? Are they hirelings also, who hire themselves out to teach those whom they regard as the laity to come under their domination in order to finance them and the organizations they represent? Might not these be modern Nicolaitans, followers of the doctrine of Balaam, the religious hireling? How many modern false ministers in these Churches preach what they are told to preach in order to retain a lucrative salary? How many of them would venture publication of any article that might not meet the approval of their superiors in the organization? Why do COG organizations often teach that their members may not hold Bible studies without an "ordained minister" present? Are they afraid the membership may begin thinking for themselves about taboo topics such as this one, and others in this series? Could it be that they don't want us thinking for ourselves, but rather prefer to program our thinking for us after the manner of indoctrination?

In order to understand what Jesus means by "eating things sacrificed unto idols," we need to remember that covetousness is, in biblical terms, idolatry. "...[no] covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5); "Mortify...covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). Therefore 2Pet 2:3 may be read, "And through idolatry shall [these false teachers] make merchandise of you." Unger notes, "...the term 'idolatry' is used to designate 'covetousness,' which takes mammon [wealth, riches—money] for its god..." (The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, p. 606). In other words, these false teachers among God's people are idolaters who appear to serve God, but in reality they serve mammon. But Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon," (Mat 6:24, Luke 16:13). We are drawn toward an inevitable conclusion, that false teachers idolize the Church organizations which they serve in return for ongoing paychecks. The "laity" worship the corporate idol with their tithes and offerings, their donations and contributions, their tears and toil, blood and sweat, as it were, while the hired ministry obtain their unjust remuneration by serving the idol in another capacity—that of false teachers who eat that which is sacrificed to the idol. The Scriptures on tithing are perverted to make merchandise of the laity. Such idol worship is spiritual fornication on the part of both the laity and their spiritual leaders. The idol is their god. Thus not only are these religious corporations not true churches of God, as their names would imply, they are in effect idols reared up in the

place of the true God. They are creatures of the synagogue of Satan of Revelation two rather than of the true church of God, scattered abroad.

It may be of interest in this regard to look up the word “idolater,” Strong’s #1496, Greek *eidololatrias*. The word is a compound of two Greek words: #1497 *eidolon* (idol) and #3000 *latreuo* from *latris* (a hired menial). The literal meaning of “idolater” in the Greek therefore is “an idol-hireling,” or one who is employed by an idol. How is it that an idol may hire employees or hirelings? Just in the manner outlined in the preceding paragraph, q.v.

According to Webster, a priest is one who is authorized to perform religious rites or services. Systems of religious idolatry hire priesthoods to minister for their idols. The laity are directed to serve the idol on pain of excommunication and loss of eternal salvation. The authorized priesthood oversee the faith of the laity and the disposition of their monetary sacrifices on behalf of the idol. They are idolaters, idol-hirelings. Their wages are derived from the sacrifices they mediate on behalf of their unholy corporate idol. Such systems are of necessity invariably authoritarian, claiming authorization from God to ordain priesthoods as rulers over the laity, the dumb sheep who yield themselves to be sheared. The sordid crassness of the entire system is little short of amazing. In truth, it is the scattered body of believers in Christ who are a royal priesthood who have no need of a hierarchy of false ministers, a false priesthood, to lord it over them (1Pet 2:1-10). Local congregations are capable of conducting their own affairs as they are led by God’s Spirit. Should one have access to Alexander Hislop’s “The Two Babylons” one may be interested in consulting Chapter IV, “Doctrine and Discipline,” and especially the section titled “Baptismal Regeneration” for a masterful exposition of the manner in which priestcraft operates. The study on Korah outlines the establishment of a false priesthood in Israel in Moses’ day.

Other studies in this series show that the church of God scattered abroad needs no extensive bureaucracies of falsely ordained “elders” lording it over them with the object of collecting large sums of money in the form of tithes and offerings to

which they are not entitled. These corrupted religious organizations, posing as churches of God, are disguised Balaamism, and the false ministers who foster this Balaamism are a modern counterpart of the ancient sect of Nicolaitans, illegitimate rulers over God’s deceived people. It is high time that they be exposed for what they are. If any of them desire to change their ways, as in Ezekiel 18:1-32, let them go out and find honest work, hire out for just wages, and cease to oppress God’s people. They may find forgiveness before God, and live.

All this is not to say that God does not have His true ministers and organizations of His true followers who are diligently about His true work of proclaiming Jesus’ Kingdom Evangel. He does have them indeed, but they are not found by casually accepting the traditional Churches obscured by a modern Laodicean darkness who mindlessly practice their conventional false doctrines.

Our original question in regard to the identity of the Nicolaitans has led us stepwise to the followers of the doctrine of Balaam, and to the false teachers who were prophesied by Peter to be making merchandise of God’s people, those whom they regard as the laity, the scattered members of Christ’s body. The Nicolaitans are the false ministries under whose tutelage many of us have sat for many years in various Church congregations. They are those against whom Paul warned the Ephesians in Acts 20:29-30, who vaunt themselves over the flock of Christ’s pasture in order to exploit them. The Nicolaitans and the Balaamites work together. In the introduction, the question was posed, who are these people really, who function as false ministers in the religious organizations that bill themselves “Churches of God”? The answer is, they are Nicolaitans (authoritarians who teach COG government or “governance” over the laity) and practitioners of the doctrine of Balaam (getters of money by means of religious deception). Herbert Armstrong is the spiritual progenitor of the Nicolaitan/Balaamite priesthoods that dominate the Sabatarian Church of God organizations as presently constituted. The Christian Denominations in general, of course, have many of these same problems in greater or lesser degree.

Study #5: What Is the Way of Cain?

Scriptures on Cain in Both Testaments

God has given us very few references to Cain in the Holy Scriptures, but they have meaning and lessons for us. The subject has to be of vital importance to the church of God, because Jude 11 warns that false teachers, who have crept in unawares, have gone after the “way of Cain.” This way is parallel to the “doctrine of Balaam”, and the “gain-saying of Korah,” who preached opposition to the way of God, Israel’s true leader, whom Moses was only obeying.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our LORD Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Jude 1:11 ...they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. (KJV)

Certain ungodly imposters have crept into the midst of the holy church of God, who are not recognized as such by God’s people. They teach that the grace of God includes license to sin. Following the way of Cain, Balaam, and Core, their lives and works deny our Savior.

Jude 1:8-10 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The LORD rebuke thee. 10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. (KJV)

Jude 1:12-16 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed,

and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage. (KJV) Jude 1:18-19 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. (KJV)

Jude excoriates those who follow the bad examples of Cain, Balaam, and Core with fitting and eloquent prophetic scorn. They are characterized as stealthy, ungodly, licentious imposters, rebellious, corrupt followers of the way of Cain. Their very presence defiles the church of God. They are perverse mockers, walking after their own lusts, their lives arrant parodies of the way of God. They exalt themselves, as Balaam did, as important and pious spiritual leaders.

Jude 1:16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage (KJV)...flattering people for the sake of gaining advantage (NAS)...they flatter others for personal gain (Williams)...flattering people to gain advantage (NKJ).

Flattery is excessive insincere praise or adulation; feigned devotion. They continually butter each other up.

The sense of v. 16b is that such ungodly and unspiritual imposters find it to their material advantage to exalt one another, to form hierarchical orders of persons likeminded with themselves. They therefore “ordain” one another and build up false priesthoods, synagogues of Satan; they are however “ordained to this condemnation” (v.4), that they pervert the grace of God into license to pursue their evil designs.

Jude 1:17-19 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our LORD Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit (KJV)... these are the ones who cause divisions, not having the Spirit (NAS)...These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit (NKJ).

Jude makes plain that noisy, loud-mouthed imposters in the church of God, who follow the way of Cain, Balaam, and Core, seek personal gain, and have not the Spirit of God. They organize into divisive parties, which they may call Churches, for the purpose of exploiting those whom they regard

as the dumb sheep of the true church of God. The fake corporate organizations they set up are in reality synagogues of Satan that make merchandise of God's people by means of a false tithing doctrine (see 2Pet 2:3 and the study on tithing). They flatter themselves that they constitute professional ministries ascendant over ignorant and subservient laities.

2Pet:2:20-21 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (KJV)

2Pet 2:14-15 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: 15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; (KJV)

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (KJV)

Peter, in prophetically characterizing these same individuals, says that they once had knowledge of the LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, but have forsaken the way of righteousness and rebelled against the holy commandment delivered unto them (2Pet 2:20-21). Peter lays bare their motivations (vs. 14-15). They have turned to the perverse way of Balaam, the way of covetousness and greed, the way of idolatry (Col 3:5), the way of Cain, and of Korah. The way of Cain, who came first, was trodden by Korah and Balaam, as well as by the false ministers who have plagued the church of God from its inception. Cain, of course, once knew the way of God, just as Abel did, but he turned to the way of unrighteousness instead.

1Jn 3:10-13 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. (KJV)

The history of Cain and Abel is illustrative of Jesus' precept: Ye shall know them by their fruits (Mat 7:16). Abel is called righteous not because he never sinned, for all have sinned (Rom 3:23), but because he overcame sin by following the way of righteousness. Cain was a servant of the devil and did evil works. We cannot look into men's hearts, but we can know them by the fruits they produce. Those who, like Cain, are of that wicked one, will produce fruits appropriate to the calling they have chosen. If they truly loved the brethren, instead of disdaining them, they would not abuse, exploit, and impoverish them, by means of the evil doctrine of Balaam, a doctrine of demons (see the Nicolaitan study).

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (KJV)

John shows us that Cain was of that wicked one, and killed Abel out of envy and jealousy because Abel was righteous and he himself evil (1Jn 3:10-13). The way of Cain is the way of Satan, the spirit of hate and of murder (John 8:44). Any who are righteous may therefore expect to become objects of hate, merely because they are righteous. Their lives condemn those who are evil and evoke hatred from them.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (KJV).

Cain killed Abel because Abel was righteous and Cain was jealous of him. Abel's sacrifice was acceptable with God, but Cain's was rejected. Abel's legacy to us is his shining example, sealed with his blood.

The account of Cain and Abel is found in Genesis four:

Gen 4:1-5 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. (KJV)

Though Abel's sacrifice prefigures that of Christ, God might have accepted Cain's also, had it been offered in a spirit of humility. The New Testament references point out the fatal flaws in Cain's character that preclude God's acceptance of an offering from his hand. When his offering is rejected, instead of humble repentance, Cain conceives a seething rage in his heart that results in hatred of his brother, whose righteousness condemns Cain by its example (see Num 16:15).

Gen 4:6-7 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (KJV)

The LORD admonishes Cain that he is to overcome sin and learn to do well, in order to become acceptable before God. Righteousness has to do with sin and one's attitude toward it.

Gen 4:8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (KJV)

Cain's envy of Abel and Abel's acceptance with God turns into hate against his brother. He murders him, obviously with planned "malice aforethought." Does he think this has solved his problem?

Gen 4:9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? (KJV)

When the LORD calls Cain to account for his sin, he lies to God and discounts his responsibility to love his brother. He has given in to his sin, being of that wicked one. The way of Cain is the way of the devil (1Jn 3:10-13, above). Perhaps he lied to himself before lying to God, rationalizing his wicked desires into a seemingly viable rationale for his nefarious ends.

Gen 4:10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. (KJV)

Deeds speak louder than words—something we need to ever keep in mind in regard to false teachers who follow the way of Cain. By their fruits are they known (Mat 7:15-23). The enormity of the sin of Cain is testified even today by his brother's life-blood crying out to the LORD for justice. God has heard, and justice will prevail, even yet. Injustice ever cries out to God, and God hears, not in vain.

Gen 4:11-16 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy

brother's blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. 13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. 15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. 16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. (KJV)

We see a lot of self pity in Cain after he gets caught in his sin, but we do not see repentance and contrition. The way of Cain is self-oriented and wilful, perverse, indeed, as is the way of Balaam (Num 22:32). One can't help feeling that it was good riddance when this evil character was driven away into a land of wandering and exile (see Jude 13). It is perhaps little wonder that the posterity of such a man as Cain eventually became so corrupt that God had to obliterate the pre-flood civilization. The land of Nod or exile and wandering may be a type of the fate of the evil angels spoken of in Jude 13, above.

Comment

In the history of Cain and Abel we see illustrated from the beginning the two ways of life resulting from the freedom of choice that God allows man. Having created us free moral agents, to coin a phrase, God leaves to us the choices we must make between good and evil. Some, like Abel, elect to do well, whereas others, like Cain, elect to do evil. God lovingly instructs us in the way that we should go, but the devil tells us, through his agents, that we can get away with doing evil. Thus, the fallacy of the way of Cain is the belief that one can do evil and get away with it. It is the way of rationalization as opposed to clarity of vision.

The question arises, why do these ungodly imposters that Jude writes about elect to creep in among God's people? Why don't they just run off and live their sinful lives on the other side of the tracks? Jude 11 and the history of Balaam give us the answer. These ungodly followers of the way of Cain also practice the error of Balaam for reward, i.e. for money. They enter in among God's people, motivated by greed. They have discovered how to satiate their greed by exploiting the church of God,

(see the Nicolaitan study). They present themselves as ministers of righteousness, but in reality they are motivated by Satan and his demons whose doctrines they teach (2Cor 11:13-15). Like Cain, they are of the evil one (1Jn 3:12). Though they appear ever so pious, they are bereft of the Spirit of God (Jude 19). They are false, imposters and actors. They get money from God's deceived people, but they do not give to others (Jude 12). The "falsity" give, and the "priesthood" get. They diligently feed themselves, but not the sheep of God's pasture; they rather devour them, (Ezk 34p.).

As Cain was motivated by hate, so are these ungodly priesthoods. Were they motivated by love of the brethren, they would not exploit them as they do. They would be giving to them instead of getting from them. Like Cain, these false prophets think they are getting away with their sin, but their judgment awaits them (2Pet 2:3; Jude 14-15).

As the name Cain is derived from "a spear" and "material possession," so Cain may have thought to gain Abel's possessions by bringing about his violent death. Note Jesus' words in the parable, "...this is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours," (Mark 12:7). Though not specifically about Cain, the manner of thought is characteristic of God's enemies such as Cain—hateful, clever, greedy. This is similar to the perverse thinking of Balaam, and of false teachers who set out to exploit others (Jude 11; 2Pet 2:1-3,15-17). Woe unto them, indeed, for God takes it very personally when evil imposters abuse his little lambs. It is not out of the question that such interlopers are toying with the unpardonable sin, for Jude writes of them as already condemned, "...they have...perished in the gainsaying of Core" (see Num 16). Perhaps this is why Peter says of them, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them," (2Pet 2:21).

Study #6: Balaam

Numbers 22-24—A Personal Reading

Num 22:1-6 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. 2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: 6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. (KJV)

Moab and Midian desired to go to war with Israel, but evidently thought it good insurance to send for Balaam to come and curse them first. They superstitiously believed that if Israel were cursed by Balaam they would be more readily defeated in battle.

Their decision to renew war against Israel would have been predicated upon their procuring Balaam's curse on them, for Balak said, "...curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me."

Pethor, or Pitru, on the west bank of the Euphrates below Charchemish, was a seat of the Babylonian Magi, and the headquarters of Balaam's false religion. A joint embassy is dispatched to solicit Balaam's religious services, an indication of the prestige he enjoyed as a religious figure some fifteen centuries before the Christian era.

Num 22:7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. (KJV)

Divination—the art of obtaining secret knowledge, especially of the future, is a pagan counterpart of prophecy. "Careful comparison will reveal that inspirational divination is by demonic power," (Unger, "The New Unger's Bible Dictionary,"

p.313). Unger goes on to say that Balaam was a pagan diviner who rose to the status of a bona fide prophet, only to revert to paganism again. It seems he could have gone either way, but kept making wrong choices. I am not sure he was that “bona fide,” given his willful persistence in what he viewed as his own self-interest. The evil doctrine of Balaam, that persisted down to New Testament times, was derived from the evil spirits to whom Balaam resorted.

Num 22:8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. (KJV)

Balaam elects to entertain the embassy rather than asking them to return on the morrow for his answer. A city like Pethor, one would have thought, would have had ample facilities for travelers. Balaam seems to be treating them with special deference.

Num 22:9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? (KJV)

Why would God, who knows all things, ask Balaam whom it was that he was entertaining? Remember, He also asked Adam where he was, and asked Cain where his brother was. Such direct questioning brings a man up short and makes him face himself. Why, indeed, was Balaam deferring to them?

Num 22:10-12 10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, 11 Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. 12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed. (KJV)

Note what Balaam does not mention, that he was offered rewards of divination, which is indeed what he desired, (2Pet 2:15). He loved the “wages of unrighteousness,” the “rewards of divination.” The LORD forbids him to accept the proposition, which should have ended the matter had Balaam been seeking only God’s will. He should have given the embassy a definite no.

God may have forbid Balaam’s curse for the reason that Moab and Midian were afraid to war against Israel without it. God may not have wanted Israel to fight them until after they had secured the Promised Land.

Num 22:13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your

land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. (KJV)

Note the reluctance with which Balaam complies with God’s will, as though he would gladly have gone were he permitted to do so.

Num 22:14-17 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us. 15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: 17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. (KJV)

Why do the delegates neglect to say that God forbid Balaam to come? Balak thinks he just needs added incentive, and then he will come and curse Israel for him. He in effect issues Balaam a blank check.

Num 22:18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. (KJV)

Ah, all that silver and gold, and Balaam is stuck with the will of God, forbidding him to hire out for it. He may not go “beyond the word of the LORD.” But he dearly wants to.

Num 22:19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more. (KJV)

Balaam entertains this embassy, also, rather than asking them to return again on the morrow for his answer. This time God doesn’t ask him who they are, as He did on the previous occasion. Why not? May it not be that God feels one warning from Him should be sufficient?

Num 22:20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. (KJV)

The key word is “if.” God will let Balaam go, if the delegation renews its petition, because of Balaam’s wilful disregard of His previous warning. If Balaam will not learn from God, perhaps he must learn the hard way.

Num 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. (KJV)

One would have thought a man as important as Balaam would have had a servant to saddle his ass for him, but he saddles his own ass. Why? It is likely that he knows he is willfully ignoring God’s

condition and in effect trying to escape from further encounter with God until after he earns his wages of unrighteousness. He doesn't seem to appreciate the majesty of Him with whom he has to do. He consorts with demonic spirits in his divinations and enchantments, and perhaps regards God as only one of many such beings.

Num 22:22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. (KJV)

God sends His angel to oppose Balaam—this vaunted religious leader who purports to be a servant of God, but who is setting out to serve mammon, (Mat 6:24). Should the curse be delivered, the pagan alliance will likely resume its war against Israel (Josh 24:9).

Num 22:23-27 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. 25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. 26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. (KJV)

Presumably Balaam is guiding the ass, but he does not see the angel, though the ass does. God seems to be teaching Balaam that even a dumb ass has sense enough not to oppose God.

Num 22:28-30 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. 30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. (KJV)

God speaks to Balaam through his ass because he still doesn't get it. Balaam is intent upon getting on with his mission to earn his big money. That God is behind the incident he has no idea as yet.

Num 22:31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of

Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. (KJV)

Balaam falls on his face, apparently terrified that the angel is going to strike him dead. Is the object lesson that the dumb ass could see God's hand in the matter and the greatly esteemed spiritual leader could not? Peter says that, "...he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet" (2Pet 2:16, NKJ).

Num 22:32-33 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: 33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. (KJV)

The ass had saved Balaam's life three times over. Perhaps Balaam is beginning to think that he should have met God's condition before setting out for Moab. It was probably necessary for God to get his attention in no uncertain terms to prevent his cursing Israel and collecting his money. The way of Balaam, which is practiced, incidentally, by false teachers in God's churches today, is perverse before God, a perverted Gospel (see 2Pet 2, Jude, Rev 2, with Gal 1:7.)

Num 22:34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. (KJV)

Balaam figures out he shouldn't have beaten his ass. He even figures out that his mission may have displeased God, and offers to return. When he admits he had sinned, he is not truly repentant. He is merely sorry his plans weren't working out.

Num 22:35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. (KJV)

Now God commands that Balaam go with the men rather than making him return. Why? Balaam will learn no other way, so he must learn the hard way, but God forbids him to curse Israel contrary to God's blessing upon them. He has to learn that one cannot serve God and mammon, but only the one or the other, (Luke 16:13).

Num 22:36-38 And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast. 37 And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee?

wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour? 38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. (KJV)

When Balak remonstrates with him, Balaam protests that he has come, after all, presumably thus fulfilling his contract and qualifying for his reward. He has done the best he can, given the LORD's interference with his plans.

Num 22:39-41 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth. 40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. 41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people. (KJV)

They go to the "city of streets" where Balak lays on a welcoming party for Balaam and his entourage. The following day they go to a religious shrine to Baal on an eminence from which they may view the encampment of Israel.

Num 23:1-3 1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. 2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. 3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place. (KJV)

This seems rather a burlesque of the Levitical sacrifices, that they think may placate God. Some may have been sacrificed to Chemosh, the god of Moab, and some to God.

Num 23:4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. (KJV)

God meets with Balaam, Heb *karah*—to meet in a hostile sense. It is as though God is saying, "Well, I see you're still at it." Balaam thinks the sacrifices will appease God. He wants to stay in God's favor and still earn his rewards from Balak. This is the perennial quandary of the false minister: how can you have it both ways?

Num 23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. (KJV)

God commands Balaam to speak the word He gives him to speak—he is to pronounce blessings upon Israel, and not curses.

Num 23:7-10 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from

Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. 8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? 9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! (KJV)

Balaam technically obeys God. He gives them God's words along with his own disclaimer as to why he may not curse Israel. It is as though he would curse them if it were permitted him to do so.

Num 23:11-12 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. 12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth? (KJV)

When Balak remonstrates with him for blessing Israel, Balaam protests that the words are not his, but God's. "Blame God, not me," he seems to be saying, "just don't forget my paycheck." Balaam seems very apologetic about the word that God gives him to speak. His will is at loggerheads with that of God.

Num 23:13-15 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence. 14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. 15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder. (KJV)

Balak thinks if Balaam doesn't see all of Israel he may be able to curse them better. The sacrifice burlesque is re-enacted, exaggerated beyond anything God had commanded Israel.

Num 23:16-17 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. 17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken? (KJV)

Again God accosts Balaam and commands him what he is to say.

Num 23:18-24 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: 19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should re-

pent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. 22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. 23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! 24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. (KJV)

Balaam again delivers God's words and again pronounces his own disclaimer, saying, "He hath blessed; And I cannot reverse it." God had led Israel out of Egypt and was leading them still. But again, Balaam is doing his best to qualify for his reward within the restrictions God places upon him. His is the impossible task of the false minister: how to serve for money and yet remain in God's favor.

That there is no enchantment or divination against Israel seems to show that demonic powers have no power to reverse a blessing given by God. Whom is Balaam serving, after all?

Num 23:25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. (KJV)

Balak says in effect, "If you won't curse them, at least shut up!"

Num 23:26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do? (KJV)

Not "that I will do," but "that I must do." He would do something else if he could. Balaam protests in effect that he is doing all he can to earn his retainer.

Num 23:27-30 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence. 28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. 29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. (KJV)

They superstitiously rearrange their procedures, thinking that men's ceremonies might impress God if done properly. Maybe from the high place at

Peor... Once again they go through their sacrificial charade.

Num 24:1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. (KJV)

To seek for enchantments, Bullinger says, is to meet with familiar spirits (Deut 18:10,14). Divination is to attempt to foretell the future apart from revelation by God, also resorting to demons. Balaam had sought to divine Israel's demise for monetary reward, as well as seeking to God, but one can't go both ways. The way of Balaam was inspired by demonic powers, not by Power from on high.

Num 24:2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. (KJV)

God had spoken through a dumb ass, and He could speak through Balaam as well if He desired. God sends His Spirit upon Balaam to make him speak the word of God contrary to his will. How can Balaam be considered a true prophet of God when he is consorting with demonic powers and opposing God's will at every turn? He had to be compelled to speak the prophecies and blessings of God, and he remained an implacable enemy of Israel to the end, Num 31:8. Besides, God had said to him, "...thy way is perverse before me..." (Num 22:32).

Num 24:3-4 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: (KJV).

This is a religious formula Balaam uses, repeated with variation in v. 15-17. He seems to have been subject to trances and visions through demonic powers, but also seeking to be acceptable with God.

Num 24:5-9 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. 7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. 9 He couched, he lay

down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee. (KJV)

Under inspirational constraint from God, Balaam utters this beautiful prophecy concerning Israel.

Num 24:10-11 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. 11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour. (KJV)

Balak interrupts Balaam's recital of the prophecy. He is angry that Balaam has not cursed Israel, though he seems now to realize that it is because the LORD will not permit it. He threatens to cut Balaam's pay rather drastically.

Num 24:12-24 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, 13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak? 14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days. 15 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. 18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. 19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. 20 And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. 21 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. 22 Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. 23 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! 24 And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall af-

flict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever. (KJV)

Balaam has silver and gold on his mind again, and the worldly honor that Balak holds forth, and again he disclaims responsibility for the outcome—it is God's fault Israel is not cursed, not his. He resumes the parable God gave him to speak, the beautiful prophecy concerning Israel.

Num 24:25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way. (KJV)

Since Balak does not procure the curse against Israel, war between Israel and this pagan alliance is averted at this time.

Though not mentioned here, we learn elsewhere, in fact Jesus tells us in Rev 2:14, that there was further consultation between Balaam and Balak, "...Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (NKJ). There were therefore further meetings between Balaam and Balak, and Balaam probably, in the end, earned some of his coveted reward. By causing them to sin, they thought Israel would become disqualified to receive the blessings God had pronounced upon them, even since the time of Abraham.

Num 25:1-3 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. (KJV)

This is the result of the consultation between Balaam and Balak.

Israel defiles itself with the false mystery religion of Baalpeor. Though a major crisis is brought upon Israel, God does not withdraw the blessings He has pronounced upon them, nor will He ever.

Comment

In the letters to the churches in Asia, Jesus associates the doctrine of Balaam with that of the Nicolaitans, with that of the woman Jezebel, and by implication with that of the false church, the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2-3). Jude says that ungodly false ministers of Christ have run greedily after the error, the erroneous doctrine, of Balaam, for reward—for money (Jude 4,11,19). Peter says that the false teachers who make merchandise of God's people have gone astray after the way of Balaam, who sought the wages of unrighteousness, or, as the account in Numbers has it, the rewards of

divination (2Pet 2:1,3,15; Num 22:7).

Jesus speaks of Balaam's doctrine, Peter of Balaam's way, and Jude of Balaam's error. They all refer essentially to the same thing, the erroneous beliefs and consequent actions of the false teachers who trouble God's people. A doctrine is a teaching, and it reflects the thought process in the mind. A Spirit-led individual seeks to think as God does, and for that reason has great respect for God's word. He searches the Scriptures to learn truth—God's word is truth. A false teacher, on the other hand, includes foreign ideas or doctrines without labeling them as such, and uses the Scriptures as window dressing rather than as substantiation for his doctrine. A notable recent example of this is the manner in which the Worldwide Church of God ministry have revised several of their doctrines. For a blatant example of this kind of cavalier treatment of the Holy Scriptures, carefully analyze the "God Is..." booklet written by the late Joseph Tkach, Sr. False teachers condemn themselves by their own false doctrines.

It seems a bit strange at first that Jesus should bring up the doctrine of the somewhat obscure Old Testament false prophet Balaam as the example for and prototype of that of the false ministers who deceive His church. It is of primary importance therefore that we understand what the doctrine of Balaam is, and how we may avoid being deceived by it. The ancient doctrine of Balaam was being taught to churches in Asia by the Nicolaitans and the prophetess Jezebel, and by the synagogue of Satan, the false church posing as the church of God, but whose real god is the god of this world. The same doctrine is being taught today in the Churches of God, since the messages to the seven churches are prophetic and apply to us as well as to the seven churches in Asia. We need not cast about too long in searching out the doctrine of Balaam, for Jesus tells us what it is in Rev 2:14,20.

The doctrine of Balaam consists of three things Balaam taught Balac to do: 1) to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, 2) to eat things sacrificed to idols, and 3) to commit fornication (Rev 2:14). Balac corresponds to the false ministry trained in the doctrine of Balaam, as does the woman Jezebel in verse 20. Jezebel follows the same threefold program, revealed as the doctrine of Balaam, in verse 14. She is permitted in the church at Thyatira 1) to teach [sin], 2) to seduce the church to commit fornication, and 3) to eat things sacrificed to idols. Jesus holds Balac and Jezebel up as types of a false ministry and a false church.

False teachers in the Churches of God then, not necessarily the deceived church itself, hold to this threefold doctrine of Balaam, which 1) teaches spiritual Israel, the church, to sin, 2) eats that which is sacrificed to idols, and 3) commits spiritual fornication. One must distinguish carefully between the deceived churches of God and the false practitioners of the doctrine of Balaam who deceive them, between the congregations of God's churches and the false ministry who teach them to sin. It is the false ministry who teach, who eat, who commit fornication, according to the doctrine of Balaam, not the churches per se. The Balacian Balaamites, the Nicolaitans, the Jezebelites, the false priesthoods who seduce God's people—these are the synagogue of Satan as opposed to the true church of God, the "laity," whom they deceive, the scattered flock of Christ's pasture. They follow the way of Balaam, which is perverse before God (Num 22:32, Gal 1:6-7).

In order for the false ministry of the synagogue of Satan to eat things sacrificed to idols, they must first erect those idols and teach deceived Christians to sacrifice to them. This is the heart and core of the doctrine of Balaam—to erect idols for the churches of God to serve.

Modern practitioners of the doctrine of Balaam therefore erect corporate religious idols which they falsely denominate "Churches of God," to which the "laity," the sheep of Christ's pasture, are directed to sacrifice their substance in the form of monetary tithes, offerings, donations, and contributions. Thus they err in the doctrine of Balaam for reward. They cause the church of God to commit the sin of idolatry, the central feature of the religious system they espouse. Without it they could not maintain themselves by consuming that which is sacrificed unto their idols. In this manner the true church is led into sin and idolatry. Just recently we have been privileged to witness a veritable laboratory experiment in the erection of an elaborate religious idol, a so-called "Church of God," in the most recent breakaway from the Worldwide Church of God—what a travesty of God's true church! See the study on tithing in this series for proof that there is no scriptural authorization for corporate religious organizations billing themselves "Churches of God" to levy tithes on the incomes of their members. The ancient priesthood of Korah may be a prototype for many subsequent false religious organizations of men (see the study on Korah).

Individual Christians, who have been deceived

by false Church of God organizations to commit idolatry in this manner, have been inadvertently caused to sin, but all they need to do is to act on God's warning in Rev 18:4 and come out of such synagogues of Satan as practice the Babylonish doctrine of Balaam in order to make merchandise of them, and whose judgment of a long time lingereth not—"...Come out of her, my people..." The synagogue of Satan is just another name for the Babylonian Mystery system of religion through which Satan has elected to work since the time of ancient Babel. It is and always has been a cleverly corrupt and deceptive imitation of God's true religion. It is infinitely adaptable to all ages and societies of men and always seeks to deceive true worshippers of God into idolatry and sin. Often it has been outwardly successful, but God is not mocked and remains unwilling that any should perish, and His will shall prevail in the end.

Study #7: What Was "The Gainsaying of Korah" in Jude 11?

Kore (Engl. Core) [2879] is the Greek for the Heb. *Qorach* (Engl. Korah) [7139,7141]—to make bald.

Korah in the Scriptures

Ex 6:21,24 And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri... And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites. (KJV)

1Chr 6:22-24 The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, 23 Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Assir his son, 24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son, and Shaul his son. (KJV)

Here are listed several generations of the descendants of Kohath and of Korah. Korah's father, Izhar, was the brother of Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron (see. Ex 6). Korah seems to have become jealous of the leadership of Moses and the Priesthood of Aaron, though his was also a position of honor.

Num 16:1-4 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: 2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: 3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? 4 And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: (KJV)

Korah was of the Tribe of Levi; the others of the chief conspirators were of the Tribe of Reuben. Num 4:1-20 describes the assigned duties of the Kohathites. They were the porters whose job was to transport the tabernacle and its furniture under the direction of the priests.

Num 26:5-11 Reuben, the eldest son of Israel: the children of Reuben; Hanoch, of whom cometh the family of the Hanochites: of Pallu, the family of the Palluites: 6 Of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. 7 These

are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty. 8 And the sons of Pallu; Eliab. 9 And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the LORD: 10 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. 11 Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not. (KJV)

The Reubenite genealogy goes: Reuben—Pallu—Eliab—Dathan and Abiram. On is also a descendant of Reuben, though his exact genealogy is not given. Korah incited Dathan and Abiram, along with On. They “...strove against the LORD: And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up.” They also incited two hundred and fifty of the princes in Israel to join their rebellion.

Deut 11:1-8a Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. 2 And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm, 3 And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; 4 And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day; 5 And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; 6 And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel: 7 But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did. 8 Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day...(KJV)

God destroyed the land of the Egyptians, and, of the children of Israel, “...afterward destroyed them that believed not” (Jude 5). The LORD sent destruction into the camp of Israel in the incident of the golden calf (Ex 32:8-10, 26-33) and of the spies (Num 11:1-9), for example, as well as here in the instance of Korah’s rebellion (Num 16:49). God sent another plague upon Israel when it be-

came necessary to quell the idol worship of Baal-peor, the nefarious doctrine of Balaam and Balak (see the study on Balaam). The plagues God sent were punishment for following after false religions.

Num 16:5-7 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. 6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; 7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. (KJV)

Only the Aaronic priests were qualified to burn incense unto the LORD. These conspirators might have remembered that the LORD was very particular about who burned incense before Him and the manner in which it was done (see. Lev 10:1-11). They had set them-selves up in rivalry against the priesthood of Aaron, so Moses appeals to God to show who are His true ministry.

Num 16:8-11 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? 10 And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? 11 For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him? (KJV)

Korah and his fellow conspirators had set themselves up as a rival priesthood against the priesthood of Aaron which had been consecrated by the LORD (Lev 8:33). Here is the gainsaying of Korah written of by Jude (Jude 11). The LORD would show them whom He had chosen as His consecrated priesthood.

Num 16:12-14 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: 13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? 14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up. (KJV)

The rebels accused Moses of not keeping his promises, as though they were his words and not those of the LORD.

Num 16:15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. (KJV)

Though Moses was the meekest of men (Num 12:3), he could also become very angry. God's enemies had better stand by when they cause the meek of the earth to cry out to Him for justice. Moses asks God to respect not their offering, as He had not respected the offering of Cain (Gen 4:5).

Num 16:16,17 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow: (KJV) 17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. (KJV)

The ringleaders of the conspiracy were Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On. The two hundred and fifty were various discontented leaders of the children of Israel whom they had stirred up against Moses and Aaron, indeed against the LORD, as they soon found out.

Num 16:18-19 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. 19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. (KJV)

Korah and his organization were able to gather all the congregation of Israel against Moses and Aaron. They were false teachers, false prophets, a false ministry or priesthood come to offer incense before the LORD. The children of Israel were able to muster an army of some 600,000 men, so that their total population at that time must have been on the order of two to several millions. One may well imagine the kind of organized "Work" that would have been required in order to propagandize and subvert all Israel, as Korah and his conspirators were able to do (see Num 1:46; 26:51).

It would be interesting to know the percentages of truth and error employed in the ministry of Korah. 85% to 15%? Just a guess. False prophets always teach more truth than error, otherwise their false works would not be deceptive.

Num 16:20-24 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21 Separate yourselves

from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. 22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? 23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. (KJV)

Though it appeared that the entire congregation of Israel were against them, the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh [a phrase pregnant with meaning], was with Moses and Aaron. They sought unto the LORD and received His counsel.

Num 16:25-27 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. (KJV)

Moses warns of the coming destruction of the rebels, and the congregation heeds his warning and withdraws from them. The surviving sons of Korah also obviously must have believed Moses and withdrawn.

Num 16:28-34 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. 30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. 31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. (KJV)

What a display of divine retribution, that the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the ringleaders of the rebellion with all that appertained unto them in a few moments of time! Probably all

that was left was a big cloud of dust where their tents had stood. The “new thing” that God did was a sign that He had indeed sent Moses.

Num 16:35-40 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. 36 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. 38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. 39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: 40 To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses. (KJV)

The earth had not swallowed the two hundred and fifty who had presumed to offer incense before the LORD; they were consumed by a blast of fire from the LORD. Their censers became a sign and a memorial in Israel of false worship that the LORD would not accept.

Num 16:41-45 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD. 42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. 43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. 44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. (KJV)

It is a wonder that the LORD put up with this rebellious people as long as He did. He could have wiped them all out and started over with Moses and still fulfilled all the promises He had made to the fathers (see Ex 32:10). They accused Moses and Aaron of killing “...the people of the LORD...” apparently as yet unable to forego the idol worship of the conspirators, who had set up their false priesthood in rivalry against not only Moses and Aaron, but as a corporate idol in the place of the LORD (see the Nicolaitan study).

Although God had caused the earth to swallow

up the chief conspirators, and the false priesthood had been consumed by a blast of fire from the LORD, the people were yet so deceived by the gainsaying idolatry of Korah that they felt that his “Work” must by all means continue. Had the LORD not sent the plague among Israel to counter their folly, they likely would have spawned new leaders and resumed the rebellion preached by Korah.

Num 16:46-50 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. 47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. 48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. 49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah. 50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed. (KJV)

Rather than wiping Israel out, the LORD punished them by this plague. They may be said to have gotten off easy. By the means of this plague the LORD finally put down the rebellion stirred up by Korah and his false priesthood.

1Chr 6:31-38 And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. 32 And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order. 33 And these are they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel, 34 The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, 35 The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, 36 The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, 37 The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, 38 The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. (KJV)

Here is listed some more of the genealogy of Levi in which the line of Korah appears down to the time of King David.

1Chr 9:19 And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, were over the

work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, being over the host of the LORD, were keepers of the entry. (KJV)

The descendants of Korah are here fulfilling their proper functions in the service of the tabernacle.

2Chr 20:19-20 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high. 20 And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. (KJV)

Korah's descendants were gifted singers of psalms of praise to the LORD. Note that Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88 are songs for the sons of Korah.

Jude 1:11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. (KJV)

Part of Jude's indictment of the false teachers who creep unawares into the church of God. Gainsayers speak against, teach against, preach against the way of God, but present themselves as ministers of righteousness (2Cor 11:15).

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our LORD Jesus Christ. (KJV)

These are the ungodly men who creep into the church of God, and who are ordained to perish in the gainsaying of Core.

Jude 1:19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. (KJV)

These ungodly gainsayers are imposters or false ministers who have not the Spirit of God, otherwise they would fear to set up false ministries to exploit God's people, and they would understand that by so doing they make themselves prime candidates for condemnation (Jas 3:1, Jude 4).

Comment

The word "gainsaying" is the Gr. *antilogos* [485] – contradiction, strife, from the Gr. *antilego* [483] – answer again, contradict, deny, speak against.

In the gainsaying of Korah, he and his party rose up and gathered themselves together against

Moses and Aaron, actually against the LORD (Num 16:2-3). God obviously did not call them; they rose up of their own will and volition. Like all false prophets, they ran, though God had not sent them (Jer 23:21).

Korah's motivation for rebellion must have been emotional in nature, because one cannot logically oppose God. He appears to have grown envious of the important positions given to his cousins, Moses and Aaron, and to have rationalized this emotion into conscious arguments that seemed plausible to him. Since rationalization takes place largely at the subconscious level, he may even have convinced himself that he was serving God. False religions are always illogical at bottom, but they throw up a cloud of religious doctrines to obscure this fact, and employ enough truth to obfuscate their error. The false priesthood raised up by Korah and the conspirators had the entire congregation of Israel bamboozled for awhile, just as the many would later follow the pernicious ways of the false teachers who would creep into the church (2Pet 2:1-2). Uninformed people may allow themselves to be led like dumb sheep, but woe betide the false ministers and false prophets who rise up to deceive and exploit them, as Korah found out in the end (see Jude 11).

The gainsaying or opposition of Korah gives us some in-sight into the genesis and formation of a false religious ministry or priesthood, somewhat by way of contrast to the way of Cain and the error of Balaam. The Bible does not tell us whether Cain instituted a false religion, though he of course lived hundreds of years, and who knows what all he may have done? Balaam was a high priest of the ancient Babylonian Mysteries, long since established, and we have to look to secular history and classic studies in order to augment our understanding of it, and its influence on the activities of the prophet. In the history of the rebellion of Korah, however, we are given an outline of the method he employed in the establishment of a false priesthood in rivalry against that of Aaron.

The Machinations of Korah

The sense of Num 16:1 (see Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*) is that Korah took Dathan, Abiram, and On, of the Tribe of Reuben, and used them to carry out the activity in verse two, which was to organize the two hundred and fifty malcontented leaders or princes in the congregation of Israel for the purpose of opposing Moses and Aaron, actually God. They disparage the priest-

hood of the LORD, and proclaim that they are equally holy. In verses five through seven, it becomes apparent that they have set themselves up as a rival priesthood to that of Aaron, so that Moses has to appeal to the LORD to show whom He would choose. Moses reminds them (v.9) that God has already separated them for important work about the tabernacle, and then he asks, “...seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron that ye murmur against him?” The conspirators then, were obviously in process of establishing themselves as another priesthood to supplant that of Aaron. Moses appeals the decision to God, and the next day the organization of Korah musters the entire congregation of Israel against the LORD (v.19).

In the history of Korah, we see a sort of natural progression in the genesis of a false priesthood, which may be applicable to the development of false religions in general. The process begins in Korah’s mind when his envy of Moses and Aaron is rationalized into plausible sounding reasons why he himself is as well qualified as they, perhaps better qualified, to lead the congregation of Israel. The next step is to confer with Dathan, Abiram, and On and plot together with them the course their rebellion should take. Korah’s inner circle then branches out by recruiting the two hundred and fifty rebellious, malcontented princes of the assembly to join them in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They no doubt organize themselves into a pecking order or hierarchy:

Korah—his three Reubenite lieutenants—the princes of the assembly. With this incipient organization of power brokers in place, their work becomes the subversion of the entire assembly of Israel by means of a campaign of advertising, or teaching of their religious propaganda and false doctrines, throughout the congregation, for they constitute in fact a false religion as well as an alternate political system to that established by God through Moses. Their work was designed to influence the entire congregation of Israel in the wilderness to side with them in their rebellion, and like a bunch of dumb sheep, the people seem to have followed their pernicious ways, no doubt providing financing as well—this false religious priesthood would have required material assistance from the people to support themselves and to carry on their “Work.”

Korah’s rebellion would thus have bifurcated itself into priesthood and laity, leaders and follow-

ers, into a hierarchy of false teachers or priests and a multitude or laity of deceived followers to support them. The system worked so successfully because it based itself on the manner in which the natural or carnal mind operates apart from God’s Spirit. A mind bereft of the Spirit, or that elects not to follow its lead, has ultimate recourse to its own unconscious and un-reasoned emotional or intuitive desires; it elects to do as it pleases first, and to rationalize its feelings later by hook or by crook. It elects to do what feels right. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death...” (Pr 14:12; 16:25). The rebellion of Korah ultimately became so successful that the LORD had to intervene in order to preserve the work He was doing through Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood.

There are doubtless many other lessons to be learned from the gainsaying of Korah, and many parallels that may be drawn to it in subsequent similar instances, both anciently and in our own day, but that task may be left to the reader in his personal study.

In Perspective

In three separate studies I have taken the pains to trace out in the Scriptures the threefold indictment made in Jude 11 against the ungodly men, the false teachers who have crept in unawares to deceive the church of God: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah,” (Jude 11).

The Balaam and Nicolaitan studies are concerned with tracing out the error of Balaam. I began there because both the LORD and the apostle Peter join with Jude in condemning the error of Balaam (2Pet 2; Rev 2). His way is shown to be a singularly self-willed determination to use his religious position and prestige in the pursuit of personal gain, of reward or of money, though one cannot serve God and mammon, but must choose one or the other. The pursuits are mutually contradictory. It is a matter of setting one’s priorities, a matter of where one places one’s faith, whether in the LORD or in the profit to be gathered by the promotion of the false tithing doctrine they invariably employ. Balaam failed the test as do the ungodly men of whom Jude writes—with them, money wins hands down. They somehow manage to rationalize the conflict that arises in the mind, and to convince themselves that they can serve God and still make lots of money doing it, as Ba-

laam tried to do. It doesn't work that way, as they will learn in the end. Such Nicolaitans may not be expected to change their ways, but we need not follow.

Next I looked into the Scriptural references to the way of Cain, a short study, because the Bible doesn't record very much about him. He too was strongly self-willed and determined to do his own thing. He does not accept correction from God. He manages to rationalize his envy of his brother and his righteous life into what he thinks is justification for murder, and seems to have thought he was getting away with it until God called him on it, "...Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen 4:9). Cain tries to lie out of it, and then complains that his punishment is too severe, though he was worthy of death. He may have thought he should acquire Abel's possessions upon his death, but God sends him away. The way of Cain was a way of self-willed rebellion against the LORD, and of jealousy and hate against his brother. Of course we have only the merest outline to go by.

The speaking-against or gainsaying of Korah was also a matter of self-willed rebellion against God, as we have seen. He too rationalizes his envy into a feeling of justification for inciting rebellion by means of the rival priesthood he raises up to oppose the Aaronic Priesthood established by the LORD. His motivations parallel those of Cain and of Balaam.

Self-will, self-deception, deceiving of others as accomplices and supporters, desire for power and prestige, the love of money, rebellion against the LORD and the restraints He places on their personal conduct, the determination to do what one feels like doing—these are brought out as motivating factors in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Korah, as well as in the ways of the ungodly men who creep into the church in order to exploit God's people. All such have in common that, despite all their pious religious protestations to the contrary, they have not the Spirit of God (Jude 19), as becomes apparent when we research their false doctrines. The lesson for us is, if we have the Spirit of God, let us by all means be led by it (Rom 8:14).

Study #8: Teachers

Selected Scriptures on False Teachers

Isa 9:14-16 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. 15 The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. 16 For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. (KJV)

In God's sight, false prophets who teach lies are the tail and not the head of spiritual Israel, due to their depraved moral condition. They set themselves up as prestigious spiritual leaders, but God views them quite differently.

Jer 5:11-13 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. 12 They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: 13 And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. (KJV)

Jer 6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. (KJV)

Jeremiah prophesies of false prophets in Israel, empty windbags characterized by deceit and covetousness.

Jer 23:21-22 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (KJV)

False teachers do not stand wholly in God's counsel, and cause His people to hear all His words. These verses show that it is the word of God that converts us, not the prophet who teaches it.

Ezk 12:24-25 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the LORD GOD. (KJV)

Webster's dictionary defines "divination" as "the foretelling of the future or discovery of that which is hidden". Some false ministers are diviners, or false prophets, with their own private visions and ambitions. The LORD God will be our

Teacher as we apply ourselves diligently to the Spirit-led study of His word.

Ezk 14:9-11 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him; 11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the LORD GOD. (KJV)

How is it that God has deceived false prophets who in turn deceive others, and yet says of them, “They shall bear the punishment of their iniquity...”? The answer has to be that they had their choice, that they need not have chosen deceit; they could have chosen honesty. In other words, though they knew what God’s Word requires of them, they elected to circumvent it or to place their private interpretations upon it. In this manner they chose rebellion rather than obedience. Why should God then not send delusion upon them, since they elect to compromise His Holy Word? If they elect to defile their own consciences, to rationalize the desires of their own stubborn wills against the Word of God, why should He not send them confusion and let them turn away to erroneous fables? He seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, not those who want to play games with His Holy Word.

God warns us not to be deceived, which would indicate that we have a choice and a responsibility to guard our minds against deception (see Deut 11:16; 1Cor 6:9; 15:33; Gal 6:7). To those who elect to become deceived, He sends confusion (Isa 66:3-4; Jer 4:10; 2Thes 2:11).

Hos 9:7-9 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. 8 The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. 9 They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins. (KJV)

The latter day prophets of Israel are iniquitous fools, corrupt spiritual leaders who serve a god of hate rather than of love—their day of reckoning approaches. As to the manner in which such corrupt themselves, refer to the account of Gibeah in

Judges 19:22p.

Mic 2:11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people. (KJV)

Mic 3:11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. (KJV)

False prophets come teaching lies; they “judge for reward,” “teach for hire,” and “divine for money,” but claim that God has sent them.

Mat 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (KJV)

Jesus warns of false teachers claiming to represent Him, but deceiving the many. They would deceive you, i.e. the church of God.

Acts 13:6-8 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. (KJV)

Webster’s dictionary defines “sorcery” as “witchcraft, magic” and “magic” as “the pretended art of controlling the supernatural, sorcery; legerdemain; charm, enchantment” and “enchantment” as a “magic spell”. Some false prophets have these powers through evil spirits. Elymas means a wizard. He was a false prophet or magician who withstood the truth brought by the apostles.

Acts 20:25-31 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (KJV)

v. 17 “And from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church,” and v. 25 “...ye all...shall see my face no more.” There were apparently three or more elders in the church at Ephesus, whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers and teachers of the flock, but destructive wolves would enter the church, and false teachers would arise from among themselves who would pursue their own perceived self-interest at the expense of the flock. Note that it is God who raises up elders, not men.

Paul taught “...all the counsel of God.” He did not leave out parts of it that did not suit his convenience, and distort or pervert other parts of it as the false prophets do (v.27, see also Jer 23:21-22).

Rom 16:17-18 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our LORD Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (KJV)

False teachers are deceivers who live after the flesh, serving their own carnal appetites, living sumptuously. Such false ministers are the real source of the confusion arising in the Churches of God. They specialize in goodly words and fair speeches without getting to the intended sense of the Scriptures they use, but rather deceptively incorporating erroneous teachings from other sources.

2Cor 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (KJV)

Ministers of Satan preach another Jesus and another gospel, and are led by another spirit, yet they enter God’s true church and pose as true ministers of Jesus Christ. Such are in fact ministers of the demonic synagogue of Satan as opposed to the true church of God (Rev 2-3).

Gal 1:6-8 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (KJV)

False teachers pervert the Gospel of Christ to suit their own ends. They incorporate their per-

verse errors into the Gospel of Christ, and leave us with the hard task of discerning and discarding their errors while holding fast to the truth. False teachers follow the way of Balaam, to whom God said, “...thy way is perverse before me...” (Num 22:32, 2Pet 2:1,15).

1Tim 1:5-7 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; 7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. (KJV)

False teachers are devoid of real understanding; their teachings are vain jangling, words without substance. Theirs is a pretended faith, proceeding from an impure heart and a defiled conscience. They are showmen, putting on a pious act.

1Tim 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (KJV)

That false teachers speak lies in hypocrisy tells us that they know better, but they persist in evil for ulterior motives not far to seek. The pagan priesthood of Jeroboam also served demons, as these do (2Chr 11:15).

In commenting on these verses, Bullinger says: “Evil angels or demons teach by their mediums...their teachings were then rife, as they are today. There is great need for this ‘spiritual gift’ of the ‘discerning of spirits’ (1Cor 7:10) of which [Paul] had written...Evil spirits are abroad in the earth; and as some are ‘more wicked’ than others, some also must be less wicked than others. Some teach foul and unclean things; others teach doctrines that sound so good, and appear so fair, and seem so holy, that many are deceived by them; and hesitate even to judge them, though they ‘discern’ them sufficiently to be suspicious of them...” (“Word Studies on the Holy Spirit” pp.144-45). It ought to be sobering indeed to bethink ourselves that our favorite false minister could in fact be a medium through whom an evil spirit, posing as a minister of righteousness, is teaching us false doctrines, or doctrines of demons.

1Tim 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our LORD Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and

destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (KJV)

False teachers suppose that gain is godliness, i.e. that the salaries they extort from illicit tithe and offering money are a blessing from God. These verses describe the substance of a false minister's ministry and the characteristic content of his sermons. Their perverse disputings arise from the way of Balaam that they follow (Num 22:32).

2Tim 3:1-9 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. (KJV)

2Tim 3:13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. (KJV)

Paul prophesies concerning false teachers in the last days, who would seduce believers from the truth. Here again he describes the ministries and careers of such men. We are to turn away from such as these, who are lovers of themselves rather than of the church of God whom they would deceive.

Titus 1:10-16 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. 12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. 15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. 16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (KJV)

False teachers profess to know God, but their works deny Him. They teach things they ought not to teach, and that for hire (2Pet 2:3, Jude 1:11).

2Pet 2:1-22 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the LORD that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. 4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) 9 The LORD knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. 11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the LORD. 12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; 13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; 14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: 15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. (KJV)

This entire chapter is a portrayal of the false teachers of the church of God and, like Jude, is an eloquent and scathing indictment. These are not preachers in the world's Churches, but within the church of God—read it carefully. “An heart they have exercised with covetous [greedy, idolatrous] practices.” This reveals their motivation, their imagined self-interest, as the way of Balaam.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (KJV)

God's people can discern false prophets by what they preach. All they have to do is compare with the Word of God, but they need to be diligently about their homework. John here seems to confirm Paul's assessment (2Cor 11:13-15) that false ministers may in fact be mediums through whom demons teach perverse errors. We are therefore to try or test the spirits of our teachers before accepting their doctrines.

Jude 1:3-18 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our LORD Jesus Christ. 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the LORD, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness

unto the judgment of the great day. 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. 8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The LORD rebuke thee. 10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core. 12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. 17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our LORD Jesus Christ; 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. (KJV)

This is a parallel chapter to 2Pet 2, written against false teachers who infiltrate the church of God. It is false ministers such as these, also portrayed in 2Pet 2, who have brought about the ongoing crises in the Church of God organizations. Verse 13 seems to refer to the demons who speak through these ungodly false ministers.

Jude 19 is one of the most startling Scriptures in the Word of God, once one has arrived at an understanding of just who these Balaamite imposters are against whom he so vigorously protests throughout his epistle. These false teachers, who so greedily make merchandise of God's people (2Pet 2:1,3,15), Jude says, “...be they who separate

themselves [playing the “big shot”], sensual [fleshly, carnal], having not the Spirit.”

Peter says they “...with feigned words make merchandise of you...” you who “...have obtained like precious faith with us...” (2Pet 2:3; 1:1). If Jude’s charge be true, and we know it is, that these false ministers have not the Spirit of God, by what spirit do they speak? Paul, of course, provides an answer in 2Cor 11:13-15, as does John, indirectly, in 1Jn 3:12. Many other Scriptures describe these false ministers and priesthoods, if we but have the wit to see—the Power from on High granted to the royal priesthood we are privileged to be.

Rev 2:14-16 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (KJV)

Jesus warns us against the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which are taught by false ministers, who are of the synagogue of Satan, though they pose as true ministers of God. Jesus accuses them of idolatry and fornication.

Rev 2:20-23 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (KJV)

Jesus warns against the false prophetess Jezebel, symbolic of false Churches that teach the same idolatry mentioned in verse 14, the doctrine of Balaam—to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Individual Christians need to make certain they are not being taken in by such deceptive synagogues of Satan that pose as churches of God.

Comment

The cited Scriptures are representative of what the Bible has to say about false religious teachers.

There is a tendency to believe that false teachers are in the “world’s” religious denominations and that God’s true ministers are in charge of the Churches of God. But Peter makes plain that “there shall be false teachers among you,” the true believers in the church of God. If we are going to face up to the truth of this matter, we will have to admit that these false teachers populate the Church of God organizations and hierarchies that set themselves up as teachers and overseers over God’s people—converted Christians, the sheep of Christ’s pasture. These are the false teachers against whom the Bible is so adamantly opposed, hirelings who are willing to preach what their organizations instruct them to preach in return for lucrative salaries. They teach for hire, judge for reward, and divine for money, as they make merchandise of you, the church of God scattered abroad. False ministers function as Nicolaitans, as Balaamites, or as a combination of the two. Nicolaitans, victors over the people, specialize in teaching authoritarianism and Church government or governance over the laity. Balaamites, the money-raisers, teach sending monetary sacrifices, “tithes and offerings,” in to the Church’s central offices at corporate headquarters. The membership are expected to acquiesce to these false doctrines like a bunch of dumb sheep, and many continue to do so. See the accompanying studies on ordination, tithing, the Nicolaitans, and Balaam concerning these false priesthoods, who constitute in fact a synagogue of Satan bereft of the Spirit of God. The study on Korah examines the genesis of such a false priesthood.

Teaching from God, Selected Scriptures

Ps 71:17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. (KJV)

God was David’s teacher (Pslm 119).

Isa 54:13 And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. (KJV)

The LORD will teach Israel when He re-gathers them to the land.

Jer 31:33-34 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of

them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (KJV)

The LORD teaches us by writing His laws in our hearts. Men do not need to be taught by other men when God teaches them.

John 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. (KJV)

God is our teacher, as He was David's. We are to learn from God's word, for Jesus said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me" (John 5:40).

John 16:13; Rom 8:14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

(For "he" read "it.") Here is the process of true education, which is not available to the ungodly men who would set themselves up as our teachers (Jude 4,11,19). True education is a product of the Spirit, the Power of God from on high working in our minds and hearts.

Gal 1:11-12 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Paul was not taught the gospel by men, but by Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:17-25 This I say therefore, and testify in the LORD, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (KJV)

The truth is in Jesus, and we need to be taught by Him alone, through His written word. He ordained His apostles for that reason. We are to trust in the teachings of men only insofar as their teachings are confirmed by the Word of God (1Cor

11:1; 1Thes 1:6).

Acts 15:19-20, 28-29 "...[James'] sentence is that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood...For it seemed good to the Holy [Spirit], and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication..."

The Jerusalem meeting deals with other issues besides the topic of circumcision, as is mentioned in James' summation and in the subsequent letter to the gentile converts. The greater concern seems to be with the subjects of idolatry, unclean meats, and fornication. Note that Jesus is concerned with similar problems in the letters to Pergamos and Thyatira (Rev 2:14,20). There may be more here than meets the casual eye. (See other studies in this series.)

1Thes 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

God teaches Christians to love one another by His Spirit of love within them.

1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (KJV)

The Spirit-led individual needs no man to be his teacher, Heb 5:12 "...ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" [as in 6:1-2]. There is no real contradiction of course. Babies need to be led to Christ, and then they can make it on their own, as the Ethiopian eunuch did. False teachers would have us believe we can't do for ourselves. One may well wonder how many of us really believe the beloved old apostle, the one who reclined on Jesus' bosom, who said that the Holy Spirit in us teaches us so that we need defer to no self-proclaimed teacher or submit to his pretended ascendancy over us? Yet since apostolic times Nicolaitan false religious teachers of idolatry have set themselves up over the "laity," the "dumb sheep" of Christ's pasture, in the phrase of Herbert W. Armstrong, in order to make merchandise of them. Such false ministers, who deal in the truth of God for the purpose of fleecing believers of their substance, are in fact pitiable, for they sell out their eternal salvation for

a mess of sacrificial pottage. It remains the duty and obligation of each individual Christian to discern between the true ministers of Jesus Christ and the false. False ministries of Satan interpose themselves as mediating priesthoods between the laity and the corporate idols they erect as their objects of worship.

Mat 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, (KJV)

This is our great Teacher, and for the next three chapters He lays out the “Constitution” of His program for us. The entire Bible is His word, what need have we of men to teach us? All they can do is give us their impressions of what they think the Bible says—we can however think for ourselves just as well as they can—perhaps better.

Origin of False Teachers

In the light of the above-cited Scriptures, it may be profitable to look into the origin of false teachers—where do they come from? Jude tells us that ungodly men have crept into the church teaching lies for gain. They are of the sort who creep into houses after silly and sinful women (2Tim 3:6). Such false teachers correspond to the false prophets of the Old Testament (2Pet 2:1).

God did not send false prophets (Jer 23:21-22), but they showed up anyway (Mic 2:11). They

come in Jesus’ name, but seek to deceive (Mt 24:4-5). They either enter in from without or arise spontaneously from within the church (Acts 20:29-30). In the former case, they never had the Spirit of God, and in the latter they have lost it by turning from the faith to their own perversions. They serve not Christ, but themselves; they deceive as false ministers with “good words and fair speeches” (Rom 16:18). As Jesus sent forth His true apostles, so Satan has sent forth his false apostles, teaching deceits but appearing righteous and holy (2Cor 11:13-15). Such are ministers of Satan, whether they arise from within the church or come from without. Some, having swerved from the faith, are unable to profitably instruct others, their words becoming mere vain jangling (1Tim 1:6-7). They do not understand the Scriptures they purport to teach, yet they set themselves up as our leaders. Some, having departed from the truth, teach demonic distortions of Scripture (1Tim 4:1). Such false teachers have forsaken the right way and gone astray; they have polluted the knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ with error (2Pet 2:15,20). These false prophets are motivated by evil spirits, not by the Spirit of God (1Jn 4:1). We need to discern these evil spirits by testing them against the truth of the Scriptures. Do we really want to know, or do we prefer to remain mesmerized by these sorcerers? The writer may not presume to judge them, but the Word of God does.

Personal Analysis: The Church of God Organizations

This section is a personal analysis by one who feels entitled to speak out after investing a quarter century and some tens of thousands of dollars in the Church of God organizations. I have done my time, and I have paid my dues. These are “Bible Churches” that provide a good deal of biblical grounding, according to their lights. One must appreciate that, even after having outgrown them.

The term “cult” as generally used is so vague as not to be very useful. In general it is used to mean a relatively small religion whose doctrinal tenets are at variance with mainstream Christianity. This is not much of a description. The word is almost an epithet to be branded upon any small religious system one happens to disagree with. A cult may be viewed as any small religion liable to suffer adverse criticism and persecution at the hands of other religions or government. Strictly speaking, a cult is any religion where the membership submit themselves to the authoritarian control of their leadership. One remembers the SDA Branch Davidians burned out by the federal government. Truth is the proper corrective for error, and all religions may profit more from liberal dosages of it than from hate and persecution. How much easier it is to brand them cults and seek to eliminate them. I use the term cult to mean any small religion. This would include Sabbath-keeping Christian groups, who are in the minority, even though they are correct, according to their limited understanding of the Scriptures, and the mainstream Christian religions wrong. This definition would therefore include the Seventh Day Adventist Church, although it has a membership of nearly ten million worldwide. It also includes the Sabbatarian Churches of God that have proliferated in the Twentieth Century. They are of primary interest in this paper. I will refer to them as the CCGs, the Cultic Churches of God, not in a pejorative sense, but as a matter of convenient reference. My apprenticeship, so to speak, was served under these religious organizations.

Modus Operandi

The Church of God cults seem to have split away from or to have been associated with the

Seventh Day Adventists during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Such CCGs seem to arise when men perceive that a corner on the truth may be exploited as an avenue to personal prestige, power, and wealth. The classic example for the Twentieth Century was Herbert W. Armstrong. To understand how a man accomplishes this end, one should read Mr. Armstrong’s writings including his autobiography, and also the writings of his critics, especially those who were members of his religion, the Worldwide Church of God, and thus privy to its inner workings.

The paradox in the modus operandi of such men as HWA, is that they employ the truth of the Bible to attain personal ends. The ends are personal advantage, power, and wealth; the means are the preaching of the Gospel truth, subtly intermixed with half-truth and error. These men engage in a process which operates as a sort of cultic blitzkrieg that takes in prospective acolytes by a storm of biblical doctrine, much of which happens to be true and recognizable as such by many nominal Christians. HWA and his spiritual successors employ the truth of the Bible for the purpose of deception—whether intentionally or not is not mine to judge. One might expect that at least at some point these vaunted, self-proclaimed religious experts would become conscious of the errors they perpetrate, and boldly begin to make the indicated corrections. Realistically, however, there is no way any of these religious corporations are going to forego the doctrine of Balaam they have perversely incorporated into their core beliefs and teachings (see the studies on Balaam and on the Nicolaitans). To do so would be to put themselves out of business.

Although the CCGs are usually maligned by their enemies as cults that have departed in some measure from sound biblical doctrine, the reverse is often the case. The Protestant Reformation stopped short of making all the corrections it might have to the abuses of Catholicism. The various Protestant Churches are halfway houses between Scholastic Catholicism and original Bible doctrine. The Reformation, and the Counter-reformation as well, made many needed corrections to pre-Lutheran Catholicism, but neither turned back again to “primitive” Christianity as presented in the New Testament.

The typical cultic blitzkrieg artist seizes upon a number of sound, and some not so sound, biblical doctrines that are not taught, or not emphasized, by the mainstream religions. These selected beliefs

become the core of the cultic religious blitz. Some of the doctrines may be outlined in a statement of beliefs, but crucial doctrines are suppressed. To spell these out would jeopardize the wellbeing, and perhaps the continued existence, of the church organization. Some of these subjects are addressed in other studies in this series. Clarification of these omitted doctrines, notably on ordination of elders and on tithing, would bear unfavorably upon the modus operandi of the cultic leadership and its organization. It would not do to call into question the very legitimacy of “the Work” itself or the manner in which it perpetuates itself. These things have to appear plausible and self-evident to the laity without reference to the more embarrassing scriptural facts. Tithes and offerings, contributions and donations, need to be kept coming in to the corporate P.O. Box number in order sustain “the Work.” One suspects that the Church leadership is well aware of these problems but disinclined for obvious reasons to dwell upon them, a disingenuous position, to say the least.

As the cultic leadership builds up a body of faithful followers, it establishes a “Work” that employs radio, television, and digital and print communications, to preach its tailored version of the Gospel of Christ to the world. Typically this gospel will include Sabbath keeping with area members; observance of the Levitical holy days at designated sites; observance of the Ten Commandments; exclusivity to some degree, the CCG seen as the “true Church”; the tithing principle as incumbent upon the laity; authoritative Church government emanating from a central headquarters, said to be based on that of Israel in the wilderness; spiritual rulership over the laity by the cultic leadership, who employ a hierarchical organization of dependent priests or “elders” who must be “ordained” by the Church leadership; and often some form of the idea of the British-Israel interpretation of history, as well as many doctrines provable from the Scriptures. In practice the upper echelons of the Church organization draw six-figure salaries out of the tithe and offering money contributed by the laity, often at great sacrifice to themselves and to their families. This is, of course, the object of the entire exercise in the first place. The higher up the organization a Church elder can work his way, the more remunerative his position becomes, and the less likely he is to rock the boat by the preaching of unfortunate biblical doctrines contrary to those dictated by Church headquarters. These men are bought and paid for by the Church leadership, whores, in ef-

fect, who devour widow’s houses but do nothing to jeopardize their heady positions and lucrative salaries. The cultic blitz is thus not only designed to lock members into the CCG, but also to lock Church officials and ordained “elders” into its hierarchical structure.

The cultic blitzkrieg is a spiritual assault upon a prospective convert’s current system of beliefs. He is led to suspect that he has been heretofore deceived by ministers of Satan the devil, but has now been given opportunity to turn to the real truth, the plain truth, as taught by God’s “True Church.” As god of this world, the devil is said to be the real power behind the Christian Churches—all except one—which of course turns out to be the CCG fomenting the blitz. Should one have had faith in God previously to one’s coming in contact with the CCG, it didn’t count. Without proper guidance one would have failed to have properly interpreted and to have adequately understood biblical doctrine. Had one previously undergone baptism, even by immersion, it too would have been invalid, not having been properly performed by a representative of the CCG—it would have been merely a dunking. One could not have received the Holy Spirit from another Church, since it was transferable only by the laying on of the hands of a CCG representative who had received it in a line of direct unbroken succession from the hands of the original apostles themselves. After entering into the CCG, the convert’s eternal salvation resided in the hands of an exclusive mystical priesthood, as it were, who had power not only to effect the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon one by the laying on of their hands, but also the power to revoke it by means of disfellowshipment or excommunication, should the convert incur their displeasure.

The process of conversion as practiced in a CCG invariably includes instruction in regard to the necessity of tithing one’s income to the Church in order not to become guilty of robbing God, which they construe to mean withholding solicited tithes and offerings from the CCG concerned. In line with the deception they practice, they all, without exception, purport to be churches of God—never synagogues of Satan. The diabolical facility with which extensive bodies of biblically sound doctrine are subtly corrupted by the admixture of self-serving error in these Church organizations is little short of amazing. The object seems to be that the laity become so pre-occupied with the wonderful truths of the Bible that they fail to notice the perverse error that is incorporated therein

by a self-serving ministry. In a larger view, it would appear that all religions, the COGs included, are founded upon bodies of truth afflicted by the cancer of error. A dynamic Christian faith has to be continually combating and freeing itself from error, particularly the error of Balaam that seeks its reward at others' detriment and expense. It needs the full armor of God (Eph 6:10-17).

It is the writer's conviction that real Christianity is a process that occurs in an individual's mind, essentially without regard to the outward trappings of religion. Basically an educational process, one's faith should be continually changing and growing rather than being frozen in place by an incomplete creed or statement of beliefs. A faith that ignores, omits, or suppresses truth it does not want to consider goes around in circles rather than pursuing its legitimate goal, which is a more perfect knowledge of the truth of the Word of God. The Bible states our beliefs, our task is to come to a proper understanding of the Scriptures. The Christian, as defined in Romans eight, has no need for a cultic priesthood to mediate for him with God as formalized religions need him to assume. He needs no Roman Catholic priesthood, no Protestant clergy, no CCG hierarchy to oversee his practice of his personal religious convictions. All he needs is his own Bible and his own informed conscience. If he has a group of likeminded brethren to meet with, so much the better, but even then, such a group should conduct their own affairs democratically, without submission to any attempted religious organizational control over them.

The CCG cultic blitzes are mixtures of sound, provable biblical doctrines and erroneous teachings purported to be biblically sound. These religions teach Sabbath-keeping, observing the Ten Commandments, observing of the annual Sabbaths, and usually a variant of British Israelism, as well as many other biblical truths. Along with these they preach erroneous doctrines such as their own exclusivity as God's true church, and especially their duty to garner tithes and offerings from the laity in order to carry on "the Work." These and other self-serving errors are so closely intertwined with true doctrines, and so often reiterated in weekly sermons, that cultic converts take them as points of sound basic doctrine. This is what happens when the blind set themselves up as leaders of the blind—see Jesus' parable in Luke 6:39. Such neophytes are in effect indoctrinated, and in practice submit their thought processes and wallets to the work, content that they have at last found God's

"true Church." Once so hooked, a convert dare not leave the CCG lest his eternal salvation become forfeit upon his subsequent disfellowshipment. As a critic has well said in summarizing the CCGs, the believer's expected role is to stay, pay, pray, and obey, and he will do exactly that unless and until his eyes are opened by an often painful and somewhat traumatic experience, such as learning unfortunate, disquieting truths or becoming disfellowshipped from the Church. The psychic trauma arises from the fear that, upon separation from the cult, one becomes thereby deprived of one's eternal salvation.

The Way Out

Having come through both the Protestant and CCG mills, the writer's present conviction is that ministers who solicit tithe money are invariably untrustworthy. The most blatant examples may be the televangelists who have been caught practicing adultery or sex perversions, or even outright fraud for which they have gone to jail. They fooled a lot of people for a lot of years, but in the end their fruits have made them known as Jesus said they would, Mat 7:15-20. But one may not have to wait until obvious fruits make them known in order to figure out who they are. If they solicit one's tithes and offerings, they are ipso facto, false ministers. They are described in Jude and 2 Peter 2. The other studies in this series lend added credence to the allegations put forward here.

The thesis of these Eight Studies is that the scattered membership of the church of God, the true body of Christ, has had a stumbling-block cast before it, causing it to sin. That stumbling-block is idol worship. We have engaged in a cultic worship of corporate religious idols that have been erected by false teachers or priesthoods, who are a modern counterpart of the ancient sect of the Nicolaitans, who promote the age-old doctrine of Balaam in modern guise. Why else would Jesus single these out in Revelation 2? And why do Peter and Jude inveigh so eloquently against them? The manner in which they have made merchandise of us is spelled out in these studies and so need not be reiterated here. The Cultic Churches of God, on this view, are so many corporate idols, creatures of the synagogue of Satan, that have been reared up in the place of the true God—and how reluctant we are to give up our idols!

The WCG corporate idol has been broken. We often hear that somewhere along the way the WCG ceased to be the true church of God. The true

church must have moved somewhere else, we think. It has moved from Pasadena to Tyler, to Edmond, to San Diego, to Arcadia, or to some other remote location. God has now apparently decided that He must work through a different corporate entity rather than the WCG. We tend to feel that we must by all means find the “right” religious corporation, in effect a new idol to serve. When our old idol gets smashed, we scurry about to find a new one to take its place in our affections. We become acutely uncomfortable without a reassuring religious corporation to which we may yield ourselves docile subjects, even as the children of Israel yielded themselves subservient to the false priesthood of Korah (Num 16).

We must give up our idols, our CCGs. We need to realize that God works in individual minds and hearts as we yield to Him, and not in religious corporate entities that seek ascendancy over God’s people. The reader is requested to prayerfully consider these studies, accepting such truth as is presented, and honestly refuting any suspected error. A perceived threat to professional or personal vested self-interest, intuitively rationalized, will be the chief obstacle to acceptance of the truths set forth in this treatise. Human thought seems ultimately to be based upon unconscious desire rather than upon disinterested rationality, which is why, like Caleb, we need “another Spirit” to guide our own human spirit or mind (Num 14:24).

The giving up of its corporate idolatry by the church of God scattered abroad need not mean that it engage in no collective activity at all. It may indeed do a voluntary collective educational work, but a work stripped of the abusive practices of the present CCGs. Locally autonomous churches could, on this view, band together to do a regional work on a voluntary basis, with a stipulation that any such work make do with no more than one percent of the income of its membership, as the Aaronic priesthood in the Old Testament had to do. Employees of such a work would be hired at competitive wages and exercise no authority over local churches. Any such centralized entity would be run by a body of representatives, elected by and responsible to the local congregations who sponsored them. The object of such an association would be to further the Great Commission that Christ gave His church by means of free and open communication among all parties concerned. Such regional entities would be called associations and not churches. They would not be empowered to make any decree or assessment binding upon any local

congregation or member, since God has given freedom to individuals only and not to collective entities. Any collective association formed by a group of churches is by its nature the creature of those churches, and is entitled to no authority over them. Human nature being such as it is, one need not expect this in the near term. Meanwhile one may do well to remain a low profile member of the somewhat obscure and rigorously independent “Ethiopian Church of God,” the ECG (Gotcha)! One uses “ECG” somewhat facetiously to refer to the church of God scattered abroad which subscribes to no authoritarian corporate entity to govern its faith and its works; the writer lays claim to the office of “lay elder” in the ECG (see the studies on ordination and laying on of hands).

Accountability

What a far cry such a utopian vision is from the travesty we have had to witness, for instance, at every stage of the formation of the UCG, which has gotten everything exactly backwards and one hundred and eighty degrees out of phase, as it put together its nightmare vision of what the WCG should have become! What a masterful job these associated false ministers have done of ensuring their own financial wellbeing at the expense of a confused and gullible, abused “laity”! How is it that these united ministers were able to clandestinely put together their self-serving C-Y-A operation at the same time they were drawing down paychecks from WCG? How is it that they were content to sit by in the WCG, presumably supporting the newfound Trinitarian system of false doctrines discovered by the Church administration, rather than vociferously protesting it on behalf of the scattered flock they were ostensibly serving? Will Jesus hold them accountable at His return? You bet He will! They may reinforce each other now, but then each of them will stand alone (Rom 2:11; 14:10; 2Cor 5:10). To them, and to other hired shepherds who populate other similar COG hierarchies, one may well say, “The handwriting is on the wall, boys! If I, a mere isolated and lonely ‘lay elder’ in the church of God, can deduce the conclusions I have drawn in these studies from the Word of God, so can any Spirit-led member who applies himself or herself to the task—you boys had best be looking for legitimate work...” It may be of interest to compare the activities of these religious leaders with the machinations of Korah and his associates in Numbers 16 (see the Korah study).

In Perspective

The Bible calls man's society Satan's present evil world with good reason (Gal 1:4). Our entire society is characterized by error—not only our religions. The deception extends to education, politics, and economics as well. Mankind has indeed been “had” by the Master Deceiver, who deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9). He works through our collective social systems as currently constituted and practiced, as well as through such individuals as he is able to influence.

Education is a system of teaching that presents established intellectual mythology as though it were truth. Religious education is a subspecies of this system. Politics is a system of legalism that forges chains of servitude in the name of liberty. It formulates policies enforceable by its State police. Economics is a system of monetary fraud whereby tokens of value are counterfeited in commercial banks as money. It is a system of usury that exhausts itself in inflation. Religion is a system of monetary fraud perpetrated by charlatans purporting to be servants of God. Formal religions are in reality systems of idolatry. All these systems are run by perhaps well-meaning but deceived “professionals” who have their respective servile “laities” to lord it over.

Arriving at an understanding of these things is not a matter of intellect per se, since the most capable of minds continue to subscribe to these systems—especially professionals who have vested

interests in the status quo. If a man lack wisdom, says James, let him ask of God who has it to give, otherwise he will not receive it (Jas 1:5). It is also well to humbly keep in mind Paul's advice in 1Cor 8:2. Wisdom comes from God, but our society has dismissed God from its schools and its secular affairs, as well as its religious affairs.

To grow in wisdom, one must formulate honest questions to the best of one's intellectual ability, in Spirit and in truth, submit them before God on His terms, and expect answers to come as one sets one's hand again to the pursuit of genuine enlightenment in regard to reality as it truly is. This is the process of true education. Society, however, having cut itself off from instruction by God, is adrift on a sea of confusion and pseudo-intellectualism that passes for knowledge. As members of society we must necessarily experience the collective social deceptions that presently prevail before we may transcend them. But transcend them we can, according to Jesus, who says to us, “...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). We may break through to a spiritual understanding of these satanic deceptions, but of course we still have to live with them on an everyday basis. When Jesus ushers in the millennial Kingdom of God all these deceptions will be corrected in a society that will be squarely based on reality and truth—Thy Kingdom come!

Additional Free Literature

Assembling on the Sabbath, Bible teaching regarding assembling and other Sabbath activities.

The Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution, 10 pages. The Apostle Paul knew his rights under the law of his days he traveled and taught Christ (Acts 16:37-40; 22:25-30; 25:11,16).

These documents can help us know ours.

“Free Church” Article Reprints, Articles about avoiding church incorporation from Linden Baptist Church, Indiana; New Testament Baptist Church, Cape Coral, Florida; and The Rutherford Institute, Charlottesville, Virginia.

God, I've Got a Problem. Bible help for the depressed, tempted, guilty, worried, lonely, afraid, bored, disappointed, bitter, doubtful, proud and dying.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? Biblical study of giving and tithing.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about govern-

ment to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in congregations today.

Servants News Literature List. Includes all *Servants' News* and *Shelter in the Word* articles since 1995 and all other CBTM literature.

Sound Systems for Services, 14 pages. Determine what kind of sound equipment you need and know how to use it—even with a limited budget.

Starting a Local Congregation. How and why to organize a congregation: utilizing spiritual gifts, teaching, music, praise, speaking in tongues, prophesying, role of women, dress, formal organization, baptism, weddings, funerals, statements of beliefs, naming a group, finding a place to meet, local evangelism and more.

What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? 83 pages. An “under-taught” Bible topic, but vital for understanding the purpose for human life now.

To receive **Servants' News** or for any of the above literature (all free), please contact: **Church Bible Teaching Ministry**, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107 tel: **517-625-7480** fax: 517-625-7481 e-mail: info@cbtm.info