

SEVEN RESTORATIONS OF THE WORK OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Version 3

**“He that hath an ear,
let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches”**

Note: we must take note of what the spirit says to the churches (plural). However, we must also take notice of what it is saying to one’s current church phase.

Which phase are we entering NOW? And just what is the spirit saying to us?

How do phases of the Church’s Work commence and how does this impact YOU?

[this paper should be read in conjunction with the paper *Roots of Our Beliefs*]

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"Still, if you will not fight for the right when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not so costly, you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance for survival. There may be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no chance of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves."

- Winston Churchill

**“He that hath an ear,
let him hear what the spirit
saith to the churches”
(Rev. 3:22)**

Extract from chapter 6 of *Mystery of the Ages* by Herbert W Armstrong

Seven Church Eras

The book of Revelation records seven messages to seven churches that existed in Asia Minor toward the end of the first century A.D.

These churches--Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea--were located along one of the mail routes of the old Roman Empire.

Riders would follow the route--carrying messages from town to town. The messages to the seven churches have words of both encouragement and correction and they clearly show the dominant characteristics of each of the congregations at that time.

But these messages were intended for a wider audience than the Christians in these small towns.

They are a series of remarkable prophecies, by which the future of the true Church was foretold in outline form, from the day it began on Pentecost, A.D. 31, until the Second Coming of Christ.

The history of the Church would fall into seven distinct eras--each with its own strengths and weaknesses and its own special trials and problems.

Just as a message could pass along the mail route from Ephesus to Laodicea, so would the truth of God be passed from era to era. It was like a relay race--in which the baton is passed from runner to runner, each one doing his part, until the finish line is reached.

Some time during the early decades of the second century, the baton was passed from the Ephesian era to the people that God had called to the Smyrna era of his Church.

Powerless, often persecuted, and rejected as heretics, the world lost sight of them. Instead, there emerged from the lost century a church that was steadily growing in popularity but growing further away from the gospel that Jesus taught.

Persecution continued at various times under the Romans until the fourth century, when Constantine recognized the degenerate Church of that period as an official religion of the empire.

... [centuries later] the true Church of God **refused to accept these teachings and doctrines and restored certain truths that had fallen into neglect in the previous century.**

They moved their headquarters to Marion, Iowa, and then to Stanberry, Missouri. A magazine, *The Bible Advocate*, was published. Their efforts bore some fruit--small congregations sprang up across the nation.

And so it was that some time in the 19th century, a small congregation of the true Church of God was established in the peaceful Willamette Valley in Oregon.

They were farmers, without formal education. They lacked trained ministers to teach and guide them. But they had the name, Church of God, and they faithfully kept the Sabbath day.

God's Church had come a long way across the turbulent centuries since the day of Pentecost.

It was weak, and lacked influence. Years of persecution and compromise had taken their toll. Much truth had been lost. But they had stayed the course.

In the Willamette Valley, they waited. It was nearly time for the baton to change again--into the hands of those God would call to do his end-time work. [emphasis mine]

Prologue

God indeed works in mysterious ways. No so more than with the way He calls people or nations to His purpose. The way he runs human affairs from time-to-time.

Not least the way He raises up a Work by first developing religious interest; then seeking out people from its midst (a calling out of a Babylon, at least typologically), then purifying their doctrine and adding truths to it.

Then a great Work occurs.

Six times this has occurred – the seventh is well on its way.

Yet there has not been much contact or derivation of a Church phase or era from the previous one. They have definitely been in touch, but close relationships generally do not seem to develop. Why?

This paper seeks to explain the above and to seek answers to the mysterious origin of new phases of the Work of God during each Church era.

Introductory Remarks

We find the principle of restorations throughout the Old Testament such as the new world after the flood; raising up of Abram in a place of apostasy; and during period of the Kings in particular when the true religion was revived from time-to-time.

We also have the work of the Elijah referred to in scripture and of course the restoration of Israel to world leadership under the Messiah, during the millennium. The millennium itself represents the restoration of God's government to the earth.

But what of the New Testament period?

Much has been written about the seven eras of God's True Church/religion. Much, much more has been written about the historical seven churches of Asia Minor and the spiritual application to seven types of Christians and, in addition, to seven church attitudes and groups in the last days.

What has never been published or preached, to my knowledge, is another aspect of this multi-faceted prophecy: that these seven eras (which may also be termed phases or epochs) also represent seven restorations (we might even say resurrections) of the Work of the True Church of God.

Of course, revivals may be personal, congregational or era-wide.

Further, just as there have been apostasies and fallings away (personal, congregational and era-wide), a remnant remains faithful to continue the Work, no matter how small. Sometimes these may be rejuvenations part way through a Church era (perhaps each era experience at least of these during its duration).

Herbert Armstrong and the old WCG taught in various ways that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 were:

- **Historical** churches which were extant in literal ancient towns located in Asia Minor
- **Prophetic** - Seven church eras or phases
- **Spiritual** – representing seven types of Christian
- **Congregational** – different congregations extant in various eras or phases could represent a spirit/attitude of another church

- **Organisational** – various organized groups and offshoots could represent various churches/eras (eg in this sense, all seven may be represented in some way throughout the 2,000 year history of the Church and as such, are still today, but with one era dominating)

With this in mind, let us therefore examine the principle of revivalism in the New Testament Church of God – if we have ears to hear.

The Candlestick Symbolism in the Old and New Testaments

Throughout the Old Testament symbols used for Israel include a woman, Zion, sheep, candlestick and so forth. In the New Testament, similar symbols are used for spiritual Israel (ie those Israelites that are spiritual and those non-Israelites grafted into the Israelitish vine).

This includes the candlestick symbolism. Note what the online version of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* has to say:

“CANDLESTICK, THE GOLDEN:

kan'-d'-l-stik, gold'-l-n (menorah, literally "lamp-stand"): An important part of the furniture of the tabernacle and temples.

See *TABERNACLE*; *TEMPLE*; *LAMP*. 1. The Tabernacle:

The candlestick is first met with in the descriptions of the tabernacle (Ex 25:31-39; 37:17-24). It was, with the utensils connected with it (snuffers, snuff dishes), to be made of pure beaten gold, of one piece, a talent in weight (Ex 25:39). It consisted of a pedestal or base, of a central stem (the name "candlestick" is specially given to this), of six curving branches--three on each side--and of seven lamps resting on the tops of the branches and stem. Stem and branches were ornamented with cups like almond-blossoms, knops and flowers--four of this series on the stem, and three on each of the branches. Some, however, understand the "cup" to embrace the "knop" and "flower" (calyx and corolla). The shape of the pedestal is uncertain. Jewish tradition suggests three small feet; the representation of the candlestick on the Arch of Titus has a solid, hexagonal base. The position of the candlestick was on the South side of the holy place (Ex 40:24).

... The immediate object of the candlestick was to give light in the holy place. The lamps were lighted in the evening and burned till the morning (Ex 30:7,8; Le 24:3; 1Sa 3:3; 2Ch 13:11), light being admitted into the temple during the day by the upper windows. Josephus in his *Cosmical speculations* (BJ, V, v, 5) takes the seven lamps to signify the seven planets. In Zechariah's vision of the golden candlestick (Zec 4:2 ff), the seven lamps are fed by two olive trees which are interpreted to be "the two anointed ones," Zerubbabel and Joshua--the civil and spiritual representatives of theocracy. **The candlestick here, like the seven candlesticks in Re 1:20; 2:1, symbolizes the church of God, then in its Old Testament form**, the idea conveyed being that God's church is set to be a lightgiver in the world. Compare Christ's words (Mt 5:14,16; Lu 12:35), and Paul's (Php 2:15).

The oldest known representation of the seven-branched candlestick is on a coin of Antigonus, circa 40 BC (see Madden's *Coins of the Jews*, 102)." (emphasis mine)

There is one important difference between the candlestick concepts when one carefully compares how they are represented in either Testament: in the Old Testament there is one candlestick with 7 branches. However, in the New Testament typology there are 7 separate candlesticks.

Why is this so?

Firstly, let us examine the context of the candlesticks in the book of Revelation. This book uses both the geography and terminology of the Near East. For instance this mysterious book contains references to Mount Zion, Jerusalem, the Temple, Israel, Egypt and Sodom, the Euphrates, Babylon, Armageddon, Jezebel plus various other Near Eastern inferences.

What does this mean for our understanding of the candlestick typology in Revelation?

What many do not realize is that the book of Revelation was the final book of the Bible to be accepted into the New Testament canon. Why was this the case? That book was considered to be so bizarre with railings similar to the Old Testament prophets and including so many Old Testament references that the canonisers had difficulty reconciling it to their view of the New Testament.

Yet the evidence was there and eventually this marvelous work was included in the canon under the inspiration of God.

Turning to chapter 1 of Revelation, we find the "seven golden candlesticks" which are used symbolically of "the seven churches" (Rev 1:13, 20):

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks;
and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle.
And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;
and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.
And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last,
and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter;
the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.” (Rev 1:12-20).

Now turn to the Old Testament reference to the candlestick and see if you can spot the difference:

“And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it.
And there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof:
three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the candlestick:
and in the candlestick four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof;
and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the candlestick.
Their knops and their branches shall be of one piece with it; the whole of it one beaten work of pure gold.
And thou shalt make the lamps thereof, seven: and they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it.

And the snuffers thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.
Of a talent of pure gold shall it be made, with all these vessels.
And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the
mount.” (Ex 25:31-40)

Here is the difference and an important one at that:

The candlestick in the Old Testament is **a single structure with seven branches** – this signifies unity, a clearly identified group, continuum through similar structures.

But ...

An evaluation of Revelation 2 and 3 indicates that **there were seven separate candlesticks**, which indicates churches which history has not given much notice to and which characteristics are quite different. This indicates that the Church of God has operated in a sequence of seven epochs or phases since its dawn and with different governance structures. In other words they are not closely linked and have a rather separate history. For it is God’s Spirit that links them, not organizational means. For they are linked spiritually, based on foundational doctrines.

Small and weak; persecuted and hated; pursued through hill and dale; mountain and valley, the Church of God fled for cover from Satan’s agents – yet it survived. In contrast, Israel is more readily identifiable in history and in its institutions. While undergoing seven phases, Israel was noticeable as a political entity of sorts.

Yet Christ is in the midst of the seven candlesticks, guiding them through His spirit and angelic agents.

What might one make of all of this?

Simply this: the Church of God has been going on a long, arduous journey of character creation, which in the main, has meant struggle for survival. The flames of the seven candlestick have flickered from bright to almost nothing, and in many cases, the flame went out.

Yet, from time-to-time, the candlestick which represents a particular phase as we have seen, burst brightly and spread the True Gospel message as best as it could.

As such, this aspect of the seven candlesticks represent seven restorations or resurrections of the Work of the Church of God. The Church has continued through all centuries since its inception about 30/31 AD but only occasionally has it powerfully preached the Gospel to society. Most attempts have not been very successful.

Unfortunately, it is lamentable that those that reject the ‘seven church eras’ doctrine are missing out on some very important Biblical truths and principles. They also miss out on the wonderful truth that ancient Israel experience seven eras which parallel that of the New Testament spiritual Israel (see the paper *The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel – Type of the Eras of the True Church?*).

Seven Restorations of the Work

One of the main reasons for the existence of the Church of God is to proclaim the future Kingdom of God.

Yet, ever since the first scattering of God’s sabbatarian church recorded in Acts 8:1, it has not always been one composite organisation. The Church of God has been small (Luke 12:32) lacking in great strength or power, yet maintaining the basic truths of God's Word: His Law (including the Sabbath sign), the Fruits of the Spirit, the Beatitudes and basic True Doctrine (such as water baptism, the True Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the nature of man and so on).

When the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70AD, a further scattering commenced. Some, known as the Nazarenes under James the Just fled; others scattered into little groups here and there; while some were already planted in Britain and elsewhere due to the work of the apostles.

Communication between them would not have been great due to the nature of the times. The Church has since largely been scattered into branches or groups which were often not in communication with one another. These branches themselves suffered scattering on a regional basis. Like a vine growing all over the place, the Church of God has spread all over the earth, sewing seeds and truths wherever she may be found, yet weak and persecuted

In any event, over time, it has scattered and then parts of it have re-gathered and restored the Work as well as many truths that had been lost, whilst simultaneously holding on to basic doctrine. There has never been a total destruction of the Church - what happened in our former association was an attempt at destruction (II Cor 4:9). But God used Satan's efforts as a means toward reconstruction for a new phase of the Work. For the Church to be tested and reformed to undertake a Work in the world structured in a way applicable for this day and age.

This is the historical period we are going through - reconstructing the Church and its efforts for the years ahead. If we view it in that light, it is overall positive, even if it is a painful experience at the time. Now is the time to shake off dead wood and steer the Church into the future with a structure geared toward a new generation whilst holding firmly to the truth.

From this is emerging the continuation of the small but powerful Philadelphia Work – a second phase of the Work. Alongside it is arising the much larger Laodicean Work.

Yet all eras or phases of God's Church, no matter how far apart they were geographically or distant in time, were and are connected by God's eternal spirit which transcends space and time – for Christ Himself is their Head and in the midst of the candlesticks.

Now, as the Babylonian system and spirit has been resurrected over time, particularly the Holy Roman Empire, so has God's Church. Each resurrection has had a different character with people called out of various forms of Babylonianism. The world is in spiritual Babylon, but there is one certain Church that is the spiritual and doctrinal successor to the Babylonian Mysteries – as such, the two concepts of Babylon overlap.

Each time a new Work is seeded and begins to take root – some years later growing and flowering.

It seems that God sifts through the world from time-to-time to choose a people and raise up a Church of God group or groups to do His will.

In any event, the following describes the probable major areas that people are called out from during given eras:

1. Ephesus: Calling out of the Babylon of the Pharisaism and Babylonianism/Hellenism
2. Smyrna: calling out of the Babylon of the cults of Asia Minor
3. Pergamos: Calling out of the Babylon of the paganism in Cappadocia and Armenia
4. Thyatira: calling out of the Babylon of the Catholicism
5. Sardis: calling out of the Babylon of the Anglicanism and Puritanism

More detailed information about these church eras will be supplied in a future article.

Suffice to say that it is of considerable interest that Christ said to the last four eras that he is coming to them:

Thyatira	“hold fast till I come”
Sardis	“I will come on thee as a thief”
Philadelphia	“Behold, I come quickly”
Laodicea	“Behold, I stand at the door and knock”

These statements are not made of the first three eras as they have now died out. But the last four, each with various branches, are alongside each other in these last days. While some similar statements are made to Ephesus (verse 5b) and Pergamos (verse 16), these are warnings of Christ’s punishment, not His return.

Surely there are groups extant since the Middle Ages and later which are the legitimate heirs to the Thyatira and Sardis eras. They are also God’s people and a few groups which have arise even in the twentieth century appear to approximate the Thyatira and Sardis eras.

A Modern Example of Restoration

6. Philadelphia: calling out of the Babylon of Protestantism and the world

One of the primary reasons for the existence of the Church is to proclaim the future government of God upon the earth – the rulership of the Messiah over the earth. With Him will be the saints and ruling the world under them will be the Houses of Judah and Israel. This is known as the Kingdom of God.

Nave’s Topical Bible reveals that “more space in the prophetic scriptures is devoted to a future rule of God on earth than to any other theme” (page 752). This was the major theme of Herbert W Armstrong’s preaching.

Yet this era is described as weak (politically and small) (Rev 3:8). But due to their faith (holding fast to true doctrine), God used this phase of His Work mightily. Notice a similar principle outlined by the prophet Isaiah:

“Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice *due* to me is passed away from my God?
Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding.
He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” (Is 40:27-31).

Other eras were not afforded such a blessing due to their problems.

God’s Church has been scattered for centuries and has not been one composite organisation, but rather has consisted of many groups related to one another. Some of those groups have died out; some seem spiritually without life; but some are alive and well, doing a Work to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to bring many to salvation.

Let us now turn our attention to the first murmurings of the birth of the Philadelphia Era.

During periods in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, America experience evangelical fervour, known as the ‘Great Awakening’. The influence of these movements may have given impetuous to the

eventual awakening and revival of a slumbering and virtually dead church. God indeed works in mysterious and circuitous ways.

For when Baptist preacher William Miller proclaimed the imminent return of Christ commencing about 1831, many began to respond (he was a Sunday keeper and never became a Sabbatarian). Whilst his followers were popularly known as ‘Millerites’ among themselves they were known as ‘Adventists’ – proclaimers of Christ’s second coming.

The second coming of Christ literally to the earth, a 1,000 year reign of His upon the earth and other truths were seldom mentioned or believed in Christianity – until the Advent movement. Indeed, Christianity was indifferent to Christ’s return or was seeking it after the millennium!

It took some years before a handful of the Adventists adopted the seventh-day Sabbath. This is how God, in His mysterious ways did this:

“Rachel (Harris) Oakes Preston (1809-1868), had a great influence on the Sabbatarian movement. She was a Seventh Day Baptist who persuaded a group of Adventists to accept the Sabbath and thus to become in that sense, the first Seventh-day Adventists. Born in Vernon, Vermont, she joined the Methodist Church, then joined the Seventh Day Baptist church of Verona, Oneida County, New York. Later she moved to Washington, New Hampshire, to be near her daughter, Delight Oakes, who taught school there. When Mrs. Oakes sought to introduce the Sabbath to the company of Adventists in the Christian church there, she found them so engrossed in preparation for the coming of the Lord that they paid little attention to her Seventh Day Baptist literature.

She did eventually gain as a convert, Frederick Wheeler, a Methodist preacher. One Sunday while conducting the communion service for the Christian congregation, he remarked that all who confess communion with Christ in such a service as this "should be ready to obey God and keep His commandments in all things." Later Mrs. Oakes told him that she had almost risen in the service to tell him that he had better push back the communion table and put the communion cloth back over it until he was willing to keep all the commandments of God, including the fourth. Knowing she was a Seventh Day Baptist, Wheeler thus began serious thinking and earnest study, and not long after about March, 1844, as he later related, he began to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. After the Great Disappointment in October, 1844, during a Sunday service in the Washington church, William Farnsworth stated publicly that he was convinced that the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath and that he had decided to keep it. He was immediately followed by his brother Cyrus and several others. And Mrs. Oakes, in turn, soon embraced the Adventist teachings. Thus it was that the first little Sabbatarian Adventist group came into being.

Mrs. Oakes later married Nathan T. Preston and moved away. Not until the last year of her life did she join what had meanwhile become the SDA Church.” (Adapted from the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Volume 10, page 1149, 1976. Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

And this is one of the lessons of the seven candlesticks: unlike the political and organisational unity symbolized by the Old Testament candlestick, the New Testament has seven separate candlesticks, symbolizing little connection between Church eras.

This is an example of such – the Seventh Day Baptists continue the same era as that which sprang from the Anglicans in the 1500s and 1600s. Yet their connection or dialogue with the following era has been very small, although potent per the above. Similarly, their connection with the previous era, was also not great.

Five groups emerged directly from the original Adventist/Millerite movement: Seventh-day Adventists (1863), Church of God (1866), and three Sunday-observing Adventist groups: Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith (1888), Advent Christian Church (1860) and the Life and Advent Union (1862) (the

latter two merged in 1964). Except for the Sabbath, the Sunday observing Adventists groups have some major similarities to the sabbatarian Churches of God, including the future Kingdom of God on earth, conditionalism (soul sleep), anti-trinitarianism and water baptism.

Both Adventists and Churches of God are familiar with their common roots and beginnings during the nineteenth century. With the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, some individuals and fellowships either never joined and remained outside of the SDA Church, withdrew in 1863 or withdrew in 1866 (see Linden, *1844 and the Shut Door Problem*, pages 80-81; Bjorling, *The Churches of God, Seventh Day. A Bibliography*, pages 10-14). Of course the Seventh-day Baptists remained a separate entity.

Later, with the incorporation of the scattered non-SDA and non-SDB churches, the new group eventually became known as Church of God (Adventist) which indicates strong, intertwined links and relationships between the Church of God and the SDAs. Later, in 1922, the name Church of God (Seventh Day) was officially adopted and has remained such to this day.

George W Stetson, a minister with the Advent Christian Church, was influential in bringing the born again in the resurrection doctrine to various ones. Stetson wrote an article in the 13 September 1871 *World's Crisis* on "Infant Salvation". In this remarkable article he argues for the new birth to occur at the resurrection when we shall be full Sons of God.

Another was George Storrs who was involved with the Advent movement led by William Miller since 1842. Storrs brought the observance of Passover on 14 Abib, rather than as a weekly or quarterly Lord's Supper; soul sleep; as well as being instrumental in bringing the British-Israel truth into the Churches of God as far as we know.

Storrs was a Methodist Episcopal minister who influenced Russell (founder of the Jehovah Witnesses) and was himself a founder of the Sunday observing Life and Advent Union (a Sunday Adventist group mentioned above).

In the nineteenth century, Ellen G White taught that the early Adventists were originally full of zeal representing the Philadelphia era but that the SDAs had become the Laodicean era.

Similarly, some Protestants (in books and websites) have drawn parallels between the zeal of the Protestants of the nineteenth century and the Philadelphia era, followed by the Laodicean era some time in the early twentieth century. Indeed, for this was the spirit of the age.

Whilst it is clear that the seeds of the Philadelphia era were sown and began to take root around the 1840s-50s, it really only began to emerge and grow into a mighty tree with the Work of Herbert W Armstrong – this commenced the short-lived restoration of the Work to great glory.

But it quickly wilted under pressure of apostasy. In one of his works concerning *The Seven Churches* (published in the early years of the twentieth century), Glengarry Rupert (who seems to be a precursor of HWA) noted:

"Verse 9 shows there is a great apostacy during the history of the Philadelphia church. Yet there are some few in that age that have kept his word ... How truly all this history is fulfilled before the eyes of those who can see, having eyes anointed to discern truth ... **Now is the time to not be ashamed of his truth and proclaim it.**" (pages 19-20)
[emphasis mine]

Rupert had predicted the apostasy of the Philadelphia era about 80 or so years prior to it occurring by understanding what the following verses in Revelation indicate:

“Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. [why? Because they caused the apostasy]

Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”
[why? Because they resisted apostasy] (Rev 3:9-10)

Membership and new elders to the Church of God were added from the Seventh-day Adventist Church from time-to-time. One such elder was Glengarry Rupert, whose writings were later likely studied by Herbert W Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God (initially known as the Radio Church of God).

Rupert brought with him the belief that the annual sabbaths are important for Christians to understand and to observe which impacted upon sections of the Church of God, a few who were already observing these days. During his time with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the late nineteenth century, he performed missionary work in parts of South America. Later, in the 1960s, Worldwide Church of God ministers stumbled across many of these scattered remnants of Rupert’s missionary work. They never associated with any other sabbatarian group, but continued to faithfully observe the sabbath and in many cases, the annual sabbaths.

The Churches of God today have a Seventh-day Adventist elder to thank for bringing the annual sabbaths into their theological framework. To this day some Adventists privately observe these days. Rupert died in 1922, still a Church of God elder, leader of the Church of God (Independent), having been part of the splits from the Church of God in 1905. It split again in 1933 with re-amalgamation in 1950, although some did not rejoin the General Conference. More recently attempts to unify with the latter group failed in a vote, but now appears to be occurring by default with individual congregations joining the larger group.

In 1931 the Church of God in Poland was formed as a result of a split from the SDA Church. Coincidentally the Church of God in Portugal also started that year, as an SDA Church splinter group. The Adventist Church of Promise was formed the following year in Brazil which is now a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day) General Conference.

Also in the 1930s an SDA minister in Australia, pastor AH Britten, established the Remnant Church of God (although it was not registered until 1939). A small group continuing that church may still be found extant in Perth, Western Australia to this day. It is the first holy day observing group formed in Australia to my knowledge.

And in South Africa, Church of God small sabbatarian groups which were extant prior to the arrival of the Radio Church of God are thought to have brought from India. Others may have been raised up in a fashion similar to that of pastor Britten.

There can be no doubt about it: the Adventists and Churches of God are related and have a common history. By the way, not all of the Churches of God in East Europe which were underground during the oppressive years under Communist rule were offshoots of the Adventists. One particular group in the Ukraine came about due to a revelation in 1946 and others trace their history to groups dating back to the Middle Ages.

In 1931 Herbert W Armstrong was ordained a minister of the Church of God (Seventh Day) and in 1933 he formed a congregation known as the Radio Church of God (later changed to Worldwide Church of God in 1968). After seven years his credentials as a minister of the Church of God (Seventh Day) was withdrawn around 1937/38 although he still co-operated with them until 1945 and Radio Church of God members sometimes visited with the mother church until the early 1950s.

Although the seeds were planted in the 1840s-60s and Herbert Armstrong's predecessors had many truths (such as Glengarry Rupert who was a kind of proto-type of Armstrong), it was not until after Armstrong was tried and tested severely in the 1930s and 1940s that growth began in the early 1950s.

Further clues to our close relationship may be found in commonalities in our literature: The WCG's booklet *The True History of the True Church* was drawn, in part, from Adventist publications such as *The Church in the Wilderness* and *Facts of Faith. Proof of the Bible* was based on the SDA's *Prophecy Speaks: Dissolving Doubts*. Even the booklet *Seven Laws of Healthful Living* seems to have a basis in the SDA's eight health principles.

Beside the Sabbath and it being a sign for Christians, other similarities include the belief in seven church eras, the identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Mystery Babylonian religion, the historic Beast power has been the Roman Empire and its successor Holy Roman Empire, water baptism, concept of the end-time remnant church, places of protection for God's people during the Great Tribulation and so forth.

During the 1960s, there was a small flow of Adventists into the Worldwide Church of God's (WCG) ranks. A flow in back toward the Adventists has also been occurring, particularly since the WCG theologically eschewed the seventh day Sabbath.

In 1934 Mr Armstrong commenced publication of the *Plain Truth* magazine and the *World Tomorrow* radio program began which grew to become the largest radio program on earth by the late 1960s. When the programme was cancelled in the early 1990s, it was, by that time, the longest serving radio programme in history.

By the time of his death, the WCG had 150,000 members; the *Plain Truth* magazine had a circulation of over 8 million in 5 languages and in full-colour; a *Good News* magazine in several languages and in full-colour with over 1 million published each issue); a Correspondence Course with hundreds of thousands of students; a theological college; a world famous performing arts centre; scores of free quality booklets and hard cover books; a radio and TV program on hundreds of stations across the globe. All literature was totally free without any cost or obligation.

Since the apostasy set in, the WCG's membership had plummeted to about 35,000; the radio and TV programs had been cancelled; the college closed; all books and booklets withdrawn; the *Good News* magazine and Correspondence Courses cancelled and the *Plain Truth* is being replaced by an ecumenical magazine with different titles in various countries.

Today we are aware of over 150 groups which have split from the WCG. Most former WCG members have now forsaken the Sabbath or observe it privately at home. A few have joined the SDA Church.

Clearly this has been another restoration of the Work and the truth (slowly gaining ground and growing large like a mustard seed since the 1860s); restoration of many truths (commencing in the late 1920s – early 1930s); a restoration of the Work as a major force with the truth about Israel used by God as a means to attract attention (since the early 1950s) and a period of spiritual power that stunned much of the world.

Armstrong presented some vital truths to the Church of God leader who would not proclaim them. He wrote articles and tried to work with them – but they just could not perceive what was going on – the spirit of God was saying something to the Church, but they were not listening.

As a result their concepts of a Church of God college and radio programme never really took off and this honour was instead bestowed upon Armstrong to bring to realisation. And it was he who loudly proclaimed the Holy Days and British-Israel truth to the world instead of others who had the opportunity to do so.

While this Philadelphia Work has split into many groups due to apostasy since the late 1980s, it will be revived fully some day. These splits may represent any one of the seven churches but some have gone into bizarre beliefs and apostasy. Silly ideas about the Philadelphia should be the 7th and Laodicea the 6th era or that there will be an eighth era are amongst the many unscriptural ideas which have come to the fore after lurking underground for so long.

The Increase in Biblical Knowledge (Dan 12:4)

The Scriptures indicate that knowledge shall increase in the end time (Dan. 12:4) – especially to (but not only to) the Philadelphia Era of God’s Work. This is often accomplished by building on the understanding, knowledge and research of predecessors. Not only is raw knowledge increased, but so is qualitative value-adding to doctrine with deeper and more meaningful insights.

Like a spiritual sifter, Mr Armstrong scoured through the works of many such as JH Allen, GG Rupert, EW Bullinger (he was quoted in some old WCG material), AN Dugger and CT Russell.

It is indeed true that there were truths found elsewhere which were garnered and sifted by Herbert Armstrong – he said so himself. Understandings and material by the Puritans, Darby, Miller, Hislop, Scofield were not unique to them but found elsewhere. Further, the regathering and restoration of knowledge has increased rapidly, as prophesied and we sabbatarians have always utilised the works of others to fill in the details of our existing framework. Speaking of Darby, Miller and others, a Jehovah’s Witness, J Denton, notes that they were a part of “The Retrieval of Knowledge” and refiners of previous literature. With this we heartily concur. Mr Armstrong’s foundations and sources may be summarised as follows:

- the Bible
- the doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day)
- the writings of Glengarry Rupert, leader of the Church of God (Independent)
- works of others who emanated from the Adventist movement, such as Charles Russell, various works of the SDAs and other pioneers of the Second Advent movement
- Bullinger’s works, Hislop’s *Two Babylons* and the Scofield Bible
- perhaps the works of Darby and others.

They were all helpful, but he examined what they had to say against the Bible. What was not upheld by scripture, he rejected. Other items he added to the foundation of the doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day), in particular the annual Feast days and the truth about Israel’s modern identity. Other doctrines followed by further study or were brought to him via early WCG pioneers such as Hermann L Hoeh and others.

Later, his basic doctrines were summarised in the Fundamentals of the Radio Church of God and expanded in scores of articles, booklets and books. His final work, *Mystery of the Ages*, summarised these doctrines.

Herbert Armstrong was in the position to pour through the works of all of those men and others decades after they died, rather than being alive during the confusing midst of the Great Second Advent movement. This was particularly during the formative years, late 1920s-1940s. But after he had settled on the framework and foundational truths, he stuck mostly with the Bible itself. God indeed moves subtly in mysterious ways, and we must give Him credit for the way He revealed these concepts and doctrines to Mr Armstrong.

The Doors opened to Philadelphia (Rev 3:8)

Because he was listening intently to what the spirit was saying to the Churches (and to Philadelphia in particular) doors were opened to Armstrong. Yet he initially took the truth about Israel and the Holy Days to the Church – these vital truths which would have opened up doors to the Church were rejected – and so doors were closed to them – but opened to Armstrong to walk through. These were the doors for doing the Work and doors of restored doctrinal truth.

The scripture distinctly says that “he that hath an ear, let him hear”. But they didn’t – and so that part of the Church did not grow in reaching the world in power. Similarly today, many have rejected some aspects of the message from the angel, such as the truth about Israel – much to their own hurt and loss of a major spiritual truth.

The term “he that hath an ear, let him hear” is an Hebraic expression for one to listen intensely and closely – taking note of what one’s attention is being directed to. This takes spiritual qualities, humility and courage to overcome old ways of outreach and to utilise new methods.

This term is use fourteen times (2 x 7) in the New Testament (Matt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:23; 7:16; Luke 14:35; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). For instance:

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.
He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”. (Matt 11:12-15)

Now what “spirit” is this that “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches”? Is it the holy spirit? Or is it the “angel” that is sent to each of the churches?

It may be dual. However, this “spirit” could well be referring to the actual angel given to each church. No doubt each church era has its own spirit guardian and messenger. But this being (and the holy spirit) works through a human – very likely a human messenger.

Indeed, in the ancient synagogue, one of the positions was that of the Legate or Messenger of the Assembly who was the mouthpiece of the members, offering up prayer to God for them.

From this one may deduce that the angel or messenger spoken of in Revelation 2 and 3 may also be a human messenger from God to the Church. But did we listen to what he had to say? Or were we like others in the early 1930s who would not listen?

Is the above an explanation of one of the ways that the spirit works (either as the holy spirit and/or a spirit angel working through the human messenger)?

Given that he was a human messenger to the Church of God of his day, Armstrong was a healer of the breach (or restorer of paths). = God’s ways and truths. Such also occurred in ancient Israel. See II Kings 12:1-15; 22:1-7; Neh 3:5-32; 4:6-15 (cp Ezek 13:1-14; Is. 58:11-14).

If so, what about the “doors” that are spoken of that were opened to Herbert Armstrong?

In Revelation 3, has the Apostle John merely clutched at metaphoric doors to drum home a point about the Philadelphia Era? Why not use some other analogy? Or are doors as he uses them, part of a bigger picture? Upon close examination, John appears to be referring to Temple doors between the two pillars, just as he was referring to the Temple’s pillars and crowns. These all have symbolism for the Church at Philadelphia.

In the back of John's mind, he may have had certain Old Testament historical themes in mind when writing these scriptures. Note how Ahaz shut the doors of the Temple:

"And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and **shut up the doors of the house of the LORD**, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

"And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers." (IIChron 28:24-25)

In contrast Hezekiah opened the doors:

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, **opened the doors of the house of the LORD**, and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

Also **they have shut up the doors of the porch**, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel." (IIChron 29:2-7)

The Priests and Levites then set out to "cleansing the house of the Lord" (verse 15). In the following verse we read:

"And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron ... And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for **the thing was done suddenly**." (IIChron 29:16,36)

It would appear from this scripture that the Church at Philadelphia was very particular at preserving the truth. They would endeavour to: 1). Restore truths/doctrines; 2). Clean up the Temple and "put it back on the track". There is therefore a hint here of an apostasy followed by restoration of the full truth by these people.

These doors also had keepers (IIKings 25:18; Jer 52:24) - Christians are meant to be spiritual doorkeepers - protecting the truth. Isaiah prophesied:

"in that day that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah ... And the key of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so **he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open**" (Is 22:20,22).

Given the time of writing of this particular chapter in Isaiah, it appears to be alluding to the re-opening of the Temple at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign and as such, may afford us with some clues to what Rev 3 means.

Philadelphia was a great centre for the diffusion of learning and civilization. It was a city where everyone was involved with evangelising. The letter to the Philadelphians suggest that there is every indication of a church with its back to the wall, a church whose energies are being expended in a righteous struggle against adverse circumstances - many from within. Its other distinguishing characteristics included: its people were in a state of expecting a great disaster; many of its people left to live outside the city (perhaps as 'holding pens'); it took a new name from an imperial god.

Clearly, Christ says that the church at Philadelphia has a key which opens and shuts. As keys open and shut doors, it must be referring to the Temple doors, given the context of the other verses dealing with Philadelphia as we have seen. Indeed, for the very next verse refers to open doors!

Refer also to ICor 16:9; Col 4:3 and Acts 14:27 - a "door" is sometimes figurative of a means of spreading the truth from a cleansed Temple - the true Gospel via every means at the Church's disposal.

It also means that this era has the "keys" to prophecy and thus doors are opened to it to proclaim a powerful Ezekiel Warning message to the House of Israel (Ezek 33:6).

Isaiah also speaks of these keys (Is 22:22). Is it possible that there were literal keys which either David had cut for the Temple doors prior to his death or which Solomon had cut, and called "the key of David" without which it was impossible to open or lock shut the Temple doors? One can only speculate, but it is interesting.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

"What Isaiah had in mind no doubt is the grand vizier or majordomo, into whose hands is committed 'unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it a similar influence in all affairs of state'" (quoting J Skinner (1915) *Isaiah*, I, 170).

"That the keys have a connection with doctrine as well as with destiny of souls is evident from Lk. 11:52 ... The delivery of a key [of knowledge of scripture - IITim 3:15] was part of the scribe's ordination" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 3, page 10). [emphasis mine]

In this regard, one should have a look at the following scriptures: Matt 18:18; 16:19; John 20:20-23; Luke 11:52; Mal 2:8.

The 6th Era Proclaims a Warning to the House of Israel

In a riveting article published in 1977, Mr Armstrong wrote about "How I came to be going to Kings and Heads of Government" (*Plain Truth*, March 1977). This article reveals how God was dealing with the Church in different phases this century. In the article he writes:

"In those early days I was especially interested in the book of Ezekiel. A special reason was that I saw Ezekiel was first given God's message in prophecy, while he was a Jewish slave ... Now this was close to 120 years *after* the House of Israel had been taken captive to Assyria ... [many] were, by Ezekiel's time, in Britain and Western Europe.

"There is no reason to think his message was ever delivered to the House of Israel in Ezekiel's time. This message in fact is for today – and contained a warning of things to happen to Britain, America and the Western European nations now in our day.

"I saw clearly, back in those early days, **that Ezekiel's prophecy was a message to be taken by some modern twentieth century servant of God – a "modern Ezekiel" to America, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.**

"I dwelt in hundreds of broadcasts on this book of Ezekiel and its warning of things ... to happen to Britain, the United States and Western Europe ... and so it was that Christ ... caused me to put special emphasis on Ezekiel's warning to our people, in our day." [emphasis mine]

We see how this Ezekiel warning to our peoples was emphasized at that time. Mr Armstrong then relates the parallels between Revelation 10:8-10 with Ezekiel 2:5-10; 3:1-3 which possibly indicates that the first part of his ministry was to proclaim the Message. While Rev 10:11 indicates that Mr Armstrong

would thereafter preach the Gospel to heads of government – which he did in a very diplomatic fashion. After this the spiritual temple would be weighed in the balance, so to speak (and might one add “found wanting”).

But note the original Greek wording in Rev 10:11: “again” in the Greek is “palin” which “carries through the idea of oscillatory repetition”, “anew”, “once again”, “once more” (Strong’s #3825). From it comes the word “paligonesia” (#3824) which means “rebirth”, “spiritual renovation”, “regeneration” (ibid). Thayer’s lexicon shows it to mean “that restoration of the primal and perfect condition of things” (page 475). There may be a hint here of a repetition of the Work by Churches of God (who may combine their resources to thunder out Ezekiel’s Message in the same dynamic fashion as Mr Armstrong did).

This reminds me of the scripture:

“O Lord, I have heard Thy speech and was afraid: O Lord, **revive** Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habbakuk 3:2).

Bullinger in his *Companion Bible* notes that “revive = renew, in the sense of repeating, doing over again” (page 1269). Strong’s *Concordance* states “quicken, recover, repair, restore (to life) ... save” (#2421). While Gesenius’ lexicon has this interpretation: “to live again, to revive ... to recover health, to be healed ... to call back to life, to restore life” (page 274).

Will Ezekiel’s Message by the Churches of God be revived and repeated in a big way? I think it is a moot point – **it has to be!** This world cannot be left without a strong prophetic warning in these last days (see also the article *Just what do you mean – Ezekiel’s Message?*).

A rejuvenated Philadelphia Work will undertake such a crusade with zeal and vigour never before seen.

Yet there is one more restoration of the Church of God to arise – one that is extant alongside the Work of the Philadelphia Era. A separate Work is arising.

A Seventh Restoration now forming

Before our very eyes (for those with eyes to see), the seventh and final era is emerging. It will have its own characteristics and set of strengths and weaknesses. Yet it seems that as time goes on, it will water-down so much of the truth of God, that that era will be close to full blown apostasy.

7. Laodicea: calling out of worldliness - the liberal church – becoming almost apostate

Now, I am a firm believer in the dual meaning of Revelation 2 & 3: it refers to church eras or phases and literal historical churches. It also pertains to seven types of Christians. This was all taught in the old WCG. For instance, we were taught that the 7 spiritual attitudes of Revelation 2 & 3 were to be found through the entire history of the True Church, with each era being dominated by that era’s particular attitude. For example, the Laodicean attitude dominates the 7th era, but the other 6 attitudes are extant as well. It may be that the last 4 eras are formed into distinguishable church groups existing alongside one another in the last days, with the Laodicean phase of God’s Church dominating.

As we have seen, we can take church eras a step further: they are more than historical eras or phases. They also represent 7 restorations or ‘resurrections’ of a viable, visible Work along with restored truths. How opposite to the 7 resurrections of the Roman Empire. The former is non-political, small, weak and scattered. The other is associated with a great false religion – a Whore that mixes some truth with much error, resulting in her condemnation in scripture.

Whilst other false pagan religions do not use the Bible and do not pretend to be Christian, this Whore claims to be Christ's bride! Such lies and blasphemy. As such, the Bible spends much more time addressing this false religion than it does new age religions or others.

But it is not just the visibility of the Church and its Work that is restored, but the truths and doctrines which are fundamental to reaching the world.

One such truth that was known by some few in the Church of God prior to the 1930s was the Israel Identity (British-Israel) truth. Herbert Armstrong properly claimed to have revived that truth to the Church of God. By that he meant in a *major* way for some segments of the Church were already aware of it.

The 'lost tribes of Israel' teaching was fascinating for explorers in Africa, central Asia and the Americas under protestant and Biblical influences within the British Empire. Many false pronouncements and illogical conclusions identifying the lost tribes of Israel with Afghans or to various African tribes were made.

At a time of religious claims to restoration and discovery in the nineteenth century, Satan was cleverly and insidiously attempting to lead people astray from the true identity of Israel.

Recently, the major group in the world that spread this truth has eschewed and denounced it – the result has been splits and fruitlessness, for this is a major doctrine that God restored to raise His end-time Work and message to prominence. Those that eschew or water it down are cursed and meet with frightful fates.

Yet God is perfectly capable of keeping His truths alive elsewhere and at the same time building on their foundations with more proofs than ever (see the principle of Luke 3:8).

Today, there is a new generation of British-Israel scholars and researchers that have emerged with much new information and indepth study. Amongst them are authors such as Steven Collins whose books have been sold by the Brigham Young University bookstore. Collins personally shipped two book orders which they ordered from him.

One senior Mormon who is a professor at a North American university has devoted intense study to the subject and produced a PhD thesis which assists greatly in the overall discussion. He is a subscriber to the British-Israel doctrine and has related how he read Herbert Armstrong's book on the subject.

Another member of the Mormon church has written a book on the subject of the lost tribes, identifying them with the Anglo-Saxon-Kelts. He has been in communication with researcher Steven Collins for a number of years.

Even many Protestants are now discovering the Sabbath and Holy Days and even the true identity of Israel (assisted by fine research including Jewish scholars such as Yair Davidy) as well as man's awesome destiny and born again in the resurrection. For instance the Restoration Foundation and Center for Judaic-Christian Studies are excellent examples of restoration of Bible Law, but there are others. As well as a group which I knew about since a youth which had an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles to be a 'witness' to the Jews. Over time they began to take the annual Holy Days seriously and later many of them decided to observe the Sabbath.

Amazingly enough, and to my pleasant surprise, I read an article in Restoration's publication, *Restore!*, which seemed to back up my basic thesis:

"The Third Phase of the Protestant Reformation is even now returning full circle to ancient Jewish [the author means Hebraic] spiritual roots in a transdenominational movement of Restoration to its own literary and intellectual sources." ("Protestant Reformation Phase III", *Restore*, Autumn 1999, page 19)

Similarly, in a book on the true Hebraic/Old Testament origin of Christianity, *Origins of Our Faith* by Rick Richardson due to be published in 2003, he notes:

"Something is happening. In every denomination within the Christian Church and the Jewish Synagogue there is a drawing; a tug back to the origins of our faith. We who are being drawn are seeking something, but we are not always sure what that something is. We are part of **phenomenon**, trying, (to the best of our abilities), to follow that tug, that we believe is God Himself drawing us back to our beginnings."

There are groups that have formed separately to the Church of God, emanating out of Protestantism that have formed non-aligned fellowships, observing the Sabbath and Holy Days. Some have been influenced by Messianic Jews or Hebrew roots groups; some by the Churches of God; some by the Seventh-day Adventists or just private study into Biblical typology, which led to observance of these days.

Something is stirring in Protestantism – perhaps another awakening, cleansing and refinement followed by restoration. Conservative researchers such as Walter Kaiser, Bahnsen and others are discovering the Law and the Older Testament (but not the Sabbath just yet see appendix 4). Just as each restoration or ‘resurrection’ of the Work of the Church of God occurred with much sifting through groups and individuals, sorting out people and doctrines and then refining them to form a group spiritually called out of Babylon, so this may be happening with the beginnings of the seventh era.

Most Church of God groups are approximating Laodiceanism, perhaps soon to be joined by others it would seem.

What will this era of God’s people be like?:

Herman L Hoeh in *A True History of the True Church* warns of the Laodicean Era:

“This frightful condition lies now ahead of us. Just as the remnants of the Sardis era of the Church exist side by side with the Philadelphia Era, **so we will continue our work to the very ‘end time’ when another group will appear - a group not accounted worthy to escape the coming tribulation. Another separate work [from Philadelphia] is yet to arise made up of begotten individuals who are spiritually lukewarm!** Woe to any of us if we take part in such a work ... It is time to wake up! if you become complacent, lacking in zeal, looking upon the church as a social club, instead of having your heart in the gospel ,you, too, may find yourself in the ‘Church of Laodicea’ left to suffer the impending, horrifying tribulation” (p31). [emphasis mine]

The Future of Laodicea - who is the Daughter of Zion in Prophecy?

Notice verse Rev 3:17: “Because thou sayest, I am rich , and increase with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”. Never had Christ spoken so severely about a Church in the book of Revelation. Compare this scripture with what God predicted about Israel and Ephraim (perhaps as a type of the Church) in Hos 2:7-13; 11:7-8; Zech 11:5; Jer 13:25-26; 5:26-28. R Trench, author of the famous *Commentary of the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia* claims that this scripture sets the Laodiceans “as in certain peril of eternal death”.

Why are they described as ‘naked’? It may have several applications:

- they are spiritually stripped and laying bare as in open shame (cf 2Sam 10:4; Is 20:4; Ezek 16:37,39; Hos 2:3,9; Nah 3:5);
- they preach about, but in practice have not “put on Christ”, nor the clothing of righteousness. In other words they are said to be full of sin (Ps 119:172; 32:1; Rev 19:8; Eccl 9:8; Job 29:14; Ps 32:1; Lam 1:8);

· “nakedness” is an Hebraism for being morally loose - sexual immorality and thus spiritually committing immoral union with the gods of this world (ie Satan and the demons as expressed by their false doctrines and practices). See Lev 18:12-19,25,28; Jer 3:6,8; 13:24-27; Ezek 15:16; Hos 2:2; Num 25:3; Ps 106:28; Rev 2:20.

We should all be familiar with the concept of the Old Testament types of the New Testament Church. Israel was a type of the Church, and in particular the Daughter of Zion in Prophecy. Just as the Daughter of Babylon is the Great False Church of this world, associated closely with political Babylon, so the Daughter of Zion is the True Church, associated very closely with Zion or Israel, for it is fundamentally an Israelitish Church, based in Israelitish lands. This Daughter of Zion makes for a fascinating study as it is applicable for the True Church through all eras up to, and especially at the very end.

In addition, the terms “My People and, “Thy People”, or “those called by Thy name” and “those called by My name” (ie the Church of God), “House of the Lord”, “Temple” etc oftentimes refers to both Israel and the Church. This also makes for special and fulfilling Bible Studies.

In verse 18 Christ exhorts Laodicea: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of they nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see”. Obviously from this scripture they are spiritually blind to both their condition and their heretical doctrines.

In verse 19 Christ sternly warns a stubborn Church “as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”. Here we have proof that the members of this era will not escape the Great Tribulation. They will go into captivity with the House of Israel and suffer the unspeakable terrors and tortures to come upon our rebellious peoples (Amos 6:7; Jer 65:15; 8:12). They will either give their lives for Jesus Christ or accept the easy option - conversion to the Babylonian Mystery Religion (including Sunday observance) and finally turning their backs upon Christ completely. This may not be too difficult for many who had already compromised with this world’s Christianity’. Many will not be strong enough spiritually to hold out in the face of being hunted down or being forced under the pain of the horrors of torture, to convert to the Devil’s false religion along with the rest of Israel.

What a time of tremendous persecution and martyrdom for these people. They will have to give their lives for Christ and His true doctrines, or turn their back on what little of the truth they have left. Christ will stop their apostatising in its tracks by the Great Tribulation. Should events have continued any longer by, say, just a few years, they would have become utterly Protestant and even have switched to Sunday-observance.

This great false religion will be drunk with the blood of God’s people:

“And I saw the woman [Satan’s Church] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev 17:6). God’s True Church, yes even the Laodicean Church, like their similar predecessors, the Thyatira Church, is deemed ready for destruction (compare Zech 11:4-11, 15-17). Notice Rev 6:9-11:

“I saw under the alter the souls of them that were slain for the word of God [the Thyatira Church during the Middle Ages], and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

“And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled”.

Here is clear reference to another great martyrdom just a few decades hence, when God will completely withdraw his protection from Israel and this wayward, almost totally apostate church. Other Scriptures on this horrific martyrdom may be found in:

Rev 7:9, 13-15; 11:1; 13:7, 10, 15; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; Dan 12:7, 10; 11:35; 8:8-13, 17, 24; 7:21; 11:31; Is 1:5-9; 9:16; 3:12; 33:13-14; Jer 5:31; 9:7, 19; Is 4:3-4; Mal 3:2-3; Hos 4:6-12; Amos 8:3; 9:1; Ezek 5:3-4; 6:8-9; 7:16; 9:1-6; 11:16; 12:15-16; John 15:17-16:4.

The Third Book of Psalms contains prophecies about these events, especially Ps 74:3-9; 79:1-3, 10. This is no small martyrdom! It would appear that there will be hundreds of thousands of true Christians that will be murdered in the most chilling, blood-curdling manner possible.

This would indicate that the Laodicean Church includes the main Church of God Sabbatarian group, some of its offshoots and perhaps many of those who have not acted upon their calling by seeking membership in the Church of God. The main Laodicean Church will probably start growing after the a huge global economic crisis to become very great indeed due to their evangelism efforts.

Near to the end of the letter, Christ inspired a further important matter for Laodicea: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (verse 20). The wonderful *Commentary on Revelation* by E Bullinger shows very clearly that this scripture is fulfilled in Luke 12:35-40 while Trench thinks that it exactly corresponds with Song of Solomon 5:2-8.

Sweet sees a parallel between this verse and Matt 25:1-10 (p109). It is interesting that Matt 25:1-10 follows on directly from Matt 24:40-51 and one wonders if there should be a chapter break as it would appear to be a continuation of the same subject - off-the-track Christians. It refers to the sleepy history of the True Church over the centuries as well, it would seem, to the history of the Laodicean era. Additionally, it would also have a personal application.

For instance the lamps refer to the light of God’s Law in a Christian’s life (Prov 6:23; Luke 12:34-40; Ps 119:105); the oil to the Holy Spirit; sleep to spiritual laziness, a don’t care, not fired up attitude (Matt 24:44; Prov 6:9; Rom 13:12; IThess 5:6); and the midnight cry to the time of Christ’s intervention in world affairs (Job 34:20; Ex 12:29; Rev 11:15).

Also, the bridegroom represents Christ and the virgins the Church. The virgins, in that day, performed duties similar to bridesmaids today. But they escorted the bridegroom to the banquet, not the bride. If or when the banquet was at night, the torches or lamps were carried by the bridesmaids to light the way of the bridal party. The torches burned brightly for they were wrapped around the top with oil-soaked cloth. A flask of oil was brought with the bridesmaids to ensure the torch flame was kept alive for the duration of the procession. The foolish virgins did not carry the supply of oil with them.

However, a casual reading of Matt 25 should tell us that it has prime reference to the sleepy, lack-lustre, lethargic and luke-warm end-time Church of God. From the context it is clear that half of the Laodicean Church will wake up to their shocking state, but only at the time of the Tribulation, while the other half will be shut out of the Kingdom. Why shut out? Could it be that fully half will descend into total apostasy and adopt Sunday observance etc?).

Concluding Remarks

We have seen how there have been seven restorations of the Work of the Church.

The way these restorations commence seem to have consistent characteristics:

1. there is little contact between the end of one era and the commencement of another
2. generally, God uses mysterious and circuitous means to raise up a new Work, sewing seeds, watering what is sewn, letting it take root, using certain ones to build upon these foundations and eventually a great ‘tree’ emerges – a new Work commences

3. during this time God calls people out of 'Babylon', purifies and purges them and introduces lost truths to that group
4. a new Work eventually emerges, taking the world by storm.

But restorations do not end there.

The Bible prophesies that the time of the Messiah Who will rule the earth for 1,000 years, will be a restoration. Jesus Christ was asked by the disciples if the kingdom to Israel would be restored at that time. He replied:

"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

Some time later Peter, speaking to the Jews noted:

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until **the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20-21)

Later in the book of Acts, James says:

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, **and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up** [ie a restoration during the millennium]." (Acts 15:13-16)

But after the millennium there is yet a further restoration! Of course, for the final restoration is the time of the New Heavens and New Earth –how we long for that time!

Finally, are we able to discern the signs of the times? Can we hear what the spirit of God is now saying to the Church – the emerging seventh era?

[in the meantime, I await the rejuvenated Work of the Philadelphia Era]

**“He that hath an ear,
let him hear what the spirit
saith to the churches”
(Rev. 3:22)**

APPENDIX 1

Extract from *Mystery of the Ages* by Herbert W Armstrong, Chapter 6 – The Mystery of the Church

Restoration of God's Truth to Church

From the year 1931, exactly 1,900 years (a century of time cycles) from the foundation of the Church, this small remnant of the original true Church of God began to take on new life as the Philadelphia era. It had come to the "time of the end." A new spiritual vitality was infused into it. The time had come for Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24:14 to be fulfilled--"this gospel of the kingdom shall be [proclaimed] in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Such vital truth that had been lost was gradually revealed and proclaimed.

This Philadelphia era is described in verses 7 to 13 of Revelation 3. The Sardis era (Rev. 3:1-6) was by this time spiritually dying and had become impotent in spreading the true gospel of Christ. Indeed they had by this time lost knowledge of the true meaning of that gospel. They knew they were approaching the Second Coming of Christ, but they had no knowledge of what would happen during the thousand years millennium, further than the fact Christ would rule.

Of the Philadelphia era of God's true Church we read: "To the angel of the church...." **This word angel translated from the Greek *aggelos* means messenger or agent. This is not necessarily always referring to a spirit angel but can refer as well to a human agent. It is possible that God's principle of duality may apply here. It may apply to an actual spirit-composed angel that has been assigned as an overall agent or helper of this particular era of the Church. Or it may also apply to the human messenger or agent God has raised up to lead this era of his Church.**

At the same time another principle of duality may apply to verses 7-13. It may apply to the Church of this era as a whole, and also it could apply to the human leader God had raised up to this era of his Church.

Continue with verse 8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

This era of the Church was to produce fruit. To this era--or to its human leader--God had set before it an open door. It is recorded in II Corinthians 2:12 and also Acts 14:27 how Christ opened the door for Paul to go into other countries to preach the gospel. This Church and/or its leader had but little strength. Neither were of great and powerful stature in Satan's world but those of this era were faithful to the Word of God. Though much of the original gospel truth, imparted to the original apostles by Jesus in person, had been lost, it was restored through the Bible to this era of God's Church who were faithful in keeping it.

It is revealed in Malachi 3:1-5 and 4:5-6 that God would raise up one in the power and spirit of Elijah, shortly prior to the Second Coming of Christ. In Matthew 17:11 Jesus said, even after John the Baptist had completed his mission, that this prophesied Elijah "truly shall first come, and restore all things." Although it is plainly revealed that John the Baptist had come in the power and spirit of Elijah, he did not restore anything. The human leader to be raised up somewhat shortly prior to Christ's Second Coming was to prepare the way--prepare the Church--for Christ's coming, and restore the truth that had been lost through the preceding eras of the Church. Also a door was to be opened for this leader and/or the Philadelphia era of the Church to fulfill Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

It was to be at a time when, for the first time in the history of mankind, the weapons of mass destruction were produced that could erase all humanity from the earth (Matt. 24:21-22). This also was to occur just before the Second Coming of Christ (verses 29-30).

These prophecies have now definitely been fulfilled. The true gospel has been restored and has now gone in power into every nation on the face of the earth.

The Church has taken on a new Spirit-empowered life.

All the technological advances and facilities are being employed.

First radio was used, beginning on one of the smallest-powered stations in Eugene, Oregon. Then the printing press. This started with an old secondhand Neostyle, ancestor to the mimeograph. In due time the printing press was used. The advent of television came in 1945--immediately after the end of World War II. The Church began using television in the summer of 1955. The true gospel, for the first time in 1,900 years, has finally been proclaimed and published into all nations of the earth. The Church has grown. For the first 25 years it grew at an average rate of 30 percent per year.

The first apostles would be astonished to see the size and scope of the work now. The means of communications, the technology and the modern resources that God has given to his end-time work would indeed be strange to those men who first received the commission to take the gospel to the world nearly 2,000 years ago.

But some things would not be strange--the Sabbath and Holy Days, the name, the Church of God, and the gospel of the kingdom--these they would recognize--handed down through the ages from the time of Christ to the time of the end.

APPENDIX 2

Chart - Possible Relationships to Church Eras

Comparison	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
with ancient Israel	Patriarchs (Abraham etc)	Israel in Egypt	Israel in the wilderness	Leadership of Joshua and the former Judges	the latter Judges and Saul	King David	Solomon and the divided kingdom
with parts of the temple	foundations	altar of sacrifice	roof	curtains and decorations	walls	pillars	outer court & Solomon's porch (court of the gentiles)
with 7 tribes which first settled the Holy Land	Benjamin	Simeon	Zebulon	Issachar	Asher	Naphtali	Dan
of false teachers and negative attributes in the eras	false apostles & Nicolaitanes	synagogue of Satan	doctrine of Balaam & Nicolaitanes	Jezebel & depths of Satan	"ready to die"	synagogue of Satan & "little strength"	"wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"
of rewards of the eras	eat of the tree of life	not be hurt by the 2nd death	hidden manna and white stone with a new name	power over the nations	white raiment, in book of life and confess them to the Father before the angels	pillar in the Temple, God's name on their forehead and Christ's new name	sit with Christ on His throne
Did each have a special message in addition to the Gospel?	Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ	Conditionalism, pagan origins of Easter etc.	Pagan origins of false days and idols	Identity of the Whore of Revelation	The Sabbath itself	Identity of Israel, Incredible Human Potential and Ezekiel's Message/the Captivity Doctrine	Preaches Christ. Will be a witness during the Tribulation

APPENDIX 3

Revelation 2 & 3

- Rev 2:1 To the angel of the **church in Ephesus** write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:
- Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;
- Rev 2:3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.
- Rev 2:4 But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.
- Rev 2:5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.
- Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches**. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
- Rev 2:8 And to the angel of the **church in Smyrna** write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived *again*:
- Rev 2:9 I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
- Rev 2:10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.
- Rev 2:11 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches**. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.
- Rev 2:12 and to the angel of the **church in Pergamum** write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:
- Rev 2:13 I know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.
- Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.
- Rev 2:15 So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.
- Rev 2:16 Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.
- Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches**. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.
- Rev 2:18 And to the angel of the **church in Thyatira** write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass:
- Rev 2:19 I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.
- Rev 2:20 But I have *this* against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.
- Rev 2:21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication.
- Rev 2:22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works.
- Rev 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.
- Rev 2:24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden.
- Rev 2:25 Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come.
- Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations:
- Rev 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:
- Rev 2:28 and I will give him the morning star.
- Rev 2:29 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches**.

- Rev 3:1 And to the angel of the **church in Sardis** write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.
- Rev 3:2 Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God.
- Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep *it*, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
- Rev 3:4 But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.
- Rev 3:5 He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
- Rev 3:6 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.**
- Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the **church in Philadelphia** write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth:
- Rev 3:8 I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.
- Rev 3:9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
- Rev 3:10 Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
- Rev 3:11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.
- Rev 3:12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.
- Rev 3:13 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.**
- Rev 3:14 And to the angel of the **church in Laodicea** write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- Rev 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
- Rev 3:16 So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth.
- Rev 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked:
- Rev 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.
- Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
- Rev 3:21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.
- Rev 3:22 He that hath an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.**
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APPENDIX 4

Some examples of works by Protestants and others who have or are discovering Bible Law and Hebraic Truth

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- Truth Triumphant. The Church in the Wilderness.*

Suggested Reading

- HRP *Just what do you mean "Laodicean Church"?*
- HRP *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter 3*
- HRP *Roots of Our Beliefs, Names and Titles*
- HRP *Should we 'move on' from the old Doctrines which came into the WCG? Or should we have continuity?*
- HRP *A Chronological Overview of the Doctrinal Changes 1986-1995*
- HRP *The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel – Type of the Eras of the True Church?*
- HRP *Just what do you mean – Ezekiel's Message?*

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