

Do We Still Really Believe In It?

After the Holy Bible, my favourite form of literature is the historical novel. I have found that this type of writing can give the reader a better idea of what life was really like “in those days” – in many ways more effectively than many dry history books can.

Most of the historical novels I have read have been based in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, penned by such authors as Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Leo Tolstoy and Daniel Defoe.

But I have more recently been attracted to those that are set in the Twentieth Century – specifically around the time of World War II.

I recently finished reading "The Day of the Scorpion" by the late British novelist, Paul Scott (1920-1978). This book is the second in a four-part, four-book series called "the Raj Quartet."

The series is set in India in the years immediately before, during and after World War II, a time which happened to coincide with the turbulent era of India's efforts towards independence from the British Empire and colonialism.

I would like to read you a short passage from “The Day of the Scorpion” – a passage which jumped off the page at me and reminded me of this present Laodicean era of God's church today; and I would like to use this quote as a framework to communicate to you some stern warnings to the members of today's church from our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Do We Still Really Believe In It?

In this passage from “The Day of the Scorpion,” we break into the middle of a conversation between two young women – upper-class, English sisters – Susan and Sarah Layton, who are portrayed as living in India during that momentous and historic period, and who are bewildered and confused by the huge changes that were taking place at that time. As you read these words, please try to apply them to the changing face of God’s church today:

Susan repeated, "I try and try but I cannot see the answer. I suppose the trouble is that people like us were finished years ago, and we know it, but pretend not to and go on as if we thought we still mattered."

Again she hesitated, then, looking full at Sarah again, asked, "Why are we finished, Sarah? Why don't we matter?"

“Because,” Sarah thought, silently replying, “We don't really believe in it any more. Not really believe. Not in the way our grandfathers believed – those grandfathers at rest, at peace, fulfilled, sleeping under the hummocky graves, bone of India’s bone. And our not believing seems like our betrayal of them, so we can't any longer look each other in the eye and feel good, feel that even the good things some of us might do have anything to them that will be worth remembering. So we hate each other, but dare not speak about it, and hate whatever lies nearest to hand, the country, the people in it, our own changing history that we are part of.”

What we just read is, of course, just a piece of fiction; but it is based on historical fact.

However, what is being said here is that huge changes were at that time taking place in India – changes which had correspondingly huge effects on everyone who lived there – both the native Indian “ruled” and their British rulers.

These things really did take place. There really were, in fact, young, upper-class English women, just like Susan and Sarah, whose military families had ruled India for generations and who, at this time being described, found this historically significant transition period very difficult to understand and to deal with.

A few thoughts leapt out at me when I read this section, as I compared what was written here about what was happening seventy years ago on the subcontinent of India to what has been happening in God's church over the past twenty-five years since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong.

Are we members of God's church just a little like the British in India at that tumultuous time of the native Indians' drive towards independence?

To paraphrase the above quote and to apply it to our own situation:

Do we members of God's church not matter anymore? Do we no longer feel good about what we are doing? About what the church is doing? About our part in it?

And here is the biggest question:

Do we not believe in it any more? I mean really believe? As our church forefathers did?

If we do not really believe in it anymore, is our lack of belief in God's work through His church somehow a betrayal of our spiritual forefathers? And of their great efforts and sacrifices? Of the blood, sweat and tears they put into it? And, what is even more important, a betrayal of our great heavenly Father?

At this point, you might be thinking, "Perish the thought!" But why not look at such things squarely and honestly?

Another question: Is what we and the church are doing today somewhat mediocre or second-rate compared to the church's work during Herbert Armstrong's heyday? Are our efforts not really worth remembering? Will what we are doing in the church now not be considered worth remembering in years to come – especially when compared to how the church's work under Herbert Armstrong is remembered now – and will be remembered in the future?

And now another question – an awful one! – a terrible thought – again plagiarized and paraphrased from Susan and Sarah's fictitious conversation: Have today's church members begun to hate one another in a similar way as the British in India began to hate one another in the 1930's and 1940's?

Again, perish the thought! But again, why not? Did not Jesus say that such betrayal and hatred is exactly what will happen in God's end-time church?:

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (Matthew 24:10)

Some more questions – again quoting the fictitious Sarah and Susan: Do we hate "our own changing history that we are part of"? In comparison with the church of yesteryear, do we despise the scattered condition of the church as it is today? Are we ashamed of it?

Although I do believe that there are different applications of the seven churches of the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, you can “call me old fashioned,” but I still do believe in the concept of the seven church eras.

It is interesting – even admirable in some respects – that some branches of God’s church seem to be striving to emulate the golden years of Herbert Armstrong’s church era – the time we believe to have been the Philadelphia era of Revelation chapter 3. They seem to be trying to perpetuate the Philadelphia era. But let’s face it. Let’s be realistic. The glory years of that Philadelphia era are irretrievably over!

On the other hand, some church members fall into the opposite ditch. They seem to feel that much – or almost everything – that the Worldwide Church of God did was wrong. Yes, even under Herbert Armstrong. They seem to feel that “That was then – this is now - things have changed!” But these people are throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

I was told recently about a conversation between two member couples in the church. I can’t remember which congregation; but that doesn’t matter. One member asked the others: "Why is it that no one seems to want to stay around after services any more and fellowship? Why is it that no one seems to really care any more?" Does this not sound just a little like the observations of young Susan in “The Day of the Scorpion”?

Another of the members participating in that same church conversation added that this identical problem is evident in at least one of the other congregations he knew of. Another added that this same problem exists in other branches of God's church.

So, just what is the underlying problem here?

Does the Church of God in the Twenty-first Century suffer from the same causative problem as was suffered by Britain and its colonists in India in the Nineteen-thirties and Nineteen-forties?

Do we not believe in it any more? Do we not believe in what we are doing? – or what we are supposed to be doing? Do we not believe in what the church is doing? Do we not believe in it with the same level of belief and zeal as our church forefathers did? As Herbert Armstrong and the other twentieth century church pioneers believed?

The Laodicean

Another of my favourite historical novels is “The Laodicean,” which was written and published in 1881 by British author Thomas Hardy.

Let us think some more about the church eras of Revelation 2 and 3 – specifically about the infamous Laodicean era.

I will not attempt to put a date on it; but it certainly does appear that the Philadelphia era of God's church which coincided, at least to some extent, with the time of the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert Armstrong, has been over for quite some time, and that we are at this time well into the Laodicean era.

If this is true, then we very much need to heed the warnings that Jesus Christ addresses directly to the Laodicean church – and to you and to me specifically.

I know that we have been through these verses before; but as they are so critically important and, keeping in mind our question, “do we still really believe in it?” let us quickly go through them again, verse-by-verse:

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: (Revelation 3:14)

Who is “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God”? It is, of course, Jesus Christ – our Elder Brother – the Captain of our salvation.

The answers to our dilemma are clearly given here. But please bear in mind that what is being described here is the general state of the end-time church. Every single sin that Jesus lists here may not necessarily apply to every single member of the Laodicean era church. All of these instructions fall under the recommendation of “If the cap fits, wear it!” So here's what our Captain says that we must do:

i) Correct Lukewarmness

Continuing in Revelation 3:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (Verses 15-16)

Firstly, we must stop being spiritually lukewarm. Please notice that the Laodicean church is here pictured as being in Jesus' mouth, and that Jesus' mouth is pictured as being a good and safe place to be. Please keep this in mind, as we will come back to it later.

Perhaps the allusion here is to a drink. We would normally enjoy a refreshingly cold drink (water, juice, wine or beer) or a comforting hot drink (coffee, tea, cocoa or hot chocolate). But if a preferably cold drink warms up to be lukewarm or if a preferably hot drink cools to a lukewarm temperature, it is not nearly as nice, is it?

Spiritually, if we are not refreshing to Jesus – i.e. by being filled with the water of his Holy Spirit – He will spew us out of his mouth.

Surprisingly, Jesus says here that He would rather see us spiritually cold than lukewarm! Maybe He feels that we would have been better off totally uncalled and unconverted, with a future opportunity for the Second Resurrection, rather than being converted and lukewarm and in danger of being spewed out of His mouth.

But like me, most of you reading this article *are* converted! So we must return to being spiritually “hot” – hot for God's work.

ii) Correct our Poor Spiritual Condition

Still in Revelation 3, continuing in verse 17:

Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ —and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked...

Here, Christ is telling us that we must get to know and to admit the wretched spiritual condition we are in.

OK, maybe many of us *are* rich, increased with goods and toys, and in need of nothing – *physically*. Most of us here in the western democracies truly are physically rich in comparison with the majority of the world’s population. But we need to admit it if we are *spiritually* wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

Once we recognize this fact, what must we do? Should we just think, “Oh! Woe is me, I’m a Laodicean!” and do nothing, like the man who looks in the mirror and sees dirt on his face and does nothing about it?

No! You know as well as I do that, once we recognize that we have a problem, we must *act* upon it! We must take urgent steps to correct these pitiful conditions:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22-25)

So then, what must we do? Just how must we make the necessary corrections from being wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked? Christ tells us how – as we continue in Revelation 3. Let us return there:

iii) Correct Spiritual Poverty

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich... (Verse 18a)

We must buy from Him spiritual gold that has been refined in spiritual fire. This spiritual gold, although deserving of at least one article or sermon of its own, suffice it to say for now that it will cure our spiritual poverty and will make us spiritually rich.

We need to get our priorities right. It is when God allows us to go through severe trials that he is able to refine us and to teach us what the real priorities of life are. We need to get our minds *off* physical wealth and get them *onto* the spiritual treasure that Christ offers us:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

iv) Correct Spiritual Nakedness

Back to Revelation 3 once again:

... and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed... (Verse 18b)

Originally, nakedness was not considered sinful, as it is today:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)

Satan's influence on Adam and Eve introduced to them the idea that the nakedness – even of the perfect bodies God had given them – was somehow something to be ashamed of:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings... So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:7, 10-11)

Like Adam and Eve before their contact with Satan, most little children have no concept of human nakedness being wrong or shameful. This is introduced to them, usually by their parents, as they grow out of babyhood.

With a trip to Italy in the offing, my wife and I have been joking around with our eight-year-old granddaughter, who is something of a junior art aficionado, about Michelangelo's famous sculpture of a naked David which is housed in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Our granddaughter sent us a photo of the sculpture via e-mail, along with the caption, "You're going to see THIS!" We edited her photo, adding a pair of shorts to cover David's nakedness, and sent it back to her!

As we all know, a vast change occurred at the instant that Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Perhaps more than we fully realize. Things that were not sinful before that instant became sinful after it. By Noah's time, the sinful, shameful aspect of human nakedness had become firmly entrenched:

Then he {Noah} drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. (Genesis 9:21-23)

In the books of Exodus and Leviticus, God included a score of prohibitions against nakedness under certain improper circumstances.

But what is spiritual nakedness?

As with the subject of spiritual gold mentioned above, that of nakedness – both human and spiritual – could probably warrant a sermon or article of its own. Without going into a lengthy discussion of the subject, we may accept, at for least for now, that spiritual nakedness is our human inability to effectively cover up our guilt, our lack of innocence, our defenselessness, our vulnerability, and our humiliation. It may be extended to include our inability to conceal the results of any spiritual idolatry or fornication that we might have participated in.

What is the remedy for our spiritual nakedness? Can we resolve the problem ourselves, as Adam and Eve tried to do with their pathetic fig leaves (Genesis 3:7)? No, as in their case, only the LORD – our Lord Jesus Christ – is able to provide the proper covering for our spiritual nakedness (Genesis 3:21).

In our case, however, unlike that of Adam and Eve, we do have a part to play. We must buy white spiritual garments from Jesus Christ so that the shame of our spiritual nakedness will be corrected.

White spiritual garments are the solution. Where else in the scriptures do we read of white garments (KJV: white raiment)?

In his excellent book, “The Tabernacle – Its Priests and its Services,” author William Brown opines that certain of the linen garments of the Aaronic priests and high priests were white. Also, the Levite musicians wore white linen garments:

Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen... (II Chronicles 5:12)

In the spiritual realm, the twenty-four angelic elders in God's heavenly throne room wear white raiment:

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. (Revelation 4:4)

Other angels do too:

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. (Matthew 28:2-3)

So does Jesus Christ Himself, as was witnessed by Peter, James and John at what we refer to as the Transfiguration. Three of the gospel writers describe it slightly differently, giving different details of the incredible event:

And was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. (Matthew 17:2)

And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. (Mark 9:3)

And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. (Luke 9:29)

But if we overcome, we too are promised – by Jesus Himself – this same white raiment:

He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels. (Revelation 3:5)

But just what *is* this white raiment?

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (Revelation 19:7-8)

This fine white linen – the incomparably beautiful wedding dress of the Bride of Jesus Christ – is the righteousness of so we must buy the white raiment of righteousness.

In Revelation 3:18, Jesus tells us that we must buy this white raiment. Can righteousness really be bought? In some ways, yes, it can:

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. (Proverbs 23:23)

If we buy truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding from God and put all four into daily practice, then this would be the same as buying righteousness. Does Jesus mean that we should buy these things with money? With filthy lucre? What do we do when we buy something? Many or even most people spend some – even much – of their time during the week at a job at which they earn money to buy goods and services. The meaning in Revelation 3:18 seems to imply a Christian spending appropriate portions of his time in order to attain these things.

There is also the example of the widow who actively and actually did this by giving her last two mites to God – everything she owned:

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.” (Mark 12:41-44)

v) ***Correct Spiritual Blindness***

Let us now return to Revelation 3:18 and move on to the next point...

...and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

Just as with some of the other points we have covered in this article, whole sermons have frequently been preached on this subject of spiritual eyesight, vision and blindness. But, in a nutshell, we must anoint our *spiritual* eyes with *spiritual* eyesalve so that our *spiritual* blindness may be cured, and our *spiritual* eyesight/vision may be restored.

Although there are eye-drops and lotions that can sooth the eyes and alleviate some symptoms, there is no physical eyesalve that we know of that can actually heal most causes of physical blindness. If someone invented one, he would make a fortune.

What is the *spiritual* eyesalve that Jesus recommends here?

When ministers anoint people and ask God to miraculously heal them, they apply a tiny dab of olive oil to the person's head (James 5:14-15).

Is this what Jesus did when He miraculously healed blind people? Also, what kind of eyesalve did He use?

And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. (Mark 8:23)

When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. (John 9:6)

In these two examples, Jesus used spit. Saliva! It is interesting to note that, in Mark 7:32-35, Jesus also used His saliva in the healing of another man who was deaf and dumb. We will return to this point later.

Is this significant? I believe that it is. I believe that the significance is that something that came *out of Jesus' mouth* was used to heal physically blind people. It is something that comes *out of his mouth* that will heal spiritually blind people. His Holy Spirit and His Word. Please remember also, from Revelation 3:16 which we looked at earlier, that the Laodicean church is pictured as being *in Jesus' mouth* and that *in His mouth* is a good place to be!

Yet again, a whole sermon or Bible Study could be preached on the phrase "out of his mouth." What comes out of Christ's mouth is powerful stuff!

vi) Accept God's Correction

Let us continue now as we begin verse 19 of Revelation 3:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...

We must accept the rebuke and chastening from our Elder Brother and His Father who both love us so very much:

I in them, and you in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me. (John 17:23)

Yet again, a whole sermon could be given on the topic of chastening; but for now, let's just consider one other scripture:

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, my son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

So God's chastening and rebuke are both good for us. They prove that He loves us. They also prove that we are His legitimate children.

vii) Repent and Return to being Zealous

Let us go back to Revelation 3:19:

...be zealous therefore, and repent.

Repent of what? Of many things, yes; but specifically, we are to repent of any lack of zeal.

The Laodicean era of the church is often characterized by a lukewarm lack of zeal. Using God's Holy Spirit, let us get back to being hot and zealous.

viii) Resume Hearing the Voice of Jesus Christ

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)

We know that Jesus is probably not going to come and talk to us personally at this time as He did with the apostle Paul. He may very infrequently appear to a very few in dreams or visions in a similar way as He did with the apostle John, and he may do so more frequently as the end of the age draws nearer (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). But usually, we must hear His words through His written Word and through the Bible-based teachings of His true ministers. It is our responsibility to be listening for Him knocking at our spiritual doors, and to recognize His knock and His voice:

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:3, 10, 27)

We must recognize and shut out thieves and imposters – counterfeit shepherds – and we must recognize and open our spiritual doors to the real shepherd – the Good Shepherd and, as Abraham did, we must invite Him in to dine with us – on spiritual food, of course. Remembering that He is the Bread of Life, and that many – if not most – of us are no longer babes-in-Christ feeding on the milk of God's Word, stronger food is necessary for us:

For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Most of us are mature children of God and should by now be feeding on the strong meat of His Word.

ix) Overcome

Back again to Revelation 3 and in verse 21:

To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Over and over again in the book of Revelation and in other scriptures too (notably in I John), we are commanded to overcome. Here in this verse, we are commanded to emulate Jesus Christ in his example of overcoming.

Jesus' reward for overcoming was to share his Father's throne. Our fabulous reward for overcoming will be to share His throne – Jesus' throne. Yes, this is the reward of Laodicean church members who overcome!

x) Hear what Jesus Christ is Saying to the Churches

He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches. (Verse 22)

Do we have ears? Spiritual ears? Or are we spiritually deaf? Can we hear what Jesus is saying to us? Are we listening intently? Or are we selective listeners? In some areas are we voluntarily deaf?

Earlier, we saw how Jesus has the cure for spiritual blindness. The cure for spiritual deafness is the same as the cure for spiritual blindness. The cure is what comes out of Jesus' mouth:

Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. (Mark 7:32-35)

We have already seen that, as overcomers, we must not be just hearers only. We must be active *doers* of the Word of God. We must *act* upon what we hear and read.

We must hear and act upon what God – through His Holy Spirit – is saying to the churches. Yes, all seven church eras. But specifically, we must hear and act upon what God – through His Spirit – is saying to His Laodicean church today.

Individuals

There then are our marching orders - the commands of our Captain, Jesus Christ. But what if some, or all, of our fellow members of the Laodicean church refuse to do these things? What if they refuse to obey Christ's commands? What if some, or all, of them fail to heed these stern warnings from our Captain? What if some, or all, of them wish to continue their pursuit after physical riches rather than seeking after God's treasure?

Does their unwise rejection give any one of us an excuse not to heed Jesus' admonition to obey these commands?

Surprisingly, the answer comes from Sarah in the very next section of "The Day of the Scorpion." Just as a reminder, the last words I quoted from Susan were these:

“I suppose the trouble is that people like us were finished years ago, and we know it, but pretend not to and go on as if we thought we still mattered.” Again she hesitated, then, looking full at Sarah again, asked, “Why are we finished, Sarah? Why don't we matter?”

After thinking her own private thoughts which I read earlier, Sarah replies wisely to her younger sister:

But she could not say this to Susan...

i.e. Sarah could not reveal her private thoughts to her younger, more naïve sister.

Instead she asked, “Why do you say *we*? *We* may be finished or not matter, or whatever it is. But *you* matter. *I* matter.

There's too much of it... Too much *we* ... *us*. I don't know what *we* are any longer, either. Start thinking like that. You're a person, not a crowd.”

What Sarah was saying to her confused younger sister here is also true for you and me. Although we certainly are members of the Church of God “crowd” – members of any one of the many Church of God groups, those church groups, as we all are painfully aware, are very, very scattered.

Like Sarah, we too could accurately say, “I don't know what *we* are anymore.” The “*we*” of the Laodicean era Church of God is very different from the “*we*” of Herbert Armstrong's Philadelphia era.

Also, you and I individually are not directly or personally responsible for the sins, disobedience, inaction or lack of zeal of other church members. We will not sneak into God's Kingdom on the coat-tails of any other church member, minister or group. We are all responsible for our own actions (Ezekiel 18:20). Although we are all parts of the Body of Jesus Christ, you and I also stand before God as individuals – individual stones in His temple (I Peter 2:5). You and I are committees of one.

In conclusion – yes, the church as a whole appears to be in its Laodicean era. And too much of the church today appears to be in a Laodicean attitude. Let us admit it. But this does not mean that every single member must remain in that Laodicean attitude.

Jesus Christ has given us the solutions and time appears to be short. Let us get working – zealously working – on putting those solutions into practice!

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