

Commentary — From the Margins *Fourteen Years Ago*

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In a story told in *A Philadelphia Apologetic*, on January 17, 2002, a Thursday, I was scheduled to teach back-to-back sections of Freshman Comp at Southeastern Illinois College, at Harrisburg ... I was teaching Tuesday/Thursday classes at Harrisburg; Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes at Paducah Community College, Paducah, Kentucky. And I lived halfway between Paducah and Harrisburg, thirty miles from both campuses—I had five acres in a hollow off of Highway 45. And I was busy, certainly not looking to take on more than I was already doing. But as I was driving toward Harrisburg on the morning of January 17th, I experienced a sense of *heaviness*, of solemnity, of awe, none of these words adequately capturing what I began experiencing when approaching and passing through Carrier Mills. And because I didn't understand what I was experiencing, I turned off the pickup's radio and drove in silence into Harrisburg as I mentally examined myself in an attempt to figure out what was occurring.

Southeastern Illinois College sits atop a dome six miles east of Harrisburg ... upon reaching Harrisburg, I made the turn east on Highway 13 while still feeling something akin to the weight of a person laying over me. But I was alone in the pickup so the feeling made no sense, had no reason to be.

I turned onto College Road, climbed the hill and turned into the upper parking lot—and in the parking lot, I heard in audible words and in a voice that seemed to have “thinginess” in my mind, “It's time to reread prophecy.”

The words left me too weak to do more than quickly turn into the nearest parking space. I was too weak to open the pickup door, let alone walk to class. And I glanced at the clock on the dash of the pickup: 12 minutes after 10. My class started at 10:30, and I had no idea how I was going to get to class on time. I really couldn't move.

I sat in the pickup and wondered what it was that I heard ... I knew what words I heard; I was still hearing them reverberate within my mind: they still seemed to be inside my mind as objects. And they didn't go away for a long time afterwards.

But what did the words in my mind mean? For I only heard the one clause, *It's time to reread prophecy*. I wasn't told why it was time. I wasn't told what I should find in prophecy. I wasn't even told that I should be the one to reread prophecy. So as I sat in the pickup, watching the minutes pass on the clock on the dash, I continued to wonder why what had happened had occurred.

When the clock read 10:25, I forced myself to move, to open the pickup door, and I made my way to class, arriving almost on time.

Each class was an hour and a half. So it was nearly three o'clock when I arrived back at the trailer where we lived near the end of the tunnel. And I opened my Bible as I began writing; for during the two classes, I concluded that what I heard was a call to

rewrite the two-house of Israel doctrine that Herbert Armstrong had preached for fifty years through one of the most poorly crafted books and illogical presented arguments ever written: *United States and Britain in Prophecy*. I was certain I could do a better work.

I had just published seven books in 2001. I had a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from University of Alaska Fairbanks. My work was reasonably well received by other writers. So I figured I could adequately give voice to Armstrong's two-house of Israel teachings. After all, I had attended Worldwide Church of God fellowships since December 1972; I had been a baptized member since before Passover 1973, so I wasn't exactly a novice even though I had been careful not to write "spiritual" material for I wasn't called to do so. That is, I wasn't called to do so until that day. ... I had heard Armstrong espouse his British-Israel doctrine enough times that his words were also heard as memories in my mind.

The books published in 2001 were effectively abandoned with being called to reread prophecy. They remained important, but not enough so to derail the task to which I had been called—and again, I heard no words commanding me to reread prophecy. But if I wasn't to reread prophecy, why would I hear, *It's time to reread prophecy*; what was I to make of hearing these words that I could still hear weeks afterwards as if they were then being spoken, not just remembered.

Upon returning home and opening my Bible to the book of Daniel and beginning to reread words I had read many times before, I realized the words didn't say what I had been told that they said ... Rome isn't mentioned in Daniel's prophecies that were sealed and kept secret by physical events seeming to have fulfilled these prophecies. And when the realization forms within the Christian that Rome doesn't belong in Daniel's prophecies, that spiritual sons of light [sons of God] overcome a spiritual [demonic] King of the North in a different manner than the Maccabees defeated the armies of the Seleucid Empire, the Christian—me—realized that the two-house message that should have been going out all along was about physically circumcised Israel forming the shadow and copy of circumcised of heart Israel, a second nation of Israel that consisted entirely of living inner selves [*psuchas* — souls] that dwell in fleshly bodies as ancient Israel in Egypt lived in houses that belonged to Pharaoh.

What scholars who date the book to Daniel to the 2nd-Century BCE have failed to understand is that what they examine is the "seal" that kept Daniel's visions secret for two and a half millennia. Daniel's visions are not about earthly events and earthly kingdoms, but about spiritual [angelic] kings and kingdoms.

Since 2002, I have written multiple millions of words in rereading prophecy, with many books going over 100,000 words ... I write from a sense of obligation: why would I be told, *It's time to reread prophecy*, if it wasn't then, fourteen years ago, time to reread prophecy. I initially tried to give this job to Garner Ted Armstrong who took it upon himself on January 17, 1962, to deny that further revelation, that additional understanding of prophecy was needed even though his father, Herbert Armstrong, had on Tuesday, two days earlier, told the Advanced Prophecy Seminar he had required all "senior" men then at Pasadena to attend that the Church had prophecy wrong, that the Church had to get prophecy right, that no idea would be off limits or too odd to discuss.

But Herbert Armstrong only taught that Tuesday session of his Advanced Prophecy Seminar. Garner Ted taught the remaining sessions. And at the beginning of the second session, which began at 8:00 am PST (10:00 am CST), Garner Ted told the assembled senior “evangelists” that his dad was just having doubts about what had been revealed to his dad because events weren’t happening in Europe as his dad had said they would; that his dad had prophecy right, and that there would be no new understandings.

In what Garner Ted Armstrong told all of the “seniors” then at Pasadena (most of these men were quite young) was heard by Christ Jesus: *don’t bother giving us additional revelation, we already know all we want to know*. And no additional prophetic revelation was given to the Armstrongs from that day forward.

From having been in front of classes, I know it would have taken Garner Ted ten to twelve minutes to arrive at, *There will be no new revelation*. It took Garner Ted roughly ten minutes to permanently “kill” his father’s ministry.

The story of what happened in this second session of the Advanced Prophecy Seminar came to me from Ray Dick who was then a fourth year Bible student at Pasadena, the course taught by Al Portune, one of the evangelists attending the Seminar.

I sought to verify what Ray Dick told me by contacting both Rod Meredith and Garner Ted Armstrong. In three exchanges of letters, Garner Ted neither denied nor confirmed the story told by Ray Dick. The exchange of letters was pleasant, and I told Garner Ted that since he had caused the situation of no new revelation for forty years, that he was the one to fix the problem. But he was seriously ill spring of 2003 when we last exchanged letters. He died before there could be a fourth exchange. However, Rod Meredith seemed to confirm what Ray Dick had reported to me. And with Meredith’s reply, I was satisfied: since receiving Meredith’s reply, I have reported the story of Garner Ted rejecting additional revelation when Herbert Armstrong knew he had prophecy wrong in the fall of 1961, and when Herbert Armstrong had said as much on January 15, 1962.

I didn’t know anything about the Advanced Prophecy Seminar until sometime in late March 2002 ... I still have Ray Dick’s e-mail message telling me about the seminar and naming the men who were in the seminar.

With knowledge of the seminar and of Garner Ted on behalf of his father rejecting additional revelation, the timing of the audibly heard words, *It’s time to reread prophecy*, made sense; for what Garner Ted said occurred exactly forty years earlier to the day, to the hour, and to the minute of when I audibly heard the call to reread prophecy, which has required rethinking all of what has been taught within greater Christendom since the 1st-Century.

I attended a get-together seminar Garner Ted Armstrong held at Marion, Illinois, summer 2001. After he spoke, he circulated among the thirty or so people who had attended. I spoke with him and mentioned that I had sat in the bleachers on the stage behind him when he had delivered his Feast of Tabernacles message in Blithe Arena, Squaw Valley, 1973. He paused for a moment, then said, “A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then.” Indeed, a lot had.

What I didn’t know when I began rereading prophecy and delivering in both books and in on-line publications what I was finding in Scripture was that once a “task” has been taken from a person, the person can never get the task back. Doing a work for God

can be likened to players in a baseball game. Once the player has been taken out of the game, the player cannot return ... Garner Ted could not return to clean up the damage he did in 1962 when he rejected additional revelation. All he could do was sit on the sidelines and watch others do the work he could have done if he had been willing to trust God. But Garner Ted apparently knew what his dad didn't then fully realize: a ministry based on a particular understanding of biblical prophecy cannot abandon the basis for the ministry and still survive.

The past fourteen years have passed rather quickly ... I want to use the occasion of this Commentary to thank the handful of financial supporters whose contributions have allowed my writings to reach beyond where Herbert Armstrong's voice and writings reached: with the Net, a greater work can be done by a few people than could, now fifty-four years ago or even thirty years ago, be done by many with annual budgets of millions of dollars.

Again, thank you supporters. May each of you be spiritually in good health.

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