

## Spiritually Lazy

### Laziness or IDOL WORSHIP? (Or Both?)

I never met Mr. Martin but I couldn't agree with him more. If there are any ex-WWCGs reading this, pay attention. I have found that to be true in some split off groups that we have visited. R.F.

The rapid and continuing disintegration of Churches has left many members and former members in a state of bewilderment or even bitterness and anger. Some may wonder whether God has abandoned His Church, while others question if it ever was God's Church. Are men responsible for the scattering of God's sheep, or can we find Biblical evidence that it is God's doing, fulfilling His purpose? by Myron Martin Gods people have a tendency to lean to their own understanding (Prov. 3:5), instead of trusting God's Word for an explanation of what He is doing. The second chapter of II Thessalonians concerns deception just before the return of Christ. In verses 10-11 we are profoundly confronted with spiritual state of some at that time. God says: ' They did not welcome the Truth but refused to love it that they might be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a misleading influence, a working of error and a strong delusion to make them believe what is false. 'WHY ARE WE SO EASILY MISLED? Is it because God has blinded us? 'What is the misleading influence and working of error that leads to the strong delusion? The context will show that the source is Satanic deception performed through the lawless one or anti-Christ, which was already in operation in Paul's day (vs. 6-8). . 'IDENTIFYING THE ENEMY . 'Most people give lip service to a higher power, but they do not understand God's plan and purpose being worked out here below. God, therefore, is rather vague to them and Satan even more so. Those who were converted by the preaching of Mr. Armstrong degenerated into a personality cult, falsely believing that Christ would not allow Satan to deceive His ministers or His Church. . 'One of the greatest deceptions Satan has palmed off on those who are arguably the most knowledgeable group of Christians since the time of Christ, is the notion that God works through only one man or organization of men at any given time. There is a marked difference between the way God operated in Old Testament times versus the method He uses today. . 'Historically it is true that God did indeed work through one man (i.e. Abraham, Moses, David, etc.). God gave His Spirit only to those individuals He was using to further His plan and accomplish His purpose. It was not universally available. That all changed, however, when Christ ascended to heaven and sent the Comforter (Holy Spirit) to dwell in the individual Christian believer (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26, 16:7). . 'Herbert W. Armstrong had incredible spiritual insight granted to Him through God's Spirit because of his dedication and fearless pursuit of the truth. Satan, however, did not throw in the towel and concede defeat. It was imperative that he discredit Mr. Armstrong and, as he does with all of us, he looked for the weakest points of his human nature upon which to focus his attack. . 'History gives us the benefit of 20/20 vision, providing we are willing to acknowledge the truth. Let's face it, Mr. Armstrong MADE MISTAKES, some of them quite grievous. The fact that he fell into personal sins and abused authority should not deter anyone from accepting the doctrinal truths he came to understand, even if he departed from some of them himself. The pendulum always tends to swing to one extreme or the other. When people discover that their idol (a fallible human being) has feet of clay, they tend to either deny the obvious and sweep the dirt under the carpet, or they make the mistake of rejecting everything the man ever said. We usually call that throwing the baby out with the bath water! For those of God's people who have reacted in this fashion to Mr. Armstrong's foibles and sins, I have one question to ask you: Would you reject the wisdom of the Proverbs because Satan eventually overcame Solomon, causing him to fall away or go bad in his old age? When you consider the question in that light, the answer becomes rather obvious. . 'HWA STARTED ON RIGHT TRACK . 'It is very evident that Mr. Armstrong originally understood the issue of church government as expressed in his insightful article in the February 1939 issue of The Good News entitled Did Christ Reorganize the Church? Note

carefully the follow passage recorded here just as Mr. Armstrong wrote it nearly 60 years ago: . "It is the true remnant people of God who keep the COMMANDMENTS that the devil is wroth with today. It is US Satan is seeking to deceive. He will deceive even the very elect IF POSSIBLE. And it is possible if we are careless and assume things without careful study of all sides and ample proof from the Scriptures. We must be continually ON OUR GUARD, never trusting any man, or even a board or group of men, but God alone, through His Word." . 'Mr. Armstrong's simple, yet powerful and profound words--in effect, TO PROVE ALL THINGS--have been forgotten by most of his spiritual children who are following the modern pied pipers against whom he continually warned. On Page 3 of the same article, he says: . "Jesus' disciples understood that the KINGDOM, with all authority to GOVERN, WHETHER CIVIL OR CHURCH GOVERNMENT, had been taken away from His people and turned over to the Gentiles. He did NOT bring the government, the organization, the authority to rule, back from the Gentiles to His people! Consequently he did NOT reorganize His people or establish any government, ecclesiastical or civil, among them. First, did Christ ever set up an ORGANIZATION, with its board of HEAD MEN, with authority to GOVERN over the spiritual affairs or the FINANCIAL AFFAIRS of the Church? Let us see whether we can find such boards, or scriptures giving them such authority. WHERE do we read of one of them being appointed as the CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD or another as SECRETARY OF THE TWELVE. Is this Biblical and Scriptural? If so, where is the fact?" . 'WCG JUMPS THE TRACKS! . 'In later years, of course, Mr. Armstrong departed from the wisdom God gave him. Contrary to his own teaching, he allowed the brethren to call him GOD'S APOSTLE. He even began referring to himself by that term. Likewise he adopted the very approach to church government that he had previously condemned. Notice how clearly he understood the problem in 1939. On page 5 of his article, we read: . "How then did ORGANIZATION and the idea of CHURCH GOVERNMENT get into the Church? It came out of Babylon! Spiritual BABYLON--that is ROME! The same as nearly all other false doctrines of Satan. Jesus never said, 'By this shall all men KNOW that you are my disciples, if you all speak the same thing the Board of the Twelve vote on.'" Jesus said we should be known to be in the true Church IF WE HAVE LOVE one to another! And doctrine has only brought strife!" . 'How sad, but true is his conclusion, yet it continues today. How many sincere Bible-believing Christians have been disfellowshipped because they ran afoul of hirelings who succumbed to Satan's deception and cast out people who dared to stand up for the Biblical understanding contrary to headquarters' teaching? These leaders did not have the faith to believe and understand that only God's Spirit can lead people into a unity of the truth. They degenerated into spiritual dictators to protect their jobs. They falsely believed that doctrine must be imposed to achieve the appearance of unity that was not accomplished by the real conviction of God's Spirit. . 'Mr. Armstrong's message is as valid today as it was nearly 60 years ago. His self-appointed successors are all too willing to follow the bad example of his latter years, as long as it maintains their power, prestige and income. They, of all people, should be aware of the sound-minded, inspired writings of Mr. Armstrong's early years. Clearly, the Worldwide Church of God indeed jumped the tracks and departed from the solid foundation of initial understanding of Scripture [Ed: Virtually all of the WCG spin-off churches have followed the same basic formula and thus fallen into the identical trap as their predecessor.] . 'THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST . 'At the time Mr. Armstrong wrote his now famous article, he was facing the same kind of division, confusion and competition among would-be leaders, that have emerged in our own day. It is indeed regretful that he forgot his own good advice. We, however, would do well to heed what he said: . "Brethren, let us have the kind of cooperative FELLOWSHIP, based on LOVE, that was practiced by the early saints, as recorded in the Book of Acts. Let us work together in unselfish effort to GIVE of the Gospel truth to the world--to GIVE of the 'waters of life' to as many precious souls as we can reach--to GIVE out the last warning message with great POWER. But let us drop all effort to BUILD UP A MOVEMENT or AN ORGANIZATION. Let us quit working FOR organizations, and work FOR THE LORD and the salvation of souls. What has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? Nothing but ORGANIZATION--which has led to politics, ministers lusting for rule and for power--

striving against each other lining up the brethren on THEIR side against the other! It is SUCH PREACHERS who have split up and divided our brethren. God's Word commands us to COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM and be separate. God's last warning is 'COME OUT OF BABYLON'!! Organization and Church GOVERNMENT have brought us only strife, jealousies, divisions, bitterness! It is not of God and can bear no other fruit." . 'AMAZING, is it not, how many who are convinced that the WCG has departed from the truth are nevertheless opting for organizations upholding Mr. Armstrong as the Elijah to come, as the one who re-established GOD'S GOVERNMENT! Others base their existence on upholding what he taught, while repeating his mistakes. WHAT FOLLY! The kind of deception and spiritual problems fostered by this wrong approach to church government that Mr. Armstrong addressed so eloquently in the early days of his ministry is also well stated in a quotation from the following article: . "Thus was CHURCH GOVERNMENT introduced into the Western world a century after Constantine (a type of the BEAST) injected the idea of church boards to decide what doctrines the rest of the church must or must not believe. And thus the very PRINCIPLE of CHURCH GOVERNMENT became THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST. The whole thing is FALSE! It is NOT ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE! It is a part of BABYLON! Those who are IN and MEMBERS of such an organized church government, submitting to doctrines declared by unscriptural boards as a fellowship test, are IN BABYLON, and actually worshippers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST! We must therefore have the courage to accept the TRUTH and COME OUT!" (The Basis For Christian Fellowship, p. 6). . 'SPIRITUAL SLEEP & IDOL WORSHIP . 'You read it in the title--SPIRITUAL LAZINESS! As the parable of the sower shows, some people who gladly received the truth and exercised God's Spirit for a little while, eventually FELL ASLEEP SPIRITUALLY. This is precisely what has happened in the modern day Church of God. The brethren did not PROVE ALL THINGS, otherwise they would not have been so easily misled by teachers wooing them back into the Babylon of a false Church unity based on rejection of God's Laws and the acceptance of pagan doctrines as an expression of love. . 'The issue in II Thessalonians is simply whose government will true Christians follow, God's or Satan's? God's or man's?? The truth is that people have made an IDOL out of CHURCH GOVERNMENT and CHURCH LEADERS, instead of taking the personal responsibility to 'work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," by putting GOD'S WORD FIRST! Indeed Jesus Christ and the Word of God must come before any personal considerations or organizational allegiances (Matt. 6:33, 19:29). . 'Many people are upset today because they sense the doctrinal disunity that exists in the Church. Can you imagine Joseph Tkach, Jr., Garner Ted Armstrong, Roderick Meredith, Gerald Flurry, Bill Dankenbring, and the latest spin-off, the United Church of God, under David Hulme, all getting together to honestly consider their doctrinal differences in the light of God's Word? If any one of them is right, then the others of necessity must be wrong! How then do you decide whom you should follow or with whom you should associate and support? Do you choose by whose personality you like the best or what doctrines appeal to you the most, or perhaps where your friends attend, or are you open to new truth, regardless of where it comes from, IF you can prove it from God's Word? Let's face it--doctrinal unity is best achieved not by some autocratic corporate church leader imposing upon the brethren what he believes, but rather by adopting an attitude and creating an atmosphere where everyone can openly consider all issues and allow the Holy Spirit to give guidance, discernment and conviction on what is right and wrong, and all according to the infallible Word of God. . 'THE TRUTH MAKES YOU FREE! . 'The government of God will not be restored until the return of Jesus Christ. The term church is derived from the Greek ekklesia, and means the called out ones. This refers to those individuals who have been called directly by God (John 6:44), given spiritual understanding by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and who continue to grow in that understanding (II Tim. 2:15), while also being obedient to God's Word (Acts 5:32). Combining all these factors, the truth is that ONLY GOD knows who are truly His. OF WHICH CHURCH IS CHRIST THE HEAD? It is simply those individuals you allow themselves to be led into all truth by His Spirit (John 16:13), NOT the members of any particular organization of men. As long as you still believe it is wrong to study differing points of view and consider them objectively from the Bible, you are still in bondage to

Satan, who wants to keep you as his slave through men who lord it over you (Matt. 20:25). Brethren, it is absolutely critical at this present juncture that we read and follow Paul's sage advice and ominous warning to the Romans when he said: Besides this you know what a critical hour this is, how it is high time now for you to wake up out of your sleep (rouse to REALITY). For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone and the day is almost here. Let us then fling away the words and deeds of darkness and put on the full armor of light" (Rom. 13:11-12). . '[Myron Martin lives in Ontario, Canada and conducts an outreach ministry to God's scattered flock. He may be contacted by writing to: Patriots of the Kingdom, P.O.Box 20004, Concord, Ont. L4K 4T1, CANADA] CS .