

"Test Your Leaders" -- Gerald Flurry.

What Went WRONG with the “Philadelphia Church of God”?

In January 1990 Gerald Flurry and John Amos broke away from the Worldwide Church of God and began a new church called "The Philadelphia Church of God." They have pointed out many of the drastic changes Worldwide is going through, and claim to want to return to the faith of Herbert Armstrong, whom they look upon as "Elijah." They banish all cosmetics, rule the flock with rigor, and emphasize "Church government" as Worldwide also does. They claim the 144,000 of Revelation are the "Laodicean" Church and will all be martyred. They further claim Joseph Tkach is the "Joshua" of Zechariah 3. They began with a flourish -- but where did they go wrong?

William F. Dankenbring

(Please note this article was written many years ago soon after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. Even so this is a very helpful and useful historical account of the well known problems in the Worldwide Church of God and its major offshoots. Updated January 2018).

I received the following letter from an ex-member of the Worldwide Church of God in Ohio who later joined the Philadelphia Church of God, headed by Gerald Flurry in Edmond, Oklahoma. His letter was extremely interesting and revealing. I thought I should share it with the readers of *Prophecy Flash*, with the hope of protecting and guiding people who might be tempted to get involved with another Church patterned after many of the basic errors of the Worldwide Church of God. The writers states:

"Thank you for your excellent literature! My enthusiasm has never been higher. I've been *starving* for such *inspiring* exhortations. Although my living was not at stake, such as in your case, the treatment I've received from church 'leaders' is about the same.

"After being too vocal in my questioning of the WCG's direction, I was 'disfellowshipped' in February of 1990. It was actually a relief since it was becoming more and more difficult to even motivate myself to attend. The last three years were *rough*."

The correspondent continues his personal, in-depth report based on his own findings:

"I then came to Fellowship with the 'Philadelphia Church of God' headed by Gerald Flurry in Edmond, OK. He sounded pretty good at first but his ideas won't stand up to his instructions to 'TEST YOUR LEADERS.' He claims remnant Philadelphia Christians should back the PCG. 'Unfortunately' again, I have just been 'suspended' by John Amos for asking about PASSOVER and the '144,000' doctrine. Mr. Amos also claimed I was disrespectful to his *office*. He claimed that myself and others here in Canton, Ohio, have been 'hounding' them about these doctrines. (We haven't even gotten around to *PENTECOST* yet!)."

The letter writer continues:

"Mr. Amos was supposed to visit me to counsel me about my 'hang up' about Passover but changed his mind and called me to cancel our 'golf date-counselling session' and to tell me I have been suspended for not being in 'agreement' and for being 'disrespectful' to a minister. All conveniently by telephone -- just for asking questions. The old AT & T 'Reach out and disfellowship someone' plan.

"I probably *do* sound disrespectful in this letter. But I'd prefer to characterize it as you would and say I and the others there were being *bold* to get to the TRUTH. So far there are three -- possibly four -- here in Canton who recognize the truth that has been revealed to you by God. Yes, and now we're being called all sorts of things in return."

What happened? Why was this sincere seeker for the truth of God abruptly thrown "out" of the new "Philadelphia Church of God," which claims to be the true "remnant" of the "Philadelphia Church" era founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1934? What went wrong? The letter writer continues his sad and pathetic story:

"Once the PCG organized itself and began teaching 'strong government' everything died. The PCG seems like a new Sardis -- accepting the truths that Mr. Armstrong taught (along with some errors), but Freezing everything at that point and refusing new Truth.

"We were just 'made examples of' to the Columbus, Ohio congregation -- the largest actual congregation in this part of the country -- (around 40-50 people). All of this without talking first with any of us to our faces. Mr. Amos has Forsaken the strays to 'save' the ninety-nine. It's BACKWARDS!

"Anyway, needless to say, your literature has shown to me that to continue to prove all things and to follow Christ -- not men with their own personal agendas -- thru getting back to serious Bible study and prayer IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR US ALL. It appears that Laodicean ministers can't magically change into Faithful shepherds, just by calling the organization 'Philadelphian.' A worthless shepherd is a worthless shepherd. I've only heard by the 'grapevine' that my status is now officially 'disfellowshipped.' No one has told me to my face. It's shameful!

"I can't tell you how encouraged I am by your reprints. I've just written this letter after having read your article 'Escape From Laodicea.' I hope to introduce others to your study aids and other publications. It won't be easy though. Already I'm considered 'lost' by my own sister who still attends the PCG. She 'lovingly' refers to your literature as 'POISON.' Hopefully she'll come around -- before it's too late.

"By the way, I'm no stranger to your articles. I'd received the 'Plain Truth' and 'Tomorrow's World' magazines in the early seventies. I'd attended the WCG since 1973. I have many issues from the sixties also. Please keep the 'presses' rolling and thanks to you and all who are helping you to teach the truth so all who will be willing to prove and accept it can do so. Thanks so much. Our prayers are with you."

The writer then adds the following postscript, a candid appraisal of the Flurry organization:

"P.S.S. Also if I can be of any help in regards to the 'PCG' please do not hesitate to ask. Mr. Flurry's errors are very dangerous, I feel. Thanks."

End-Time Deceptions Abound

Just because a Church group comes out of the Worldwide Church of God, and possess quite a bit of truth, does not necessarily mean that they are "God's end-time Church," and the ONLY true Church of God on earth, today, as the Flurry organization claims for itself!

What about you reading this article? Do you know how to really IDENTIFY God's True Church -- His True Work on this earth, today?

Jesus Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt.7:20). A Church's "fruits" involves both its TEACHINGS and DOCTRINES as well as its POLICIES and PRACTICES! Isaiah the prophet wrote, "To the law and to the testimony [the BIBLE]: if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is NO LIGHT IN THEM" (Isa.8:20).

Now, I have nothing "personal" against Gerald Flurry and his new organization. However, I have heard some things about them which cause me to grieve. They appear to have retreated into a form of "isolationism" and are not carefully "proving all things," as Paul commanded us to do (I Thess.5:21). They have retreated into the past, a time warp, where Herbert W. Armstrong -- despite his many faults, blemishes and errors -- is virtually "worshiped," put up on a pedestal, and glorified as the "Elijah" to come. Yet Herbert Armstrong himself admitted he was not a "prophet," and made many, many mistakes throughout his life. The prophecies concerning the coming "Elijah" say that he will restore the truth of God. Herbert Armstrong did restore some of God's truth -- but far from all of it -- and he was in error on some very important points.

Furthermore, the Elijah to come is prophesied to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers" (Mal.4:6) -- and the dropout rate of young people from the Worldwide Church of God was enormous when Herbert Armstrong was alive. They have failed to truly reconcile fathers and children. Family break-ups were at record levels. Husbands were divorcing wives and wives were leaving husbands. The situation in the Worldwide Church of God, during Herbert Armstrong's later years, was chaotic, with divorce and remarriage at all-time highs. Certainly these would not be the "fruits" of the ministry of the "Elijah" to come!

Gerald Flurry is right to compare the present-day leader of the Worldwide Church of God to "Judas Iscariot." The modern leadership of the Church is indeed betraying Jesus Christ and His truth!

The Great Errors of Gerald Flurry and

The "Philadelphia Church of God"

However, Flurry is totally wrong to use the prophecy in Zechariah concerning "Joshua the high priest" and to claim it refers to Joseph Tkach. According to Flurry in his book "Malachi's Message,"

"Joshua was Zerubbabel's chief assistant. They are both end-time types of two men who work together just before Christ's return. Joshua rebelled and 'despised the day of small things.' He turned away from the way Zerubbabel built. That is how Satan got to him (Zech.3:1).

"The 'man of sin' rules in God's Temple (or Church) and rejects the past instructions of 'he' who was 'taken out of the way' (II Thes.2). There is to be a Judas-like betrayal today, just as there was with Joshua.

"An end-time Joshua and the 'man of sin' reign in God's Church just before Christ's return (Zech.3:8; II Thes.2:1-3). Are they one and the same? Both turn away from past instructions. Both have filthy garments. Failing to submit to Christ's government is the major problem of both men" (p.61).

Sadly, this exegesis is all mixed up, spiritually. The "man of sin" of II Thessalonians refers most directly to the future "BEAST" or ruler of the end-time Babylonian Empire (Rev.17:10) who will literally sit in the Temple of God, soon to be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Rev.11:-1-2). He will literally sit in the Temple and proclaim that he is God. Paul writes of him, "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thess.2:4). Joseph Tkach does not literally claim that he is "God." This prophecy can only refer to him as a secondary type, since he does "exalt himself" and sits in the "Church" and acts with brazen impunity as he changes doctrines. But the primary meaning of this Scripture is obviously as a reference to the end-time Dictator who, like Antiochus Epiphanes, will desolate God's Temple and install the abomination of desolation (see Dan.11:31-32; Matt.24:15-21) and who will persecute God's people (Rev.12:14-16).

Who is "Joshua" the High Priest?

Flurry also completely misunderstands the significance of "Joshua the high priest" in Zechariah 3, also. Let's notice this passage carefully. "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?'" (Zech.3:1-2).

Notice! This man is snatched FROM the "fire," a type of the Great Tribulation. That means he is SAVED! He is a chosen vessel of Almighty God! He is most definitely NOT an "apostate" who starts out well but ends up going astray! Rather, the exact OPPOSITE is true! Let's continue the passage:

"Now Joshua was dressed in FILTHY CLOTHES as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have TAKEN AWAY YOUR SIN, and I will put rich garments on you.' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by" (Zech.3:3-5).

This scene shows a man who was filthy with sins, but who REPENTED -- and who was then used mightily by God! This describes the very opposite of a man plunging into APOSTASY -- it shows a man FORSAKING apostasy and REPENTING of a grievous, filthy, spiritual past!

In ancient times, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor of Judah worked together, as a team, to rebuild the temple of God, which was accomplished from 520 to 516 B.C. They were a powerful team -- Joshua did not forsake the Work of God, as Gerald Flurry seems to claim, and plunge into apostasy -- not at all.

The TWO WITNESSES

Rather, he and Zerubbabel were TYPES of the end-time TWO WITNESSES of the Book of Revelation! Notice it! God shows Zechariah a vision of a gold lampstand with seven lights, and two olive trees beside it (Zech.4:1-3). God then says, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT,' says the LORD Almighty. What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of "God bless it! God bless it!" Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation; his hands will also COMPLETE IT. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you" (Zech.4:4-9).

Notice! This cannot refer to Herbert Armstrong, not even in type. Even if one suggests that God used him to begin His end-time work in 1934, he is now DEAD. He most certainly will NOT "complete" or "finish" the Work of the Church! Therefore, he was NOT an end-time "type" or fulfillment of "Zerubbabel"! That should be perfectly plain.

The Scripture goes on, however, "Who despises the day of small things? Men will REJOICE when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. . . ' Then I asked the angel, 'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?' He replied, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord' I said. So he said, 'These are the TWO WHO ARE ANOINTED TO SERVE THE LORD of all the earth'" (Zech.4:10-14).

What is this talking about? These two "anointed ones" were Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest! They were a type of the TWO WITNESSES of the End Time! They worked TOGETHER to finish and complete the WORK OF GOD on earth, prior to the return of Jesus Christ!

Therefore, in no way could this prophecy refer to Herbert Armstrong -- who is now DEAD -- and Joseph Tkach -- who has now turned ASIDE from the true paths of God!

Rather, as John writes in the book of Revelation, Almighty God says:

"And I will give POWER TO MY TWO WITNESSES, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. *These ARE the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.* If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how any one who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want" (Rev.11:3-6).

How clear! Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel were two powerful servants of God who were types of the end-time Two Witnesses prophesied in the book of Revelation. In no way, therefore, is "Joshua" a type of that miserable dog and cur Joseph W. Tkach who has sold his soul to the devil and has departed from the faith and followed in the diabolical footsteps of Judas Iscariot, the supreme traitor of all time!

Flurry and the "Temple"

Flurry is also dead wrong when he claims,

"Even if a temple is built in Jerusalem, it will not be the temple of God [his emphasis]. The Jews have not been commissioned to build God's temple -- as Zerubbabel was. If they build a temple, it would be the Jew's temple" ("Malachi's Message," p.47).

This is utter nonsense. The prophet Daniel foretold of a Temple of God in Jerusalem during the last days (see Dan.8:9-14, 23-25) where sacrifices will be performed (Dan.9:26-27) and where the abomination of desolation will be literally placed (Dan.11:31-32). Jesus Christ also foretold of this same Temple or "holy place" (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14). And John in Revelation connects this future Temple with the two witnesses, and was told specifically to "measure" it, but not to measure the "outer court" because "it has been given to the Gentiles" who will trample it down for three and one half years, during the "Great Tribulation" (Rev.11:1-2).

Furthermore, to claim that this Temple would not be God's Temple shows an astonishing lack of understanding. God plainly COMMANDS His people, the Jews, to rebuild His Temple. The prophecies of Haggai are all about this phenomenal End-Time coming event. God declares, "'Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and BUILD THE HOUSE, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,' says the LORD" (Haggai 1:8).

Talking about this end-time Temple, God says, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more SHAKE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, the sea and the dry land. I will SHAKE ALL NATIONS, and the desired of all nations [Christ the Messiah!] will COME, and I will fill this house [the End-Time Temple!] with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. . . . 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty' (Hag.2:6-9).

Gerald Flurry says any Temple the Jews build will not be God's Temple? That is exceedingly strange. Malachi the prophet declares: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will COME TO HIS TEMPLE; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will COME,' says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:1). Christ will return TO HIS TEMPLE in Jerusalem! One of the final things remaining that must be accomplished before the return of the Messiah is the *rebuilding of His Temple!* Read my articles on "Coming Soon -- A Temple In Jerusalem!", "Prepare the Way of the Lord!" and "Will a Temple Soon Be Built?"

For a man who claims to be God's sole remaining representative on the earth, leading the sole remnant of the "one true Church," Gerald Flurry shows an astonishing amount of ignorance and an equally astonishing degree of pride and vanity and cocksure pompous arrogance. A little more "humility" would be much more becoming. God says, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and TREMBLES AT MY WORD" (Isaiah 66:2).

Enough said?

The Mystery of the 144,000 Garbled Again!

Flurry is also wrong in claiming that the Laodicean Church is the 144,000 and will all perish in the Great Tribulation, suffering martyrdom. He completely twists the Scriptures in Revelation 3 to

suit his purpose, claiming that the promise in Revelation 3:21 is not given to the repentant Laodicean Christians at all but is part of the promise of the Philadelphia Church (whose own reward is actually mentioned in Rev.3:11-13). For Flurry to apply the promise Christ makes to repentant Laodiceans to the Philadelphia Church's reward is pure, unadulterated hogwash!

Flurry states that the 144,000 of Revelation are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord (Rev.6:9-17; 7:1-4). This of course is true. But then Flurry goes off the track, and claims that only the 144,000 are "sealed" after the Great Tribulation because, according to him:

"The Laodiceans will DIE and be sealed during the 2 1/2 year Tribulation. Therefore, we can see that the 144,000 of God's people receive their salvation through the Tribulation experience -- and death" (p.29).

This is utterly false! He adds,

"Again, the Bible indicates that *all the Laodiceans who enter God's Kingdom must DIE for God* (Rev.6:9-11; 12:11-12). You should read every word. . . . The Laodiceans have to *prove themselves by dying for God*" (p.30, his emphasis).

These Scriptures simply do not say what Gerald Flurry says they say. Rather, Rev.6:9-11 speaks of MANY true Christians dying during the Great Tribulation. But it does not say ALL will perish in martyrdom! Similarly, Revelation 12:11-12 merely states that the devil will come down to the earth with great wrath and fury. Verses 14-16 show that some of God's people will be protected from Satan; but others will be persecuted. There is NO MENTION OF MARTYRDOM, although it will certainly happen to SOME! Persecution is NOT "martyrdom"! Many will be persecuted, thrown in prison, and treated horribly. Some will definitely be martyred -- but nowhere does God say all the Laodiceans will be martyred -- only that they will suffer the "fire" of the Great Tribulation (Rev.3:18). In the process, many of them will finally REPENT, and learn their lesson.

Who then are the real 144,000 of Revelation? Let's understand! The apostle John sees them after the Great Tribulation (Rev.6:11-17), during a pause before the Day of the Lord begins, when God Himself sends plagues upon the earth (Rev.7:1-2). John says quite clearly that they are 12,000 from EACH of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev.7:3-8) who are also "servants of our God" (v.3). Being servants of God, these people already have God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, these must be SURVIVING CHRISTIANS from all the remnant Churches of God who have come THROUGH the Great Tribulation, and are *still alive!* At this time they will be "sealed" in their foreheads (v.3).

What is this "sealing"? It cannot be receiving of God's Spirit -- they already have that, being

"servants of God." To claim that it is "death," as Flurry does, makes no sense whatsoever. These people are SURVIVORS, still alive at the end of the Great Tribulation! What, then, is it? Notice!

The Mystery of the "Mark"

"Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, 'Bring the guards of the city here, each with a WEAPON in his hand.' And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. . . . Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, 'Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and PUT A MARK on the FOREHEADS of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.'"

Ezekiel continues: "As I listened, he said to the others [other angels], 'Follow him through the city and KILL, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but DO NOT TOUCH ANYONE WHO HAS THE MARK" (Ezekiel 9:1-6).

This "mark" is the same thing as the "seal" in Revelation 7:3 -- it is the "seal" or "mark" of divine PROTECTION and setting apart! In other words, the PLAGUES OF GOD which will fall upon the earth during the Day of the Lord, will not harm or touch the "sealed" and protected servants of God who are still alive at that time! They will be supernaturally SPARED and SAVED from the judgment that will fall upon the heads of all the wicked!

"The Government of God"?

Unfortunately, Gerald Flurry's so-called "Philadelphia Church of God" is no more the true "Philadelphia Church" than is the Worldwide Church of God or the Church of God, International! It is just one more off shoot of Worldwide -- one more "sect" that has arisen during these last days to lead people astray into error! Satan the devil seems to have a slot for virtually everybody, and many subtle ways in which to deceive people.

Flurry believes that the "government of God" is only in his "church" group today. He thunders at everybody else:

"When we reach 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord,' all rebellion from the Church against the Elijah Work [which he claims is his work] is removed. At that point, all Firstfruits support what Christ has restored through HWA or they are dead spiritually! Even though HWA died before 'the great and

dreadful Day of the Lord,' there are many who still don't support what Christ restored through him. When that Day arrives,
*ALL CHURCH MEMBERS WHO STILL REBEL AGAINST
 GOD'S GOVERNMENT WILL BE CUT OFF FOREVER!"*
 (p.29, whew!).

Flurry's "church government" is no more God's Government on earth than Worldwide's, Church of God, International's, or any other sect or cult today! He says of those he calls "Laodiceans," "They have a serious *GOVERNMENT PROBLEM*. *They are in the Tribulation for that very reason!"* (*ibid.*). But Flurry's group has shown it has that identical problem!

Will they wind up then in the very same place?

Flurry threatens all who don't follow HIM and his group with DEATH in the Great Tribulation, unless they repent NOW. He claims their "sealing" means being MARTYRED during the Great Tribulation. What a total perversion and twisting of the plain and simple Scriptures of Revelation 6, 7 and 12! Knowing that we serve a righteous and a just God, I suspect that God will reserve for Gerald Flurry and his group the very punishment that he so quickly threatens so many others with! I would sincerely not want to be "caught" among them.

On the last page of his book, page 83, Flurry asks the question:

"WHO HAS A GOVERNMENT PROBLEM?"

He asserts:

"We are going to be accused of rebelling against God and His authority. WE ARE DOING JUST THE OPPOSITE! . . . Who has a government problem? The whole battle we face is struggling to cling to Christ's government. . . . WE ARE NOT REBELLING -- WE ARE TAKING A STAND AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE!"

Of course, Joseph Tkach and the Worldwide Church of God do accuse Flurry and his group of rebelling against "Church authority" and the "government of God." But now Flurry and his group are accusing others of the very same thing when they disagree with him! So what we see here are "two wolves," all right -- the Worldwide "wolf" gnashing its teeth at a rebellious young "whelp" of a "wolf" which has led off a group of people to follow him to his own rendezvous with destiny, and the Great

Tribulation -- unless he, himself, bitterly repents of his own serious, fatal errors!

If Flurry were taking a stand against those who are rebelling against God, and if he were standing up for the TRUTH of God, and not just for old ERRORS and doctrinal mistakes of the past, then I would have nothing against him -- I would cheer him and root for his team. But alas, I cannot do that. The "fruits" have proven that his group is just another "miniature Worldwide" with all of its governmental errors and doctrinal faults -- including the abuse of authority and stubborn refusal to admit and confess their mistakes, and to repent and receive proven and provable new Truth!

"BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!"

Finally, Flurry ends his book:

"Brethren, please study and digest this message, and pray fervently for God to guide you. BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN! Your eternal life hangs in the balance" (p.83, "Malachi's Message").

On this one thing Gerald Flurry is certainly right.

You should definitely "BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE -- NOT MEN!" (p.83). And that includes *Gerald Flurry!*

Flurry also tells people who read his book, "

"GOD COMMANDS -- TEST YOUR LEADERS" (page 5).

This also is very good advice. And it applies just as much to Gerald Flurry as it does to Joseph W. Tkach, or any other man on the earth, today!

He is also right, when he says, on page 4, that the apostle John had a "run in" with a certain church leader of his time, one Diotrephes, who would not let the brethren receive emissaries from John, but forbade them from doing so and even "puts them out of the church," John wrote (III John 9-10). Flurry says these cast out ones were the faithful brethren, the one's who had God's Holy Spirit. These cast out ones became the new faithful Church of God, while the visible organization under Diotrephes went into apostasy.

Flurry declares:

"The point is, THOSE CLOSE TO GOD FOLLOWED
JESUS CHRIST -- not some of the deceived leaders in
God's Church."

Flurry continues:

"We often ask the question, 'Is he out of the Church?' But that
isn't the most important question. That isn't the question the
Apostle John was most concerned about. His followers were
'cast out' of the Ephesus Church [era -- III John 9,10] -- but it was
because they were actually FOLLOWING CHRIST! Following
Christ has gotten many people kicked out of God's Churches --
when those Churches were going astray. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE
WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST -- not a man or a church organization"
(p.4, "Malachi's Message").

Isn't that amazing? Gerald Flurry knows this truth. He even writes about it. Indeed, a TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST! But then Flurry does the very same thing DIOTREPHES DID whom the apostle John had his confrontation with -- he casts true Christians out of the Church! Flurry does the very same thing to others that Joseph Tkach and his minions in Pasadena did to him!

Is that the right "Christian example" to be set?

Is Flurry, therefore, really "FOLLOWING CHRIST?"

The experience of the man who was in the "Philadelphia Church of God" for a while speaks volumes concerning the true state of affairs of the "Philadelphia Church of God."

His letter is very revealing and definitely shows a wrong attitude on the part of the ministry -- a self-righteous, holier-than-thou attitude that is blind to error and their own mistakes and shortcomings. Christ Himself will deal with such reprehensible, devious ministers who refuse to repent when confronted with the plain and simple Word of God.

"WOE To the Shepherds"!

The Word of God thunders, "To the shepherds: Thus said the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel, who have been tending yourselves! Is it not the flock that the shepherds ought to tend? You partake of the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, and YOU SLAUGHTER the fatlings; but you do not tend the flock. You have not sustained the weak, healed the sick, or bandaged the injured; you have NOT BROUGHT BACK THE STRAYED, or looked for the LOST; but you have DRIVEN THEM WITH HARSH RIGOR, and they have been scattered for want of anyone to tend them" (Ezek.34:2-5, Tanakh).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "'WOE to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!' declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: 'Because you have SCATTERED my flock and DRIVEN THEM AWAY [through "disfellowshipment" as well as other means, including "boring them to death" in some cases] and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow PUNISHMENT on you for the EVIL you have done,' declares the LORD'" (Jer.23:1-2).

John Amos, one of the two top ministers of the "Philadelphia Church of God" -- I have to put that name in quotation marks, because by their fruits they certainly are NOT the "Church of Brotherly Love," which the name "Philadelphia" would imply -- accused a man of having a "hang-up" about Passover and the 144,000. But I have noticed it is the one who does the accusing who usually has the real spiritual "hang-ups."

The leaders of the "Philadelphia Church of God" appear to be stuck in "neutral" spiritually and are going nowhere fast. As the letter writer said, they have all the major "truth" virtually "frozen solid" -- as of the time of Herbert Armstrong -- except what Gerald Flurry decides to change, for his own benefit.

Concerning the Passover controversy, Flurry and Amos both should read my many articles on this subject which prove beyond any question that Passover must be observed at the END of Nisan 14, on Nisan 15, the same time as the Jews have always observed it. The wine and unleavened bread are to be taken with the Passover meal or seder, in a family setting, the only difference being they represent the blood and body of Christ our Saviour who rescued us from sin. (See the articles "Wonderful New Truth about the Passover!", "Passover -- The Final Solution," "When Should We Observe the Passover?" and "Myths about the Passover!")

Likewise, they should study into the subject of the right day to observe Pentecost. This holy day has been grievously misunderstood. The Jews have always celebrated both Passover and Pentecost on the right days -- they never lost this fundamental truth of God, anymore than they ever lost the true knowledge of the weekly Sabbath! (See my articles "How Should We Count Pentecost?", "Pentecost -- the Final Story," "The Pentecost Enigma!", "The Incredible Truth about Pentecost," and "The Plain Truth about Pentecost!")

I sincerely hope that Gerald Flurry and John Amos will both come to full repentance before they go so far adrift from the truth which they once held that they earn for themselves the full, undiluted and undiminished WRATH and fury of God, which He will pour out on the wicked shepherds, the evil ministers, and all those who MISLEAD God's people!

As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "The WRATH OF GOD is being revealed from heaven against ALL the godlessness and wickedness of MEN WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. . . . so that [these] men are without excuse" (Rom.1:18-20).

This is no small matter, but something all should take with the utmost seriousness and urgency.

Presently, the "Philadelphia Church of God" possesses fatal and dangerous errors. They came out of Worldwide, but not "all the way out" of Babylon! They still have the Babylonian, authoritarian, despotic form of "church government" which does not come from Scripture but from Babylon and the tyranny of Roman Catholicism, masquerading as the truth of God. God's true ministers are not autocrats or dictators -- they are loving and gentle shepherds who love the flock with tenderness and rule with meekness and gentleness (I Pet.5:1-4; Matt.23:8-12).

The "Philadelphia Church of God," as it seems to *boastfully* call itself -- not illustrative of what I would call an attitude of humility -- needs to repent, and develop an attitude of true humility. Certainly, people need to be warned against every vestige of false teaching that remains in the Worldwide Church of God. But we need also to repent and change every vestige or particle of error that formerly was taught by the Worldwide Church of God. Just "following Herbert W. Armstrong" as he used to teach is not good enough. He was still just a man -- mortal, fallible, weak, and sinful. Following him blindly would be no safer than following any man blindly!

The Scriptures state unequivocally: "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing" (Psalms 146:3-4). This certainly happened in the case of Herbert Armstrong. He left the Work of God in the hands of a spiritual *FOOL!*

The Word of God says, "It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes" -- or ministers or any human leaders (Psalms 118:8-9).

I hope and pray that the leaders of the Philadelphia Church of God will come to a much fuller and deeper repentance and submission to the will of God. It is right that they should help expose the errors of Worldwide -- but they should not blind themselves to REAL new truth, and bring people into servitude and cruel "bondage" to themselves -- *replacing one dictatorship with another!* They themselves must also open their eyes to the fact that Herbert Armstrong did not have all the truth, and that we must continue to GROW in grace and the knowledge of God's Word and HIS LAWS (II

Pet.3:18). If they follow the example of Worldwide, and put people out for asking questions, or bringing up serious new truth, then they are no better than the apostates they are fleeing from -- they are just "the pot calling the kettle black" -- modern hypocrites! We should not reject the extremism of Worldwide only to retreat into a rigid reactionary neo-conservative cultism.