

Church of God, The Eternal

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What Is "The Work"?—Part III

July 1979

Dear Brethren:

The letter is somewhat delayed this month, due to the massive amount of work to be done.

Through this means, let me apologize to those anticipating answers to personal letters. Just as soon as I can, I will endeavor to catch up with this backlog of work. Thank you for your patience. I do not take your letters lightly, so they are not being hurried through the mill.

Our European trip was successful and most encouraging. Our French-speaking brethren are truly an inspiration. It is their desire that I convey their deepest love and respect to all the brethren in the other far-flung areas where people do still love the Truth and rightly honor God.

There are now two groups meeting for Sabbath services in Europe: one (the original) in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the other in Grenoble, France. We were privileged to spend time in both areas.

Because of the lateness of this letter, let us get directly to the point—the continuation of the subject, "The Work." It is completed with this issue.

Can you trust a "work" always to guide you faithfully? Or is a work to be evaluated and judged, on the basis of the Word of God—the Word which must be supernaturally revealed? Carefully read and study the following material. After you have digested it all, you will be able to answer intelligently the above questions.

First, mentally review past material. Or, if necessary, peruse or reread the *Monthly Letter* for May. You will then be ready to begin this letter.

Sent—But Not Always Received

God is from eternity. He is the author of all that exists. For, by Him were all things designed, established, and made.

As Creator and Maker, He is owner and possessor of all that exists. All internal human relationships—life, ownership, rights, etc.—are transitory and temporary. Those relationships are rightly governed, controlled, and ordered by that Creator.

Purpose is the foundational base of all existence. Nothing simply is, without cause or reason. The very existence of the physical man—as well as spiritual beings, in their realm—is evidence of will, design, and purpose.

The very existence of the creation demands inherent responsibility. But the discharge of any responsibility can be acceptable only if exercised or carried out in complete harmony with the initial, inherent, designed and predetermined purpose of God.

Trials, difficulties, and problems are the result of disharmony between the created and God's designed purpose. Character building demands will, decision, and volition. Of all the creation, only angels and man were created with such potential. God, by His very nature, is possessor of will and character (Titus 1:2; Jas. 1:13; Num. 23:19; Jas. 1:17; 2 Pet. 1:4). Men and angels must make choices. Since Truth is singular (only one way can be absolutely right), the opposite—while containing many variations—must also, in a sense, be singular. There is only truth and error—the way of life and the way of death. The choice which man or angel must make is the pursuit of either truth or error.

Since the objective of created intelligence is to develop character and perfected will, the created subjects must themselves be designed with this potential. Both angels and men were so created. They were created with a nature totally against them—but with the mental powers to understand, reason, evaluate, and make correct decisions (Gen. 4:7, RSV; Rom. 1:20). By resisting inherent, evil pulls and willfully pursuing the way of intelligent reason, both angels and men can develop character—thus, a philosophy and control of life which brings them into complete harmony with the underlying fabric and design of the entire, vast universe.

The achievement of this ultimate objective will be—for a relative few—at the time of Christ's Second Coming. For the vast majority, it will be at the conclusion of the appointed 7,000 years. All incorrigibles will be eliminated, in love and mercy, by the fire of the second death. Then all of God's creation will exist in complete harmony—peace, accord, agreement, and love.

Having the potential for wrong, both angels and men have pursued the wrong way. Fallen angels—by reason of failure to fulfill the purpose for which they were initially created (to nurture, protect, and inspire men who are of lower station)—became adversaries. In this act of defiance, they followed a leader whose very name characterizes evil intent and greed—Satan. Likewise, men rebelled—turning from God, their very Creator, in hostility, resentment, bitterness, and contempt.

Because of the inevitability of the exercise of this devious nature, God—man's Creator—laid out a plan of reconciliation for humankind, long before the actual creation. For, God's Word tells us Jesus Christ—the author and finisher of the required faith and reconciliation—was slain from the foundation of the world.

For many and varied reasons, God—though directly and personally working with a few human beings early in the history of mankind—has since that time elected to use man to carry out His work of teaching, instructing, and warning the world. And it is that very fact which has become the basis of multitudinous problems. Only momentarily—when fright, apprehension, and fear of life prevailed—have human beings generally manifested any willingness, responsiveness, or teachability. Not only have they rebelled against God, but they have also categorically rejected God's designed and approved reconciliation for them.

Therefore, even though God has at various and sundry times wrought significant works among humankind, these works and the instruments physically responsible have been largely misunderstood or rejected. The rationale of the human mind and heart is endless. But, such rationale will not alter the facts. If we be those of understanding, let us comprehend.

After creating man and woman (Adam and Eve, our earthly parents), God personally came to the Garden of Eden—which He had created for them—and taught the principles of a priceless way of LIFE. However, at the same time, He warned them about the deceptive pitfalls of another way which would insinuate itself upon their minds and hearts. He told them that, however appealing or right it appeared in human eyes—however bright and attractive it might seem—it would produce aches, pains, heartache, and every terrible thing possible in this mundane, physical existence.

Though God had personally instructed them, they rejected the message He gave—the instruction in the way of life. In actuality, they rejected God, their own Creator. And at the same time, they listened to the adversary, Satan—because he appealed to their rebellious natures—rather than to intelligence, reason, honesty, integrity, and principles of harmony. The consequence to this world has been the abundant manifestation of rebellion, wrath,

sedition, heresy, war, and hate. Man is so grossly deceived that, to this very day, he still fails to recognize the fact that such experiences are manifestations of a nature which God requires him to master and overcome.

After the time of Adam and Eve, God personally dealt with a few chosen vessels—the patriarchs. Individually, these men responded. Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—though faltering at times—all remained faithful to the call and instruction. But God's purpose was not to continue in a one-to-one relationship. The very promises given to Abraham could be realized only in the organization, development, and growth of a collective body of people. For reasons known to God alone, He had from the beginning selected the people from the promised seed of Abraham to become His national people—His firstborn son (Ex. 4:22–23). With the creation of that nation, a system of teaching, control, and administration became absolutely imperative (Ex. 18). Yet, on only one occasion did God personally deal with the Children of Israel: at the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments. And even in that charge, Moses received the Law and delivered it to the people. In all other instances, God spoke to Israel indirectly—through His chosen servant, Moses (Ex. 25:22). Moses performed an awesome work—and a work not of Moses, but of God. Moses was not doing his own will. He was not second-guessing God. He patiently waited for instruction from God, and delivered only what God had given to him.

Despite the fact God had actually delivered the message to Moses, the people rejected it. Their carnal minds and rebellious natures were not responsive. They questioned the call of Moses. They questioned the honesty and motivation of Moses. They even questioned the authenticity of the Word which Moses delivered.

History proves, and man generally accepts (on the basis of inclusion in the Bible), that Moses was a servant of God—that he was a recipient of God's words and that he faithfully delivered those words to the nation of Israel. But today, men who once understood the Truth have invented yet another way of circumventing personal obedience. More of that, however, in correct time sequence.

Moses was, without doubt, a called and chosen servant of God. He performed a major Work of God. Yet, people in general—with the exception of a very few—still do not accept that fact. Because they do not accept Moses as a true, faithful, and commissioned servant of God, they categorically reject the message which he taught. In fact, they so hate the message that they violently oppose its proclamation. The premise of man has always been, "If I do not hear—if I am not aware of the facts—maybe what is said will not happen." God calls this "darkness," or "blindness." In some cases, where people once KNEW and UNDERSTOOD, that blindness or darkness is deliberate. They refuse to hear or

listen—because, although convicted of (KNOWING) the Truth, they either do not want to perform or are fearful of the hollowness of their arguments. Regardless of the reason, the motivation is carnality and weakness of the flesh—man simply does not want to do the genuine will of God, and he does not want to hear Truth. He prefers to exist comfortably in his own adopted blindness.

Therefore, though Moses was a true and historically proven servant of God, he was not—in the long run—understood or accepted by the majority of those whom he was sent to serve. They rationalized-away the verity of his commission and responsibility (Ex. 2:14; Acts 7:20–25, 37–39). This was the person they once believed—when it was to their advantage (Ex. 4:31 and 20:18–21; Deut. 5:22–33).

Moses, after his generation, was rejected by the Children of Israel! They did not believe or trust him. But, did those facts change the reality of his call and commission? The acceptance of a servant of God is often not a proof of his authenticity. Quite the contrary, the very rejection of the servant is some form of proof of his verity.

Can anyone intelligently claim the powerful, inspired, and successful prophets of God had a favorable reception by the people to whom they were sent? Of course not! The Bible is a long chronicle of man's total rejection of every commissioned messenger of God. There has not been one prophet who was accepted and believed—whose word, from God, was acted upon consistently in faith and confidence.

Abraham, though a prophet of God, was not believed or accepted as such. Noah was spurned, despised, and rejected (he was, no doubt, the butt of much ridicule and censure. The people must have jeered and uttered vindictive, caustic statements). Tradition says Isaiah was sawn asunder by the very people who could have benefitted from his warnings. Ezekiel was maligned and ridiculed by the chosen people of God—those who had been called to receive every blessing pronounced by God, but who hated the message (they hated Ezekiel because of what he proclaimed, not because of contempt for him as a man). Can anyone deny the sufferings of Jeremiah—sufferings inflicted by the very hands of the people once chosen by God, the people to whom the promises and blessings had been given? What a price Jeremiah had to pay for faithfulness to God! Every prophet of God who is mentioned in the Bible was rejected. The people turned violently against the messages proclaimed. For an extensive explanation, refer to the article on prophecy.

Christ came to His own, and they also categorically rejected Him—not His person, but the message He brought and the offices of responsibility assigned to Him by God the Father (John 1:11). As we shall see, even at the conclusion of His ministry, most of the

select people with whom He worked turned away from Him and resorted to their own carnal reasonings and pursuits (compare John 6:66–71 with Acts 1:15). Christ, the very Son of God, was rejected by most human beings—even by those who once knew and believed the Truth which God had sent to the world through Him.

Human Nature Justifies Self and Condemns Past Generations

It is so easy for us, today, to look back in history and conjure-up our own mental versions of a past servant. We can even accept such a servant in fact—his mission, message, responsibility, etc. We, as human beings, will judge forcefully and contemptuously those who believed not—who were unfaithful and rebelled against the will of God. But deceptively, while judging those of the past, we ourselves do the same things. And while we behave just as unfaithfully as they did, we create a host of rationalizations which "justify" us in our rebellion and disbelief of the same eternal, unalterable, unchanging, spiritual principles.

In a nutshell, we—as human, carnal entities—condemn in retrospect the unfaithfulness of those who were historically rebellious, because the reality of the event is far removed from us today. But present-day human beings are doing worse than their forefathers, while they salve their consciences with a host of deceptive justifications! Only the truly enlightened—those who apply the meaningful intent of every Biblical principle—will negate the self, bring the carnal mind into captivity to Christ, and learn from the objective lessons of the past (written specifically for us of these last days).

How many, today, arbitrarily condemn all in Christ's day who rejected Him as the manifested Son of God? These same people, today, fully believe they are true and genuine servants of God. Yet, the Bible clearly says the god of this world is Satan the Devil. Further, we are informed emphatically by New Testament prophecies that even those who once KNEW Christ—by call and revelation—will, in the final analysis, deny Him as the true Christ. Of course, no one is going to admit this rejection and candidly state that he is one who KNEW Christ and rejected Him because he did not want to pursue that way.

How, then, can one know?

By their fruits you can know them!

The Bible clearly tells us salvation is to KNOW the Father and the Son (John 17:1–3). Yet we are told: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar,

and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). And the commands of Christ are the words of the Father (John 12:48–50).

In Christ's day, a mere 120 people remained faithful to the message of Christ—the words which the Father sent to humankind through Him. Circumstances are no different today. As He was rejected in His own day, so has He been rejected in our day—rejection is possible only by those who once KNEW (John 12:48; Matt. 10:40; John 13:20).

Christ called and personally trained His twelve disciples. They were commissioned by Him: commissioned to preach exactly the same message which He taught—the one and only true Gospel, the very words which God the Father sent by Him. The disciples KNEW the message!

By revelation, they knew they had been taught by the Son of God (Matt. 16:16–18). They knew, by faith, that they were to be the very representatives of Christ and God. Yet, under temptation and adverse circumstance, one of the twelve chosen disciples failed the test. He, by aberrant mental rationalization, lost his spiritual direction. There is every reason to believe that he felt he was doing "the will of God." Knowing human nature for what it is, it is very hard to believe he KNEW he was wrong and yet willed to suffer the eternal consequences of his mistake. By mental rationalization, he justified his behavior. He rejected Christ! He lost faith and began to trust his own mind and conviction.

The twelve disciples had the very best teacher. They were taught by Christ, the very Son of God. And their message was given them at the beginning, before they were ever commissioned to go forth to the Work. Yet, when they went forth to proclaim that message, they encountered much resistance. They were rejected, just as Christ had been. For, Christ had told them that as He was rejected, so would they be. Tragically, the very ones who initially accepted the apostles were the ones who ultimately rejected them. At the conclusion of the apostles' mission, few of those who had been called by their preaching remained faithful to what they had been taught.

Time and circumstance make little difference. It takes faith to believe initially. And it requires the same faith to remain consistently loyal.

The Truth is eternal. It never changes. The method by which God reveals that Truth to humankind is the same—past, present, and future. Faith is the ingredient essential to belief and continuity. The pulls of human nature—doubt, disbelief, uncertainty, and rebellion—are just as active at one time as at another.

History is a continual repetition of the same, tragic mistakes. What happened to Moses and ancient Israel was repeated in the lives of Christ and those called to hear and understand that same Truth. What happened in the lives of the twelve apostles, and in the lives of those called to hear and understand the Truth at that time, was but another repetition of the same behavior. In both cases, the facts of the call and rejection of the Truth are recorded for our admonition and learning—for those of the last generation.

Again, the whole sordid example was repeated in the life and mission of the Apostle Paul. Many learned the Truth of God through him—only later to reject him and the very message which he, as a servant of God, had taught. Moreover, the rejection occurred a mere ten to fifteen years after Paul had been inducted into the ministry of Jesus Christ. Nearly every epistle which Paul wrote was related to this tragic behavior of human beings. He encouraged them to be faithful—to remain loyal to what he had taught from the beginning.

Despite the appeals of God's messengers, and the power of the Truth, few of the initially called remained faithful to their call or to the eternal Truth which had been delivered to them.

Regardless of what the people demanded, or what many of the later ministers began to believe and preach, the apostles of God said they had no alternative but to remain faithful to their call and to the doctrine—the Word of God—which they had received from the beginning (1 John 1:1–4; 1 John 2:1–29; Gal. 1:1–18). The work which the apostles were required to fulfill was the faithful preaching of the unchanging Word which had been delivered by God. It was not an assumption of prophetic capability. Any time God commissioned His servants to make any prophetic pronouncements, the basic requirements were specifically revealed. There was no doubt or second-guessing. The servants KNEW what God had specifically given to them. And the outcome was inevitable.

What we must remember is this: The twelve apostles and the Apostle Paul were called and trained by Jesus Christ. The very words of God were given to them, and then they were sent forth to proclaim that unchanging and eternal way of life. That was the Work of God—the very work for which they had been called. As a result of that proclamation, many people responded and were baptized. Yet, in due time—because of the aggressive activity of Satan and his cohorts—the Truth of God, accepted by faith initially, became subject to doubt, disbelief, and ultimate rejection. Though the Occidental world later accepted the person of Christ, He was categorically rejected in His own day. In like manner, the apostles were rejected, just as Christ had predicted. The real Work—the proclaiming of the unalterable, unchanging, eternal Word which had been revealed initially—was rejected. Faith in that true way was lost. Doctrine was rejected. It became subject to perversion and

corruption—not actually replaced by some other doctrine, but perverted and corrupted from its originally revealed form. Remember, there is a time sequence which is absolutely mandatory with respect to revealed doctrine! The perversion of Truth did not initially exist and eventually become purified into the true doctrine. Such a concept makes God accountable, and at the same time makes Him a liar. On the contrary, the very concept of divine revelation demands the initial revelation of Truth, with a subsequent perversion and corruption. For, it is impossible to pervert what did not previously exist.

What about our day?

As the apostles during Christ's day had received the Truth of God, so would chosen servants of God in the days just prior to the Second Coming of Christ—the last days—receive that same Truth (Matt. 28:19–20). But the Bible makes it clear there would be an apostasy in the last days—a departure from that Truth (2 Thess. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–8; 2 Pet. 2:1–22; Jude). The Work—the simple and straightforward proclamation of the truth revealed initially—would be perverted. It would take on a different dimension—a dimension which the vast majority would follow, because they trusted in men instead of the revealed Truth (2 Pet. 2:1–2).

Oh, the fickleness of fleshly man! Called of God initially, those chosen responded to the TRUTH which they heard. They truly heard the voice of Christ (John 10:1–16). Yet, by the subtleness of time and imperceptible incursion of deception, the initial trust of the Truth becomes transferred to men. The same was true in the days of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3:1–23). Since Paul was the very, chosen servant of God, some adulated him in the place of God. Why? Because of the fickleness of human nature. The basis of our trust must be only Christ—the revealed Word of God—and never any man. The real Work of God is to proclaim the Truth and to emphasize that Truth so that the chosen sheep may have an unalterable standard and example to follow, and a means by which to perform their daily task—that of evaluating and KNOWING God's true shepherds, His ministers (1 John 4:1–3).

At every appointed time, God sent forth His chosen vessels to proclaim the Truth—to do the Work of God. Faithfulness to that Truth was tragically short, as all recorded history reveals. Because faith must be kept strong—by belief in the one and only way—few human beings have been able to weather the storms of doubt and misgiving. In many cases, the way was totally rejected. In other cases, the very organization which was given the Truth perverted it, effected unauthorized changes, and became an instrument of brutality and sordid behavior (Examples: Ancient Israel, the first-century Church of God, and—prophetically—the final Church of the last days).

The real Work of God was rejected! But the visible organization remained. Israel did not die out after she rejected the Truth and the Work of God! Neither does the church of the last days.

What happened to the organization as a result of the rejection of the true Work for which God called His last-day human instruments? What now prevails as the fundamental philosophy? What are the manifest evidences of these changes?

"The Work" Used to Justify Doctrinal Change and Character Gloss

It is interesting to note how many times, in the Bible, God specifically warned, punished, or rejected human instruments whom He had chosen to accomplish a specific work because those very servants manifested the tendency to allow, or actually allowed, their own vanity to become lifted so as to assume a position never given by God. Cain is a classic example. Even David manifested an arrogance until he was warned and turned bitterly from his own ways, repenting and wholeheartedly returning to God. Saul was a notable example of a humble servant who was lifted up to a position by God. He was the chosen servant of God as long as he remained "little" in his own eyes. Look at the failure of Solomon, a servant who had everything going for him—power, position, wealth, and understanding—until his heart became lifted up. Remember the significant number of prophets of Israel and Judah who forgot their called purpose and resorted to personal pursuits—yet claiming to be the servants of God. Judas, a called disciple, became lifted up in his own arrogance and took matters into his own hands. Paul warned of those in New Testament times who would do the same thing, in departing from the Truth—not departing from a visible body, but devouring the flock for personal advantage. Even Paul himself had to bear a special burden throughout his ministry, lest he should be lifted up due to the abundance of revelations which had been given to him.

The above examples attest significantly to the fact that human beings—though called and chosen of God, assigned specific "works" to perform, and given awesome power to perform those responsibilities—do have major struggles against the vanity of their own minds. It is for that reason, the very Son of God—Jesus Christ—had to set the ministry an example. He emptied Himself of all His glory and power, taking upon Himself the form of a humble servant (Ph'p. 2). He had absolutely everything. Yet, in order to fulfill the will of God, He willingly emptied Himself—not considering His exalted station, position, or power. His example is specifically for the ministry, and it relates in a broad sense to the character-developing process of all human beings.

Any human being called of God can fail. Paul said he could. Judas did. Many of the prophets failed. It is inconceivable to believe, however, that once a man has failed in the fulfillment of the work for which he was called and sent, he will accept that failure—openly confessing it and then emphasizing the necessity for people no longer to adhere to what he teaches or practices. On the contrary, knowing human nature, we may accurately assume that some form of rationalization and self-justification will characterize his new thinking.

Just what are these "new" thought patterns? What are the manifestations of this change of heart, this break from the God-given responsibility, the assertion of human vanity and arrogancy? Such thoughts of men manifest themselves in some form of action. Therefore, as Christ stated, we can know them by their fruits.

What, then, are the fruits—evidences that a departure is underway? We shall soon see and understand. But at the outset, it is imperative to know and understand that man's word cannot be accepted implicitly! Only God does not lie, exaggerate, or misrepresent—at any time. Therefore, only His Word can be believed without reservation. Man, composed of flesh, is subject to his own whims. He must be watched, evaluated, judged, and subjected to continual review—and that means all men. It makes little difference whether he is a minister or a lay member; one has just as many carnal pulls as does the other.

A cardinal principle, fundamental to Truth, is—"By their fruits you shall know them." In all the physical realm, this tenet is absolute. Do men gather figs from a thorn bush? Is it possible? Or, is it possible that both sweet and bitter waters can flow simultaneously from the same well?

The physical characterizes the spiritual (Rom. 1:20). The fruits borne by individuals, organizations, or conceptions practiced are absolutely indicative of their premise, value, direction, purpose, and character.

The presence of God and His Spirit is manifested in benevolence, inspiration, and meaning. If an organization or conception produces corrupt fruit, it cannot be an endeavor of God.

What are the fruits of "the Work" of the last days? Remember, a work cannot go corrupt unless it was initially right and pure! Therefore, the fruits borne in the latter days of the Work must show either gradual or precipitous transition.

Now, let us honestly and carefully evaluate the fruits borne! For, by them we will be able to determine the transition and the present corruption of that which God established initially.

There are points which clearly indicate a transition. They are evidences of corruption—the turning from an honest and worthy endeavor to a completely physical endeavor. For the most part, these points will be briefly stated—under the subheads below—though a complete article could be written on each.

Personality Idolization

As the vision of the real Work becomes dimmer, the emphasis upon—as well as personal recognition of—the servant is augmented. Initially, the human servant is nothing. He is a mere instrument, usable in the hands of God. What really counts is the message—that which God revealed to him and for which he was sent to the people. But, due to the natural proclivities of man, the position, responsibility, and power given to fulfill the Work can easily become objects of undue respect and adoration. It is the type of thing frequently seen in most spheres of human endeavor—entertainment, politics, science, business, etc. The leading personalities revel in their stature, recognition by the populace, and frequent accolades. In the final analysis, all they attempt or do subsequently is sublimated to the personality of the individual. He is respected because of who he is—not because of what he says and does, or that for which he stands.

With respect to religion, the next step is a simple matter of course. The people follow the leader—regardless of defects, errors, or presumption (2 Pet. 2:1–2). They are members of a personality cult. They totally abdicate their responsibility. They become putty in the hands of the one highly venerated, respected, and trusted. They completely entrust their lives—present and future—to his whims. They refuse to evaluate, judge honestly and fairly, or even look to the standard once taught and practiced by their "hero." Moves can be made—obliquely at first, but as time progresses the changes can be made more dramatically—without upsetting the equilibrium and trust of the people. Trust in a principle or way of life is subtly transferred from the concept and its author—in this case, God—to the one espousing that way. Then, the stage is set for any and all changes. The "servant of God" is completely trusted, believed, and upheld, in all conceptions and actions. Verification by living proof and initial faith are no longer requisite (Ezek. 13).

Compare and study the following: 1 Corinthians 1:6–24 and 3:1–23; 1 Samuel 15:10–13 and 16:7. See, also, Philippians 2:1–11; John 12:44–50; and 1 Corinthians 15:24–28.

Briefly, let us comprehend how this veneration is developed and sustained.

First: The people must be taught and compelled to believe that they and all other human beings are subordinate to the Work itself. They must be made to believe that they actually exist for no other purpose.

Second: There must be a progressive emphasis upon the conception that the individual leader is the length and breadth of the Work. In this way, the man and not the message or his superior, God, is exalted.

Third: To sustain the image and power, a hierarchical system must be developed and expanded. The greater the development, the greater the position of power and influence for the leadership.

Fourth: A fear syndrome must be generated—especially, fear to question the structure and assigned levels of various responsibilities. To ensure its effectiveness, the very hope of personal salvation is hooked to obedience to this concept.

Fifth: To ensure continued success and unchallenged obedience, absolute power must be assumed. That power, in a religious sense, is found in a corrupt explanation of the Scriptural right to bind and loose.

Sixth: To broaden the general base, assure personal success, and create the necessary physical (visible and compensating) image, a "center" of activity—buildings, etc.—must be developed. To this the people are encouraged to look. It is touted as the example and image of good and purpose.

Once the physical image is generated, little by little the respect and love for the message taught is transferred to the institution. In time, few people will even ask any meaningful questions. They accept whatever they are told—not even wondering why they then believe and practice the exact opposite of what they accepted originally.

Size of Organization Used as Justification for Liberal Tendencies

Because confidence and trust in God have diminished or have been lost altogether, the defective and physically oriented servant begins to look to physical dimensions by which "the Work" is to be accomplished. Size of organization and assets become the foundation for confidence and assurance—the means by which the conceptual responsibility of a work is to be carried out.

But God—as owner and possessor of heaven and earth—does not need organizational size, power of money, or prestigious recognition to achieve His purposes. A couple of examples will make this principle very clear. See 1 Corinthians 1:23–31; 2 Corinthians 10:3–18 and 12:6–10; and Judges 7:1–25. Compare Deuteronomy 8:11–20 and Romans 3:27–28.

To begin looking to the physical as the premise for the successful accomplishment of "the Work" requires acceptance by the world—those who pursue the course of the physical only (1 John 2:15–17; John 7:7; and John 15:15–25). It becomes essential to moderate, change, or alter certain doctrines in order that the church, college, and people can be accepted by all strata of peoples. This requires a significant liberalization of concept, principle, and practice. A more secular approach is deemed necessary for broader acceptance of publications and of the corporate organization by "important" and influential people.

But never, in the history of God's dealing with man, has He allowed (or recorded an example of) doctrinal and principle change for the sole purpose of broader acceptance. In every Biblical example recorded, God called His servant, gave him the message, and sent him to the object peoples of that message. Each servant of God was warned never to alter, change, or water down the message. Acceptance or rejection on the part of the people—from the initial call to understand, to all subsequent warnings deemed necessary by God—is the sole responsibility of God and the people involved.

Junkets to Nations: Banquets, Personal Glory, Etc.

One of the most obvious physical manifestations of a spiritual departure, from the genuine and true Work to which a chosen servant is called and sent, is an extensive quest for acceptance and praise of the great and near-great of the world. Since "the Work" is considered to be worldwide in scope, universal contact is deemed necessary.

If a work is of God, its fruits will bear this out. It will in all respects fulfill Biblical requirements. And one consequence of that fulfillment is shown to be human hatred for the Truth.

Therefore, in all recorded examples of God-given witnessing or warning through the endeavors of called and chosen human servants, "the powers that be" had little to do with what was said. In fact, the warning was against them. Read the four books of Kings and Chronicles, as well as the book of Judges. To that list must be added all the major and

minor prophetic books. Not one example can be found to support the contention that a favorable atmosphere must first be achieved, through many and varied physical works. No example of banqueting in favorable and acceptable circumstances. In all cases, the servant of God was derided by the powers and authorities of the nations involved. There was most certainly no personal glory, recognition, or acclaim tendered the true servants of God.

In no case did God ever enlist the service of the people and the nation to whom He sent His messengers. God has no need of their help. He is the Omnipotent Being. He has all power and authority. He can and does use miraculous and supernatural power to achieve His purposes. He cannot be thwarted by man or nation, or the combination of peoples. Jesus Christ is the example of a true minister. He forsook all to perform His commissioned responsibility. And all who will live and fulfill the same purpose for which He was sent will bear in their lives and bodies the same trials, stripes, difficulties, and abuse. It makes little difference whether one is a minister or a lay member, except that the minister will suffer greater deprivation.

The Word of God emphatically instructs us that one who is a friend of this world is the enemy of God (Jas. 4:4). This world (nations, governments, and peoples) is under the sway and influence of its spiritual father, Satan the Devil (John 8:33–47; Luke 4:4–8). From the text in John, it becomes plainly evident that in due time—after faith and real spiritual orientation are lost—religious leaders see the physical only. Jesus Christ said that although the Jews in His day were born of the lineage of Abraham, they were in a spiritual sense the children of Satan.

When human beings—regardless of who they are—become careless, lifted up in pride for their personal worth, and covetous of power and position, they resort to assumption and presumption. Every effort is made to force Biblical fulfillment of specific promises, prophecies, and blessings. And such presumption often necessitates constant change or reinterpretation. But, until credibility is totally lost (a progressive consequence of human arrogancy and error), the unthinking, mesmerized initiates remain faithful and loyal to the man and to the organization—characteristics which should be owed to God and His way of life, only. But as we saw earlier, such respect and trust have been transferred subtly from the Truth—into which the people were called and baptized—to the one proclaiming it and to the organization generated.

Therefore, since the true servants of God will be sent before kings and other civic leaders of the world to warn them in specific and unmitigated terms—and not by hypocritical diplomacy—those who have turned to the physical will seek to counterfeit this approach. In so doing, they must use every form of subtlety and diplomacy to gain entrance

into those lands and courts, and to obtain personal favor. These are the very reasons for lavish junkets, banquets, and social works. For those whose eyes see and whose hearts understand, this is clearly the manifestation of a perverted physical orientation.

Let us ask a basic question: Is it conceivable that God would court the favor of one whom He purposes verbally to slay and punish for his part in the wretchedness of humanity? Would God defy one of His own cardinal principles by creating a personal, favorable association between His servant and the product of defiance and rebellion—the world? Does not the Bible instruct us to have no part with them? How, then, is it possible for God to do the very thing which He condemns? Such a conception makes absolutely no sense! God is not hypocritical! Hypocrisy is a manifested trait of humanity. What God condemns, He does not practice.

For elaboration of this principle, please study the following: Matthew 10:16–23; Mark 13:9–13; Luke 21:12–18; Acts 4:26 and 9:15–16; and James 4:1–8. Also Revelation 11:15, 18; 13:1–17; 14:8; 16:13–14; 16:19; 17:1–18; 18:1–21.

From the above texts, you will readily realize that the purpose of the nations of this world has never changed! They are the products of Satanic influence. At all times, they have been opposed to the real Truth of God.

Yes, the servants of God will be drawn before the leaders of this world, but in a configuration quite different from that of the banquet hall and other lavish circumstances. When God's servants have been taken before the civic leaders of this world, there will be little doubt in the minds of those leaders about the purpose for which they have been confronted.

It was the forced interpretation of Biblical prophecies, and the desire to conform to the world for social acceptance, which constituted the basis for doctrinal change. This was also the premise for character gloss and the motivation behind achievement of status, size, and other physical features deemed necessary to fulfill the primary goal—the universal proclamation of a "NEW" gospel. And, as Paul said, such gospels are not new—they are only perversions of the real Gospel which God originally and foundationally gave.

Conformity to the World—to Avoid Persecution

The rationalization of the ministry—those in the higher ranks—went something like this: "How can a small, struggling group become the witnesses God requires of them? Does

it not take prestige and power to achieve these ends?" The small size of the operation became an embarrassment to the leaders. For that reason, subtlety and deception became the order of the day. Compromises and changes of doctrine were essential, because nothing must detract from the one real objective—that of giving a witness to the world. This witness was merely the fact that a new world order would be established. The sins and wretched social practices of the world were never censured. The name of Jesus Christ was scrupulously avoided. And the true Gospel was not so much as mentioned.

The justification for all these changes and social adjustments?—"The Work" had to have a good report among all peoples. And that good report was inferred to mean social acceptance—the result of avoiding "oddball" beliefs and doctrines.

This forced conception of "the Work" necessitated size and wealth. Because of general recognition, doctrines were subjected to wholesale review and subsequent change. In this way, many people (NUMBERS) would be added and the tithing base within the church would be increased. The intent of such "growth" was to provide a potential for expansion of "the Work," which by its very compromises could no longer be an effective witness. How can a witness of God's purpose and its relationship to humankind be given by a work which compromises the very principles of the witness in order to do the work itself? Does not all this change and human endeavor indicate its true nature and source?

The Work lost its perspective! It became the idol of human endeavor. Its fulfillment and accomplishment rested largely upon the machinations of its human leaders. Its future was not left implicitly in the hands of God. For, God would have brought to fulfillment His intent—but in the time and way which pleased Him. He has the power to perform. But such patience and trust of God did not augment the image, success, and endeavor of the human leaders called to perform.

This kind of assumption is as old as the history of God's dealing with men. Their very lives, and the circumstances regarding this assumption, were written—as part of the holy Word—for us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Human beings, whoever they are, must learn to trust and respect God. He does not need the rationalization and assumed endeavors of men—those whom He called to faithfully carry out specific commissions.

Attitude Toward the Work Becomes the Basis for All Judgement

"The truly converted are those whose hearts are wholly in the Work"—a statement frequently made in the last number of years, before the beginning of the prophesied departure and breakup of the church. But the question surfaces: "Is it really the absolute, unalterable Truth of God?"

Such a conception allows for the development of indifference to character building and personal mastery of carnality—it rejects individual responsibility of overcoming. Conversely, God says it is those possessing faith and effecting mastery of carnality who shall enter into the Kingdom of God (Rom. 3:21 and Rom. 1:17).

Carnality is the natural way of human endeavor. It is the manifestation of the physical. Conversion is the process by which God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, turns our endeavors 180 degrees—from the direction of the flesh (physical) to the spiritual orientation (Gal. 5:17; Matt. 6:24–34).

Therefore, it is inherently obvious that the real measure of genuine conversion is the extent to which we, by the help of God, have turned from the physical to the spiritual. How far have we effected the required mastery of self? By an honest and truthful evaluation of self—comparing spiritual things with spiritual—we can know (Rom. 8:5–14).

No one denies the need to be totally oriented to those personal, God-given responsibilities which must be carried out in the life of each individual. But that orientation must be the result, rather than the objective, of true and genuine conversion. For, in the interest of sound reason, how can a work witness against a society, peoples in general, an individual, or even a segment of society, unless those responsible for the warning are leading exemplary lives themselves? Anything short of that accomplishment is a form of hypocrisy. And God hates hypocrisy and double standards.

The reason for the necessity of witnessing is the obvious manifestation of the world's error—error which will produce the consequence of manifold curses and ultimate rejection. However, a witness is of little value to people of no understanding. A witness is a living testimony, both spoken and lived, against peoples who can and do know the Truth.

When emphasis is placed upon a "work" instead of upon the real purpose—true, genuine conversion and personal mastery—a major shift is subtly underway. Since the outward is often a revelation of the secret thoughts of the heart, there is every reason to believe transition is effected to remove the spotlight of Truth from self. Those not genuine

and meaningful in the pursuit of character cannot stand to look continuously into the force of the "law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25).

When attitude toward the Work becomes the basis for any and all judgement, one can readily see how such a concept becomes the source of partiality. Since God, Christ, and/or the Spirit cannot be accused of overt partiality, the existence of such a concept can be laid only at the feet of carnality itself.

The truth is, the real and only premise of judgment is the Word of God (John 12:44–50). It is that Word which God sent by Jesus Christ! He was that Word made flesh—the Word which lived and practiced all that God gave in commandment.

Once again, no one denies the need to have one's heart in the true Work. But it is abundantly evident that the true and genuine Work of God does not change. The premise of any and all "Works," regardless of time and circumstance, will be the eternal Word of God. Times may change, the peoples to whom the message is sent may vary, and the servants carrying out the Work of God may be new, but the actual premise of the Work will never change or vary (Jas. 1:17).

The only basis for judgment and evaluation of anyone or anything is the eternal, unalterable Word of God—with its emphasis upon the Law, statutes, and judgments. When the Work remains properly oriented and genuine, the truly converted will be wholehearted and loyal. They will not compromise truth and circumvent personal responsibility to remain "faithful" to a spurious "Work." In reality, true judgment involves the evaluation of both the individual and the work. The basis of evaluation of both has always been, and will always be, the unalterable Word of God.

The church is the body of believers. It is the body of those called out of the ways of flesh and the natural to subscribe to the absolute, eternal, spiritual ways of life. The composite of those who are called of God and practice those spiritual ways is the church.

The only reason for the existence of a Work is the initial proclamation of the Gospel, by which the chosen candidates—called of God—come to the knowledge of the Truth. Or, it exists as a specific activity by which previously enlightened people—who subsequently departed from that way to which they were called—are warned of God's impending censure, correction, and punishment (Amos 3:6–7).

The two succeeding paragraphs will clearly indicate the incongruity of the justification concept mentioned above.

The Law points out what sin is—it defines sin. And the existence of sin indicates the absolute necessity of spiritual justification. But can future obedience absolve past guilt? It cannot. Justification must come from some source outside of that which defines its necessity. It involves the realization and acceptance of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Further, why seek for justification from that which no longer has force or meaning in our lives (the penalty of the Law which claims our lives)—due to the act of justification itself? Would not such a concept (the penalty for past guilt removed) totally frustrate the very conception of justification?

In like manner, we must ask: How can the very reason for a work be subordinated to the work itself? Would not such be a manifestation of confusion?

The failure of God's chosen people—their rebellion against the force and authority of His Word—creates the necessity of a Work. It is obvious that the Truth stands supreme. The Work will pass away, upon fulfillment of the need. However, the Truth of God will endure forever.

Jesus Christ has a major Work to perform when He returns. But that Work has an appointed end! Yet, the Truth—the rejection of which necessitated the Work in the first place—will endure for all time, eternally.

Sometimes, the acceptance of certain things "good for the Work" may be very damaging. Jesus Christ knew and understood this principle (Matt. 4:3–9; Luke 4:3–13). To determine good—for either the individual or the church—it is necessary to employ the absolute, unalterable Word of God, just as Jesus did at His moment of crucial trial.

The conception that the church exists only for "the Work" implies that very Work of God—according to His own, supernatural purpose—is subordinated to the ephemeral activity of man. What a tragic concept!

It is the salvation of man that is the glorious purpose of God. To that end, Jesus Christ was sent to the earth. For that purpose He died. How, then, can all that activity be subordinated to the general concept of merely warning the world and making a totally secular public announcement of a new world order?

In the above conception, the entire activity of God the Father and Jesus Christ is made inferior to "the Work of the last days." All logic and spiritual comprehension challenge this belief!

Such a rationalization places undue emphasis upon the physical. The church provides the financial base. As the church expands, so does the financial base.

This conception precludes the supernatural. It augments trust in the physical alone.

God can perform major works without recourse to size and physical finances. This is not to say He never uses the physical. What is said and implied is that God must be trusted, regardless of physical conditions and circumstances, in order for the Work to remain true (its direction and purpose unaltered). Any deficiency of finances should indicate a need for closer trust and confidence in God, not a need for change of the intent and purpose of the Work.

Involvement With Worldly Organizations, Groups, Etc.

The Work becoming the ultimate objective of all endeavor and purpose in the church, it was only logical to see change transpire which allowed for participation in organizational activities of the world. Whatever was necessary to open doors for "the Work" was deemed acceptable.

Adoption of this very concept immediately necessitated major changes in doctrine, belief, and practice. After all, how could one employ, as an aid to the fulfillment of the Work, what the world offered—and yet, at the same time, condemn the world for what it believed and practiced?

The gradual swing from the profound proclamation of the Truth of God to a more generalized conception of worldly acceptance should have alerted us all to what was transpiring. But, far too many of us were "spiritually mesmerized" with the idea of a Work. From this premise, it was relatively easy to induce people to accept anything which was thought to be good for that activity. Even to this day, many people become highly agitated if anything is said about "the Work"—even if they could not possibly tell what that work is or explain how truth can be changed and direction altered. In reality, they are mesmerized by the concept of a Work. It is like being in love with love.

If you will be honest with the facts, try applying the conceptions now taught (related to "the last-day Work") to the activities of either Jeremiah or Jesus Christ. You will be amazed at the absolute incongruity which exists between God's past servants and those of today.

As stated earlier, there are only two reasons for a Work: either 1) the proclamation of the revealed Truth, by which the called and chosen of God can come to a knowledge of that way essential to salvation; or 2) a specific activity to warn those who depart from the Truth to which they were once called.

Try applying the above subtitle point (justification) to the two God-given, legitimate reasons for a Work. To accept a compromising justification for a Work eliminates the reason for both genuine, legitimate needs. The one need is to proclaim the unalterable way of life—the very antithesis of the compromising principle. The other is to warn against the very thing they practice by their compromise. It is a little ridiculous and hypocritical, do you not think?

By accepting this compromise principle, the way is left open to seek out counsel and aid from those who have no grasp of the spiritual. And those who have no genuine, spiritual orientation will lead the church deeper and deeper into error. Each step will be justified "for the sake of the Work." But as God said, they who lead and counsel will cause others to err and eventually to fall.

When emphasis is placed upon "a work," the standard of doctrinal and spiritual evaluation becomes variable. However, the absolute standard of God—His Truth—is inflexible. It is the basis of all determination and evaluation. In it is found no place for human vanity, arrogance, and self-esteem. But, by simply effecting a transition of emphasis from the absolute standard of God—the revealed Truth—to the Work, and to the one called to do the Work, the standard becomes variable (Ezek. 13). In this way, individuals cannot judge the accuracy of the Work—but rather, the changing concept of the Work becomes the basis of all individual evaluation. Right must be determined by the powers that be. No judgment can be exercised until a statement is issued from them. And, since no leader is willing to accuse himself, there is no way to evaluate the authenticity and faithfulness of the servant. How contrary to the specific command of God (Matt. 24; 1 John 4; Deut. 13)!

Simply stated, the absolute is the Truth of God. It is not the instrument of God. But based on today's conceptions of "the Work," the absolute is not the Truth of God but the work itself. And the work is usually characterized by the individuals who are doing it.

The bond of perfection is the Spirit of God. That Spirit manifests itself in the Truth (John 16:13; John 14:17). As such, it is the Truth that becomes the bonding element within the entire Body of Jesus Christ, the Church (Eph. 4:3).

When the Truth is de-emphasized and "the Work" emphasized, the perspective is lost. The problem is comparable to what happens when a king or other civic leader emphasizes his position and power rather than the purpose for his being a king or ruler.

Again, what really counts is the Truth—faithfulness to the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. When the work itself is emphasized over the need for the work, it is tantamount to putting the cart before the horse.

All people should ask, "Why is there a need for a work?" It would thus become obvious that the need for a work greatly supersedes the work itself!

If a work is of God, it is empowered by the Spirit. That Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. What will be proclaimed, then, is the Truth—the unchanging truth. When that Spirit is active, it will manifest itself in harmony, honesty, oneness, and love and respect for the Truth. Divisiveness, hypocrisy, and changing concepts of Truth are evidences of the loss of God's Spirit. When a tree dies, it is evident that the sap of life no longer flows through it. In exactly the same way, when breakup occurs in the church, it is evidence of the loss of the Spirit.

Trust in Personal Ability

Frequently, God uses those who do not appear to have considerable native ability. In fact, that is the way God purposed it. Why? That no flesh could glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:23–31). Consider the following examples:

- 1) David was not one whom the people would have selected. He was a mere shepherd, a little lad of no unusual countenance—but one whose heart was right with God.
- 2) Amos was not from a sophisticated background. He, too, was a shepherd. He personally thought this was a minus factor. But God thought differently.
- 3) The twelve disciples were held in contempt by the erudite of their day.
- 4) Jesus Christ was considered to be of low birth and unlearned.
- 5) The Apostle Paul had no natural flair or native ability. His visage and speech were contemptible in the sight of most learned people of his day.

6) Moses had no great physical capabilities to present to God. He had, instead, a speech defect. Yet, in those ways which counted to God, he was a giant. He trusted not in himself but looked implicitly to God. He was a man of great humility. He was a faithful servant in all that God called him to perform (Heb. 3).

The extent to which we look to our own physical capabilities is the extent to which we are trusting self, not God. All should be done in the power and to the glory of Jesus Christ. Considering the Biblical examples God gave, one would gain the certain impression that physical ability was a liability, not an asset.

Failure to Accomplish Objectives

The only legitimate Work is that which proceeds from God. And whatever God purposes cannot be thwarted, blocked, or altered. What God plans, wills, and establishes will be done (Isa. 40:12–17, 21–27; Isa. 13:13–22; Isa. 46:5–11; Dan. 2:19–23; Dan. 4:25; Dan. 4:34–35).

Therefore, any failure in a work is evidence that the plan was not of God. In the Apostle Paul's case, he desired to go to a specific area of the world but was hindered because God was not ready for him to go. He did not go and then fail at the task. God can and will impede, where necessary—but there is no Bible example of God's sending and then allowing the mission to be aborted.

Satan cannot block the will of God. Nations and their leaders cannot obstruct or infringe upon the plan and will of God. When God wills something to be done, all the forces of the universe cannot thwart Him. He is omnipotent.

Failure is NOT of God. An aborted effort is absolute evidence that the activity was of man, not of God. Doors opened by God cannot be closed.

God Provides Everything Needed for a Servant to Accomplish His Work

Yearly, millions of people train and equip themselves for the pursuit of lifetime responsibilities. Preparation requires two things. First, the necessary academic skills must be obtained—either by formalized education, by "the college of hard knocks," or by field or on-the-job training. Second, the necessary equipment or tools are absolutely requisite. The better one is equipped, the greater are the chances for success.

Would the spiritual responsibilities of God be any different? The human instrument is chosen of God—chosen to do the Work of God. He does not do his own work in the name of God. The only legitimate Work is the Work of God—God's actual work, though accomplished through human instruments.

For any actual, literal Work of God, He calls, trains, and properly equips those He commissions and sends forth. Notice the number of classic examples recorded Biblically for our admonition and learning in these last days.

Abraham was called, trained, and tried, before he was allowed to embark upon the course of activity for which God called him. Moses was trained and equipped in unusual ways to perform the work for which God chose him. David (the king) was trained and thoroughly equipped, spiritually, for his foreordained work. Every prophet received special training and was significantly equipped to do the work which God gave to him.

What a magnificent example Christ was! He was commissioned and sent by God. And God empowered Him to do the work for which He was sent to the earth. Very special tools, essential for successful achievement of this assigned responsibility, were given to Christ (Luke 4:18). Since the New Testament ministry is the continuation of the ministry which God the Father gave to Christ, Christ in turn gave the power and specific gifts essential for the ministry to do their part of the Work of God (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:14–20). While Christ was still here on earth, He sent out the twelve disciples on a training mission. He trained them in the use of all the powers which would be essential to do the work which God had in mind (Matt. 10:1–8; Mark 3:13–15; Mark 6:7).

Without the correct knowledge and proper tools, satisfactory work cannot be performed. Therefore, just as a physical mechanic—of whatever vocation or profession—cannot perform his work if he allows tools to become blunt, damaged, or lost through either abuse or disuse, so also the servant of God manifests a considerable deficiency in the work performed when the proper tools are lost or abused due to forced usage.

Such a loss is an obvious manifestation of either a growing separation between God and His servant or the completion of the work which was determined by God. God, being all powerful, cannot be held accountable for any failures. The loss of the requisite tools and powers to perform is evidence of estrangement. There is a way back on track; but few, if any, have ever been able to snatch themselves out of the downward course of degeneration. Their minds just will not admit the cause of difficulties and the need for reactivation of the real, spiritual purposes for which they were called and commissioned.

The Message and the Messenger Authorized by God Only

The only valid message is that revealed by God. And the only authorized messenger is one chosen and commissioned by God.

Since God does not reveal error and never commissions or sends a servant whom He has not taught, trained, and instructed—or to whom He has not given the revealed message—any change or modification is absolute evidence of a different spirit, the beginning of a perversion of the Truth, or an outright rejection of the way of God. For, change is not of God. And any modification indicates tampering with the original commission.

The twelve apostles knew and understood the accuracy of this principle. They knew they must be faithful to the truth given them from the beginning (1 John 1:1–3; 2 Pet. 3:15–18). The Apostle Paul knew he had to be faithful as he also warned others (Gal. 1, 2; Heb. 13:7–9).

Angels cannot change the divinely revealed way. Human servants are warned not to tamper with the message. No one can be a commissioned servant without first receiving the message. To believe that change is essential—and approved of God—is to hold God accountable for error or dereliction of responsibility.

The Word of God includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and is written for this final generation. Therefore, as that Word points out, no change or modification (perversion or corruption) is acceptable. The manifestation of any lateral move is immutable evidence of presumption, rejection of God's will, and unfaithfulness. And by that factor alone, the true people of God can evaluate minister and church.

Satan Can Hinder—but Only as God Allows

God is all powerful. He is Ruler Supreme—of heaven and earth. Only what He wills or allows transpires, in all the far reaches of this vast universe.

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way that God rules in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:30, 32, 34–37), even though these nations compose the kingdom of Satan (Luke 4:5–6; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). How many today may have to learn through the same kind of trauma?

Whatever God has purposed will come to pass. This being true in all the physical realm, does it not appear that it is more significantly true in the spiritual?

Yes, Satan can hinder—but only as God allows, and always for meaningful reason. Even though God, for reason, allows Satan temporarily to hinder, he cannot thwart or block the will and purpose of God. Such a conception would make Satan more powerful than God.

Therefore, any unusual emphasis upon obstructionism by Satan is indication of a major cover-up. Rather than to admit failure and the fact God is not in such a venture, it is far more self-justifying and palatable to the human mind to lay the blame at the feet of Satan—even if it does make him seem to be more powerful and capable than God. But this latter fact will not seriously be considered or weighed by those duped and mesmerized by the concept of a "work"—those not spiritually alert to the profound and unalterable Truth.

Consider: What happened to the international campaigns? The "new doors," opened to proclaim the message? The fruits of the "great" changes of 1972–74? And, the loss of the real fruits of the Spirit of God in the past several years—a loss candidly admitted by many in private but denied publicly?

Emergence of the Concept of a Work Which Has No Biblical Basis

Was this concept of a Work the manifestation of an effort to justify what could not be proved Biblically, and at the same time to circumvent the spiritual responsibility incumbent upon all called and chosen of God—to ". . . try the spirits [ministers] whether they are of God . . ." (1 John 4:1)? How are we obligated to try (test) them? Isaiah says, ". . . To the law and to the testimony [Word]: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

The very concept listed in the above subtitle has no basis in fact. It is entirely antithetical to all recorded Biblical instruction. If it be a true principle, then many of the Biblical principles are not true! Which will you take? You cannot believe both.

Such a conception is the indication of error and confusion. It is the obvious evidence of a mad search for justification of what is happening or has happened.

Character demands the courage to face the facts for what they are and then admit the failure (confess). From that premise, anyone easily can seek the will of God and receive the

necessary direction. However, the pursuit of such a direction would not allow for the pursuit of what certain individuals might want. For, in it will be found neither personal glory nor approbation of self.

Abrogation of All Individual Responsibility

The concept which has emerged in the past few years is that the individual has no responsibility to check, prove, and know the Truth. The upper level of the hierarchy taught that doctrinal and other decisions belonged to them, and that the people were obligated to do only what they taught and demanded.

On the other hand, those at the lower levels of responsibility and membership had grown spiritually lazy and indifferent. They believed their responsibility ended with paying their tithes, making offerings periodically, and sacrificing economically for "the Work" when necessary. This concept allowed them to slumber soundly. "After all," they insisted, "if we are wrong, it is the ministry that is responsible." And of course, this concept was reassuring in their ignorance, because it implied that only the leaders would pay the price and that they themselves would not be held accountable.

The truth of the matter is the exact opposite. God will actually allow the faith and conviction of the lay member to be tested (Deut. 13:1–3; 1 John 4:1; 1 Cor. 10:19). How? False ministers will be allowed to arise, for this very purpose. And how do we determine a false minister? By whether or not he remains faithful to the Truth which he was taught, or that which was revealed to him originally! Remaining a part of the church is entirely dependent upon whether the church remains spiritually faithful. Continuity of the physical Body is no proof of spiritual faithfulness (compare Acts 7:37–39; John 1:11–13; Matt. 23:1–6).

Because the Jews understood the intent of Jesus Christ—His denial of their claim to be the continuation of the true seed of Abraham—they were highly incensed! Would we expect any less today?

The wise will heed and take warning. The others will continue in their "peaceful" slumber. But destruction will come suddenly upon them.

All had better continue in "the faith once delivered." All had better know the true flock—those living the holy, righteous way God ordained. **PROVE AND BE FAITHFUL. TRY AND KNOW** the true ministerial servants of God. Have confidence in God, Christ,

and the way of life. But, trust no man. Your only hope is to have faith in the way of life which you were taught, believed, and accepted.

Prophetic Failure

The many and varied pronouncements of religious people of the world are not mentioned in the Bible. Except in a general way, there is no mention of Buddha, Confucius, Islamic leaders, or the other highly venerated leaders of the world's religions. To be classified as a false prophet requires an initial call, receipt of responsibility, and faithfulness. Then, in due time, presumption and vanity lead the servant into error. Thereby he becomes a false prophet (Deut. 13:1; Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 34:2).

The failure is NOT an indication that the man was never chosen. It is a manifestation of presumption and creeping error. When such behavior becomes evident, we are obligated by God to face the facts as they are and to have no fear of that individual. For, God had not sent him—he had arrogated a responsibility for which he was not sent.

The absolute manifestation of a defective work is prophetic failure. Explanations, adjustments, changes—or whatever—will not change that fact. For, when God commissions and sends, the message has been delivered and the results are imminent. The purpose which God has purposed, for which the warning is sent, will transpire. The word which God sends will accomplish that whereunto it was sent. It cannot fail! There is no reason for second-guessing. The message is certain. The commission is sure. And the results are inevitable.

Emergence of the Concept That a Called Servant Cannot Fail

What happened to character? To free moral agency? Does this conception—"A called servant cannot fail"—also mean that no chosen child of God can fail? If so, does not the very concept make God partial and preferential in His treatment of the chosen?

Was the Apostle Paul—as a called and commissioned minister—unaware of his irreversible, "saved" condition? For, he manifested a concern that unless he remained faithful and loyal to the Truth, he could become a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27).

Judas was one of the twelve original disciples, but he failed wretchedly. Both Saul and Solomon were kings who knew the Truth, yet physical temptations overcame them and they failed the office and responsibility which God had given them.

Jesus knew and admitted that the Pharisees sat in the seat of Moses (Matt. 23:2). They tenaciously clung to the idea that they alone were the children of God. Why? Because they were the physical seed of Abraham. Little did they realize the physical does not influence the spiritual. One can continue in a physical office and yet be completely cut off spiritually. For, though Jesus admitted they physically sat in the seat of Moses, He said they were spiritually the children of the Devil (John 8).

The whole concept mentioned above violates every basic spiritual principle ("He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my [Christ's] throne." The final judgment will be rendered by Jesus Christ at the appointed time. The faithful servant will be highly rewarded). The principles which are antithetical to the above concept are many. NO ONE is immune to the judgment of God. And "judgment" inherently implies evaluation and determination. Determination, because no decisions have been or are made until the appointed time.

Perversion and Counterfeit

As sure as a true and genuine Work is established, the archenemy of all Truth—Satan the Devil—will make his entrance. He will appear as an angel of light. Corruption and perversion will begin—imperceptibly and subtly at first, but more dramatically and aggressively as time progresses and people have become acclimated.

These perversions are as old as the history of humankind. Satan knows the reason for the creation of man. He is making every effort to solidify his kingdom and destroy his potential replacement.

Briefly, let us note a few of these perversions—works of error. In each case you will note an acceptable beginning in God's Work, but a change occurs in due course.

1) 2 Corinthians 11:1–4, 13–15: The Church of God at Corinth was under attack. The people had begun to doubt. Their minds were being perverted—they could not evaluate properly the simple and unadulterated Truth which had been delivered.

The deceivers had arrogated title and position. They challenged the original Truth which God had delivered to Paul. As self-appointed apostles of God, they used the power and influence of that office to adversely affect the people whom Satan wanted to devour and destroy.

The ONLY basis for judgment was the original Truth which Paul had received. He was a true apostle because he had the Truth revealed initially and received a commission to proclaim that way of life.

2) Titus 1:10–16: In many cities where Paul had taught, ministers and lay members were turning from the Truth. But they did not forsake their claim to be the servants of God. On the contrary, they claimed to know Him. But, Paul said they had turned from the Truth and that in all their works they denied Christ and were abominable in the sight of God.

3) 1 John 3:8: Under one general classification can be catalogued the works of all who have departed from the Truth. They are the works of Satan. He knew the Truth from the beginning—the time of his creation—until he rebelled against the unalterable way of God. He became Satan—the adversary—because he did not remain faithful to God, abiding in the Truth. From that day on, he has attempted to pervert and destroy every Work of God. Of course, he works by the express permission of God. We shall see more on that later.

4) 1 John 3:12: The works of Cain are the type of one called of God, and to whom the knowledge of God's will is given, but who rebels against that way—desiring to do his own will, while at the same time claiming to be a servant of God (Gen. 4:7, RSV). Cain knew God, for God talked to him. If he had crucified the self and continued in the way of God, he could have remained a servant of the Eternal.

5) Acts 20:28–30: A perverted work was to develop right out of the midst of the Ephesian church. The very leaders of this corrupt work would be those who once taught the Truth of God.

6) 1 Timothy 6:3–5: Some under the charge of the evangelist Timothy would pervert the Gospel. They would begin to teach those things which they had "studied for themselves," but refuse to teach the divinely revealed doctrine which God had originally delivered to them. Their perverted gospel would be a gospel of heresy, questions, disputations, and self-gain. They would manifest perverse and unsound minds.

7) Galatians 1:6–12: Asia Minor was being bombarded by strange, "new" concepts. The Apostle Paul called it a perversion of the Gospel, for there is but one true Gospel. All others are corruptions. As a result of these corruptions, the chosen people of God had begun to exit from the Truth, making their own individual choices as to what to believe and practice.

8) 2 Timothy 3:1–8: A last-day work which manifests none of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Yet, they are people—including ministers—who once knew and practiced the Truth. They are servants who have turned from revealed Truth to scholarship—ever learning, but unable to come to a knowledge of the Truth. Why? Because Truth does not come through scholarship. It must be revealed. Being spiritual in nature, it must proceed from a spiritual source.

When a man dies spiritually, he degenerates and falls apart. But, he will not die peacefully. Manifested will be the struggle of death. Paul wrote of this very struggle (verses 1–5, particularly verse 5).

9) Matthew 23:1–6: The physical continuation of the ancient Church of God (Acts 7:37–39). But the Jews had devolved into a mere institution practicing the commandments of men (Mark 7:1–13). Though a mere physical body—devoid of the real Truth of God—they refused to admit their real station and condition. Adamantly and vengefully, they maintained their integrity, inherited rights, and assumed relationship with God.

The above example makes it clear that the mere claim of an individual proves nothing. Only the fruits tell the real story. The genuine, true fruits of a faithful Work lie in continuity of the message given—not in physical existence only.

10) 2 Corinthians 2:17: Some in the Corinthian church had corrupted the Word of God. Therefore, the physical endeavors of that group were evidence of a corrupt work.

But they did not simply leave the Body and disappear into anonymity. No, they corrupted the Word. They maintained a physical existence and indubitably continued to claim to be the chosen servants of God.

11) Isaiah 29:13–14: A false, corrupt work of the last days. How did it become corrupt? By turning things upside down (verse 16).

Logic tells us that the first principles were right-side up. The change—corruption—followed. But God makes it clear, those whom He has called will be brought to perfection. They will be forced to undergo severe tribulation until they learn their lessons and return to Him.

12) Isaiah 57:3–21: Historically accurate. Written as a part of God's Word, specifically for the last generation.

A people of God turned to error and corruption. But, by miraculous intervention, many are brought back to the will of God.

Depraved people (verses 3–5). Turned to spiritual adultery: from the Truth to a perverse way (verse 7). They pursued internationalism, doting on the kings (verse 9). They were impressed with themselves—self-esteem (verse 10). But God says a day of revealing is coming (verse 12). Many will return (verses 15–17).

13) Isaiah 59:1–8: An utterly perverse people of the last days, doing their own thing. The straight way, which God had delivered to them, they make crooked. Their work is a work of iniquity.

14) Jeremiah 3:20–25: Israel faltered and failed. But they continue as a physical people—still believing they are God's own. Their recorded history is written for us. If we turn from the Truth of God, we must have courage to turn back to God.

15) Jeremiah 7:8–16: A people called of God turn to bizarre practices. But they continue to claim a relationship with God. Their source of confidence is the physical House of God. However, the fruits borne are degrading. From those fruits, any thinking individual can know the real Truth—as opposed to a mere claim of Truth.

16) Jeremiah 23:36: A last-day prophecy. People who had the Truth—the words of life—perverted that way. They trusted in themselves and their assumed relationship with God.

17) Jeremiah 48:7–10: A work can become corrupt, employing all the facets of deception and trickery. The curses for defiance and rebellion will be termed "persecution," as was the case prior to the actual captivity of Judah. It takes courage to face the facts as they really are—to admit the reasons for the difficulties encountered.

18) Ezekiel 6:1–10: In the last days, some who understood the Truth turned from that way and became actual recipients of the severe curses of God. As a result of such strong punishment, these people are able to break loose from the assumption which has ensnared them. They are free to be honest and candidly admit their error.

Here is clear evidence of a work gone corrupt. These are people who knew the Truth (verse 9). These are the people who turned away from it to practice error.

Perversion or corruption of the Word of God is almost commonplace to those called. Few people, indeed, have ever implicitly been faithful to truth or responsibility. Surely, these historic examples should impress upon us the tendency of human nature not kept under control. They were written for us! Will we, in time, fail to be faithful to our call and responsibility—to sustain the Truth at all costs?

Jesus Christ said only a few would find the way of life out of the chaos and confusion generated by departure from the faith once delivered. To see and understand is a great blessing. But to endure at all costs, faithful and consistent until the time of final judgment, is an even greater blessing.

Why This State of Confusion?

From the midst of the people of God, false leaders (those who once knew the Truth) will arise. Their intent will be to mislead and to secure adherents for their way of belief.

God allows such conditions to develop! Why? Because He wants His people tried and proven. How will this task be accomplished? By the necessity of their employing the Truth given to them originally. Signs, wonders, and miracles must be allowed by God as a test—although they dissuade some from following His words of life (Deut. 13:1–5).

It is absolutely essential that a trial of faith be administered (1 Cor. 11:19). God wants to know who will trust Him by exercising the revealed Truth. He does not want His people to look to man or organization.

The same requirement was borne by the New Testament church (1 John 4:1–2). It was the responsibility of each chosen individual to try the ministers—as well as themselves. For, many presume to be teachers, misleading those who will be influenced. Anyone who does not remain faithful to the Truth is not to be feared or respected (Deut. 18:22).

Every called servant must KNOW for himself (Gal. 6:4). He must not forfeit responsibility, leaving it to others. The basis of his judgment is the true Work—the proclamation of the words of life (John 10:35–38).

The Expected Result

The Bible tells us that God has a desire to bring to a conclusion the work which He has begun. His is a work of salvation. Though many of His chosen of the last days have

departed from the Truth, God will intervene supernaturally and bring them back to the true and genuine way of life—with the exception of those who become contemptuous and incorrigible.

We must not allow ourselves to be shaken by these things (2 Thess. 2:1; Matt. 24:13). God has allowed all these things to happen for our good. We must learn how to judge every work. Judgment of every activity is essential. The standard by which to judge has always been the same. The Word which God gave to the patriarchs is the same as the Word which He gave to Moses. And the way given to Moses is exactly the same as taught by Christ. What Christ taught is precisely the same as given to the twelve apostles. What Paul taught to Gentiles, as well as to Israelites, is exactly the same as the twelve apostles taught. And, finally, what the New Testament ministry was to teach is the same revealed Word of God which all the others taught.

That very Word of God has been the basis of every Work performed. It was always either a) the initial proclamation, by which the chosen of God would come to understand the Truth, or b) a specific warning (because of carelessness or departure) to those called.

Why the Need of a Test?

The responsibilities promised are awesomely great. The power, unbelievable. Inheritance of such glory cannot be taken lightly. God will be sure. There will be no room for another Satan. Only those who love the Truth—and would die for it—will ever be allowed to possess eternal life, with all its attendant power and glory.

Let us take just a little glimpse into the purpose of the test which has manifested itself today! If we take heed, we shall live by these very words.

1) Isaiah 28:7: Servants once used for honorable purposes, these leaders have gone astray. They make every mistake conceivable. Should the people of God follow them, despite these conditions? Does it make sense to believe that the lay people should abdicate all responsibility and unreservedly obey and follow such leaders?

God said they erred! Should we follow error? Absolutely not, because two facts are obvious. One, a solid premise of consistent judgment does exist. Two, all people are required to seek out facts—to know the truth of any given condition.

When chosen instruments abuse office and responsibility, they cease to perform the will of God. And God does not expect us to follow errant leaders.

2) Isaiah 29:13–16: A prophecy for the last days. Does it make sense to follow blindly such leaders? Of course not. Here is a condition where Deuteronomy 13:1–5 surely must apply. We see here the end result of a work gone corrupt. For that reason, all instruments of God must daily evaluate what is occurring. The basis of that evaluation is the unmovable and unalterable factor—the eternal Truth of God, which can be known only by divine revelation.

3) Jeremiah 23:25, 32: Can you determine any way—other than by careful, honest, and unbiased judgment or evaluation—to judiciously handle such a claim? A Work of God in the last days has gone astray. And it was a Work which taught the Truth of God.

4) 2 Peter 2:1–2, 21: How is one to avoid the influence of error, indicated for the last days?

Because most of God's chosen have been swayed into total abdication of responsibility, the effects of verse 2 will hit them squarely in the face.

2 Peter 2:21 makes it abundantly clear that someone in the last days does receive the Truth but, for many reasons, depart from it. The wise will not be caught in the web of deception. They will evaluate, by the unalterable standard of Truth, every leader and his work. A true and genuine Work will, as a whole, produce the same good fruit as does any individual who possesses the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, let us once again note Hebrews 12:26–27. A great shaking is inevitable. The reason? God wants to know who will stand (on what?) at all costs! It is not uncommon for human beings to honor, respect, and remain faithful to other human beings. But the whole, tragic history of the Bible reveals the unwillingness of called servants to remain faithful to the Truth.

When men subtly transfer respect for the Truth to themselves, in the interest of some great work, you can be sure error and perversion will creep into the Body (the Church). In such cases, you are not to fear the leaders but to honor and respect God—manifesting faithfulness to His Word. To turn from the revealed Truth is to deny Christ. And, many who once knew God and His Son Jesus Christ are now denying both!

The responsibility is yours! You had better KNOW. But you must respond only to the Truth you once possessed. To move laterally, trusting one man and then another, will result only in great tragedy and disappointment.

"The Work" must not become the premise for all your judgment. The Word of God is the only basis.

When a "Work"—to substantiate its own existence—begins to justify lying, hypocrisy, double standards, adultery, perversion, corruption of the Word, hate, resentment, verbal abuse, contempt, and every other carnal, fleshly manifestation, it cannot be the Work of God!

Again, our deepest love and respect. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity of serving you. We are always happy to hear from any or all of you.

In loving kindness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'R'.

Raymond C. Cole