

Commentary — From the Margins *Mr. Raymond Dick*

June 2002, I drove to Hawkins, Texas, to meet Ray Dick. I wanted to discuss events that occurred at Ambassador College (AC) during the spring of 1962. He had detailed some events in e-mail correspondences that had relevance to what I had begun doing. From these exchanges I realized that Ray had carried a prophetic baton for forty years while, figuratively, an entire generation died in the wilderness—the generation that had rejected divine revelation in an Advanced Prophecy Seminar that Herbert Armstrong required all the senior men then in Pasadena to attend. It seems that Mr. Herbert W Armstrong (HWA) knew that his many prophecies about post war Europe had not occurred. He knew that a ministry based upon prophecy had to get prophecy right, and he knew that he didn't have prophecy right. So during the autumn of 1961, he scheduled an Advanced Prophecy Seminar for AC's Spring semester that was supposed to get prophecy right, if nothing else.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong taught the first class session of the Advanced Prophecy Seminar in January 1962. He told the men that any and all ideas would be considered, that they and he didn't understand prophecy, that nothing was too silly to be explored. But HWA only taught the first session of the Advanced Seminar. The second session and every session after that was taught by Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA), who began the second session by saying that there would be no new revelation, that his dad was just having doubts, that the *Church* understood biblical prophecies and had them correct, that he had personally proved them to be correct.

When I learned, in March 2002, from Ray Dick about the Advanced Prophecy Seminar and about what GTA said, I realized the draft notice I had received to reread prophecy on Thursday of the second full week of January 2002, at approximately 10:12 CST, occurred forty years to the day from when GTA rejected revelation, and probably forty years to the minute. I wrote GTA and asked if the story about the Advanced Prophecy Seminar were true. He replied in a most gracious manner, but neither confirmed nor denied the story. I wrote him a second and a third time, and each time I received very gracious replies, but no confirmation nor denial. However, Rod Meredith seemed to confirm the story when I wrote him asking if the story were true: Meredith remains one of the few men still alive who were in the class (Leslie McCullough being another). Thus, I inserted the story and additional details about being drafted to reread prophecy in *A Philadelphia Apologetic*, which went to press summer 2002—the book is still available, but is really first year student writing and needs to be revisited.

Ray Dick wasn't in that Advanced Prophecy Seminar. He was taking fourth-year Bible, which Al Portune taught. But Al Portune was in that Advanced Seminar and he reported to his class what was covered in each session of the Advanced Seminar.

Near the end of the Spring 1962 semester, in a Friday class, Al Portune expounded a prophetic teaching that Ray Dick believed was incorrect. When I went to visit Ray in 2002, I had hoped he would tell me exactly what Al Portune had said, but my visit was cut short by an intestinal bug. Thus, informed speculation remains that the subject was endtime armies surrounding Jerusalem. Regardless, Ray spent the weekend searching Scripture and before class Monday morning presented to Al Portune reasons why the prophetic teaching of *the Church* was wrong. Portune then came into class with additional Scripture passages that supported what Ray had brought to him, and from the fourth-year Bible class was coming prophetic insight that should have come from the Advanced Prophecy Seminar. That is, on Monday prophetic insight was coming from fourth-year Bible. GTA was then out of town. When he returned on Thursday for that week's session of the Advanced Prophecy Seminar, he pulled Ray Dick out of class, and with a cowering Al Portune in tow, GTA threatened to expel Ray for introducing heresy.

Ray Dick was an older student. He had spent WWII in a Conscientious Objectors' camp near Downey, Idaho, because of his Mennonite beliefs. He was not a physical coward. He was a man of principle, and he believed *the Work* headquartered in Pasadena then being done by HWA was God's work...he knuckled under when he knew he was right and GTA was wrong. And I'm not sure that he ever fully forgave himself for doing so.

What Ray realized was that there were still three and a half years of tribulation left after armies surround Jerusalem. I believe this was the prophetic baton that he carried by himself year after year. And after, in December 2001, reading Ray's article on prophecy published in [the Journal](#), I realized he was correct—not in everything he wrote, for he accepted *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* as a valid text, but in the premise that the battle of Armageddon and armies surrounding Jerusalem are separate events three and a half years apart.

For forty years, one man quietly accepted the authority under which he had placed himself. He could have rebelled. He could have gone out on his own to do a work for God. But he accepted the premise that God was in charge of the only work that he knew being done with the energy and dynamism of the Worldwide Church of God. And for this, Ray Dick deserves praise.

If God wanted to unseal endtime prophecies in 1962, GTA couldn't have stopped their unsealing. Rather, it seems that the Armstrongs were in the unique position of being able to influence a course of events if righteousness and honesty had prevailed when HWA figuratively had a knife in his hand. He was spiritually tested as Abraham was physically tested, and he failed his test concerning his son, who really killed his ministry on Thursday of the second full week of January 1962.

I was a fifteen-year-old high school Junior in January 1962. I attended the Seventh Day Adventist Church at Oceanlake [now Lincoln City], Oregon, with some regularity, but I wasn't interested in prophecy, and I was not particularly interested in God. I still wasn't really interested in prophecy when I was baptized

into the Body of Christ before Passover 1973 by Mr. Bob Peoples, then pastoring the Salem [Oregon] WCG congregation. By this time, I was a gunmaker, living in a remote area along the Oregon Coast. And the fear of biblically prophesied events that evidently brought many people during this era into Armstrong's tent had little relevance when a person is already living off the land.

Seven years almost to the day after I began attending WCG services, I began writing. I was sitting in a damp cabin of a boat at Dutch Harbor, Alaska; I had just finished reading the novel *Triple*; and I threw the book across the cabin, saying as I did, *I can tell a better story than that*. Now, twenty-five years later I don't know that I have. However, by fall 2001, I had several secular novels in print. But as a person under authority, I wasn't about to write theology. That was the job of the headquarters ministry, whether Pasadena or Cincinnati. So I understand why Ray Dick would bite his tongue in May 1962 when GTA accused him of introducing heresy.

Today, members of the so-called independent churches of God are an unruly lot, determined never again to let any man get between them and God, not realizing that most of them stand between God and themselves. They stand with their backs to God, ever ready to take offense at the slightest affront. They stand with wallets that cannot be opened with screwdrivers and pliers. They stand with their salvation under lock and key. They do no work for God; they are truly unprofitable servants. But they are beholden to no man. Their loyalty is to themselves. And no one will ever again teach them anything.

How many disciples today will wait for God to correct the leaders of a corporate church that teaches many disciples to live within the laws of God, but also teaches prophetic error? Ray Dick was willing to wait. He trusted God. And it would have been presumptuous of him to have begun doing a work on his own.

It would have been presumptive of David to take King Saul's life even though God seemed to have delivered Saul into David's hand...what does it mean to be a man after God's own heart? Ray Dick was a man after God's heart in that he was not presumptuous. He had been, for whatever reason, given prophetic knowledge that HWA didn't have. He didn't use this knowledge to build for himself a spiritual house as some former WCG ministers are now doing. He waited for God, waited with faith that God was capable of taking care of the problem. And he lived to see the problem corrected through the destruction of the theological empire HWA had constructed for himself. He lived to see GTA pass from the scene, and he lived to read where I took and have taken the prophetic knowledge he alone carried for forty lonely years.

I did not write about theology, nor speak about theology until after I was drafted to do so, a claim for which time will judge its truth. It would have been presumptuous for me to have done so. But since that specific hour arrived three years ago, I have taken the student position I had that was orthodox WCG, and I have moved into a larger arena, where with that baton Ray Dick carried without fanfare or acclaim, I sally forth, jousting with windmills.

Although Ray never fully understood typological exegesis, nor how radically different typology is from precept-upon-precept exegesis, he recognized that few

yet understood the knowledge he had held for so long. He offered to sponsor an East Texas radio broadcast, but I am not the right person to produce such a program. He wanted to assure disciples that during the Tribulation their children would be safe. He could see in Scripture the amount of death that will occur, but he didn't understand why so many would die. He didn't understand that the Church, as the firstborn son of God, would be [ransomed](#) for the remainder of humanity. So I didn't take him up on his offer. It was too early to go to the many COG members living in Texas.

One COG writer wondered if I have ever been a part of a real COG—yes, I was. And I remained under authority until God ended an administration of the Church that received its death sentence in 1962, a decade before I began attending its services. And once I began attending, it would have been presumptuous for me to speak as a lay member. Like Ray Dick, I too waited for God to correct a work that had jumped the tracks. Unlike Ray Dick, I now have the opportunity to deliver endtime words about patient [endurance](#). The good news that must be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations is that [all who endure to the end shall be saved](#). The last Eve will deliver three sons during the first half of seven years of tribulation. A spiritual Cain will murder his righteous brother, leaving one son marked for death and the other dead. Then, when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ, Satan will be cast from heaven. The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, and the last Eve will give birth to a spiritual Seth who only has to endure to the end to be accepted before God. Enduring, though, will mean living by faith for another three and a half years. Thus, all who endure to the end shall be saved, for all will have the Holy Spirit and will be born-from-above.

If a person reads the chat-group posts about the hierarchical authority of the Armstrong administration of the COG, a person would think that it is foolishness to remain under the authority of an arbitrary government. It would be much more foolish to insist upon a person's rights and turn his or her back to God...as a Kenny Rogers' song went, there's a time to hold your cards and a time to fold. Too many COG members have been quick to fold, thereby taking themselves out of whatever game that is being played. These "independent" members need to put themselves back into a game, even if it is their own. Right now, they are many David wanna-bes who have slain Saul and don't know what to do next. They stand bloody, ahead of God, and ready to devour their neighbor.

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