

## Invisible Idol/Visible Man II The Addicted, the Addictor & the Addictee

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Here we are 21 months later doing #2 in this series. Let's see what happens to churches, and let's analyze and see what happened to the Church of God and why we are in the condition we are. Then let's see how all of this developed and I think you will be amazed.

I'm going to give some excerpts from the book *Toxic Faith—Experiencing Healing from Painful Spiritual Abuse* by Stephen Arteburn & Jack Felton, or understanding and overcoming 'religious' addiction. It's quite a good book. The only problem with this book that I see is that they give a psychological solution and they do not allow very much of a total commitment toward God. They say that one should not give up family or anything like this to serve God.

Well, we know that's against the words of Christ. But this is going to give us some very good insights into what has happened. You will be able to identify a lot of these things as we go along.

What I'm also going to do is I'm going to read some things from *My Catholic Faith* by Louis LaRavoire. I'm going to read some things concerning the pope and the hierarchy out of this, and I think you are going to be stunned as to some of the things that they say, and that you actually believed some of the very same words coming down from the pulpit of the church you may have attended.

Let's see about the Church that is called *the flock*. Let's see about the sheep and the shepherd. Let's understand what Christ is doing; what is happening to the Church and how did it ever get this way in the first place. Let's understand something very clearly. This is not the first time that things like this have happened, nor is it going to be the last time. We hope there won't be too many more times like this, because I'm sure we're getting down closer to the end of the age and the return of Christ.

John 10:1: "Truly, truly... [or amen, amen] ...I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door..." *There is a proper and a right way, which is defined:*

- by the Word of God
- by sound doctrine
- as God leads us by His Holy Spirit into all Truth

***If you don't go that way***, "...but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber" (v 1).

We're going to see that is exactly what applies to many of the 'religious' people today.

Verse 2: "But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice..." (vs 2-3).

This is what is happening with all the scattering that is taking place within the Churches of God today. God wants to know: **Do you hear His voice?** As we've covered many times, the whole purpose of God in the calling and covenants that we have is to ***obey the voice of God!*** He wants to know: **Are you going to hear His voice?**

The voice of Christ is contained in the Bible. You have to follow the Words of Christ and what He says and properly do it. We've already experience that there are a lot of teachers out there who cleverly take the Words of God and re-manipulate them in a way that is not correct, and they are some of the slickest thieves and robbers, because they are coming close to the door, but they are going in another door.

"...and **he calls his own sheep by name**... [you can go to Rev. and find that we are going to receive a new name; *God knows you*] ...and leads them out" (v 3).

God is going to lead us in everything that we do. God is doing that constantly.

Verse 4: "When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them... [we are to follow Christ] ...and the sheep follow him because **they know his voice**." *That's the #1 test today!*

- Do you know the voice of Christ?
- or
- Are you listening to the voice of a man?
  - Do You know the voice of Christ?
- or
- Are you just following a leader?
  - Do you know the voice of Christ?
- or
- Are you stuck in an organization?
  - What is it?

Verse 5: "But they will never follow a stranger..."

That's going to have a bearing on some of the things that we'll talk about later. That's why we are here and they are there. If we're going to follow

a stranger, we're not going to be where the strangers have taken over the Churches of God.

"...for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep**'" (vs 5-7).

Remember that He said on the Passover night, 'I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life.'

Verse 8: "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers..."

Beginning with Cain, Lamech and all those on that side of the Flood. Then on this side of the Flood we have Nimrod, beginning with him, and all the various 'religions' coming down through time. They're all "...thieves and robbers..."

"...but **the sheep did not hear them**" (v 8).

That's why when you get this mixture of the religions of the world and the Churches of God, we are not to stand for it; we're not to put up with it.

But if you're one of the addicted, one of the addictees, or one of the enablers, *you will put up with it!* You will wonder what's going on, but you will just sort of passively sit there and do nothing. That's why we need to get our mind back on Christ.

Verse 9: "**I am the door**.... [Christ is the only way, the only door] ...If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy...." (vs 9-10).

That's what's happening, as we'll see later in some of the prophecies, in the Churches of God; the flock of God.

- they are *being killed spiritually*
- they are *being stolen spiritually*
- they are *being destroyed*

Part of what we're doing today is to lay out the knowledge for you so that you can stop being killed, you can stop being stolen from, and you can stop being destroyed.

*Jesus said*, "...I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly" (v 10).

That means not only now, but not just necessarily in the physical things. You can be rich in physical things, but you can be penurious in spiritual things. All the physical things that you have are going to do you no good!

- they won't save you in the day of trouble

- they won't lift you out from your sorrow and difficulty
- they can't give you the Spirit of God or any such thing

We need to understand that. The way that we have life more abundantly is with the Spirit of God and the love of God, and understanding His Word and living the way that pleases God. Then we have life more abundantly.

Verse 11: "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

Everything that needs to be done in feeding the sheep is for them, so that they can:

- grow in grace and knowledge
- grow in the Truth and love of God
- have that relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ

Anything short of that, is not going to serve the people, the brethren, nor are they going to grow in grace and knowledge as they ought to.

This also has to do with the whole thing concerning Christ:

His crucifixion  
the way He lived  
how He conducted His life

**Everything that He did was for the Church and for the salvation of mankind!**

Verse 12: "But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd..."

We've had a lot of hirelings, and they all graduated from 'Hireling University' and all were sent out to be the 'Little Lord Fauntleroy's' and dictators. We're going to see how that happened.

"...whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them" (v 12).

That is exactly what is happening to the Church today! I'll guarantee you something else, ***it's going to continue and continue relentlessly until you seek and find God!*** You can be guaranteed of that!

Christ has called you; you have the Spirit of Christ; He is not going to let you be, ***because He's going to lead you to salvation!*** All of these things that you're going through and all the trouble and trauma is to teach you so that you learn, that you know, ***and also to reach down and save you*** from the disasters that are coming!

Verse 13: "Now, the hireling flees... [Why?] ...because he is a hireling..."

One minister was reputed to saying, ‘The first church that offers me \$36,000 a year—I’m gone!’ It has nothing to do with:

- the Love of God
- the Truth of God
- the Faith of God
- caring for the sheep

*No, he goes, “...and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and **I know those who are Mine, and am known of those who are Mine**” (vs 13-14). *This is where we need to start!**

Compare Ezek. 34 with Jer. 25. We’re going to see that there are two kinds of problems that evolve.

1. There are the soft, easy-going sheep who are just meandering away, and they love to have everything so. They’re the ones who tell the preachers, ‘Preach to us smooth things. Preach to us good things. Preach to us what we want to hear, because we have itching ears and we want to hear something new, strange and different.’
2. There is this kind here that come and sit before and they have their Bibles and the Word of God, they know what the Truth is.

Ezekiel 33:30: “And you, son of man, the children of your people are still talking about you by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speaking to one another, each man to his brother, saying, ‘**I pray you, come and hear what is the word, which comes forth from the LORD.**’ And they come to you as the people come, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words. But they will not do them....” (vs 30-31).

So, you have a lot of people who are just ‘religious glad-handers’ who are there because it’s a place to go and it makes them comfortable. But as far as operating that way in their lives, they don’t do them.

“...For with their mouth they show much love...” (v 31).

Yes, they’re kind; they’re sweet; they’re gentle as far as human beings go and to one another. They show a lot of love, but this just covers up their carnality.

“...**but their heart goes after their covetousness.** And lo, you *are* to them as a singer of love songs *with* a beautiful voice, and able to play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. And **when** this comes to pass; **(and behold will come) then** they shall know that a

prophet has been among them” (vs 31-33). *Ezekiel was speaking of himself!*

Let’s look at the state of the Church today. We need to ask:

Why is it that way?  
What is God trying to do?

This all ties together. Ezek. 34 is a result of Ezek. 14. What is the most important commandment of all? ***You shall have no other gods before Me!*** And from that commandment comes, ***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and being.***

Here is the behavior that too many people have going on today:

Ezekiel 14:1: “And some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts...’” (vs 1-3). *That’s what it is!*

Ask yourself: What is my idol, in my heart, that has cut me off from God? *Only you can answer that!*

“...and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I at all be inquired of by them?” (v 3). *Idolatry cuts you off from God!*

We’re going to see that there are *invisible idols*, and behavior and response to this behavior is exactly what God is talking about, because there are idols in the heart. These are not crosses and crucifixes and statues of men or animals, birds or anything like that.

Verse 4: “Therefore, speak to them, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Every man of the house of Israel... [every one; we are spiritual Israel] ...who sets up his idols **in his heart**...”’”

People can’t see it, but you know it. Remember God knows all the hearts and the thoughts. ***We can never fool God!*** We can always fool some people.

“...and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet...” (v 4).

He wants to know, ‘What is the Word of the Lord today?’

“...I the LORD will answer him according to the multitude of his idols, so that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart because they have deserted Me **for their idols**—all of them. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, **‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Repent and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your**

**abominations**” (vs 4-6).

That’s what God wants. That’s why all of this is going on. One of the things that is true: When you are miserable, wretched, naked, poor, blind and correction comes, then you begin turning to God.

Let’s see what happens, because not only are we talking about every man, but we are talking about the leaders, the shepherds, and we’re going to talk about the response to those leaders and shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:1: “And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds... [John 10—the hireling shepherd] ... ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’”” (vs 1-2).

*Remember what Jesus asked Peter three times:*

Peter, son of Jonah, do you love Me? *Jesus said, ‘Feed My lambs! Feed My sheep! Feed My flock!’* That’s very important to God; that’s why He went through and did that with Peter.

*Here’s what we have experienced and seen;* v 3: “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool...”

They have fleeced the flock; merchandized the flock with many different schemes and many different ways. One of the most important things that sheep can produce is wool; so they are taking their wool, what the sheep are producing and are using it for themselves, rather than reaching out to help other sheep; ***rather than reaching out and doing what God wants!*** They take it and use it for themselves.

“...you kill the fat ones, **but you do not feed the flock.** You have not made the weak strong...” (vs 3-4).

As a matter of fact, they went so far as to say the stripes of Jesus Christ have nothing to do with physical healing. That, brethren, was an absolute lie and the undoing of one of the biggest Churches of God.

“...nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away...” (v 4)—*all those people disfellowshipped:*

- Where are they now?
- Where have they gone?
- What are they doing?

God knows where they are if they have the Spirit of God! They were driven away!

“...nor have you sought that which was lost;

but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty” (v 4).

Right now, as I said 21 months ago, the leaders of the Philadelphia Church of God<sup>[transcriber’s correction]</sup>, the Global Church of God/Living Church of God have not repented of their sins, and they are exercising their authority over the brethren with force and with cruelty. I said back then, because the Word of God is true, that desperate and terrible things are going to happen, and they are! They are happening right today, because

- they have defied the Word of God
- they have abused the flock of God

This applies not only to those Churches, but we are going to see that is going to happen to the whole world on such a grand scale, that what we have experienced within the Churches of God is just ‘training class.’ I think you’re going to be absolutely surprised!

Verse 5: “And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd....”

A lot of them have that today. Where have all the evangelists gone? All the ones that we knew, what are they doing? *They’re either serving themselves, or they don’t believe the Truth any longer!* What were they doing when they were in the Church of God?

“...And they became food to all the beasts of the field...” (v 5). *Let out there to let all the demons to get hold of them!*

“...when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains...” (vs 5-6).

That’s what we have today, people going here and there trying to find the Truth of God. Is the Truth of God anywhere? Is there anybody who preaches the Truth of God? *There are those who do!*

*So, they’re wandering around “...and upon every high hill. Yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth...” (v 6). That’s true!*

We have brethren from all around the world that we are helping. As we have said, from the experiences we have gone through, we have nicknamed our self, kind of in jest, but it is really in truth: *The Recycled, No Hassle, Last Resort Church of God!* Somewhere there has got to be the people of God, that love God and want to serve God.

You try this church for a while and that doesn’t work; then you try that church for a while and that doesn’t work. You listen to this preacher for a while and that preacher and that doesn’t work. You’re out here all wandering around and not

knowing what to do.

**Seek God! Seek Christ!** That's what it has to be! So, all the hirelings graduating from 'Hireling University'.

**“...and none searched nor sought for them.** Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD, **‘As I live,’** says the Lord GOD...” (vs 6-8). *When God says, ‘I live’ we all better hear and fear!*

“...‘surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food to every beast of the field because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search *for* My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.’ Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD” (vs 7-9).

There's time enough to repent. God says to 'repent and return to Me' (Ezek. 14). Not only can the sheep, who have wandered, repent; but also the shepherds who have not done what God wants, they can repent. ***But you have to acknowledge what you have done!*** It's not just changing the name of the church from a WCG to UCG. ***You have to change the heart. There has to be repentance.*** If not, know this; this is going to happen:

Verse 10: “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, **I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their** hand...’”

God is going to. All of those of you who are the hirelings, you'd better stop and think about what you've done. Even though you may or may not have a paycheck, ***God is going to require it from you;*** anyone who is a shepherd. That's why James said, 'Brethren, not many of you should decide to become teachers, because know that we should receive the sterner judgment.'

“...and cause them to cease from feeding the flock. Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for **I will deliver My flock** from their mouth that they may not be food for them.’ For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out’” (vs 10-11). ***Brethren, that's what we need to do today!***

That's why we do the things that we do. That's why when you first get in touch with us, we send you a Care package. When you get that, you think whoa, what is this? *This is an answer that God wants us to give to you:*

- that you can know that God loves you
- that you can know that there is a way out
- that you can understand that there have been brethren who have been faithfully serving and loving God, and are providing this for you to help you

- then you in turn help others

That's the reason why we do it, so you know that ***someone loves you; God loves you; God's Word is true;*** God hasn't gone anyplace.

All this nonsense that you've gone through, now you need to begin to be healed, get your wounds healed and get out of this mess. That's part of it. Christ said that He's going ***to search His sheep and seek them out!***

Verse 12: “As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his scattered sheep...”

Christ is out there doing that right now. That's why we have said through the years: numbers don't count, dollars don't count. ***Nothing counts except what God does and what God sends!*** What God does, we serve, help, love, educate and re-establish them to God. That's what it has to be. We've had enough of organizations. We've had enough of all these false idols. ***You need to be re-established to God!***

“...so I will seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.... [God is not done. yet] ...And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land and feed them on the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the places of the land where people live” (vs 12-13).

This blends right on over into the Millennium; this overlaps into physical Israel as well as the Church.

Verse 14: “I will feed them in a good pasture... [that's what Christ said: 'I am the Good Shepherd...'] ...and their fold shall be upon the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel. **I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down,**’ says the Lord GOD” (vs 14-15).

Then this blends into David the king. What is the Church called? *The Tabernacle of David!* So, all of this blends all in together.

Now let's see some of the tactics that have been used. This is important for us to know, understand and realize. Every one of us must:

- know the Word of God
- prove those teachers, whomever they are
- test them and try them against the Word of God

Deceptions are so clever now! Deceptions going out and some preaching going out is such a

mixture of Truth and error that only those who truly are exercising the Spirit of God will be able to discern. So, you have to make sure that you are close to God. You have to make sure that your relationship is between you and God the Father and Jesus Christ. Then you will know. You have to listen very carefully. You have to read very carefully.

I have some things that I'm studying by one of the most clever deceptions that has taken place within the Church of God today. I will be fully prepared to cover that. We are to test them spiritually. We are to test them by the Scriptures.

Anyone who says that we all ought to accept everyone's differences and get along together. **No way!** That is a message from Satan the devil! Christ said that **He is the Way; He is the Truth; He the Life!**

There's a difference between being merciful, tolerant and understanding of sinners. But you don't take that same mercy and tolerance and say that it's okay to believe one way or the other: 'you believe in the 14<sup>th</sup>/I believe in the 15<sup>th</sup> Passover. Let's just overlook the difference and get along.'

- Did Christ say that to the Pharisees?
- Did He say that 'I know you're well-intentioned'? **NO!**

It is Truth and it is doctrine; ***doctrine based upon the Truth!*** There is no lie coming of the Truth. So, we have to know.

2-Corinthians 4:2—*Paul is talking of himself and his ministry:* "For we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in *cunning* craftiness... [with guile, to take and to steal] ...**nor handling the Word of God deceitfully...**"

I want to mention, brethren, that's the biggest sin of all the hirelings; ***they handle the Word of God deceitfully to justify everything that they do!***

- Can you discern when the Word of God is being handled deceitfully?

*Or because the Word of God is read to you:*

- Do you sit there and purr as it goes along?
- Are you a 'yes' head-nodded that anytime you hear any of the Word of God you shake your head 'yes, yes, yes' and you don't know that it's being handled deceitfully and put together improperly and wrong conclusions are being made?

Remember, Satan the devil even quoted Scripture totally accurately. ***It's how it's applied;*** that's what's important. We all have to be responsible to understanding and being able to discern it.

- some of you have been so addicted in the system
- some of you have been so victimized by the system
- some of you have been such enablers to those over you

*that it's hard for you to understand!* If we can help you understand, we'll be glad to. But you first of all need to spot where the Word of God is being handled deceitfully.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy that he should rightly or straightly cut and divide the Word of God; putting it together with 'precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little, there a little' and put it together rightly. If not, then it's being handled deceitfully.

"...but by manifestation of the Truth... [make it revealed, make it known, to point it out, to show it] ...we are commending ourselves to every man's conscience before God. But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing" (vs 2-3).

Brethren, let's hope that there are very few lost sheep. If we can help them:

- help their wounds be healed
- help their emotions be healed
- help their spiritual lives be healed

***we need to do that so they're not lost!***

Here's what happens when you reach a certain point of straying away from God's way, then Satan is there like a roaring lion, and he loves sheep; he loves to devour them.

Verse 4: "In whom the god of this age has blinded the minds..."

What did God say to the Laodiceans? *You are blind!* Why are they blind? *Because of all of the circumstances around them;* all of the lies and the improper putting together of the Scriptures! ***The deceitful handling of the Word of God by the hirelings!*** When the trouble comes:

- Where are they?
- Where are you?
- Where are you going?
- Are you going to end up being prey?

When you give up your own free agency, which God gave you, and you turn it over to someone else, or you don't exercise it, then you have made that decision yourself, and God is going to hold you responsible. You can always say, 'The minister over there...' But always remember what

happened when Adam said—when they were caught in their sin—*the wife!* And Eve said *the serpent!* But that didn't turn back the judgment of God, did it? *No!* So, you can't blame anybody else.

The only way you're going to turn back the judgment of God is to repent. Otherwise, Satan is going to blind you.

"...of those who do not believe, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should shine unto them. For we do not preach our own selves..." (vs 4-5).

We're going to see that's one of the most addictive things that has ever been done; a man preaching himself, using the name of Christ and not preaching Christ.

"...but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (v 5). ***To serve the brethren! To help them!***

Let's see that there are some desperate times that come along. Here is what has to happen; this is a responsibility given to all of those who are truly the ministers and elders of God:

- to serve the flock
- to guard the Truth
- to uphold the doctrines of Christ

Titus 1:9: "Holding steadfastly to the faithful Word..."

God's Word is faithful and Jesus said that ***'not one word would fail.'*** As a matter of fact, what did He say? ***Heaven and earth may pass away, but My words shall not pass away!*** So, it is a *faithful Word*.

"...according to the teachings of *Jesus Christ*, so that he may be able both to encourage with **sound doctrine**..." (v 9).

- rightly dividing the Word of Truth
- understanding the Truth
- studying the Truth
- knowing the Truth
- applying the Truth
- thinking with the Truth
- knowing what to look for

If you do that then you will be able to see the deceit.

"...and to convict those who are gainsayers.... [there are a lot of gainsayers out there] ...For there are many rebellious and vain talkers and deceivers, especially those from *the* circumcision party" (vs 9-10).

That applied to the Jews back then, but now it applies to those hiring ministers within the

various Churches of God. They sound good, they look good, they are smooth; but do you hear their message? There's only one message, and that comes from God!

Verse 11: "**Whose mouths must be stopped...**"

That's a command that we are to do. The way we do it gives a testimony against them, and a witness from the Word of God so that people can know and understand the choices they need to make and stop their mouths. God will stop them if we do our part!

But if we sit alone and just say all is lovey-dovey, everything is wonderful and fine, then disaster is going to happen; it's just around the corner. Notice what they do:

"...who are subverting whole households, teaching things which *they* ought not, for the sake of selfish gain" (v 11).

Yes, merchandizing the brethren! Taking their fleece and giving the wool to themselves; eating the fat for their own. People love it! Some people love to be merchandized, because they think that the more that they give, the more they have *spiritual standing* before God. Well, that's not so!

2-Peter 2:1: "But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will **stealthily** introduce destructive heresies, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways... [Isn't that true?] **...and because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed**" (vs 1-2). *Saying:*

- you don't need to keep the Sabbath
- you don't need to keep the Holy Days
- you can eat unclean meats
- you can keep Christmas & Easter
- you can go to church on Sunday
- after all it's all fine
- Christ delivered us from all of these things

It's a nice smooth message, ***but it is***—according to the Word of God—***speaking evil of the Truth!*** God said, 'If you will turn away your foot from My Holy Day—referring to the Sabbath—and will not do your business and will not do your pleasure, but will do My pleasure' God delights in the Sabbath Day, God wants to fellowship with you on the Sabbath Day. He's not there on Sunday; He's not there on Easter or Christmas.

What you're doing in accepting that, you're accepting the doctrine of Balaam to eat things

sacrificed to idols, because all of these idols move from the *invisible* to the *visible* when you go from Sabbath and Holy Days to Sunday and Christmas and Easter and all of that.

Verse 3: “Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages... [planned statements, deceitful statements; we call it today, *spin-control*] ...exploit you for gain; for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching.”

I want you to understand something very important: If you think that you're greater than God and the Word of God, and that judgment is not coming upon you:

Verse 4: “For if God did not spare *the* angels who sinned...”

We're less than angels, so if God didn't spare them, how much less is He going to spare us?

Acts 8—Simon Magus—some of these same tactics have come into the Churches of God today and are causing all kinds of troubles and difficulties. Here we have:

- the *visible man*
- the ways, means and tactics on how he got there
- all of the things of self-worship of the leader

*And Satan is right there to stir it up!*

(break)

*Let's see the tactics of Simon Magus, Acts 8:9: “But there was a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city...”*

Using satanic means and methods of controlling people. We're seeing that on a vast scale today. That has been used in the Churches of God today. For those of you have heard, seen or read about the *Jesuit Agenda* for the Seventh Day Adventist Church; that is called ‘neurological linguistic programming.’ It's on television everyday. It's on the news everyday. It's in the presidential conferences everyday. It's in every book. And it's coming right from the pulpits of the Churches of God.

“...and astounding... [programmed, used, manipulated, directed] ...the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be **some great one**” (v 9)—*pride and vanity!*

What does the Bible say about those who call themselves ‘great.’ *Man at his very best is altogether vanity!* When we see about the pope, he

gives himself out as the ‘greatest one’; using the same tactics, by the way, too.

Verse 10: “To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ Now, they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries” (vs 10-11).

When the *true* Gospel came and people were going away from Simon Magus, he said, ‘I believe’ and Philip made the mistake of baptizing him and the news got back to Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John down there to find out what was happening, because they knew Simon Magus. You know the rest of the story. Simon Magus was refused after he tried to merchandize John and Peter. Peter told him to take his money and ‘go to hell.’ (just the vernacular of what he told Simon to do)

Verse 22: “Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and beseech God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”

Acts 13:6: “And when they had gone through the island as far as Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-jesus”—which means *the son of Jesus!*

What did he do? *He went around deceiving!* Notice what Paul said, v 9: “But Saul, who *was* also called Paul, being filled with *the* Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him, *and* said...” (vs 9-10)

‘Let's all just get along; let's find our common ground. You have your differences and I have my differences, and you accept me and I accept you; and we'll all be wonderful, nice people together.’

**NO!** He didn't say that!

“And said, ‘O full of all guile and all craftiness, *you* son of the devil *and* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the straight ways of *the* Lord?’”

Twisting and turning the Scriptures and deceitfully handling them to get his own way.

Verse 11: “And now behold, *the* hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.’...” (vs 10-11).

God made him blind! I think that there are a lot of people going to church where there are an awful lot of blind leaders. Jesus said, ‘If the blind lead the blind, they're both going to fall into the ditch!’ That's what's happening in the Churches of God.

Now let's look at some things from this book: *Toxic Faith*. I have re-named it ‘Addictive Faith,’ because it's not *true faith* in God. It is using



the name of God, but it's not the true faith of God.

For anyone who is a teacher, a preacher, and anyone who listens to them, are you ready to try this test, because this is the judgment that's going to be. ***None of us are going to escape the judgment of God!*** We shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ and the minister is going to give an account for you. ***NO! You're going to give an account for yourself!*** and ***The minister is going to give an account for himself! Everyone is going to have to account for himself!***

Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven."

You must be ***doing and practicing the will of the Father*** Who is in heaven!

Verse 22: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?' **And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you....'**" (vs 22-23).

How do you know God? *Paul said that 'he who loves God is known of God.'* So, they don't have the love of God. John wrote, ***'He that says I know Him and keeps not My commandments is a liar, and the Truth is not in him.'*** John also wrote that ***'if you know not Christ, you love not.'***

All of these addictive 'religions' are void of love. They have a pseudo love or a false love, but do not have the true love of God. Hence:

- they do not have the true hope
- they do not have the true faith

Out of this book I'm going to read to you; I've adjusted some of the things that are written here, to apply to us directly in the Churches of God.

***Toxic Faith—Understanding and Overcoming Addiction*** by Stephen Arteburn & Jack Felton

#### **Ten Rules of a Toxic-Faith System:**

- 1) The leader must be in control of every aspect at all times.

***We've seen that happen—haven't we? That's called government from the top down!***

- 2) When problems arise, immediately find a guilty party to blame

***The leaders:***

- 3) Don't make mistakes

***The pope is infallible; and if they do, God will correct them!*** Here is the way it's been said: ***'God appointed them and they're there because God put them there, and don't you think, brethren, that God is able to correct them?'*** Therefore, you don't do anything, but passively sit back.

4) Never point out the reality of a situation  
***In other words, don't criticize even though it's true!***

- 5) Never express your feelings unless they are positive

Everything is good/good, better/better; wonderful/wonderful. Even when the Worldwide Church of God was going into a direct tailspin into oblivion, what were the leaders saying? ***The great growth in Christ!***

- 6) Don't ask questions, especially if they are tough ones

Translated: ***Don't rock the boat!***

7) Don't do anything outside your role  
***Put another way: Stay in your box! Have you not heard these things? You're to stay in your box.***

8) Don't trust anyone  
***Who is not in good standing with the hierarchy! They must have the approval of the hierarchy!***

9) Nothing is more important than giving money to the organization  
***Pray, pay, stay and obey! PBSO! Members are not brethren in Christ; they are tithe-payers!***

10) At all cost, keep up the image of the organization or family  
***and its leader, and its hierarchy.*** It's all based on pride; respecter of persons!

What I want to do is read to you some pages that I have right from *My Catholic Faith*. Let's start right out with the pope, because this is the biggest organization on earth that practices these things. Have we not been told, 'If there's any one thing that the Catholics have right, it's government from the top down'—***the hierarchy?***

from: ***My Catholic Faith*** by Louis LaRavoire:

Thus when men arose and attack some of the truth about Christianity...

Always start out with a true premise, then you switch it.

The church clearly defined the Truth so that no one could be misled. This was tradition working in the church and now we have manmade legalistic rules called "tradition."

Tradition comes in the church even today. When the holy father defines a dogma of faith, he is not creating a new truth, but he is making clear a truth that was contained in the deposit of faith given us by Christ Jesus. And so, tradition is a living force in the church. Without it, the truths contained in the Bible could not possibly be understood.

Because you would find out that they are totally wrong. Have we not found the same thing within the Church of God? Has there not been a tradition built? Has there not been things put there as barriers to keep the truth from coming? *Yes!*

Notice the powers of the pope; this is amazing. I want you to listen very carefully to these words:

### The Powers of the Pope

What are the chief powers of the Pope? I want you to think about the coming one-world, global religion. I want you to think about these ten things that we read on the rule of faith. I want you to apply them to the Catholic Church; I want you to apply them to whatever church you desire to apply it to that has a hierarchical system, and you will see that they fit. That's why the Jesuits like to infiltrate organizations that have hierarchies, because they can sit there and wait for years, and then bring on all their destructive powers.

The Pope has supreme and complete power...

Very important for us to understand; that's why I'm beginning with the pope, but let's also understand that it happened in the Churches of God. Let's also understand that it happened when one man exalted himself to be 'God's only apostle on earth.' Exact same thing!

Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, 'All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.'" The pope has usurped the authority of Christ.

...and jurisdiction to decide questions of faith and morals and to arrange the discipline of the universal Church.

1. The power of the Pope *extends* over every single church...

Does not say *Catholic!*

...every single bishop and pastor, every one of the faithful.

You apply this to the ecumenical movement that's taking place. Apply this to the bringing of all religions together. I think you're going to see that this is greater than any of us have ever imagined.

2. The Pope is the supreme *judge*; to him belongs the last appeal in all cases.

The Pope is the "teacher of all Christians"...

Notice that he didn't say *Catholic!*

...the "chief shepherd of the shepherds and their flocks.".... The word "Pope" is derived from the Latin term *papa*, which means "Father."

Even that snuck into the church—didn't it? *Yes, it did!* It's called *the Peter principle*.

Matthew 23:8: "But you are not to be called Rabbi; for one is your Master, the Christ, and all of you are brethren. Also, do not call *anyone* on the earth your Father... [in a religious sense] ...for one is your Father, Who *is* in heaven. Neither be called Master..." (vs 8-10).

We were in a church where it was 'Mr. This/Mr. That—and it means master. Jesus said, 'Don't do it.' So, what did we do? *We did it!*

"...for one is your Master, the Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever will exalt himself shall be humbled..." (vs 10-12).

That's happening; we've seen it happen and it's going to happen again. The greatest abasement of all is going to happen when the false prophet and the beast are cast into the Lake of Fire.

"...and whoever will humble himself shall be exalted" (v 12).

3. The Pope is *independent* of every temporal sovereign and of every spiritual power. He is responsible to God.

Have you heard that before of the leaders? *Yes!*

What is the temporal power of the Pope? The temporal power of the Pope is his power to rule an independent state as sovereign...

He wants the whole world!

...free and independent from other earthly sovereigns.

The vastness of the Church and the greatness of its responsibilities towards its millions of members require that it should be able to communicate with them unhampered by any national government, free of foreign interference.

So they can do their dirty work wherever they desire.

He has *precedence* of jurisdiction and honor over all other bishops.

The Bishop of Rome's jurisdiction extends over all Christendom....

That means all Protestants!

...He is first in both authority and honor.

He enjoys the exclusive *titles* of: Pope, Sovereign Pontiff, Roman Pontiff, Holy Father, His Holiness, Vicar of Christ, Father of Christendom. But he calls himself the "Servant of the Servants of God."

Which is an ideological mask, much like those who say they have a 'servant ministry' but they rule with an iron fist!

Because of the words of Our Lord to Peter: "Blessed at thou"...

Notice how they twist the Scriptures and deceitfully use it. They took that one phrase out:

...we address the Pope *Beatissime Pater* (Most Holy Father). The office is called the See...

Whenever you have 'See' that goes back to the old pagan 'seers.'

...of Peter, Holy See, or Apostolic See, or the Chair of Peter. The Pope is called from his see, the Pope of Rome, and the Catholic Church under him is often called the Roman Catholic Church.

How about the hierarchy? *There is a hierarchy!* All ten of the rules of an 'addicted' faith applies to the Roman Catholic Church. What did they do?

*Toxic Faith:*

1) The leader at all times must have control of [everything] every aspect at all times.

*The pope is!*

2) When problems arise, immediately find a guilty party to blame.

*The Inquisition!*

3) [The leaders] don't make mistakes

*They're infallible!*

4) Never point out the reality of a situation

*You never criticize the pope!*

5) Never express your feelings unless they are positive.

*You must bow down and kiss his ring or his foot!*

6) Don't ask questions, especially if they are the tough ones!

*By the way, what has the Bank of the Pope done recently with its money?*

7) Don't do anything outside your role!

*Stay in your box, you're to be ruled by the pope!*

8) Don't trust anyone!

*Only the pope or the hierarchy, unless they're in good standing with the hierarchy!*

9) Nothing is more important than giving money to the organization!

*The wealthiest organization on earth!*

10) At all cost, keep up the image of the organization and [its leaders and hierarchy] or family.

*We're going to see that's exactly what the Catholic Church has done! That's exactly what every dictatorial hierarchy always does!* Be it in the political sense, in the church sense; and it's happened in the Church of God. Part of the problem was—and is—that many of you were addicted to it; many of you were enablers of it; many of you were part of it—called *co-conspirators!*

*Toxic Faith* by Stephen Arterburn & Jack Felton: (points are paraphrased)

The hierarchy of the *invisible idol*, the addictive faith characteristics:

1) Special claims about special ability and knowledge

I was born to this job. God called me from the womb.

2) Always trust the leaders even when they are openly wrong

Where they have been told from the pulpit, if this leader is 95% wrong and he is 5% right, and you are 95% correct and he is 5% wrong, God will uphold the leader. **NO!** If He did then God would be against truth. Is God ever against truth? **NO!** *He's the Author of truth!*

3) Everyone must submit to the leader as a sign of faith and acceptance

They do that with the pope—don't they? *They kiss his ring!* Yes, the do! Everyone has to bow down to the pope. There are other ways that it's been done in the Church of God: from the pulpit, the name of the man may be mentioned more than Christ.

4) Dictatorial and authoritarian leader

5) An us vs them mentality

Brethren, we're the only true church on the face of the earth, and anybody not in this Church is not going to be in the Kingdom of God. So, God promptly turns around and just the opposite. God is God! No man is going to tell God what to do!

6) It is punitive and fearful in nature and creates fear

7) Overwhelming service and activity oriented

You have this club, that club and the other club. You have this group, that group and the other group. You have your time totally consumed by serving the Church. It's designed that way. The Mormons do it; other churches do it; Catholics do it; Churches of God do it. They keep you so busy you don't have any time to pray, but you better pay, and you sure enough better obey and stay.

- 8) The followers are in pain and abused
- 9) Closed communication

One way, top down communication; you never, ever, ever reach the top. Low and behold you better never question or you're gone!

#### 10) Legalism

They have their own set of rules; just like the Catholics have their traditions.

- 11) No objectivity or accountability
- 12) Labeling and accusing and pigeonholing

That's how they do. Rather than face the truth, 'Well, you're in a bad attitude.' or 'You should never ask that, you're just a lay-member. Who are you to ask?' or 'You're a troublemaker; you're stirring up difficulties.' Have you heard that?

#### The Addicted Leader

The addicted leader has many, many characteristics. Most of all it is self-idol. He is a self-worshiper. ***The self-idol of the leader!*** Or as one woman wrote: *the most worshipful ramrod, to get his way!* He sits at the top and everyone better do deference.

The Characteristics of the Leader—the Persecutor—comes against those who want to know the Truth. These are all relevant to what we've experienced.

- Is extremely self-centered  
Always has to talk about I, me and mine!
- Frequently defends his own problems
- Feels the need to embellish the truth and make things appear more grand than they really are

I will never forget 1972, the first week in January, and all of you old-timers remember that; 1972 was when we were to flee. We had that all worked out with 19-year time-cycles and everything. That was reality. When the first week of January came and we were all to flee to go to a place of safety, we were all sitting in the gymnasium at that time in Pasadena and we heard the great, wonderful news. The first week in January we didn't flee, but we got advertisements in the *Reader's Digest!* Making them more grand than they really are.

- Feels the need to be in control [always]
- Seeks power and control

A key word of these kinds of addictive leaders is power, *power*, ***power!***

- Speaks boldly about sinful behavior, even when involved in the same behavior

Speaks boldly against it while still doing it! I'm going to shock a lot of you, but it is the truth: Garner Ted Armstrong was caught, infamously, trying to attack and seduce a masseuse; and by the way, they have it on tape and it's gone all around the world. Years before at Ambassador College when GTA had his offices over the library, he had his consorts come up on Sabbath morning and have their illicit sexual affairs Sabbath morning, and he would go down Sabbath afternoon and preach!

***That is the truth!*** I talked to the brother-in-law of one of the women that did that for two years. ***Speaks boldly about sinful behavior even when involved in the same behavior!***

- Projects own wrongs onto other people

The brethren are always at fault! Putting a guilt-trip on the people! Finding fault:

- ✓ you're not praying
- ✓ you're not studying
- ✓ you're not giving enough
- ✓ you're not obeying

I remember how many times that we get messages that would come down:

- ✓ the Church isn't praying
- ✓ the Church isn't studying
- ✓ the Church isn't fasting
- ✓ the income is down

- Sees things in terms of very black and white
- Believes people are extremely wonderful or bad, usually depending on the amount of support offered to the persecutor [leader]

Of course they have to have the praise, flattery and everything that goes with it.

- Has an attitude of superiority

That's the opposite of what Jesus Christ said.

Matthew 20:20: "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, worshiping Him and asking a certain thing from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you desire?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these my two sons may sit

one at Your right hand and one at *Your left hand* in Your kingdom.’ But Jesus answered *and* said, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and to be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ And He said to them, ‘You shall indeed drink of My cup, and shall be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*; but to sit at My right hand and at My left *hand* is not Mine to give, but *shall be given to those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father’” (vs 20-23).

Verse 25: “But Jesus called them to *Him and* said, ‘You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them.’”

Rule them with a rod of iron! And they that exercise authority upon them are called *benefactors* (Luke 22)

Verse 26: “However, it shall not be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant.”

Just the opposite! We all went along with this one way or the other—didn’t we? *Yes, we did!*

- Appears very angry with those involved in sin

*No compassion! No love!* I think what you’re going to see in all of this is that since they don’t truly know God, then they’re not loving God, so therefore, all of these things happened.

- Often is motivated by greed
- Fears sexual inadequacy
- Was probably born into an abusive or neglectful home that appeared wonderful to those outside the family
- [He] feels [he is] owed something

*Because of his own self-importance*

- Feels persecuted *when faced with the truth*
- Lives in a false world where person is convinced he...is right *even when he knows he is wrong*

Now we’re getting into very unusual behavior and we’ve seen that, too.

- Usually possesses special talents
- Contorts God’s Word to fit his own belief

*Always finds a way to twist the Scriptures to justify it. We’ve seen that, and they’re still doing it today.*

- Surrounds himself with people who are insecure and easily swayed

*Especially the second level of the hierarchy*

- Manipulates others by using guilt, shame and remorse
- Blames others for [his] own failure
- Attempts [always] to make others accept full responsibility for own mistakes

*But not his!*

- Feels disappointment in God, self and others

*when things don’t go the way he wants*

- Usually [is always] impressed with material goods and wealth and those who own them

A minister even made a comment that only those men who are successful, wealthy businessmen should be ordained as elders.

- Is very angry
- Has compulsions in several areas

*Actions, alcohol or drugs—that could be medication, because medication is a drug.*

- Possesses an observable compulsion...that appears admirable to the world
- Possesses a hidden compulsion that would disgust most people if it were known
- Places great value on performance, *especially those working for him*

*especially those working for him*

- Deeply resents having to perform

*when he has to do the Truth*

- Is not involved in any accountable relationships

*If they turn bad on him, cut them off, even if it’s your own son!*

- Has no intimate relationships
- When in a bind will ask for forgiveness and appear sincere doing so

*How many times over and over again?*

- Fears not measuring up or losing image

*By all means protect the image of the leader and organization and hierarchy!*

- Fears that if no longer able to perform for the masses, will be useless to God

Then the next category, which goes along with this; and all of us know this:

**The Role of the Co-conspirator to uphold the addictive leader** Here is the prime enabler, called *the co-conspirator*.

I call him the *sycophant*—someone who is fawnily coming around stroking, to help that person secure his position, and to make himself needed by the leader, called *the ultimate team-player!*

### **The Role of the Co-conspirator**

For every persecutor [addictive leader] exists at least one co-conspirator who manipulates, plots and plans to keep the persecutor [addictive leader] in power and position....

I can think of a name! I can think of several names! One who is an accountant, one who was right there side-by-side with Herbert W. Armstrong. *Yes, indeed!*

...The persecutor [addictive leader] and co-conspirator work as a unit; they operate as one. Both are addicted to religion as a means by which they feel accepted and significant....

In large organizations, [there is usually] more than one co-conspirator exists. Several co-conspirators work together to form a team of yes-men and yes-women who will do anything to perfect and defend the persecutor [or the addictive leader]....

*That is called a Board or Council of Elders! Sound familiar?*

...They feed into the persecutor's [addicted leader's] ego... [they draw from him and feed him—both] ...and further blind him...

*From his faults and reality and so forth.*

...When conflict arises, they usually find a way to agree with the persecutor [addictive leader] and support his or her position....

*It's called spin control.*

...They are loyal and a supportive of the persecutor [addictive leader] in every way. If it were not for them, the persecutor's [addictive leader's] empire would fall quickly.

*Does that sound familiar? We've all experienced that!*

In a toxic-faith system, these are the most dangerous followers. They are as driven and misguided as the persecutor, and because they are close to power, people trust them....

*Their faith in the persecutor is the reason so*

...many will continue to support that person when trouble, rumor or admission of wrong surfaces

*Sounds like I'm reading contemporary church history!*

The primary role of the co-conspirator is to make the persecutor look good. The co-conspirator is the caretaker of the entire system and also has the especially important task of being the caretaker of the persecutor's image. If the persecutor lacks compassion, the co-conspirator will supply it. He or she make sure that the persecutor is identified... [by the family or minister or followers] ...as compassionate. When the persecutor praises... [gives adulation] ...the co-conspirator, usually... [results in making] ...the persecutor look good by covering up or compensating for some major flaw [in the persecutor's character or image].

*Again, spin control!* What happens when they do this—and they do an especially good job—they get a gigantic bonus!

In a typical crisis, the co-conspirator comes to the rescue of the persecutor, thus gaining special favor in the latter's eyes [the persecutor]....

The role has been played out many, many times in the past few years as ministry scandals have surfaced.

What is seen publicly often goes on privately in the family of the persecutor also.

*Forgiveness!*

The co-conspirator is told that the persecutor [persecuting minister or the addictive minister] endured relentless persecution. There are admissions of working too hard and burnout....

*That ought to ring a lot of bells in your past memory.*

...Perhaps there is this slight hint that if those around the persecutor had been more helpful, the disaster could have been averted... [would never have happened].

Have we not heard that before? *If all of these women wouldn't have come around I wouldn't have committed adultery!* If all of you men would have handled this more discreetly, this wouldn't have happened. 'I'm just burned out; I have to go to Colorado and recover.'

Sound familiar? *Yes, indeed!*

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 10:1-14
- 2) Ezekiel 33:30-33
- 3) Ezekiel 14:1-6
- 4) Ezekiel 34:1-15
- 5) 2 Corinthians 4:2-5
- 6) Titus 1:9-11
- 7) 2 Peter 2:1-4
- 8) Acts 8:9-11, 22
- 9) Acts 13:6, 9-11
- 10) Matthew 7:21-23
- 11) Matthew 28:18
- 12) Matthew 23:8-12
- 13) Matthew 20:20-23, 25-26

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Jeremiah 25
- John 10
- Luke 22

Also referenced: Books:

- *Toxic Faith—Experiencing Healing from Painful Spiritual Abuse* by Stephen Arterburn & Jack Felton (amazon.com)
- *My Catholic Faith* by Louis LaRavoire

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