

15 Accusations and Truthful Responses about Herbert W. Armstrong

By [COGwriter](#)

Original version was published as "Consider candid responses to 15 accusations about HWA" in The Journal: News of the Churches of God, February 28, 2003, pp. 6-7. A few small updates have been included in the on-line version--mainly to address specific issues raised on-line.

Since first learning about the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) more than 30 years ago, I have heard many false accusations against the WCG and its leadership. This article, however, dwells only on the accusations I have personally heard against church founder Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA).

Although it is not likely this article will persuade anyone who has made up his mind that he/she doesn't like HWA, I hope those who are interested in the truth will realize that he has often been unfairly accused.

One problem with doing this research is that HWA grew up during a time when one was taught not to dignify false accusations with an answer. Thus he almost never denied the many attacks against him personally.

Another problem is that since he is dead (he died in January 1986) I cannot ask him about any of these matters.

It has been said that it is impossible to prove a negative. So about the only way this writer knows how to try to do that concerning someone who is dead is list the accusations, review whatever facts are available, consult with some who were around HWA for decades, attempt to contact witnesses, and include that information in this article.

I spoke with many people who had much contact with HWA relevant to these accusations, I spoke with several of the accusers, and I had E-mail communication with the reporters of some of the accusations. I name many of my sources, but several requested that I not include their names.

I have also reviewed various of HWA writings and writings of his critics. The accusations answered in this article range from what some might describe as the trivial to the deadly serious.

No middle name

Accusation No. 1: HWA was named Herbert Armstrong at birth and did not have W as his given middle initial.

This is true according to Living Church of God founder Roderick Meredith of Charlotte, North Carolina, and from one of HWA's relatives who lives near Tyler, Texas.

In all U.S. States I am aware of, anybody can take just about any name he wants, including middle initials, as long as he has no intent to defraud anyone.

There were apparently so many Herbert Armstrongs that HWA decided the sheer number of them caused confusion. One of them even lived across the street from the Pasadena, Calif., campus of

Ambassador College (the school HWA founded) in the early days, causing problems with mail deliveries.

Why HWA chose W is not clear, but by adding it he made his name more distinctive.

In HWA's early years it was not unusual for people to have middle initials that did not stand for anything. An example is Harry S. Truman. According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, President Truman's initial did not represent a middle name.

The excesses of youth

Accusation No. 2: HWA drank to excess.

A quotation attributed to HWA's grandson has it that HWA drank too much (see a quote from John Tuit's 1981 book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*).

However, HWA's grandson told *The Journal* that he did not "recognize the first person statement attributed to me in Tuit's book".

Other observers have said he was often sluggish or sleepy, presumably from alcohol, almost every night.

Another wrote: "Armstrong himself admitted to excessive drinking as a young man, but 'not at all even the fraction of the volume of an alcoholic' (Autobiography, p. 240)" ("Booze!," Dec. 9, 2002, Missing Dimension Web site, published by Gavin Rumney, Auckland, New Zealand, www.missingdimension.com).

The truth is that HWA did drink alcohol, as do probably a majority of Church of God members. Here is specifically what he himself wrote about his younger days and alcohol:

"I began palling around with two other young men who were advertising representatives of magazines. One of them was in process of separating from and divorcing his wife. The wife of the other was away for the summer and fall. We began to haunt nightclubs--then called cabarets. Often we would hang around these places of sorrowful, moaning, screeching, wailing music--if you could call such dirges 'music'--until 1 or 2 a.m. We began to drink--not at all even a fraction of the volume of an 'alcoholic'--but too much for efficiency" (*Autobiography of Herbert Armstrong*, 1986 edition, p. 243).

If HWA had as much problem with his liver due to alcohol as his critics have contended, then maybe he would have died prematurely because of liver damage. But he lived to be 92 1/2 years old.

Also, HWA did take a variety of medications, and some can make a person appear under the influence of alcohol when such is not the case.

Regarding the above quote attributed to HWA's grandson, he told this writer on Dec. 17, 2002: "I did not say those things in Tuit's book. He [HWA] was not a drunkard, and if he were he never could have done all the things he did." (He also made other strong denials of this allegation that I did not get down verbatim.)

This is the third or fourth accusation I have investigated in Tuit's book. Thus far every time I have contacted a source cited in the book, the source has denied making the accusation. I conclude that

Tuit's book is entirely unreliable for anyone seriously interested in determining the truth about accusations against HWA.

Dixon Cartwright of Big Sandy, Texas, publisher of *The Journal*, did tell this writer that in the late 1970s at various times he answered the phone in the office of *The Worldwide News* in Pasadena when HWA was calling to dictate his editorial and that HWA "sounded as if he were under the influence."

However, Dixon Cartwright agreed that it is possible HWA could have been under the influence of medications, as HWA was on medications at the time.

Dr. Meredith acknowledged that he witnessed HWA drinking a "bit heavily" at times but never saw him incoherent or drunk.

Others have said HWA did drink at certain public functions and that he did, for a while, rely on alcohol to help him fall asleep at night--this part seems to be true.

Cocaine

Accusation No. 3: HWA was addicted to cocaine.

A former WCG member told me this in 1982.

This obviously false accusation is strongly denied by my numerous sources and in one respect is somewhat funny, since the toxic effects of cocaine are more or less the opposite of those for excess drinking: tachycardia, or extreme nervousness.

An addiction to cocaine would have been extremely difficult to conceal because, as one medical source (*Merck Manual*, 1999 edition) understates it: "Discontinuing sustained use of cocaine requires considerable assistance."

Gross impropriety

Accusation No. 4: HWA was guilty of gross sexual impropriety.

After reviewing the details of one particular allegation regarding sex and what I uncovered, Dixon Cartwright, *The Journal's* publisher, asked me to remove them from this article because of the lack of proof and because certain parties are not alive to defend themselves and because *The Journal* is a family publication.

Various versions of this accusation are extant, most of which seem to be based on a chapter of David Robinson's 1980 book *Herbert W. Armstrong's Tangled Web*. (A version of the accusations appears in Tuit's book as well.)

I investigated four allegations related to this specific accusation and concluded that unless certain alleged audiotapes (which have never been made public, and I requested them and even spoke to one who had claimed to hear them--he finally admitted to me that he actually had not heard them) surface (and I made diligent inquiry to attempt to find them, including dozens of phone calls, plus E-mails through late February 2003, and even later after this article was originally published), the accusations are not provable and aspects of the accusations are indeed disprovable.

Perhaps I should mention that since one aspect of these accusations is commonly attributed to a comment supposedly made by HWA's son Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA) concerning his dad and another relative. I personally called Garner Ted Armstrong's office on Dec. 12, 2002 to inquire about this particular accusation. I was not able to speak with GTA directly, but a key employee of the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association discussed it with him and got back with me. Through his spokesperson, GTA declined to comment except to pass on the message that "everything you really need to know about my father is contained within the autobiography." Thus GTA did not stand by a statement attributed to him on this matter--so how can any believe this?

In December 2006, I saw a post at an anti-Church of God website that stated that Dibar Apartian supposedly confirmed that he felt that HWA was guilty of incest. On January 3, 2007, I spoke with Dibar Apartian about this. He knew HWA for the past 30 plus years of HWA's life. Dibar Apartian clearly and flatly denied the claim someone made that Dibar Apartian said he felt that HWA was guilty of incest. Every single time I have gone to the alleged sources of information on this incest matter, none of these "sources" have ever stood by the statements that the anti-HWA critics have claimed were made. I would like to add that Dibar Apartian is 88 1/2 years old and he specifically told me that it should be clear to everyone that he has nothing to gain by denying this. Dibar Apartian also told me that he has never once made a statement confirming any of HWA's alleged personal faults, and specifically that he never stated that he thought HWA was guilty of incest.

In his *Tangled Web* book, the late D. Robinson wrote that "like the Wizard of Oz, Herbert Armstrong is operating on image. When his hand is called, there is no substance there. Like the Wizard, he is just a lot of bluster."

Based on my experience in trying to track down credible sources for this accusation, all I find--including a whole chapter in Robinson's book--is "just a lot of bluster." Actually, it appears to me that no one who has made or repeated most of the accusations against HWA actually has any real proof for most of them--no one seems to have checked with either the primary (those involved) or secondary sources (those with proof), but instead relied on accusation and rumor--simply stating a false charge does not make it true, no matter how many times it may be repeated.

Improper involvement

Accusation No. 5: HWA was improperly involved with female Ambassador College students.

Bernard Kelly's *Bible Expositor* newsletter of Oct. 19, 2001, publishes allegations that in 1957 HWA unsuccessfully attempted to recruit AC coed Suzanne Black as a "special lady" for the purpose of providing him with sexual favors and claimed that HWA justified his actions in this regard by declaring that he was "above the law."

I spoke with many who were around HWA in the late 1950s, including Dr. Meredith, Dibar Apartian and Wilbur Berg. They all said that, based on their close association with him at the time, they believed such accusations could not be true.

If the accusations were true, why would Suzanne Black remain a WCG member until 1975, some 18 years after the alleged incidents, and why would her husband teach at Imperial Schools in Big Sandy and later at Ambassador College many years after the alleged incidents?

I even spoke with her husband, Wiley Black, on this matter. In my opinion his comments, as well as the report in Kelly's newsletter, were contradictory and illogical. It is clear to me that those that repeat this accusation simply have not attempted to question either of the Blacks about it.

B. Kelly also quotes S. Black as saying HWA's wife, Loma, forced her to clean toilets in a women's dormitory with her bare hands and that Dr. Meredith tried to drown her by pushing her head forcefully against a rock while he was baptizing her, an accusation Dr. Meredith categorically denies.

When taken as a whole, S. Black's testimony, as published by Kelly, lacks any credibility.

HWA's disposition

Accusation No. 6: HWA had a temper.

By numerous accounts, this accusation is true.

False prophecies?

Accusation No. 7: HWA made false prophecies.

Various sources have leveled this accusation. For this article, I simply cite one of them, the book *Transformed by Truth* by Joseph Tkach Jr.

Under the heading "Failed Prophecies" in chapter 11, J. Tkach listed several supposed failed prophecies of HWA:

* Mr. Armstrong wrote that the death of Pope Paul VI could "plunge the world into the most terrifying crisis ever experience by man."

* Mr. Armstrong wrote that a meeting of Catholic cardinals "may well prove to be a WORLD-SHAKING EVENT--the most important world event since World War II!"

* In 1980 Mr. Armstrong wrote that the world had "entered into a 'whole new ball game.' The intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan changes the whole world picture."

* Mr. Armstrong wrote that the 1980s "well might see the END of this present world; WAKE UP!"

* In the early '80s Mr. Armstrong wrote that "signs are now fast appearing that our Work of the GREAT COMMISSION may be much more near completed than we have realized." n Mr. Armstrong wrote, in the early '80s, that "God's great work through His Church (Philadelphia era) may be FINISHED in a matter of months."

* Mr. Armstrong wrote of the 1980 U.S. presidential election that "this present election travesty may well be the very LAST political election for the presidency of the United States, with little incompetent men vying for the coveted prize."

* In 1981 Mr. Armstrong wrote that the conditions that would allow Bible prophecies to be fulfilled were "fast accelerating, indicating that we are indeed in the very last of the last days." He predicted that "terrible, frightful things are going to happen in the next few years that are going to take the lives of probably two thirds or more of all the people now living on the face of the earth."

My response to J. Tkach's listing here of these supposed examples of HWA's prophecies is to point out that many of HWA's predictions did indeed come to pass, even though HWA obviously believed we were closer to the events of the very end time than we were.

Nevertheless, the death of Paul VI did trigger a drastic turnaround in world events, ultimately leading to the appointment by the Catholic cardinals of Pope John Paul II, who was instrumental in helping break Eastern Europe free from communist influence.

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets did change world events markedly. It contributed to the bankrupting and dissolution of the Soviet Union. It contributed to the influence of leaders such as Osama Bin Laden. Those events are still resonating in the aftermath of Sept. 11 and the war on terrorism.

The WCG under HWA did at least partially fulfill the prophecies of Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 3:7-8 about the work of the end-time Church of God.

Regarding the 1980 presidential election, in November 1980, HWA sent Herman Hoeh out to state that the election of Ronald Reagan meant that there would be much more time (Sermon, Sacramento, November 1980). I personally heard this.

HWA did make various errors in the 1940s in his predictions concerning the outcome of World War II. But his main errors were when he suggested--or at least implied--dates for specific prophecies.

None of the specific "prophecy" items listed above in *Transformed by Truth* were actually false. After all, if the criterion for a true or false prophecy is that it happens when the predictor thinks it will happen, then Paul, Peter and even Jesus are guilty of the same type of false prophecies that HWA is accused of. (For example, "Surely I am coming quickly," Revelation 22:20).

Further, when HWA said something "may" happen, he was not making a false prophecy. It was true that certain things might have happened. He allowed for that when he used the word "may."

HWA critics also tend to forget that he made many correct predictions. For example, in the December 1948 issue of *The Plain Truth* HWA predicted a coming "United States of Europe." As recently as October 2002, Valery Giscard d'Estaing suggested that the name of the European Community should be changed to United States of Europe. I believe HWA was among the first if not the first to coin the term United States of Europe for the government that is even now still forming in Europe. Even if the EU is never renamed, the truth still stands that a united states of Europe is still forming.

HWA also correctly predicted that the Soviet Union would never launch a major attack on the United States. He also preached that East and West Germany would reunite (which happened) and lead a unified Europe (which is happening). At the Feast of Tabernacles in Tucson, Ariz., in October 1979, the WCG taught that the unified Europe would probably include many nations then in the communist bloc.

Although the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have not been taken over by a German-led unified Europe (that ultimately will not include the U.K.), many of us in the COGs believe this prediction will eventually come to pass.

Another point needs to be made here. HWA never claimed to be a "prophet" in the accepted sense (see accusation 14). He did not receive information in visions and dreams or from God face to face, as did the prophets of old. Therefore it is improper, in my opinion, to characterize any predictions of his that did fail to come to pass as "false prophecies."

Income matters

Accusation No. 8: HWA made predictions he knew were false in order to maximize the WCG's income.

Although it is true that at one time HWA apparently believed that members of the WCG would probably "flee" to a "place of safety" in 1972 and that Jesus Christ would probably return in 1975, as those dates grew closer HWA and associates apparently began to have second thoughts about the accepted time line. John Robinson of Decatur, Ind., wrote an article in 1997 that talked about this aspect of the history of the WCG. As 1972 drew near, wrote John Robinson, some in the WCG "began to question the time line set forth by Mr. Armstrong and Herman L. Hoeh, the chief architect of the church's teachings on government and prophetic understanding. The first high-profile minister to do so was Roderick C. Meredith, then head of the WCG ministers . . .

"In the late 1960s Mr. Meredith wrote in a letter to the ministry that he felt there was 'more time left than we had expected.' "To his credit, Mr. Meredith tackled the issue head on and began to influence members to rethink the issue" ("WCG Governmental History Traced Up to Tkach Era," *In Transition*, Jan. 31, 1997). Dr. Meredith informed me that Mr. Armstrong sent the letter (which was quoted by J. Robinson) to all WCG ministers in 1969.

Further, here is what Leroy Neff of Big Sandy, Texas, a retired WCG evangelist, treasurer and AC faculty member, recently said on the subject of Christ's predicted return in 1975: "Rod Meredith preached strongly around 1970 that it was very unlikely" ("Third Ambassador Campus Came to Texas in 1964," by John Warren, *The Journal*, Sept. 30, 2002).

If HWA were trying to milk money out of church members and the church's "coworkers," you would think he would have waited until late 1975 and claimed to have had a vision that instructed him to change the date. Instead, he encouraged Dr. Meredith inform the ministry and others that 1975 would not likely be the end. The truth is that HWA did believe what he wrote and so strongly wanted Christ to return that he sometimes allowed his enthusiasm to bias his writings.

Money matters

Accusation No. 9: HWA was in it for the money.

HWA believed what he wrote--according to all sources with whom I spoke in connection with this article, including people I haven't yet mentioned by name, such as Aaron Dean of Gladewater, Texas, and even people who can be described as critics of HWA, such as Art Mokarow and Norman Edwards.

A careful reading of HWA's autobiography reveals that his decision to preach had the immediate effect of hurting his income rather than enhancing it. It was several decades before his income was reliably better than before he had begun to preach. If he had been in it for the money, one would have expected him to retire at some point and live off what he had accumulated. Instead, he continued to make telecasts until shortly before he died at age 92, visited 70 nations to proclaim the gospel *after* he was of retirement age and pushed himself relentlessly to get the gospel out.

The value of world trips

Accusation No. 10: HWA wasted money visiting world leaders and other dignitaries, and in other ways, without financial accountability.

HWA believed that Matthew 24:14 (the gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations) applied to him personally. He went to 70 nations directly and all the rest indirectly (through attending, as well as speaking at, various state functions).

I do not doubt that some money was wasted, but, as a former cost accountant, I think I am qualified to state that money is almost always wasted to some degree when major projects are undertaken.

Of HWA's visits with world leaders Legacy Institutes' Leon Sexton of Bangkok, Thailand, wrote: "In 1984, Herbert W. Armstrong visited King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit in this same palace. I was along as part of the Ambassador Foundation team. At that time the queen explained her project and the goals she wanted to achieve to help her people. The project was in its infancy and the queen needed help. Mr. Armstrong decided to help the queen get her silk project off the ground and donated seed money. "Now, nearly two decades later, we find that the church's involvement in these projects to help the poor in Thailand, through the efforts of the king and queen, have once again been blessed by God and have born abundant fruit. So much for the gainsayers who say Herbert Armstrong was throwing money down a rathole by giving to help the royal family of Thailand or that he 'bought meetings' with them with church money!" (as quoted from a letter to Legacy supporters dated Nov. 9, 2002).

Furthermore, regarding wasted money to do the work of God, even those called of God sometimes erroneously make this accusation--the disciples did! "A woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.' But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, 'Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her' " (Matthew 26:8-14).

However, it was apparently Judas, who later betrayed Jesus, who objected the most, "Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. " (John 12:3-6). Perhaps Judas influenced the other disciples to believe a false accusation-and perhaps those in the Churches Of God can learn from this lesson and not let those who make false accusations improperly influence them.

Jack Kessler made a variety of accusations that money was wasted, etc.--WCG addressed those accusations in the *Pastor General's Report* dated March 18, 1982 and denied their validity. Furthermore, that same *Pastor General's Report* includes a reprint of statements made by Jack Kessler as of March 1, 1981 admitting that there had been no fraud and that the Arthur Anderson provided " completely unqualified opinions two years in a row" (an unqualified opinion, in laymen's terms, means that the outside auditors found nothing wrong of any importance). Hence for him to later change his position seems odd at best.

As indicated above regarding financial accountability, HWA's WCG was audited by major accounting firms and published proper financial statements. But for some reason, critics still tend to ignore them.

Ministerial credentials

Accusation No. 11: HWA was never properly credentialed as a minister.

This is simply not true--though it is true that years after he left the [Church of God \(Seventh Day\)](#), they revoked his credentials with them.

Elder John Kiesz of Denver, Colo. (who died in 1996), an associate of HWA in the 1920s and '30s in the Church of God (Seventh Day) wrote (according to the Giving & Sharing Web site [www.giveshare.org]): "In 1931 he [HWA] was ordained to the ministry, and in 1932 he received his Ministerial License Certificate from the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, signed by O.J. Runcorn as President, and Mrs. I.E. Curtis as Secretary. The headquarters of the General Conference of the Church of God (7th Day) had been at Stanberry, Missouri, since the late 1880's."

Crediting sources

Accusation No. 12: HWA was forgetful, and he was a plagiarist.

Yes, HWA could be forgetful. After reading various editions of HWA's *United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* and J.H. Allen's book *Jacob's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*, I do not agree that he was guilty of plagiarizing Allen's book. Although I believe HWA got certain ideas about this subject from Mr. Allen and, from what I have heard, the first edition of US&BC, which I have not seen, was much closer to Allen's work, I also believe HWA simply comes to conclusions different from Allen's in too many instances for any plagiarism charge to hold water, especially in HWA's later editions. Of course, if HWA did make significant use of Allen's work, then he should have credited Allen, even if his use of this work falls short of plagiarism.

HWA paraphrased more than he should have, but, since he, along with his wife, Loma, was the entire editorial and publish staff for a while, it is understandable that they could have become careless in this regard.

Regarding *Has Time Been Lost?*, it appears that this booklet was quite similar to a booklet originally produced by the Church of God (Seventh Day). According to an article by Norman Edwards (*Servant's News*, November 1998), the CG7 did not have a copyright notice on it when it published it. Edwards also wrote, "The two booklets are word-for-word identical in about half of the places. Armstrong did add some things, but in many places he simply dropped out information--such as the 1910 dates of encyclopedias which, if included, would make the booklet look 'old' (see p. 24)." At the time CG7 published it, without such a copyright notice, the information was in the 'public domain' and it would have been legal for it to have been copied and republished (but I feel that should something in the book should have indicated that it was republished). I think it is likely that either HWA did not recall that he did not write much of this particular booklet or some of his staff made an improper assumption. As a writer I can verify that the more you write the less you remember about what you actually did write. I think a factor in HWA's failure to properly credit other sources was his lack of formal education. Even though he was a naturally talented writer, he was not privy to formal training that would have instilled in him the highest regard for properly crediting other people's works.

The 18 truths

Accusation No. 13: HWA's "18 truths" are not individually all original.

This is true but not relevant. People who hurl this accusation fail to recall that HWA did not say he came up with his list of truths. He wrote: "At least 18 basic and essential truths have been restored to the True Church since" the year 1933 (*Mystery of the Ages*, Dodd & Mead, 1985, p. 251), and he

said in a sermon in which he listed the truths that the "Philadelphia Era of the Church," which he believed to be the WCG, was "restoring what had been taken away, restoring what had been taken away" (Sermon. "Mission of the Philadelphia Church Era," Dec. 17, 1983). (Here is a link to an article that list those truths titled [Did You Know What the First Changes the Tkach Administration Made?](#))

Thus HWA believed the Ephesus (apostolic) era, the first of seven, held to certain truths that God used him to restore to the Philadelphia (sixth) era of the church. HWA also acknowledged that other, non-Church of God, groups had portions of the truth (he wrote this in a letter to WCG members dated Nov. 19, 1976).

Divine revelation?

Accusation No. 14: HWA, as did Joseph Smith and other religious leaders, claimed to have divine revelations.

HWA did not claim to have massive amounts of biblical truth instantly revealed to him by God or an angel. He documents in his autobiography how he engaged himself in a six-month study of the Bible after being challenged on the Sabbath and other issues. He also wrote, "Emphatically I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks directly, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new or special instruction from God--separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I never have claimed to be" (*Tomorrow's World*, June 1972).

An unlikely source to back of HWA's claim in this regard is Joseph Tkach Jr. Here is some more of what he wrote about HWA and the subject of divine revelation in *Transformed by Truth*: "Mr. Armstrong used the term revealed in a way substantially different from how one might see it defined in most dictionaries or seminary textbooks. When he said something had been revealed to him, he did not mean that God had poured the new understanding directly into his waiting mind. No, whatever the new teaching happened to be, it usually came through a more human channel. "When some people hear this for the first time, they wrongly assume that Mr. Armstrong knowingly talked about 'new revelation' in a deceitfully malicious way. When he'd talk about ideas being revealed to him, most people automatically assumed he meant revealed in the sense of Paul's experience on the Damascus road or Isaiah's experience when he was called into ministry as described in Isaiah 6. But this would be to misunderstand. "Mr. Armstrong's use of the term revealed was a good deal more elastic than that, and I don't believe it was deliberately deceitful or malicious . . . Regardless of what you may personally think of Herbert W. Armstrong, one fact is incontrovertible: The overriding reason our reforms have developed and taken root is that Mr. Armstrong himself always insisted that those who want to follow God must find out what God's Word really says, then go and do it."

J. Tkach's most serious charge

Accusation 15: HWA ran a cult.

If the Joseph Tkach WCG had real reason to know that Mr. Armstrong was guilty of any of the 14 previous accusations, it is logical that it would have mentioned them or perhaps included them in his book *Transformed by Truth*. The truth is that the only accusations above that are directly mentioned to in the book (or official WCG sources) are those regarding prophecies. Yes, J. Tkach states that HWA was wrong doctrinally and prophetically, but perhaps the roughest comment alluded to be against HWA in *Transformed by Truth* was suggesting HWA taught "cultism": "As successor to WCG founder Herbert W. Armstrong, Tkach boldly led the Pasadena, California-based

church from cultism into Christianity." I disagree. I believe he ran the most biblically-based church that existed on the earth--which, according to Jesus, would be a little flock (Luke 12:32).

God uses imperfect people

Throughout history, God has called and used imperfect human beings. Noah is recorded to have gotten drunk (Genesis 9:21). Lot got drunk at least two times and then unknowingly committed incest on those occasions (19:30-36), yet the Bible calls him 'righteous' (II Peter 2:7-8). Abraham (12:12-13), Isaac (26:7), Jacob (27:24), and Joseph (42:7) all lied or were at least misleading at some time. Sarah dealt harshly with a maidservant (16:6;21:10) and lied to God's representative (18:15). Moses had a temper, was a murderer, and a fugitive from justice (Exodus 2:11-15). David was a womanizer (I Samuel 25:42-43), adulterer (II Samuel 11:3-4), and murderer (11:14-24), who displeased God (vs. 27), yet David was also a man after God's heart (I Samuel 13:14). The Apostle Peter lied, cursed, and denied Jesus (Mark 14:67-71), and later was caught being hypocritical by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2:11-13). Paul referred to himself as a "wretched man" (Romans 7:24) and his original name was Saul (Acts 7:58). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). By writing this paragraph, I am not saying that I think HWA is guilty of anything I did not think he was guilty of before (and even if he was and he repented, that is between him and God). I am simply stating that if the reader comes to a different conclusion on some of the accusations, that simply does not take away from what God had him accomplish.

The fact remains that it is pretty hard--some would say impossible--to prove a negative. No matter how many people with whom I try to verify various supposed facts, it is nearly impossible to prove that something did not happen. On the other hand, most of the allegations I have encountered are illogical, do not fit with the facts and cannot be properly verified either (plus HWA has been dead for more than 19 years).

Jesus accused too

Jesus was falsely called "a glutton and a winebibber" (Luke 7:34), was implied to be a child of fornication (John 8:41), falsely accused of having a demon (Matthew 12:24), questioned about whether he paid taxes (Matthew 17:24;22:17), and was falsely accused of breaking the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14). He was correctly called (by some of the same accusers) "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34), called the leader of people accused of transgressing the "traditions of the elders" (Matthew 15:2), one who had many false witnesses rise up against him (Matthew 26:59-60), recorded to have demonstrated public anger and outrage (Mark 11:15-21), reportedly arrested as if He were a robber (Mark 14:48), and crucified with thieves (Matthew 27:38)). Jesus was even "numbered with the transgressors" (Luke 22:37), yet Jesus was the Son of God.

People attacked Jesus personally because they did not want people to heed His message--that appears to be a leading reason for the accusations against HWA. It is easier to attempt to attack the messenger than the biblical message. Of course, today, many not only attack the dead, but the living--such as Roderick Meredith, human leader, under Jesus Christ, of the Living Church of God (for more information, please read the article [11 Accusations and Truthful Responses about Roderick Meredith](#)).

That you be not condemned

Those who wish to pass judgment against HWA on the aforementioned allegations would do well to mediate on this: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:1-2).

If something illegal ever happened, the proper biblical course of action (according to the apostle Paul) would have been to press charges, for if any "have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls" (Acts 19:38-39). The courts were open for HWA when he was alive, and if any crime occurred the charges should have been brought 19 to 70 years ago.

Actually, when the WCG was charged in court for alleged misuse of public funds (and it is my understanding that John Tuit was one of the parties that filed against HWA on this), the State of California eventually dismissed the charges. Though various accusations may have been made in court cases, HWA was never convicted of any crime I am aware of, including any of the accusations listed in this article, nor was proof of them offered against him in court.

If HWA were guilty of a crime, God will have to judge him. Although I do believe some of the charges I listed above are valid--such as HWA's temper and (with the qualifications I listed) his carelessness in not properly credited some of his sources--I do believe was a man of God.

Most of the allegations against him are similar to those made against other spiritual leaders down through the ages. God holds us accountable for what we know. In this article, I did my best to share what I know about the accusations and truth about Mr. Armstrong. I have little doubt that his critics will try to dismiss most of the truth shown in this article.

Hearing the truth

The Bible also suggests that knowing the facts about possibly sordid matters can help one that God is calling. Those who may doubt that should recall that Joseph was not quite sure on how to handle Mary's premarital pregnancy until God sent an angelic messenger to tell him the facts (Matthew 1:18-23). Is it not hard to believe that your fiance is a virgin when she is pregnant?

Joseph, however, made the right decision once he heard the truth (vs. 24). But others in the Bible did not, even though the truth had been revealed to them (i.e. Eve, Jonah).

Will you?

COGwriter, 2003, 2005/2006/20070104