

January 16, 2015

[Printable/viewable PDF format to display Greek or Hebrew characters](#)

What Herbert Armstrong Didn't Know [Third Section]

Argument: As a self-educated theologian, Herbert W. Armstrong as the Pastor-General of the former Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God, never understood the basic construction of Hebraic poetics, that the visible, physical things of this world reveal and precede the invisible spiritual things of God, with outwardly circumcised Israel forming the chiral (or left hand) image of circumcised of heart Israel, the assembly of inner selves born of spirit through the indwelling of Christ Jesus. Because Armstrong never understood theological chirality, Armstrong placed importance on the surfaces of things and people; importance on appearances, gender, skin color, and genealogy. He therefore prevented himself from understanding the mysteries of God, and was and remained a spiritual novice throughout his ministry that extended from 1934 to 1986.

5.

Discussion of scriptural fallibility could continue and develop into a book of itself, but that is not the purpose of this extended article: the purpose is to address Herbert Armstrong being perceived as *God's essential endtime man*, the last Elijah, when no human person is "essential" other than the man Jesus the Nazarene. If anything, Armstrong "killed" the work begun by Sabbatarian Pietists ... Pietism began as a "movement toward piety" that developed within Lutheranism in the late 17th-Century, with a few within this movement accepting the seventh day Sabbath as the day upon which God and Christ should be worshiped. Sabbatarian Pietists came to America as seventh-day Brethren early in the 18th-Century, with the Ephrata Community (1722) developing from the preaching of Conrad Beissel. From Sabbatarian Brethren came seventh day German Baptists [Dunkards], then after 1844 and William Miller's Great Disappointment, the Church of God Seventh Day and the Seventh Day Adventists. Armstrong began to attend with the Oregon Conference of the Church of God Seventh Day in the late 1920s. Although he was always uncomfortable acknowledging that he was ordained by the Church of God Seventh Day and counted as one of their pastors, he wasn't uncomfortable acknowledging that he was ordained as "one sent forth" by the Oregon Conference. But in the size and scope of his ministry; in his lifestyle; in the message he taught; in his exclusion of the laity from ministry, he effectively denied the tenets of Pietism, consciously moving farther and farther from Pietism as his ministry grew in reach and income. Whereas he came to the Sabbath through attempting to prove his wife wrong about Sabbath observance, his wife Loma came to the Sabbath through study with members of the Oregon Conference (through the ministry of the laity):

Armstrong came to the Sabbath as one who would, if he could, root Sabbath observance out of his wife, but died as one who had effectively rooted Pietism out from the Sabbatarian Church. But the six principles set forth by Philipp Jakob Spener in 1685 for restoring life to the Lutheran Church remain the principles for restoring life to the Sabbatarian Church. And through the splintering of Armstrong's ministry since his death, some Sabbatarians have returned to Pietist practices such as home churches, Bible studies, and living a vigorous Christian life. Unfortunately, the majority of Armstrong's disciples no longer keep the Sabbath: Armstrong, not the Adversary, killed them by how he lived like a king while the laity lived like paupers.

Now to his credit, Herbert Armstrong, without being born of spirit, knew enough to walk in this world as a believing Judean, and he knew enough to teach others to also walk as believing Judeans—and that might be enough. The decision will be Christ Jesus', not any man's. So for those disciples that genuinely "hate" Armstrong and there are many, their hate will be their undoing. If Jesus could wash Judas Iscariot's feet knowing that Judas was about to betray Him, disciples ought to be able to figuratively wash Armstrong's feet.

Armstrong taught as one who had no spiritual understanding: *British Israelism* was at the core of all he taught. And with Armstrong placing emphasis on descendants of the so-called Lost Ten Tribes, Armstrong disclosed that he didn't understand Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel that best supports Christian disciples living as Judeans.

The author of Matthew cites Hosea:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.
They shall not return to the land of Egypt,
but Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me. (Hos 11:1–5 indented lines are the spiritual portions of thought-couplets)

But the author of Matthew only cited the spiritual portion of verse 1: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

The author of Matthew needed to establish that Jesus represented <Israel>, thereby giving Jesus priority over the children of Israel that crossed the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month (Josh 4:19), thus entering the Promised Land ["penned" in the Sabbath] as the selected and chosen Passover Lamb of God.

The problem had to be solved if the remainder of his message was to work for endtime disciples—and the solution chosen capitalized on the known ruthlessness of Herod the Great. Through the coming of the magi to worship the infant Jesus [whether

this story is true is immaterial: there should be no record of Jesus prior to the beginning of His ministry, where Mark's Gospel begins], the author of Matthew had reason for Herod to order the death of all infant males (of two years age or less) in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. One of these infants was a potential threat to him. Thus, cause existed for Jesus' parents to take Jesus beyond Herod's jurisdiction; to take Jesus to Egypt. But in taking Jesus to Egypt, the author of Matthew also had to get Jesus out of Egypt, the topographical representation of Sin, without Jesus being tainted by Sin. And for this reason, Joseph and Mary had to return to Judea while Jesus was still protected by the innocence of infancy.

In the author of Matthew slipping the infant Jesus into and out Egypt, then citing only the spiritual portion of Hosea's prophecy that is about the children of Israel under Joshua [in Greek, *'Iesou — Jesus*] being called out from the land representing Sin, this author effectively slips Jesus into being the selected and chosen Passover Lamb of God, with Jesus replacing the children of Israel as the sacrificial lamb, chosen on the 10th day of the first month, the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem (see John 12:1, 12 — five days before the Passover as Pharisees reckoned the Passover would have been the 10th day of the first month).

For Armstrong not to recognize what the author of Matthew does in replacing natural Israel [the outwardly circumcised descendants of the patriarchs] with Christ Jesus and those who are circumcised of heart through the indwelling of Christ, Armstrong disclosed his spiritual blindness for all to see, thereby making his advocacy of British Israelism a pennant of ignorance waved before the world.

Again British Israelism as a concept represents the epitome of carnal-mindedness: Armstrong's two-houses of Israel message could be reduced to the natural descendants of the patriarchs that have the right to bear the name *<Israel>* were not the descendants of the House of Judah that went into captivity in Babylon, but the descendants of the northern House of Israel that were taken captive by the Assyrians more than a century earlier. But again, Assyria serves as the topographical representation of Death; so when Hosea in the spiritual portion of a thought-couplet declares, "Assyria shall be their king," the prophet discloses consignment to disobedience and death.

It is less difficult to reconcile the historic movement of peoples with descendants of the patriarchs journeying eastward and westward from Samaria than it is to reconcile natural descendants of the patriarchs being endtime *Israel* with Scripture, especially the epistles of the Apostle Paul, who wrote,

You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Rom 2:23–29)

Elsewhere Paul writes,

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, *as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For *in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, **having been buried with Him in baptism***, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Col 2:1–12 emphasis and double emphasis added)

Unfortunately, the first to gather together Paul's epistles was the heretic Marcion late in the 2nd-Century CE. Apparently, he was also the first to establish a New Testament canon, his canon consisting of ten sections from Luke's Gospel plus ten of Paul's epistles, all redacted to support his dualist, neo-Platonic theology.

Proto orthodox (as Bart D. Ehrman identifies the forefathers of modern Christendom) bishops and theologians fought against Marcion and his teachings by gathering together fourteen of Paul's epistles and their version of Luke's Gospel, plus the other three Gospels, each redacted to support what would become orthodox [*the right belief*] Christianity. And while all of this was occurring, remnants of the Great Assembly were redacting Moses, the Writings, and the Prophets to purge from them the readings that early Christians used to support their belief that Jesus the Nazarene was the Messiah ...

There was a whole lot of tinkering with Holy Writ occurring that served no useful purpose other than to do what the author of Luke's Gospel told Theophilus, confirm that what these Christians or Jews had been taught was correct (Luke 1:4).

Both Mohammad [Islam] and Joseph Smith [Mormonism] recognized the textual inconsistencies taught within Judaism and Christianity. Both of the theologies they founded grew from recognition that the Bible as received by 4th-Century Christians justified errant dogmas; however, neither Islam nor Mormonism (both producing their own sacred text[s]) were any closer to theological *truth* than Christian orthodoxy.

Herbert Armstrong skirted issues of redaction by borrowing from Protestantism its figurative 4th-down punt: *Scripture in its original languages is the infallible Word of God*. Therefore, for Armstrong, British Israelism was true if the original wording of Scripture in its original languages could be recovered. But Armstrong simply couldn't read Matthew's Gospel as it was written.

Although Armstrong consistently maintained that he was not a scholar, he nevertheless identified himself as an apostle—and as an apostle he entered uncharted territory with only the naming phrase *<Israel>* as his guide, not at all realizing that it is the French who cannot pronounce *<Shibboleth>* (Judges 12:4–6). It is the French who to this day do not use the /sh/ sound at the beginning of words. Brits have no problem

pronouncing *Shibboleth*. Brits cannot be reasonably identified as endtime descendants of ancient Ephraim, even via DNA marking.

But the question must be asked, what has correct identification of the endtime descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes to do with endtime *Israel*, the nation to be circumcised of heart? What does correct identification of the Ten Lost Tribes have to do with Christ Jesus being the *Israel* called out of Egypt? What does the tongue (and how *Shibboleth*, or how *'Iesou* is pronounced) have to do with being circumcised of heart? Does the circumcised inner self of a person utter words aloud? Are silently said prayers heard by God?

In order for the British to be endtime descendants of Ephraim—what British Israelism teaches—and for Americans to be endtime descendants of Manasseh, the Apostle Paul must be either badly misread or ignored ... while scholars don't know everything that Marcion taught, they know that Marcion redacted Paul's epistles, removing from them any reference to Jesus being a human man, with redaction being a form of forcing a misreading of the text onto the text. Marcion misread Paul's epistles. Herbert Armstrong didn't misread them, he ignored them.

From where does Protestantism get its *antinomianism* if not from Marcion's misreading of Paul's epistles having crept into orthodox Christendom? And from where do Sabbatarian Churches of God get their legalism if not from Armstrong ignoring Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

But Paul's epistle to the saints in Galatia doesn't say what Protestant Christendom has made it say by *line-upon-line* exegesis, which Armstrong also practiced, only using a differing set of *lines*.

About *line-upon-line* exegesis, the prophet Isaiah writes,

These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed by wine, they stagger with strong drink, they reel in vision, they stumble in giving judgment. For all tables are full of filthy vomit, with no space left. "To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people, to whom He has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear. And *the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.* (Isa 28:9–13 emphasis added)

This is rest; give rest to the weary—what message gives “rest” to the weary? Is not rest given to the weary when Paul wrote,

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.* And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Gal 2:17–21 emphasis added)

Yet Paul also wrote [dictated],

For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (Rom 2:11–13)

Also,

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that *Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law*. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (Rom 9:30–33 emphasis added)

In Christ, *rest* is given to those who have committed unintentional transgressions of the Law, regardless of whether they are or are not culturally under the Law. This has been difficult for the splintered Sabbatarian Churches of God to accept: *Christ who lived in Paul* raised Paul's inner self from death, thereby setting up a war within Paul's fleshly body, a war of the now living spiritual inner self against the physical flesh, a war in which the inner self can lose skirmishes but not the war. Hence, Paul wrote,

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Rom 7:14–23)

Marcion would not have agreed that the *Law is good*; that the *Law is spiritual*. And Armstrong would not have agreed that Christ lived with him, that his inner self had been made alive through the indwelling of Christ Jesus in the form of His spirit [*pneuma Christou*].

When Christ lives inside the person, Christ continues to keep the Law as He did when alive physically. Thus, in Paul's inner self where Christ lives, Paul delighted in the Law. The problem came in that Paul's inner self was not yet able [mature enough] to rule over his outer or physical self, his fleshly body that remained consigned to disobedience and death.

A strong man crucified could live on the cross for a day or longer. Legs were broken so that the strong man could not continue to push himself up and thus breathe. Jesus was scourged [beaten] to weaken Him, thereby forcing upon Him early death, the kindest thing Pilate could do for Him without causing a riot.

The old inner self of a person—the *old man*—is figuratively crucified with Christ through the spirit of Christ [again, *pneuma Christou*] entering into the spirit of the person [*to pneuma tou 'anthropou*], but if this old inner self is that of an inwardly strong person, the old inner self will continue to live even though figuratively impaled on the cross. And this crucified old inner self will cause the fleshly body to do those

things that the new inner self hates, the dilemma Paul experienced when he wrote, *I do the very thing I hate*.

Paul didn't understand why his new inner self—which he knew he had—could not overcome the sin that dwelt in his fleshly members. Paul didn't know that there would be a Second Passover liberation of Israel, a liberation from indwelling sin and death, at a specific moment in time [space-time], with this Second Passover liberation of Israel being of the “Israel” Paul himself identified in Romans 2:28–29.

There have been many persons who have explicated, redacted and doubly redacted Scripture since the 1st-Century CE, without realizing that the text the person was explicating was itself an explication of what was originally written. But of these many explicators, none were born of spirit as Paul was; as the author of Matthew's Gospel was; as the author of John's Gospel was; as Peter and James were. For at the end of the 1st-Century, the spiritual Body of Christ died from loss of breath [the spirit of God, *pneuma Theou*] as Jesus' physical body died at Calvary. And both the death of the spiritual Body and the resurrection of this spiritual Body is possible; for no person can come to Jesus unless drawn from this world by God the Father (John 6:44)—and this latter concept Armstrong understood in principle but not in its practicality.

Death of the Body of Christ would occur when God the Father ceased drawing individuals from this world then delivering these individuals to Christ Jesus ... death occurred when the last living person born of spirit died physically [ca. 100–102 CE], with God the Father having ceased to draw new persons from this world forty years after Calvary [ca 71 CE]: the razing of the physical temple had to occur prior to the razing of the spiritual temple. Thus, the Father continued to draw persons from this world and deliver them to the glorified Christ Jesus for as long as the earthly temple stood, with the earthly temple [Herod's temple] forming the chiral image [the left hand type] of the temple of God, the Church (1 Cor 3:16–17), the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27).

Resurrection of the Body of Christ will occur in a moment, this moment to follow seven years of tribulation, these years of tribulation to begin with all of greater Christendom being suddenly filled with spirit and thereby liberated from indwelling sin and death at the Second Passover liberation of Israel. Spiritual birth comes in the moment when Christ Jesus returns as the Messiah, except for the Elect, those disciples born of spirit when it isn't the season for fruit of the spirit.

Paul wrote,

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew*. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." *So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace*. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. *The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened*, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." (Rom 11:1–8 emphasis added)

The Elect about whom Paul here wrote was a remnant of Israel, this remnant forming the physical shadow and copy [left hand chiral image] of the spiritual Elect of

God, chosen not on the basis of works but by being foreknown by God the Father, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom 8:29–30). Actually, the spiritual Elect are those disciples who have the faith of Abraham in that they hear the voice, the words of Jesus, believe the One who sent Him into this world, and have their belief of God counted to them as righteousness so that they pass from death to life without coming under judgment (John 5:24). They are chosen by grace, with <grace> used as a euphemistic expression for being under the garment of Christ Jesus' righteousness.

The person truly born of spirit knows that he or she has been born of spirit; for the old man—the inner self with which the person was humanly born and with which the person reached physical maturity—dies either a slow death or a rapid one, but either way dies and a new inner self replaces the former inner self. This new inner self has been brought to life through the indwelling of the spirit of Christ [*pneuma Christou*] in the spirit of the person [*to pneuma tou 'anthropou*] in a manner analogous to that of a husband penetrating his wife for purposes of procreation.

Because Armstrong was not—by his own declaration—born of spirit, he didn't and couldn't understand spiritual birth. He simply had not experienced spiritual birth, and in the honesty he had, he could not claim what he knew had not happened to him. And again, for this he deserves credit ... however, among those who became his disciples, a few were genuinely born of spirit, with these few generally ostracized within fellowships. These few thought for themselves for they had within them the mind of Christ. And because these few thought for themselves, they had their spiritual growth stunted by Armstrong, but they could not be spiritually killed by Armstrong or by anyone else.

Armstrong thought he was making disciples for Christ Jesus, but the vast majority of those who came into his fellowships were his disciples, not Christ's — and it is these Sabbatarian Christians who were spiritually harmed by Armstrong or by his ministers. These disciples would not have been genuinely born of spirit: the few genuinely born of spirit formed a remnant foreshadowed by the remnant of natural Israel that Paul addressed. The disciples who fell away, who did not continue to grow in grace and knowledge are representative of “*the rest [who] were hardened.*”

Endtime disciples have not seen Paul face to face, have not benefited from dialogue with Paul, but are today as the holy ones at Colossae were.

In the glorified Christ Jesus (as opposed to the fleshly man Jesus), the *fullness of deity dwells bodily* (Col 2:9) ... if the glorified Jesus is the second Adam, a life-giving spirit [*pneuma*] (1 Cor 15:45), the *fullness of deity* would be this life-giving spirit that would be without an earthly body, except as this life-giving spirit dwells in a disciple, thereby transforming the inner self of the person into a son of God possessing deity, not what either Trinitarian or Arian Christendom teaches—

Pause for a moment: if the glorified Jesus is the life-giving spirit that represents the *fullness of deity*, this fullness of deity is represented by the spirit of God [*pneuma Theou*] in the spirit of Christ [*pneuma Christou*] that now enters into the spirit of the person [*to pneuma tou 'anthropou*], thereby causing the person to become the personification of both Christ Jesus and God the Father and thus the *face* of God in this world. The person born of spirit as a son of God is, to this world, as the Lord was to Moses and as Moses was to Aaron and by extension, to all of Israel. The Apostle Paul was to the Church as Moses was to Israel. It is for this reason that Paul can write,

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 3:10–11)

And that the author of Hebrews can write,

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Heb 3:3–6)

Herbert Armstrong understood this concept of the glorified Jesus being the fullness of deity through the flawed lens of spirit-filled disciples being “begotten” of God, but not yet born of God.

The concept of being begotten [fathered by] but not yet born of spirit would have disciples still in the womb of the mother, with Armstrong teaching that the Church was the mother. Thus, logic would hold that if disciples are fetuses in the womb of their mother, disciples are nourished through an umbilical cord as they are confined within a wet, dark grotto. But this imagery is contrary to what Paul wrote to the holy ones at Corinth:

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? (1 Cor 3:1–3)

And,

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Heb 5:11–14)

A begotten fetus is not a milk drinker. An infant outside of its mother's womb is a milk drinker.

Could Herbert Armstrong distinguish good from evil? In his personal life, apparently not. But his personal life is between him and Christ Jesus, not between him and the disciples he made for himself. It is, however, fair to criticize him for his personal relationship with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (dod 28.09.1989) ... Marcos, having been convicted of murdering a political rival of his father in 1938, had his death sentence overturned by the Philippine Supreme Court in 1940. He then went from being a felon to being a freedom fighter against the Japanese, *according to him*, claiming deeds and decorations that history has shown simply were not so. His father was executed in 1945 for being a Japanese collaborator. There is the stench of collaboration also attached to Marcos. Nevertheless, campaigning as the most decorated guerilla fighter against the Japanese, Marcos won the presidency in 1965, won a second term, and shortly before being term-limited out of office, Marcos declared martial law on 22.09.1972 through his infamous *Proclamation 1081*, which made him a lifetime

dictator, the powers of which he used to silence a free press and suspend civil liberties. He closed down Congress, the media, and arrested opposition leaders under the pretext of creating a *New Society* based on new social and political values—and he repeatedly entertained Herbert Armstrong, who came bearing gifts and a message about the *Wonderful World Tomorrow*, a message that Marcos could use to his advantage.

No, Armstrong could not distinguish between good and evil. He had no practice in making such distinctions. Nor did the ministry he ordained. For every minister upon returning to a pastorate for reunions after having been transferred out of the area universally expressed surprise about who was still attending Sabbath services and who was not. The disciples that they had perceived as the strongest in the faith were gone. The ones whom they had expected to fall away were still attending services. ... These ministers, themselves, in great number fell away once Joe Junior abandoned Moses and bragged about slaying Herbert Armstrong's dead ministry: as one Klamath Falls attorney said in the pretrial settlement hearing for a malpractice law in which the hospital had admitted liability, *There's only so many bullets you can pump into a dead horse*. "Little Joe" kept pulling the trigger long after he ran out of ammo.

Contrary to what Armstrong apparently believed about himself, he will not be in charge of education in the World Tomorrow. He might well not be in charge of anything for he practiced conspicuous consumption of the tithes and offerings of followers who struggled financially. He taught that in the World Tomorrow, glorified Christians would live as kings, enjoying the finer things of life. And he had his disciples believing that at least at the Feast of Tabernacles, disciples should also live as kings, spending a tenth of the person's annual income in an eight day period ... Armstrong seemed not to realize that the one who will be great in the kingdom is the one who serves most, not the one who is served by others as kings are.

There is a little recognized clause in a passage from Paul that has been previously cited, but that is here also appropriate:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, *by taking the form of a servant*, being born in the likeness of men. (Phil 2:5–7 emphasis added)

The Creator of all that has been made physically was in the form of God, a form higher than any human king; yet this deity didn't cling to divinity, but entered His creation in the form of a servant ... human persons are created in the form of servants; humans, like angels, are created to serve and not to be served. But apparently Armstrong never realized that a person's fleshly body exists to serve others, from livestock that daily need to be fed and watered to neighbor and brother—to the sister too proud to ask for help even when help is desperately needed; to the brother who no longer remembers he benefited from poached venison forty-five years ago when the brother was in need; to the grandson who idolizes Armstrong through consciously blocking from his memory knowledge of the extravagant lifestyle of the Pastor-General. It is serving the person who doesn't want served where displaying Philadelphian love becomes most difficult. And when the physically living person has nothing else to give, the person still has his or her time, the person's allotted days of human consciousness. And what greater gift can one person give another than a portion of the person's allotted days?

When history blows the dust away, this present endtime Christian era will not be remembered by how Christians pronounced a bastardized Hebrew name, but by whether these same Christians were willing to lay down their lives for their brothers—lay down their lives in small units, a day here and a day there, an hour helping neighbor, another hour answering questions, another attempting to get a Christian to take the Passover sacraments on the dark portion of the 14th day of the first month, this first month beginning with the first sighted new moon crescent following the spring equinox wherever the person lives.

If Herbert Armstrong genuinely believed he was serving his disciples, he had an odd way of showing his service—

Before continuing this subject, I want to address Armstrong’s core message about the *Wonderful World Tomorrow*: in the Millennium, the 1000 years when the glorified Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, there will be no buying and selling, no transactional economy. Once dominion over the single kingdom of this world is taken from the Adversary and his angels (*cf.* Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–18; 12:7–12) on Doubled Day 1260, and the Adversary is cast into space-time and down to this earth, the whole world is baptized in spirit and into life. No longer will sin and death dwell in anyone unless the person takes death back inside the person by returning to sin, defined as unbelief; the absence of faith [*pisteos*] as in not believing God (Rom 14:23). Therefore, the third angel’s message—

If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. (Rev 14:9–11)—

pertains not just to the 1260 days of the Endurance in Jesus (from Rev 1:9), but throughout the Millennium. And the mark of the beast, the mark of Death [*chi xi stigma* — the tattoo/*stigma* of Christ’s/*chi* cross/*xi*] needed to buy and sell in the Endurance isn’t Sunday worship, isn’t a computer chip, isn’t a Social Security number, but is simply marking oneself with the means used to kill Christ Jesus thereby identifying oneself as a person to be killed because of the person’s unbelief of God about Israel not marking itself through tattoos or cuttings: “You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves” (Lev 19:28).

Simple enough? Yes, simple enough that the third part of humanity (from Zech 13:9) that wouldn’t, today, sport a tattoo of the Christian Cross will not, when their spiritual lives are at stake, permit themselves to be tattooed with a cross. However, this will not be the case for the vast majority of Christians, even when filled with spirit.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus said,

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have

set your hope. For *if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?* (John 5:39–47 emphasis added)

Again simple, a simple question: if Pharisees would not believe Moses' writings, how could they believe Jesus' words? By extension for God is not a respecter of persons, if Christians will not believe Moses' writings—inscribed words, sans aspiration/voice, of the God of Abraham—how will they hear Jesus' voice and believe His words? They won't.

It is Jesus who places aspiration or voice or life into Moses' words. It is Jesus' voice that makes Moses' words complete.

In the Millennium, there will be no transactional economy, no buying or selling, no working for wages, no economic oppression, and not much of what is today recognized as prosperity. The person who works six days a week at providing for family will have enough, as it was for Israel and the children of Israel in the wilderness when it came to gathering manna. The person who works little will get by; the person who works much will also get by, maybe better than the one who works little, maybe not. But both will work and will have enough, day by day, week by week, year by year, century by century, with mortal life continuing because there is no longer any indwelling sin and death. The Millennium will not be an age of space travel, or super computers, or even primitive electronic communication. It will be an age when people talk to one another, face to face, and have enough time to do so. It will not be an age when humans figuratively [as Armstrong taught] put the frosting on the cake, but will be an age when everyone has work to do and plenty to think about ... if a person wants a knife, the person will forge the knife blade, even if that means smelting the iron for the blade: the abundance of this present world will provide the raw materials needed in the quiet age to come.

A person born of spirit today already experiences a shadow of what the Millennium will be like.

Back to where I left off, Armstrong's odd way of showing how he served his disciples ... those co-worker letters: feeling Armstrong's hand in my mailbox caused me to quickly respond to his co-worker requests for money.

In 1973, I had no money for the holy day offering on Rosh Hashanah. But Oregon had a bottle bill. I turned in all of the pop bottles I had on hand and all I found in nearby ditches. Three dollars and seventy-three cents went into the offering plate at Eugene, this offering not put into an envelope because of its small size (I didn't want anyone there to know how little I gave; I was embarrassed by how little I had).

The holy day fell mid workweek, fell on Thursday. When I returned home from services, there was an unexpected check in the mailbox for three hundred seventy-three dollars. The check was from the State of Oregon, part of an unemployment insurance settlement.

Was the dollar amount of the check coincidental? Had I not found more pop bottles because the check had already been mailed? Possibly. A person can easily become overly superstitious, attributing to God what might be mere happenstance. Many Christians are overly superstitious. Most are. Unbelievers would say all are. But what about me? What did I think then, and what do I think now, four decades later ... if the dollar amount was coincidental, then in my life a lot of coincidences have occurred that defy

logical explanations. So, no, I didn't then think the amount was coincidental. I don't today think the amount was coincidental, not considering that the following spring, still cash strapped, still unemployed, circumstances conspired through which I relocated to Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, with a job at which I was earning a hundred dollars a day [I was falling "timber" in North Kenai for the LNG plant that was never built].

A local elder in Anchorage, Al Tunseth, went for pre-approval for financing so he could buy a new house in, I believe, 1976. The bankers laughed at his budget, and couldn't believe that his bills were getting paid on time. Yet his bills were being paid on what was for him a third-tithe year. When the bankers quit laughing, they approved him for the loan he requested ... things just had a way of working out for those who felt Armstrong's hand in mailboxes or in wallets and responded by sending offerings.

But Armstrong never understood tithing, how it should be applied and what it represents.

There is only one tithe [10%], not two tithes [20%] or three tithes [30%] of one's increase, not income.

An Israelite brought his tithe to the temple on the 1st and 2nd, 4th and 5th years of a seven year cycle. On the 3rd and 6th years of this cycle, the Israelite's tithe remained local, given to the Levite who had no inheritance in Israel; given to the widow and to the fatherless who had no inheritance in Israel.

On the years when the Israelite brought his tithe to the temple, the priests [who also had an obligation to tithe on their increase] would return a tenth of the Israelite's tithe to the Israelite so that he and his family could eat during the three seasons when all Israelite males were to appear before the Lord. Thus in numbers that most likely pertained to many Israelite farmers, the Israelite harvested 6,000 pounds of grain, of which a tenth [600 pounds] was the tithe brought to the temple. Of this tithe that the priests received from the farmer, the priests would return a tenth [60 pounds] back to the farmer, the second tithe. And the farmer and his family would eat on these 60 pounds of grain for the period when the farmer was in Jerusalem [when the temple stood].

Herbert Armstrong never understood that tithing represented the portion of the harvest of the Promised Land that will be gathered to God—the harvest of humanity.

There is an adage about God watching out for fools ... when it came to tithing, Armstrong's disciples were fools for whom God watched-out. For even after that white paper on tithing came out in, I believe, 1978, most of us (I know I did) continued to pay a second and a third tithe. All that changed for us in Alaska was that we paid off our increase, not our income.

That white paper on tithing, like all of Armstrong's dogmas, was not written in the language of a literate adult, but in the language of an immature student, thereby producing a form of *heteroglossia* that was novelistic in nature.

The conflict employed by Armstrong between differing modes of speech (in particular, between that of King James English and that of American sixth-grade students) served to refract Armstrong's authorial intentions, bending what should have been straight forward discourse into a spectrum of discourses that Armstrong, as an advertising pioneer, used to concealed from the public the limitations of the product he

was selling. And he was selling a product, his self-educated readings of biblical prophecy that were eerily similar to the readings of Ellen G. White in many aspects.

At the beginning of Armstrong's ministry, the tension Armstrong produced through his heteroglossic discourse [many-voiced discourse] energized otherwise tired subjects, thereby guaranteeing that a prophecy seminar in a local lecture hall [school, civic center, Masonic lodge] would produce committed disciples eager to support his ministry. As his ministry grew, he kept virtually the same heteroglossic discourse, broadcasting his words across first America using the few clear-channel 50,000 watt radio stations that existed, then overseas via pirated, off-shore radio stations.

Armstrong needed other-language first-language speakers to understand flat-vowel, Mid-America speech—and as America became a world super power, more and more nations taught their students English, and in particular American English at a student level, thus supplying the base for the energized tension that caused many Europeans and Africans to request “free” literature, with the number of publications sent out into the world justifying the continued sacrifice of his disciples in supporting his worldwide ministry ... the winter of 1980-1981, I was living in Anchorage without a reliable vehicle. My wife worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as a drivers' license examiner; she worked across town, and to get to work, she took the city bus into downtown, then caught a bus out to Dowling Road. She had a brief wait in the downtown bus station—and the bus station had a *Plain Truth* literature stand that was distributing a high number of *Plain Truth* magazines each month.

When she started riding the bus, she saw that all of the magazines stocked on the stand were being thrown into the garbage can every morning; so she began to take the magazines from the garbage can and restock the stand with them.

The men who were stocking the stand told the minister, Earl Roemer, that the stand was suddenly no longer producing and recommended that the stand be relocated elsewhere—and this is what was done. It was only years later, in deer camp on Kodiak, that I told Earl why the stand quit distributing the number of magazines it had before.

The stand never produced much for the Church or for God. But then, the object of the stands were to keep publication numbers high and thereby justify the ministry of Herbert Armstrong, showing to members just how effective his ministry was at *spreading the Word of God to all the world*. ... I understand that in East Africa, the inside of mud huts were “papered” with pages of the *Plain Truth* magazine, the magazine sent free to all who requested a subscription.

Narrative energy comes from in-text conflict, with a principle source of narrative energy being direct narration by the author, especially in doubled-voiced discourse where the author tells one story that has in the story a narrator telling another story.

The author of Hebrews identifies Scripture as doubled-voice discourse when this author says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-lipped sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit [spiritual], of joints and of marrow [physical], and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart [again spiritual, as in Matthew's three sets of fourteen generations].

How do endtime disciples understand Jesus, in John's Gospel, telling His disciples:

Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, “A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me”? Truly, truly, I say to you,

you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. *When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.* So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. *I have said these things to you in figures of speech.* The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. (John 16:19–27 emphasis added)

The birth analogy is metaphorical; for human birth is not spiritual birth yet human birth has similar elements to spiritual birth, notably the pain that comes from bringing forth a nation in a day:

Before she was in labor
she gave birth;
before her pain came upon her
she delivered a son.
Who has heard such a thing?
Who has seen such things?
Shall a land be born in one day?
Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?
For as soon as Zion was in labor
she brought forth her children.
Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?
shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?"
Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
all you who love her;
rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her;
that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast;
that you may drink deeply with delight
from her glorious abundance." (Isa 66:7–11)

In human birth, the pain of opening the womb precedes birth and does not follow birth, but in the chiral image of human birth—spiritual birth—birth pains follow and do not precede the birth of sons of God. The movement in the narration of the verse is from physical [*Before she was in labor / she gave birth*] to spiritual [*before her pain came upon her / she delivered a son*]. The energy of the passage comes from the tension between physical and spirit, the conflict between the author writing about *what is* [physical birth] and *what isn't* heard or seen [spiritual birth].

Perhaps it takes a novelist to first feel, then identify the heteroglossia of Hebrew structured discourse. I am certain that being a novelist before entering UAF's graduate writing program fall semester 1988, helped me deconstruct the novels of others ... as an aside, one wanna-be pastor from the former WCG sought to dismiss what I write with the phrase, *He's just a novelist*. That is true: I am just a novelist, not a pastor wanna-be.

I wasn't called to make disciples, but to reread prophecy, the domain of born-of-spirit writers working outside the box of orthodoxy. And those who receive me receive my reward that came with being called to reread prophecy.

All of the preceding, going back to the first words of this piece, brings me to Luke's Gospel and to the Book of Acts and to what Mikhail Bakhtin, 20th-Century Russian theorist and literary critic, wrote about Second Sophist novels, with one citation almost capturing the essence of what he writes,

Rhetorical-judicial categories predominate in the conception of human beings, which was definitive for the heroes of Sophistic novels, ancient biography and autobiography and later in chivalric romances, novels of trial and analogous rhetorical genres. The unity of a man and the coherence of his acts (his deeds) are of a rhetorical and legal character and therefore, viewed from a later psychological concept of the human personality, they appear external and merely formal. It is no accident that the Sophistic novel was born out of a utopian fantasy of the law having nothing to do with the actual legal and political life of rhetoricians. (M.M. Bakhtin. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin; University of Texas Press, 1981. 407)

The Law having nothing to do with actual legal and political life—a utopian fantasy? But isn't this fantasy what's taught within greater Christendom? Isn't the Christian laity "condemned to be free," a concept advanced by the atheist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre? Aren't Christians "free" from the Law, with Luke's Gospel historically used by Marcionists to support their *dualistic* perception of God that had the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being the wrathful Hebrew God, a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament, with Jesus being the Savior sent by the New Testament God and with Paul being this God's chief apostle.

Marcionites pitted opposing gods against each other, opposing forces against each other, one good or spiritual, the other lower, material, and evil—this differs from how the Hebrews used physical versus spiritual imagery, which uses the physical [lower than the spiritual] to reveal the invisible spiritual through preceding the spiritual in this world. The physical doesn't oppose the spirit. There is no conflict between Abraham and Christ Jesus, no conflict between Isaac and the born-of-spirit disciples. But without the man Jesus being baptized and the spirit of God descending in the bodily form of a dove to enter into Him about where a whale breathes, disciples would have little knowledge of how they, themselves, are born of spirit. Disciples wouldn't realize that when the glorified Jesus *breathed* on ten of his first disciples and said, "Receive *pneuma 'agion*" (John 20:22), the Holy Spirit was given and these ten disciples were suddenly born of spirit through receipt of the indwelling spirit of Christ.

Is there any opposition between God the Father using His breath, His spirit [*pneuma Theou*] to speak words to the man Jesus, who, having fulfilled all righteousness, was raised from the watery grave representative of the Flood of Noah's day, and had His inner self raised from death through the indwelling of the spirit of God, thereby causing Jesus to be born again, or born from above as the Son of the Father, not as an adopted son, but as a one-off created Son who was to be the first of many sons (Rom 8:29), each of whom would be created through the sudden indwelling of spirit of Christ in the spirit of the person ... no, there is no conflict here, except with what orthodox Christendom has traditionally taught about a closed godhead.

If a person wanted to advance the proposition that Jesus was both fully man and fully God, the hypercorrection to what Marcion taught about Jesus not being a man but only being fully God appearing as a man, there would be no better way than to put the story of Christianity into a Sophist novel, with the hero of this novel being Christ Jesus and with the heroine being the Apostle Paul, who would undergo a series of trials and journeys that would finally unite hero and heroine. In the course of this novel, there would be (as there was in almost every Second Sophist novel) storms and dangers, repeated escapes from death, a trial scene, imprisonment, and a shipwreck ... do these episodic motifs seem familiar? They should. They are the structural elements of Sophist novels, but they are also the structure of the Book of Acts, not at all a coincidence.

The last scene of the novel would have the hero and heroine uniting in marriage—in the case of Acts, the last scene would have Paul martyred and meeting Christ Jesus in the air, thus ending the Christian era and experience. So there is good reason for the last scene of Acts to be torn off and thrown away.

At the same time that proto orthodox Christians were battling Marcion and his ideology, these Christians also battled with the continuation of the Circumcision Faction, Ebonite Christians, that didn't recognize Paul as an apostle. A Sophist novel showing that the early Church came about through the evangelism of Paul would work to marginalize these Ebonite Christians and any other remnant of the Circumcision Faction, with this novel showing Paul's credentials for being an apostle.

Why is any of this important when it comes to what Herbert Armstrong didn't know? Because Armstrong, following in the footsteps of Andrew N. Dugger and Clarence O. Dodd, traced the history of the Church through Sabbath observance, with none of them realizing that within the Christian narrative, the Christian who kept Sunday as an observant Jew kept the Sabbath was identified as a *Sabbath-keeping Christian*.

Armstrong had little or no knowledge of the actual history of the spiritual Body of Christ; for Armstrong sincerely believed Jesus had promised His disciples in Matthew 16:18 that the Church would never die ... that isn't what Jesus said. Did the gates of Hades prevail over Jesus' earthly body? No, they did not. Yes, Jesus died at Calvary. Yes, His body was dead in the Garden Tomb for three days and three nights. But the gates of Hades couldn't not prevail over His body for the Father resurrected Jesus' body to life after the third day by returning to Jesus the glory He had before He entered His creation as His unique Son. Likewise, the Father who raised Jesus to life will collectively raise Christians to life as sons of God through a birth process better represented by that of butterflies than by human beings; for spiritual birth proceeds through four stages, not three.

All spiritual growth by sons of God occur in this world where change is possible, thus making the living inner self in mortal fleshly body analogous to the larvae stage of a butterfly, with this inner self being characterized by the worm that never dies. The death of the fleshly body is now represented by the chrysalis stage of a butterfly: the body is dead but life continues, only to emerge as a new creature more glorious than the caterpillar that grew from a tiny larva to, say, a tomato hornworm, the size of my fingers.

There is, indeed, a history of the Church, a history allegorized by the author of Matthew's Gospel declaring that there were three sets of fourteen generations between Abraham and Christ—three sets of physical/spiritual ministries, with the use of <seven>

suggesting that each portion of each set was complete in itself, with the ministry resting [coming to an end] on the seventh day. And in this, the author of Matthew's Gospel advances additional knowledge concerning the seventy weeks prophecy given to Daniel.

Again, Scripture when read closely discloses that in at least the first two clusters of fourteen generations, more generations were present than the author of Matthew counts. Luke's genealogy of Jesus, while problematic for many reasons, has more than fourteen generations named in the third cluster. And it's time to reload, not to pump more bullets into a dead horse, but to hunt four beasts, each a demonic king.

*

Two more sections remain to be posted on-line before the five sections will be gathered into an e-book manuscript of seven chapters.

* * *

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

[\[Home\]](#)