

DEMAGOGUES

IN THE CHURCH OF GOD TODAY

By Wayne M Icenhower

Has there ever been a time in church history in which more groups, leaders, and sets of beliefs claim to be associated with the teachings of a leader in the church that has died? Time and experience have revealed some of these leaders to be imposters, taking advantage of the lukewarm condition of the church to set themselves up as the center of the religion of their followers. This article explores why these demagogues have arisen, and the methods used to gain a following, so you won't be fooled.



Introduction

Man's six thousand year history is filled with leaders of nations and groups that did not have the best interests of their constituents in mind. In more recent times, men such as Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Napoleon sought to control their world by dominating and expecting absolute obedience from those they ruled over. The children of God have always been able to readily discern such men to be controlled by the god of this world, Satan the devil. (II Cor 4:4)

Ironically, Jesus Christ knew that the people of God would be more easily deceived by those rising up from within their association! Generally, many of God's people tend to forget that Satan's primary target are those that have the Spirit of God, those that are already begotten of God, and those that will soon be BORN into the Kingdom of God into the God family.

Thus the true Christ warned nearly 2000 years ago when he walked the earth as a human being, "Beware of false



prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening [ravenous] wolves." (Matthew 7:15) The term "demagogue" aptly describes such men, whether narcissistic political leaders, or leaders in religion. When applied to religious deceivers, the word correctly relates them to the men in the world's political systems that use many of the same methods of control. This is what the word means:

Demagogue—(1) [noun] a person, esp. an orator or political leader, who gains power and popularity by arousing the emotions, passions, and prejudices of the people. (2) [verb] to treat or manipulate (a political issue) in the manner of a demagogue; obscure or distort with emotionalism, prejudice, etc.

During the Philadelphian era, we viewed such men as external to the visible corporate organization of the Radio Church of God that became the Worldwide Church of God. Although those outside the faith accused WCG of being a cult, those inside KNEW it was not. While there was an imperfect administration performed by men—some with the spirit of God, and some that the Bible refers to as tares—we generally understood the visible organization to be "God's church".

But we've seen since Mr. Armstrong's death, men that were associated with that organization at lower leadership levels reveal themselves as demagogues. This process didn't happen suddenly, and occurred over a period of many years.

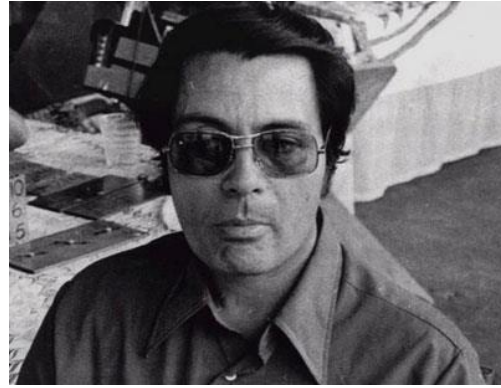
First, the people of God experienced an ongoing apostasy, where Satan worked through men in the WCG to first obscure the Gospel of Christ, and finally to inject so much heresy the visible organization ceased to be the true church. But these men were not demagogues! They were, however, a part of the Synagogue of Satan among the people of God that were there to initiate the prophesied "apostasy" of II Thessalonians 2:3.

These apostates promised God's people FREEDOM from what they regarded as the strict regimen of the faith, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19)

Philadelphia into Laodicea

During the Philadelphian era in the late 1970's, you might recall another well known religious demagogue in the United States. His name was Jim Jones and he was never, of course, associated in any way with the true people of God, or the faith of Jesus Christ.

This man, like David Koresh years later, claimed to be speaking from the inspired Word of God; but spoke confused jibberish that made little sense to anyone outside of their cultish group. The true people of God correctly viewed him as insane, and under the direct influence of Satan the devil.



The adherents to the nonsense being “preached” were usually the young and impressionable, the mentally ill, those on the verge of mental illness, and those of the

lower economic and educational stratum. They were desperate people seeking meaning in a world that they didn’t understand, and one that seemed hopeless to them.

Over time, they were convinced that this demagogue had the answers. Finally, as most of us know, these 800 people ended their own lives, following the murder of five others in Guyana.

Now, what does this insane man and his small group has to do with the Church of God? By the time you finish reading this article, you will see that the mind of Satan has common traits and methods evidenced by those he uses.

As the Church of God entered the Laodicean era, the apostasy escalated as an unconverted leadership the Bible refers to as the “Synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 3:9), thousands of unconverted tares, and a discontented assembly of people with the spirit of God willingly veered from established basic doctrines. Other Christian members recognized the church had moved into the Laodicean era, but did not know exactly what do or how to react.

Many of you that lived through the latter years of the 1980’s were probably astounded to see how quickly the minds of MOST of the membership changed. We now understand why. In most cases, the mind change occurred so quickly because they *had been following a man*—Hebert W. Armstrong and were not rooted in the bible.

Remember, people that have no knowledge of the true God can follow men and seem religious! Only, those WITH the Spirit of God imbued into their very nature have contact with the true Christ. Without REAL contact with God through the power of the Spirit of God, carnal man CANNOT commune with Christ, but can only follow vain men that might *seem* religious.

The Spirit of God, when exercised exposes departures from truth, and those being led by the Spirit of God KNEW the Worldwide Church of God was veering off track. Many had seen the heresies injected in the first years of the apostasy before as they welled up during the 1970’s. While they understood this was occurring, there were many unique reactions to it and opinions about how individual Christians should react to it.

By the late 1980’s the Church of God environment was ripe for Satan to open his toolbox and move to the next phase of his work that Jesus Christ was allowing in order to measure His people. A work that had as its first goal, disunity fomented by the virus of false doctrine injected into the Body; second, a scattering through further

disunity of the true people of God; and, finally, achieving the end goal—the DESTRUCTION of Godly character being shaped in each baptized, converted member!

Men Arise From Among Church

The PCG—or Philadelphia Church of God—became incorporated in 1989. Led by a man ordained into the WCG’s corporate ministry in 1973—Gerald Flurry—the early organization held as its charter a promise to continue in the doctrines re-established in the church of God during the Philadelphian age. During these early years, the PCG claimed to be fulfilling Revelation 3:20 by delivering the “knock” for Jesus Christ.

This “knock” was to be a message of warning given to the “Laodicean church”. For a few years, the Laodicean church was viewed to be the repurposed Worldwide Church of God. Gerald Flurry was able to benefit quickly from the confusion caused by the WCG apostates, as disenchanted and discouraged brethren began to assemble in the PCG. By promoting this “work” with passion, zeal, and what seemed to be righteous indignation, Gerald Flurry was able to generate excitement and enthusiasm in the people that became members.

Those becoming members in the early 1990’s were willing to look past some error, as they were relieved from supporting the apostatizing Worldwide Church of God. For example, many never really believed the flawed book Malachi’s Message to be the “little book” of Revelation 10, as Gerald Flurry was teaching, but the dubious claim was tolerated.



In 1993, Rod Meredith left the Worldwide Church of God and organized, along with others, the Global Church of God (GCG). The GCG embraced numerous doctrinal compromises introduced by the apostates, providing fresh material for Gerald Flurry to attack, all the while seeming “righteous” to his followers.

The early GCG had those in both its membership and leadership that had enough knowledge of PCG and Gerald Flurry to be sure he wasn’t being worked through by the living Christ. They looked to the GCG as an assembly of the people of God that would return to the full truth. However, there were doctrinal compromises from the beginning compared with what had been practiced by the WCG as led by Herbert Armstrong.

A few years later, many ministers that would not support Rod Meredith but that could not any longer support the Worldwide Church of God, incorporated under the legal name United Church of God (UCG). The leadership of UCG believed and preached even more error than that being taught in the GCG. But, other than the persona of Rod Meredith, they were much more similar in their beliefs than the PCG and other groups arising from it.

Toward the end of the 1990’s, the GCG broke apart, with most of its membership remaining with Rod Meredith in his new organization, The Living Church of God (LCG). Others, however, formed into different groups such as Harold Smith’s ‘Church of God in Fellowship’, and another man that authored a book called “Anoint Your Eyes”, and claimed to be practicing the “full truth”.

It is not my purpose here to discuss every single group that formed, as is not important and would make for pretty dull reading. However, the brief history above is necessary to set the stage for the theme of this article.

Aside from PCG, LCG, UCG, and RCG a couple of other somewhat notable figureheads associated with the Church of God should be mentioned.

Robert G. Artis was disfellowshipped from the PCG in 1997. He has a small following, and preached very bizarre private interpretations of scripture. He believed that Gerald Flurry had been sound, but then fell away and became the “seventh candlestick” of the Laodicean era.

Another man to mention in the context of “demagoguery” is Ron Weinland. This man wrote and published a book called “2008—God’s Final Witness”. He came from the UCG, leaving when he discovered that he was a prophet. Later he received more “revelation” revealing to him that he was one of the two witnesses and his wife was the other. He has made so many false prophecies, one could predict what is NOT going to happen by using him as a resource.

This brief summary paints a picture of confusion, disunity, and error that can be VERY depressing to those that invested much of their lives in the old WCG. On one hand the people of God correctly believe in the benefits of fellowshiping with those of like minds, but on the other hand they cannot support leadership that is corrupt, self-absorbed, and in error!

The Bible states clearly that the Church of God would exist up until the time Jesus Christ returns to earth (Matthew 16:18), when those alive at his coming become a part of the first fruit resurrection, but ironically there is tremendous confusion, arrogance, and false teachings in these last days.

Let’s be clear, before we move into the next section that will expose those methods. Organizations claiming allegiance to or history with the on-track Worldwide Church of God, could be classified into two different lanes of thinking; but, they are not best described as “right” and “left”, or “conservative” and “liberal”.

It is much more accurate to view all organizations that followed on the heels of the apostasy in the corporate Worldwide Church of God, as being led by men that fall into two categories: (1) those that have the Spirit of God, and (2) those that are devoid of that Spirit. It is the latter category that this article is directed at.

The demagogue is LED BY A DIFFERENT SPIRIT—APART FROM GOD! His objective is evil from the beginning, intentional or not, because his vanity is insatiable due to his very nature. His methods are in alignment with the evil one that hates God and hates the people of God *with passion*! These leaders are, by far, the most spiritually destructive, as they use the “wiles of the devil” to accomplish their objective.

Of course they don’t appear on doorsteps with business cards advertising their title of “False Minister”, “False Prophet”, or “Wolf”! They generally arose in this end time during the confusion caused by the apostatizing and disintegrating WCG, claiming to work directly for Jesus Christ: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”

But the people of God can see through their deception if they are armed with certain tools and knowledge, in concert with the Word of God, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of

the devil.” (Ephsians 6:11) This armor as defined by later verses in this same chapter “truth”, “righteousness”, “the gospel message”, and “faith”.

When you recognize a demagogue, you should run away as fast as possible, no matter how “righteous” they might seem. It would be better for you and your family to be a part of a group adhering to some of the truth in a compromised manner, than to follow a demagogue claiming to practice all of it.

Next, a common pattern of these men will be revealed, along with their methods, how they think, and their purpose. This truth will add strength to your armor as a true Christian.

Demagoguery

What are some of the common traits we find in such men? Why are they driven to become demagogues that devour the truth, and the people that fall under their spell? What makes them successful doing so?

A discussion of demagoguery would not be complete without including the use of ‘*propaganda*’. Propaganda is perceived to be true by a group, or mass of people. Many of us know that one of the tools in the propaganda toolbox is repetition. Repeating a half-truth over and over again until the rational defenses of the receiver breaks down, and his or her mind accepts the half-truth as full-truth.

Demagogues are experts at employing this technique.

Understand also that a propagandist DOES NOT look at human beings as individuals. He is only concerned with the group, or mass of people as it can serve him. He employs every technique of “group think” at his disposal over time, as he begins to break down the rational defenses of the hearer.

Notice Jude 16 as translated by James Moffatt, “For these people are murmurers, grumbling at their lot in life—they fall in with their own passions, their talk is arrogant, they pay court to men to benefit themselves.”

This scripture describes the inner workings of a demagogue. He is a complainer, and believes he deserves more than his lot in life has provided him. He is arrogant, believing himself to be talented and gifted, and driven to do great things. Finally, he is a flatterer that compliments others when he needs them, or something they have to offer.

Such men really care little for others and only as others can help them achieve their selfish, arrogant objectives. Those that have known or experienced demagogues will not have to think very long to remember the flatteries delivered at calculated moments to seduce and entrap. If the one being flattered has subordinated himself, his defenses will usually begin to naturally come down.

But the demagogue is not *just* a flatterer. The religious demagogue always claims he has received a message that he must deliver. He has a “job to do”, and your job is always “to support him”. The demagogue associated with the Church of God will always claim a special relationship to Jesus Christ. To him, his link is different than a ‘regular’ Christian. He always claims *and believes* that he has been given some special prophecy and knowledge revealed just to him, and him only *directly* from Jesus Christ!

He begins the process—and this is very important to understand—by cloaking error in truth all within a long term strategic plan to introduce where he is really going *after the groundwork has been laid, and the group lowers its defenses*. The demagogue recognizes his need for the group to fulfill his vain pursuits, and cares little about the individual as long as the individual doesn't compromise the group.

Whether he is aware of his ultimate aim as he first begins to gain a following doesn't really matter. If he does not have it on his mind yet, the evil spiritual being leading him certainly understands where he is taking him and those that follow!

The flood of propaganda begins with a trickle. In the case of PCG, for example, it began with “the knock” [a commission to stimulate *passion* in the group], a ‘man of sin’ in the organization that was being knocked upon, feigned righteous indignation directed at those that had ‘fallen away’, feigned ‘love’ and ‘concern’ for those that ‘were in grave danger’, and many, many messages describing how everyone else was in error, and PCG was the only group the right track.

Early ‘revelations’ are usually believable. For example, the ‘knock’ *IS* in the Bible (Revelation 3:20) and *will* be fulfilled. It was obvious that the church had entered the Laodicean era, and that doctrine was being changed. Even Joe Tkach (Sr.) sitting as the ‘man of sin’ in the WCG seemed plausible until he died years later, but long before the “man of sin” would be destroyed by the “brightness” of Christs coming. There were a multitude of other false ‘revelations’ presented, as well, but for the sake of space and for illustration, we'll limit it to these.

In the late 1990's the Global Church of God blew apart, and David Pack emerged forming his own organization. He, like Gerald Flurry, authored a book that he held to contain *new revelation* (the book was called Anoint Your Eyes). Most of what is presented in the book was believable and based on the experiences of many. David Pack claimed early on that he was only a lowly Pastor trying simply to “hold fast to the truths of God”. He elicited renewed *passion and excitement* in many of his followers, and was more skilled at flattering those he thought he could use than Gerald Flurry. He rewrote most of Mr. Armstrong's booklets, and became almost teary eyed when discussing his work. He generally appeared to be solid with the doctrines of God.

Let's consider and meditate on similarities between these two demagogues, because these characteristics can be found among them all.

Both these men (1) viewed the people of God as a group, not as individuals composing a group (2) both stimulated passion for a work and an urgent job to be completed (3) both slowly moved the focus of the people of God from God the Father and Jesus Christ to place more focus on their own perceived “greatness” (4) when the controlling links had been firmly established, they themselves began to inject heresy and wild ideas—in particular in the realm of prophetic interpretation (5) They elevated themselves by assuming titles that have not been given to them. (6) They began to speak of points of God's truth as deep and esoteric, not easily understood. (7) The trance or delusion was completed when the remaining followers lost the ability to think for themselves. and thus believes ALMOST ANYTHING vomited out by the demagogue.

The perceived need for the demagogue continued to grow, and followers believed that they could not understand scripture apart from him, and thus could not make it into the Kingdom of God. All the while, of course, the demagogue blasted the big lie at his followers that those that leave him and the group would die forever in the lake of fire.

Notice II Thessalonians 2:10-11 “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they *received not the love the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

Understanding faded as the deceptive link between the demagogue and the members became stronger. This while the Spirit of God was BEING SQUELCHED – if it existed in the first place!

As the ability to think clearly fades to a blurred sense of reality, these demagogues preach ever more bizarre propaganda that to those on the outside appear quite dumb and often goofy. The members in now very tight and rigid organizations believed this inability to understand was due to the power of the demagogue, and the link he had with Jesus Christ!

You can be sure that demagogues rising up among God’s people—however different they might be as human beings— ALWAYS follow this same pattern. Remember, they believe they DESERVE adulation and respect and are gifted—even if they speak about their humility! Their arrogance DRIVES them, as they believe they have formerly been denied the respect and influence they deserve! They undoubtedly gnashed their teeth through their years under the former organization, believing that THEY were entitled to much more notoriety, fame, and respect.

Through it all, the people of God enter red danger zone as they move their focus from the Father and Christ to the man! When the process is complete, the Spirit of God not only wanes; but eventually leaves the individual. He or she, at that point, has *allowed a man to take their crown*!

Jesus Christ was not primarily warning His people only about false minister Joe Tkach when He inspired the scripture through John, “. . . hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3:11) Many saw through Joe Tkach and the departure from truth into evangelicalism. The focus of Jesus Christ’s warning in Revelation 3:11 was toward the demagogue—the wolves the Bible speaks about in other places.

Most *lukewarm* ministers likely believe they are really helping the people of God, by being compassionate and understanding, forgiving and tolerant. They are wrong in what they’re doing, and they are setting the people of God and themselves up for severe tests in the tribulation; but they don’t attempt to place themselves in the place of Jesus Christ as a revelator! They aren’t claiming to have a conduit into their minds directly from Christ, and they aren’t claiming to be Christ’s only agent used to reveal prophecy and additional knowledge!

The demagogue in this church age has hi-jacked the doctrine of the Government of God, and used it to promote himself and a satanic brand of the true religion. Yes, there is authority in the Church of God; and hierarchy. That is God's way, as revealed in scripture.

But the demagogue uses this hierarchy to claim a chain of command in the flow of the Spirit of God. In effect, if not openly, he claims the link between Jesus Christ and church members to be through him. In doing so, he elevates himself to a level that NO MAN has ever been given by the creator God!

Christ does not work that way, and never has! Jesus Christ is building INDIVIDUAL character in INDIVIDUAL Disciples!



How Does Christ Work in the Church Age?

God the Father and Jesus Christ work directly with EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34) The hierarchical Government of God, with "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" is necessary for administration. Why?

So that all of God's people "come [into] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

Ironically, the demagogue first hi-jacks the framework of the Government of God, then perverts it, ultimately modifying to the point it is not recognized as God's Government as revealed in scripture. Those that have been members of the PCG, RCG or other authoritarian groups will recall how "government" was repeated over and over and over again to mean autocratic unquestioning obedience and subjection to superiors. David Pack even wrote a very long book called the "Government of God" that was FULL of error.

Jesus Christ HAS NEVER in the church age communicated His truth the way the demagogue insists upon. While He often works through men as teachers, HE COMMUNICATES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD WITH EVERY CHILD OF GOD INDIVIDUALLY! Of course, if he is not directly working with a man or woman, then they DO NOT HAVE HIS SPIRIT!

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (Hebrews 12:8)

Think about it! Jesus Christ commands us to HAVE NO OTHER GODS IN PLACE OF HIM or the Father. How pathetic is a faith that trades in the spiritual link to the SOON COMING KING for an idolatrous view of a frail, faulty, flawed human being!

The demagogue cannot bear to have anyone but him providing new revelation. Gerald Flurry and all other demagogues that have arisen since the apostasy have proven themselves to be LIARS with both their words and their works. And no wonder, they work for the being that is the father of all liars, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: *for he is a liar, and the father of it.*" (John 8:44)

UNDERSTAND THIS PLAINLY! You can confirm very quickly that a man is NOT being led by God when he claims that "Christ is revealing knowledge only through him." THIS IS NOT TRUE, AND HAS NEVER BEEN TRUE THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AGE, since the Holy Spirit was given to both Gentile and Jew that are called and chosen.

Yes, the Word that became Jesus Christ did communicate directly to his prophets prior to the establishment of the Church of God. But, even then, if there was more than one man or woman alive at a time, He worked with BOTH of them individually! A quick example would be Elijah and Elisha, until Elijah died.

This has NOTHING to do with administrative function and the Government of God. It has to do with the very nature of the Holy Spirit, its Power, and the link it provides between the God family and mankind.

Breaking Free

It can be incredibly difficult to exist in an organization with a demagogic leader. If the human mind accepts the demagogue as his savior, it may well be impossible, for the member will have surrendered the ability to reason, and may have lost the Spirit of God.

But the religious demagogue apart from his group is powerless and, in fact, pathetic and weak. He holds no influence or real power over those outside of his group.

Organizations led by such men are vulnerable to thinking, human beings that are spiritually strong and knowledgeable! Paul wrote "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

The true brotherhood of God is directly opposite of the administrative systems established and promoted by the demagogue.



Jesus Christ is no respecter of persons, and does not reveal all truth JUST THROUGH ONE MAN! Even though he DOES work at times through one man to accomplish His purpose.

To break free from the control exerted by a demagogue, a man or woman under the influence must begin to recognize the patterns common to such men. They must return to their Bibles—the instruction manual available to all of us in this church age—and believe what it says, not the man perverting the words.

Time Is Short

The period of measuring described in Revelation 11:1-2 is nearing an end. There is not much time left for those under the influence of delusion of ex-WCG demagogues to break free.

Hopefully, those under the control of men that believe they are acting in place of Jesus Christ will recognize observed patterns that reveal the methods such men employ to take captive God's people. They can recognize the idolatry that takes place when a man usurps titles and elevates himself to positions that the true Christ has not given. They will then, hopefully, be able to see how the path they are on makes them dangerously weak, and vulnerable to deception.

The Word of God is plain, and 'a two edged sword', cutting to the quick with truth. One of the most exciting attributes of true Christianity is that it DOES NOT require an interpreter, or mystic. God's people must be admonished to return to the faith once delivered before it is too late. Their savior is Jesus Christ, a God being in the God family returning soon to establish HIS KINGDOM with His firstfruit brothers and sisters. A first order of business will be to remove demagogues and demagoguery from the earth.