

Commentary — From the Margins

“Whether They Hear or Refuse to Hear”

And he said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel—not to many people of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me. Because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.” Moreover he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear.” (Ezek 3:4-11)

A story I have told before: on Thursday of the second full week in January 2002, about 10:12 CST, as I was pulling into the parking lot of Southeastern Illinois College at Harrisburg where I was to teach two back-to-back sessions of English Composition, I was called to reread prophecy. This was not a spontaneous feeling, but a hearing within the mind as if the words were heard with the ears of an authoritarian voice saying, “It’s time to reread prophecy.” For the last ten or so miles of the thirty mile drive from where I lived to the college I had experienced something akin to a heightened sense of awareness, something I then could not explain nor since have tried to explain. Nevertheless, the words that were heard came suddenly and unexpectedly. There was no context from which the words came other than what I was feeling. My thoughts were on the class, which would begin shortly after I arrived on campus. I was neither seeking an answer to a question, nor possessing a desire to do something other than what I was doing. I was baptized into the Body of Christ nearly thirty years earlier so I wasn’t a novice in the faith. I had been writing professionally since 1979 (I have a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from University of Alaska Fairbanks), and I had avoided writing about theological matters for I wasn’t then called to ministry, something upon which my few detractors capitalize: “He’s just a fiction writer.” Yes, I spent the decades of the 1980s and ’90s writing fiction for I was not then called to write about theology, and I wasn’t about to usurp authority not granted. Too many attempt to teach when they have not been called by God to be teachers; thus, to support their ministries, they beg for support, ever reminding their followers that *God loves a cheerful giver*.

But beginning on that Thursday of the second full week of January 2002, I was called to reread prophecy in a manner less spectacular than how the Apostle

Paul was called but in a similar manner—and I make no apologies for being called. It wasn't me who did the calling (I would not have chosen me for this task, for I know what is covered by the blood of Christ), but I am thankful for the chance to do a work. And since being called, beginning that very day, I have been about the task of rereading prophecy, which has opened all of Scripture.

I wasn't called to *make nice* with sin, or to play *patty-cake* with heresy, or to say pleasing things to keep financial contributions coming. I wasn't called to soft-sell the gospel to a world increasingly unwilling to hear *the Christian message*. I wasn't called to apologize for the soon-coming slaying for all firstborns not covered by the blood of Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, a slaying of approximately a third of humankind. Yes, God will again give the lives of human beings as ransom for Israel as He gave the lives of Egyptians before for the ransom of Israel, then a physical nation (Isa 43:3-4). Israel is now a spiritual nation in bondage to indwelling sin and death. ... I was called to remove the seals from long sealed and secret prophecies, and this calling has left me in a position like that of John the Baptist's, who said to the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism,

You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," for I tell you, God [θεός] is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matt 3:7-10)

Christians, Sabbatarians and the lawless, need not to presume to say what Korah said to Moses and Aaron, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord [YHWH]?" (Num 16:3). Indeed, everyone in Israel was holy, the chosen nation of God, His firstborn son (Ex 4:22). But not all of Israel or even all of Levi had been chosen to speak for God. Not all of the prophets of Jeremiah's day were given messages from God, Hananiah being an example (Jer chap 28); nor were all of the priests hearing the words of God, Pashhur being an example (Jer chap 20). Of the first Apostles, none were chosen to lay the foundation of the house of God. That job was given to Saul of Tarsus, who had approved of the murder of Stephen. So being called to a job is not a matter of being holy, or of a democracy of opinion, or of already having authority within the Church. Moses did not ask for, nor seek the task for which he is remembered; nor did Jeremiah or Paul, neither of whom was collectively held in high regard by Israel, physical and spiritual respectively. Only the passage of time established whom God used for what job, with Paul's position still doubted by Messianic Christians.

The sealed and secret prophecies of Daniel were not unsealed by Ellen G. White, who died more than a century before the spiritual king [sar] of Persia pushed against the spiritual king of Greece, the event that began a war within the bottomless pit that has seen the king of Greece flying out of the west to trample the king of Persia, an on-going war fought partially with *toy soldiers* firing real bullets and dropping real bombs and exploding real IEDs in Iraq. The king of Greece will win this war, which means that the democratic values of Greece will

prevail, not that an occupying force from the United States and Britain will bring peace to a region divided by theology. This king of Greece is not a king or a nation of this world, but part of Satan's reigning hierarchy that will, in its entirety, be toppled when the lives of men [and women] are twice given as ransom for first Israel, then for all of humankind (the sixth Trumpet Plague).

The visions of Daniel were not unsealed by Herbert W. Armstrong although it was possible that they could have been if he had "gone spiritual" in 1943, when he saw that world events were not unfolding as he then understood biblical prophecy. As it was, he identified himself as a watchman sent to warn Britain and the United States of a revival of a Rome-German alliance in the form of a United Europe that would enslave the English-speaking peoples of the world. He stayed physically minded even though Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world, nor from this world (John 18:36).

- If Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, then why teach that it is of this world? Why teach that His kingdom is a one-world-government like that attempted to be formed by men through the United Nations?
- Satan as the present (though disqualified) prince of this world doesn't rule through a single human government, but through a mindset of disobedience and rebellion.
- Jesus will not rule men through other men but through a mindset of obedience to God; for He will receive the kingdom taken from the four demonic kings by the court of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9-14). And He will not leave this kingdom to others to rule, but will rule through every person being fully empowered by the Holy Spirit, thereby giving to every person the mind of Christ.

Both Ellen G. White and Herbert W. Armstrong were without prophetic understanding, the most polite way that it can be said that they were false prophets. But as the exiles of Israel in Babylon said, "The Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon" (Jer 29:15), so too has spiritually circumcised Israel said of the many prophecy pundits who would have the holy nation of God focusing on what happens in physical Jerusalem, while barely acknowledging that the heavenly city is without occupant.

The house of God in the heavenly city, along with its walls, are to be built on the foundation Paul laid before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes upon the remnant that left spiritual Babylon. If a portion of this remnant is figuratively caught on the plains of Jericho, that portion of the remnant will be slain. Only in heavenly Jerusalem, not a city of this world with geographical coordinates but a city with theological coordinates—the city to which disciples come on the high Sabbaths of God—will disciples find safety. ... For most Sabbatarian disciples, the place of safety is the grave. Only the remnant that keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy, will cross from the first 1260 days of the Tribulation into the second 1260 days. And Ellen G. White did not have the spirit of prophecy. If she had any spirit, it was not of God for she denied the only sign Jesus gave that He was of heaven, this sign being that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. He was three days and three nights in the grave [all of the 15th of Abib, the high

Sabbath; all of the 16th; all of the 17th, the weekly Sabbath], not two nights and a day as Ellen G. White claimed to have received in a vision.

Herbert W. Armstrong figuratively reached heavenly Jerusalem—whether he was first is not as certain—but he never located the foundation Paul laid. Instead, he started to work on his own house, building for himself a theological dwelling that he hoped would rival Solomon's physical house, little realizing that only what is built on the foundation Paul laid will endure ... the house Armstrong built was consumed by the fires of dissent throughout the 1990s. Only charred splinters remain, with these splinters now vying with each other for who can remain most true to the message Armstrong delivered when they should be sweeping away the rubble and relocating their foundations to where Paul built.

And in the valley of Hinnom, a few disciples build a mean little dwelling in which only Hebrew names for the Father and the Son can be spoken aloud. These few deny Christ by denying that by Him and for Him were all things made. They don't like how Scripture reads so they have printed their own Bible ... they are blasphemers, liars, spiritual murderers, and seek the same sort of purity before God that the Pharisees sought. They are equally blind, equally deaf, and equally vile. (Oh, but their dancing at *Missing In Action* conventions is so tantalizing.)

Those disciples who have swallowed the *sacred names* heresy shall receive no apologies from me—I am presently watching an infant in Christ spiritually die from ingesting this poisonous weed. Friends from Lewiston died now several years ago although they would say that they are enlightened while the rest of us err in holding that the *Logos* who was with God [θεόν] and was God [θεός] and who made all things entered His creation as His only Son, the man Jesus. If I err in believing Jesus, then let me have that error counted to me. And let those who deny that the One who created all things came as the man Jesus also have their denial of Christ counted to them, for this denial shall not be forgiven in this world.

How many infant sons of God did the Apostle Paul watch die? All in Asia, correct? And how many infant sons of God will we, in this last generation, have to watch die physically and/or spiritually? Many! Too many to count! They will be our physical children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends, acquaintances, disciples with whom we have worked, have baptized. Will we come to hate death so much that we will reject lawlessness without consideration of the question to which a lawless answer can be posed? Will we hate death enough to live our lives in a black and white world? If we do not, then we can expect to meet death ourselves, not that we won't face death from outside sources every day throughout the seven endtime years.

There can be no compromise with sin.

The world was baptized into death in the days of Noah's Flood, and out of death came eight, plus seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of every common species. Death is darkness, and out of the darkness came light in the face of Christ Jesus (2 Co 4:6), a life-giving spirit (1 Co 15:45) with seven spirits that function as His eyes and with seven horns that are seven churches (Rev 5:6). What isn't seen at the beginning of the seven endtime years is the single pair of every denomination, every sect, every schism within lawless Christendom, for these single pairs have not yet been visually determined ... which congregation of

the tens of thousands of Baptist fellowships will be the one that will hear the words of Jesus and believe the one who sent Him? Which congregation of Methodists will believe? Or which congregation of the Assemblies of God will believe? Even those congregations that will believe do not, today, know who they are. If they did, they would begin to keep the Sabbath and would become one of the seven churches.

It is always an error to say that the seven named churches in Revelation are seven eras of the Church of God—this is a false teaching borrowed by White and Armstrong from the Plymouth Brethren.

When disciples are born of Spirit [the divine Breath of God] they are typologically represented by humankind being born from physical breath. They must now be baptized into death in a manner analogous to the world being covered by the waters of the Flood [sprinkling is not baptizing]. Their physical bodies are types of Noah's Ark, as well as the Ark of the Covenant. And when they emerge from the waters of the baptismal font or horse trough or lake or river in which they were baptized, they form a common pool of disciples that was foreshadowed by Noah's descendants, to whom all flesh was given as meat.

But of Noah's descendants, only one found favor with God and had his belief counted to him as righteousness: Abraham, who left Ur of the Chaldeans [Babylon] and journeyed by faith to Canaan, the Promised Land, God's rest, represented typologically by Sabbath observance (*cf.* Heb 3:16-4:11; Ps 95:10-11; Num chap 14). Only one is called the father of the faithful. And if disciples are to have the faith of Abraham—this is the criteria for being chosen from the many called (Matt 22:14)—disciples will leave the common pool of those who have been born-of-Spirit and who today lounge in the wealth of Babylon, and these disciples will journey to the Land Beyond the River, with this mental journey taking disciples into living outwardly as physically uncircumcised Judeans.

The Methodists, the Baptists, even Latter Day Saints—all of these denominations have built spiritual houses in Babylon, with Sunday observance being the defining characteristic of those congregations that remain in theological exile. Mennonites, Brethren, and the Amish built houses on the plains of Moab, where they can look across into the Promised Land from which they are separated by their refusal to cross the river into Sabbath observance. Seventh Day Baptists and Seven Day Adventists built spiritual houses on the plains of Judea, but they have yet to journey to Jerusalem. And many, tiny COG fellowships camp on the outskirts of the heavenly city, where these charred splinters, smug and condescending, smolder in turmoil as they wait for a United Europe to send armies against physical Jerusalem. They are so busy watching the physical horizon that they cannot see how far away they are from the foundation Paul laid in this heavenly city.

And I watch an infant son of God die from ingesting spiritual locoweed, the *sacred names* heresy.

I don't know that I will ever get used to seeing sons of God perish in disbelief. Health care workers become somewhat desensitized to death as they see it on a regular basis. I suspect that will happen ... *another dead son of God, a corpse that still breathes physically, a promise that did not develop.* But I'm not yet to that point although I have seen many who have died, including a pastor with

whom I shared a couple of deer hunts back in 1982, '83—including my own daughters, who knew to keep the commandments and who were baptized but who have since returned to the world or to exile in spiritual Babylon.

God will send a great delusion over those disciples who return to sin after being liberated from indwelling sin and death by being filled with the Holy Spirit. Those under this great delusion will believe that they are correct in what they do; thus, they will not repent of their lawlessness. And because they will not repent, their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven them. They will still physically live in lawlessness while believing that they please God, but spiritually, they are dead ... they are observable; they are known to me, to others; their lives are today the saddest stories in the world. Well, almost the saddest stories, for even sadder is the story of someone who left Babylon, then left fellowships in Moab to cross the figurative river Jordan only to be given a false translation of the Bible, a translation that encourages its readers to feast on locoweed.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He drew near and saw the city, for *the city did not know the time of its visitation* (Luke 19:44). Disciples today, though sensing that the end is near, do not know the time of their visitation. If they did, they would not practice lawlessness or eat locoweed. They would, instead, preach repentance to Israel, including to the vipers that seek purity through how they utter the name of God.

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