

This Unique Worldwide Church of God

And

Armstrong Theology

By Dr. Hugh M. Mauck

At one time or another, during these past few years, have you received congratulations, praises and heard expressions of joy at your sudden freedom from the shackles of Old Testament theology? Have you been complimented for accepting Christianity and Jesus Christ as your personal savior? Is your extended family more friendly toward you —now that they believe you have become a New Testament Christian? THAT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE.

As we all know, this Church has made many needed doctrinal and administrative changes in this last decade of this 20th century. Today, I want us to question and analyze several statements about those changes published by David Briggs —especially the one he wrote about this Church *making one of the most remarkable transformations in American religious history. How true is it? Mr. Briggs's whole article is based upon that belief. But have the changes really been such remarkable transformations? What we read in print does not always tell the true story or give the correct picture.*

As members of this Church, who are we really? Is our Congregation truly a Church of Old Testament theology, as some claim? Or it is possible that we have been a New Testament Church all along? Surely, this Worldwide Church, —that God has called us into, has had more professional, and non-professional, religious critics *trying to figure out who and what we are*, and have been, then any other church of which I know. And most of these critics are experts in their own eyes of what this Church is and especially what they think it should be — and don't mind saying so.

Critics pass their judgmental convictions among themselves. They print articles about the Church for public consumption; They make comparisons, and in one way or another, intentional or otherwise, they ridicule what they claim to be Armstrong erroneous theology.

Some of these critics have been within our own families, who love but pity us for our supposed religious ignorance. And because they do care they go to great lengths hoping to save us from our entrapment. Some do all they can to bring us out of what they have been told is "Armstrong" bondage or Old Testament confinement.

For many, this is a very touchy subject, and I wouldn't even tackle it if I did not think it is very important; and with the strokes I have had recently, I don't know how many opportunities I may have in the future to share this knowledge with you. So I want to do it now. I hope you will not tune me out. I hope you listen with an open, patient mind till I show you what I want you to see and learn what I want you to know.

MY PURPOSE IS to give honor to Mr. Armstrong, to whom and where honor is due and credit to the Worldwide Church of God for its teaching THAT HAS BEEN CORRECT, where credit is due (Rom. 13:7). *Please understand, I don't mean to disparage any of the critics for expressing their beliefs.* I merely want to state some of them and point out where they are incorrect.

In so many words, some professional critics say, *we were duped followers of the powerful and authoritative presence and compelling "salesman-turned-preacher" patriarchal* Herbert W. Armstrong, whom they say WE NOW ADMIT WAS WRONG IN ALL HE TAUGHT. Though we know this, I want to remind us He was *not wrong in all he taught.*

Because my father left home before I was ten, I have been told my reason for coming into the Worldwide Church of God, was because of my psychological need for a father figure, which Mr. Armstrong provided. And so I have often been referred to as an Armstrongite.

But as you will see, as we go along, *I was never an Armstrongite.* There were some things he did and taught that I did not feel applied to me, for one reason or another, a few of which he later came to see in a different light himself. But I was a follower of Mr. Armstrong in as much as *he followed God and taught the truth of the Bible*, the same way as Paul followed Jesus and taught Christians should follow him, that is follow Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

These days we are being told none of us were Christians till now; that we never preached Jesus; that *we did not believe in grace*, but that we were an Old Testament church; and that *we taught salvation by works*, even to the point some believed we could not be Christian. We were and are unique — unlike any other Christian church. Perhaps some of our critics never realized the Old Testament, and all its covenants were *agreements of grace between God and men, God giving grace to the humble (Prov.3:34).*

We are being told we are just now becoming born-again Christians. When told that to one of our minister's wives, she replied having been born-again for over 40 years. The person she told that to had no idea being born again in this Church was possible. That person must have been listening to the critics, who themselves *have little or no idea who we are and what this Church really is and especially what it taught from the beginning.*

I want to now give you an example of David Brigg's recent publication regarding what he calls Armstrong's Theology. I don't want any of us to be deceived by this publication or any other such critic's writing.

Sunday, June 15, 1997, Lewisville, Texas, David Briggs wrote a news article about Armstrong's theology for *The Associated Press* that appeared in local news papers all across the country. He titled it: **CHURCH FOUNDER WAS WRONG; Worldwide Church of God lost members, found acceptance in splintering.**

It appeared in *The Las Vegas Review-Journal*, and *The Las Vegas Sun*, among others. WE ALL SAW AND READ IT. Friends in Texas, Colorado and California, having read the article, either sent us a copy or told us about it.

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It reads, "After Armstrong's death began one of the most remarkable transformations in American Religious history: The church formally declared its founder had been Fundamentally wrong all along and that the historic creeds of Christianity were the new gospel."

I am not sure how Mr Briggs wants us to understand his statement, *the historic creeds of Christianity were the new gospel*. If that means Armstrong's theology never included preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ or that He is our Savior, *which some say it does*, how can that be? —when every member of The Worldwide Church of God has accepted Jesus as his (her) savior and been baptized into The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit, *and is a Christian*. No member has ever been baptized into Armstrong's Theology or any physical organization. The Church of God is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. HE IS ITS HEAD AND LEADER. Its members are members of His spiritual body.

The definition of the word Christian is simply followers of Jesus Christ and New Covenant Theology. Christianity is merely the name given to the religion of Christians. Therefore, the Worldwide Church of God has always been a New Covenant Christian Church and its members have always been and are Christians.

The Church published articles as far back as I can remember, *even before that as far back as 1939, some of which I will show you before I complete this message*, stating its Christianity and proving the Old Covenant AS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES was abolished by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Church always taught SALVATION CAN ONLY COME BY HIS RESURRECTION. This Church has never taught salvation to be anything but A GIFT OF GRACE that is only given through faith in the name of Jesus. However, the Church did stress *faith must have its works*.

Good News

I have several articles with me, published in the Church's Good News Magazine. One is dated October 1957. On page 11, written by Herman L. Hoeh, is an article stating three times in the first four paragraphs that this Church [WCG] is a New Covenant Church and that the Old Covenant is abolished.

In spite of this truth, which he does not know, Mr. Briggs writes, "Armstrong's teaching began to slowly unravel in the eyes of church leaders.... *They came to agree (indicating just now)* with traditional Christian interpretations of salvation by faith and to view other Christians with new-born respect." Part of this statement is true —part is not true. Briggs follows through giving examples of *ARMSTRONG THEOLOGY* to support his supposition that *everything Armstrong ever taught was wrong*.

I believe if Mr. Briggs had it to do over again, he would not have written everything Armstrong ever taught was wrong.

No Christian leader has ever been totally right, but that does not make one totally wrong either, which this article states.

During this 20th century, *Christianity has become the largest religion in the world*, claiming well over a billion members through out the earth. It is also *the most divided of all religions* —composed of hundreds of different groups, denominations, sects and churches with innumerable Catholic and Protestant beliefs.

No one has ever succeeded in condensing Christianity into an *exact bottom-line summary statement*. The disciples of Christ came the closest, but never fully succeeded. In many ways Paul's teaching is different from that of Jesus and the gospels writers. Even Peter recognized Paul's writing is hard to understand. And so now, today, with all the differences in belief in the many denominations of Christianity *it is impossible* to set out ONE LIST OF TEACHING that apply to all Christians everywhere. Consequently, there is no unity among all Christians.

TOTAL CHRISTIAN UNITY APPEARS TO BE FOR THE FUTURE IN GOD'S KINGDOM, which can only come through Jesus Christ when we reach full spiritual maturity.

Armstrong Theology, if we want to call it that, *Included* Christian theology. The Worldwide Church of God differed primarily from other Christian churches in belief and acceptance of all the Ten Commandments being in force today. *That included the seventh-day Sabbath*. Keeping the Sabbath was not the problem. How the sabbath was taught to be kept was what worked against us. The Church referred to Exodus 20, not because the Old Covenant is binding but because in the Old Covenant is found *the only portion of Scripture* where all Ten of the commandments are listed systematically. Here we have all the points of the law, which God wrote with His fingers, together in one unit.

Going back to Brigg's article, he continued, "Consider, for example, that in Armstrong's theology, everyone eventually would be resurrected to eternal life and saved from the lake of fire — except about 1 percent of the population who knew the truth and rejected it." In other words that small percentage are those the Bible speaks of as having committed the unpardonable sin for which there is no forgiveness (Heb. 10:22).

Briggs goes on to write, "But that is exactly what church members are being told to do now —reject what once was held up as the truth." Is that really what WCG members are told to do? —Reject everything that once was taught by the Church?

Let Us See!

Evangelist Michael Feazell recently went to a meeting with other evangelical ministers and the topic of who would be saved came up. They presented a situation of a lady who died in the Bahai faith without

knowing of Christ. A Christian doctor was present, but because the Bahai people were there, he could not speak of Christ to her before she died. He felt guilty and perhaps responsible for the eternal separation from God she may suffer because he did not say anything about Christ to her.

Mike suggested to the group that maybe this lady was never called and did not have her chance to accept or reject Jesus Christ, and that *she might have in the future*. No one can come to Christ unless granted by the Father. So one must be called to become a true Christian. Mike said some of these ministers became quite upset at the suggestion this woman will have a future opportunity to receive Christ as her savior.

To me this is the same type of wrong attitude those had of whom Christ spoke in the parable of the eleventh hour workers. In this parable recorded in Matthew 20, Jesus tells the people the kingdom of God is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Now when he agreed with the laborers to pay them a denarius, a few dollars a day, for their labor they went to work in the vineyard. Not having enough laborers to do the job that early, he went out again at the 3rd hour and hired more, He did the same again at the 6th, then the 9th and finally the 11th hour, till he had sufficient laborers. At the end of the day they all received the same few dollars pay.

Those who went to work the earliest part of the morning complained when they saw those who went to work the 11th hour received the same pay as they did. The owner of the vineyard had to remind them they had no complaint coming because they received what they were promised.

From this example, should Christians be upset if those who never heard the name of Jesus, THE ONLY NAME EVER GIVEN whereby they might be saved, hear and are saved at a future time? Remember how upset Jonah got when God saved the people of Nineveh who repented upon learning God had them scheduled for destruction? The disciples once wanted to call fire down from heaven on their enemies as Elijah did. Christ rebuked them for that attitude. These are examples of the same attitude of not wanting to accept people as their equals or wanting others destroyed. That is not the right attitude for Christians.

David Briggs may not understand *salvation for everyone is a cause for great rejoicing*. He is a journalist writing what he hears from others. But how can some ministers in a room full of other Christian ministers become upset over the belief that *all* but 1 percent of the population, Christian and non-Christian will eventually be saved? *Do these ministers really want everyone to go to the world's version of hell fire and burn forever*. I hope not! God does not want anyone to perish. Neither should Christians. No matter how wicked or wrong people are, sooner or later He wants to turn everyone around to become righteous and perfect —if not in this life, *it must happen in another life after this one*.

Paul tells us that eventually all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Does he mean it? How can that be true if it is also true that *only those* who are Christ's will be resurrected to meet him in the air at His coming

(1 Cor. 15:20-23). Didn't Jesus also tell the teachers of the law and Pharisees they were hypocrites who shut up the kingdom so neither they nor their followers could enter. They were Israelites!

Speaking to Israelites, Jesus spoke so much about people who could not enter the kingdom till they became like little children, or whose righteousness does exceed that of the Pharisees, and who cannot enter till they do the Father's will, —until they are born of water and the spirit, and are producing the fruits of the spirit, etc.

All those Israelites never had a chance to be among those who are Christ's at His coming. *How could they when Jesus taught in parables so they could not become Christians?* They were sinners all right but they never committed the unpardonable sin, which is the only sin that will condemn them. There has to be a time, therefore, in the future, for them to become Christ's —some period of time, or age —after Christ returns.

I know people say that when the book of Revelation speaks of more than one resurrection it is speaking symbolically. Nevertheless, two resurrections some period apart is the only thing makes sense considering Christ's denouncing treatment of the religious leaders of His day.

Immortality & Rulership

Briggs disdains Armstrong's belief that, "Once Jesus returns they [those called of God] would be instantaneously changed from mortal to immortal, helping Christ rule over the universe for the next 1000 years, at the end of which the rest of humanity would be judged."

I don't know which of those people that he interviewed for the information to write his article objected to most, whether they objected to the idea of there being more than one resurrection or they objected to the thought Christians will eventually rule with Christ. That is interesting because we have already seen the Bible speaks of more than one resurrection and *Joseph Tkach Jr.*, the present WCG Pastor General, just published a five page letter stating, "The good news is that our labors and sacrifices [serving Jesus Christ] are not in vain. Our efforts will be rewarded."

Mr. Tkach continues his letter printing scriptures showing *what those rewards will be*. He writes, "The Christian rewards will include being given charge of all the master's possessions (The Master owns the universe)." The rewards will include authority and rulership over many things, including authority over the nations, ruling cities, people, etc.

So who is right? Will we, or will we not rule with Christ over the universe? There has been too much wrong emphasis placed upon our future rulership by leaders and members, in the past, where almost every one wants to have a higher position than everyone else. Because of that attitude, some members feel they don't want to rule over cities, nations or people at all. At the same time, however, there are many things in this world they would like to see changed and feel if they had the power to do so they would make those changes, if they could

be sure the changes are right. At that time they will know for sure, because Jesus Christ will be there to ask and to teach what is right.

We have a good example right now before us, in Princess Diane, who was in an unprecedented position to help others. She had the royal connection background. She had the time. She had the money. And she had to love for people of all walks of life.

We The Members

Many of those of us who are baptized members of the Worldwide Church of God, who serve God, DO NOT FEEL that our earlier teaching, *was simply a waste of time*, whether called Armstrong Theology or not, *as some are saying*. Some say the Church *doesn't believe anything the same any more*, as David Brigg's article points out. Many of us also believe that if God wanted us to be just like all the other Christian or religious groups, WHEN HE CALLED US INTO THIS CHURCH, He merely would have left us in those groups, in which we were, and not raised up *THE UNIQUE WCG ENTITY WHICH WE ARE*. We would still be in other Catholic or Protestant churches, not just now being encouraged to go back to them.

But God called us out and meticulously taught us The Old Testament — which enabled us to become more "all things to all men" just as Paul accepted and embraced both Old and New Covenant practices. Someday we may have to teach Old Covenant Israelites who know not the Lord, as we do.

We learned dignity in our services. We learned discipline and obedience. And we learned respect for the Great God, even building a one-of-a-kind monumental, auditorium in Pasadena to His name and sharing it with the community.

Sure the Worldwide Church of God taught many requirements and forbidden practices of the Old Covenant — believed to be carried over into the New Covenant, through Jesus and the Apostles teaching and living examples *because they are in the Testament gospels*. It now turns out many of these God may have intended to be only for a few centuries of the early New Covenant Church and a few decades in this 20th century Worldwide Church of His — and for a few Christian other churches today.

Even as God never required of the gentiles that which He did of Israel, God does not seem to require the same religious practices of every New Covenant Christian church. He works in each Church as He sees fit. HOW AND WHY THE DIFFERENCE IS NOT OURS TO JUDGE.

The early New Covenant church only had the Old Testament scriptures from which to teach, although the apostles themselves had their 3-1/2 years experience, teaching and observing Jesus Christ. We have both the Old and New Testaments today.

Many people do not realize the Old Covenant is only part of the Old Testament and the New Covenant is only part of the New Testament. So we have to know when Christ's teaching was fulfilling the Old Covenant

and when it was expanding and elaborating God's Commandments as they are carried over into the New. Christ taught for 3-1/2 years before He established the Church, which began on the day of Pentecost after His death.

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J. T. ...

>>>>> Screen Projections Shown with This Sermon >>>>>

This Unique Worldwide Church of God

Christianity is the name given to the religion of Christians. The correct definition of a Christian is simply *a follower of Jesus Christ and His New Covenant Theology*. The Worldwide Church of God has always been His followers —its members are Christians. Together they are a New Covenant, Christian Church.

The Church published articles as far back as 1939 stating that fact —proving the *Old Covenant was abolished by the death of Jesus Christ* and that salvation can only come by His life —His resurrection.

PROOF From the Good News Magazine

November 1951, Page 12, Herbert W. Armstrong: WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

The rarest Christian is really God-disciplined, the self being controlled and directed, not according to human desire, sudden impulse, or the social standards of this world, but by the Mind and Will of God as revealed in every word of God. He has truly repented of sin. Jesus Christ is his personal Savior —a Savior who has in Spirit literally come inside him and lives his life for him. He has received, and is now led by the Holy Spirit of God.

March 1952, Page 1, Herman L. Hoeh: DID PAUL PREACH A NEW KIND OF CHRISTIANITY?

Jesus Christ is the minister of the New Covenant based upon better promises than the old (Heb. 8:6, 12:24). Jesus preached and lived a New Testament message in *opposition* to the Jews. If we claim to abide in Christ, we ought to walk even as He walked —follow His example.

March 1952, Page 11, Question Box: WHAT DOES "NOT UNDER THE LAW BUT UNDER GRACE" MEAN?

What does grace mean? Webster defines it as mercy, unmerited kindness, an exemption or pardon as from a penalty. If we are under grace, the pardon of God, we are not to live in sin, we are not to break God's law. Grace does not do away with the law; it pardons our sins, making it possible for us to keep the law through the Holy Spirit that is given to those that *obey* God (Acts 5:32). If grace could abolish the law, then there would be no more sin, because there is no sin where there is no law (Rom. 4:15). And if there were no sin there would be no grace.

October 1957, Page 11, Herman L. Hoeh: DOES THE *OLD TESTAMENT* HAVE *AUTHORITY* OVER CHRISTIANS TODAY?

The Old Covenant was a marriage agreement between the LORD and the nation Israel in a husband and wife relationship. When Christ, the husband, died, the covenant ceased to be in force. Death ended the marriage agreement —the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is abolished!

November 1957, Page 9, Herman L. Hoeh: WHICH OLD TESTAMENT LAWS *SHOULD WE KEEP TODAY*?

How can we know which laws in the Old Testament were changed or abolished? Jesus —the Living Head of our Church —told His disciples... How important it is that we —the disciples of Jesus today —become familiar with the least commandments —that we live by every word of God.

February 1958, Page 1, Herbert W. Armstrong: LET GOD FIGHT YOUR BATTLES!

Why do so many people think of Him as dead Christ hanging on the cross? God Almighty raised Him from the dead! Jesus Christ is our living savior and High Priest...

March 1958, Page 3, Herbert W. Armstrong: SHOULD WE USE THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Certainly our Church —the true Church of God —is a New Testament Church. It is certainly under the New Covenant. The Old Covenant —meaning the agreement between God and Israel, made at Mt. Sinai —is replaced by the preaching of the New!

August 1958, Page 11, Richard D. Armstrong: YOU ARE NOT AN "ARMSTRONGITE."

If you call yourself solely "a follower of Herbert W. Armstrong" or any other man then you are NOT a follower of Christ —hence not a Christian. The word *Christian* implies one who is a follower of Jesus Christ, who patterns his life after the life Christ led, who believes His teaching and follows His precepts. You are a member of God's Church —a Christian —and should call yourself such, NOT an "Armstrongite."

May 1959, Page 5, Herman L. Hoeh: WAS THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH FOUNDED ON SUNDAY?

The true Church must be the Church that Jesus founded. It must have been founded when He founded it. And it must have been founded where He founded it. Jesus founded *His New Testament Church* on the day of Pentecost —not before then. History of the calendar shows this day was a Monday. It is the Holy Spirit that puts us into the one body or true Church.

October 1959, Page 11, Leroy L. Neff: WE ARE CALLED TO A BETTER RESURRECTION.

Read on through Hebrews 12, and notice particularly verse 23. Here is mentioned the "Church of the first-born." The Firstborn will have greater opportunity for service. They will be in higher positions of authority in God's Kingdom. The one who has the highest office, can more effectively serve and help more people.

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter listing many of the holy men and women who endured hardships with the goal in mind of obtaining a better resurrection. Being the firstborn implies a second-born and obtaining a better resurrection certainly implies more than one.

September 1979, Pages 8-9,15, WCG Publication: WHAT IS SALVATION?

Chapter 4, *The Gift of Eternal Life*. God freely gives us, through His grace great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4). Through them we become "partakers of the divine nature."

Chapter 2, *Jesus Makes Us Right With God*. Of course we are not justified by works. That is why Paul said: "A man is NOT justified by the works of the law but by the faith in [of] Jesus Christ" (Gal.2:16).

We are justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (ROM. 3:28). But if we belong to God, we will seek to please Him. We are not saved by our works, but God has given us salvation in order that we may do good works. We can not earn God's grace. It is His gift to us. Salvation is not something we can obtain by penance or religious works of any kind. There is nothing we can do to merit God's favor of grace.

Dr. Hugh M. Mauck September 1997