

INTEROFFICE

To: Mr. David Antion

Date: July 31, 1973

Department:

Subject: Healing -- Only Part of Bigger Issues

From: Walter Sharp

Cover memo to be attached to the memo from Jim Morrison.

Hi, Dave!

The attached memo is the result of many hours of discussion with Jim Morrison about what is presently happening in the Church. Though I may not have said it exactly the same way, I agree with the basic points. I feel the doctrinal problems we are having now all revolve around the crux question of how the Church functions within the New Covenant. I feel we need to thoroughly discuss this basic issue, since there is what one might call a "de facto split" in the Church already over this point. What I mean by that is that many ministers basically grasp that you cannot legislate many principles of Christian life, and that they have backed off from the "legislating" approach to Christian living and have begun to teach people to stand on their own two feet and make many of their own decisions. They have begun to allow the members the freedom to make mistakes in a way that we haven't in the past. They have begun to approach Christian life more from the point of view of not trying to force people into a certain physical regimented way of acting as a result of legislation and stringent rules and so forth that one could call a man-made religion.

Now there are many ways to put that concept, but my point is that there are virtually two different ways of approaching Christian living and the doctrines of the Church of God and the Scriptures extant in the Church right now. And we need to have a basic discussion as to this matter of faith and legislation, the New Covenant, and how the Church relates to the Christian in the New Covenant. I feel that all the other matters that we may discuss and our conclusions on these other doctrinal questions should be come to based upon a proper understanding of the role of the Church within that New Covenant relationship. I think the scriptures that are involved are Romans 14, Romans 10, Romans 8, and to a great degree, much of the book of Galatians.

Thank you for your consideration of our material. This is basically what we feel is the crux issue regarding the doctrinal matters of the Church at this time.

Mr. David Antion

July 31, 1973

Page 2

Addendum:

It seems to me that in any conclusions reached in regard to our doctrines, there should be some logical thread that is woven through those conclusions that forms a basis upon which we reach those conclusions. But if we decide each matter, one by one, individually, without questioning our basic approach to the matters of Christian living, doctrine, and how the Church relates to the Christian within the New Covenant, we are going to end up with a patchwork quilt of various doctrines without a thread of logic through them.

INTEROFFICE

To: Mr. David Antion

Date: July 31, 1973

Department:

Subject: Doctrinal Crisis -- The Need to Face
Crux Issues

From: Jim Morrison

As many of us realize, we are now in the midst of perhaps the greatest crisis in the recent history of the Church of God. I'm not referring to the financial situation. That is a remote, distant, second- or maybe even third- consideration.

I'm speaking of the doctrinal crisis that many of us have seen developing for many, many months, and is now fully upon us. The issues are major -- monumental -- piling into insignificance a single issue such as D & R or healing. The question is whether we will face it before it publicly blows up in our face.

What is at stake is our very conception of what God is like, what true conversion is all about, and what true righteousness is -- in short, the question of whether we really understand the "new covenant."

The time when our energies, our time, and our emotional concerns have been largely diverted to financial matters and organizational problems involving the mechanics of "getting out the Gospel," we find ourselves in a doctrinal and spiritual crisis. I'm convinced there can be no solutions to our financial and organizational problems unless we face the crux issues.

We say the world treats with the effects, not the causes. We don't feel it's fair for them to accuse us of "bad-mouthing" the country when we point out the problems.

Do we as an organization deal with the causes? Do we get to the crux of the issues and resolve them, or do we skirt the issues?

The questions regarding healing are but one example, but it relates back to the overall question. Our concept of what God is illustrated by our past teaching on healing. We have made this a test of a person's faith. "Will you trust God, or will you trust doctors?" We have portrayed God as a Being who is constantly testing us to see whether we have faith. We have, in the past, taught people that it is "righteous" to avoid doctors and hospitals.

Mr. David Antion

Page 2

July 31, 1973

A person who "follows the Church's teaching" and avoids going to the hospital may or may not in his heart be doing this in faith and be pleasing to God. But by acting in a particular manner, he is accepted by the Church and therefore "righteous."

Have we, as a Church, tended to focus on the activity -- the outward doing of something rather than the heart? Haven't we taught people to judge themselves (and each other!) by physical standards? And this goes far beyond the matter of healing, skirt lengths, hair lengths, and sideburns.

Haven't we taught, by the emphasis we place on certain things, that it is "righteous" of itself to save second tithe and pay third tithe, for example? Is God continually "testing" us to see if we will obey Him?

Granted, there are tests involved in becoming a Christian, but we seem to make everything a test, even before the person has grown spiritually to a place where the change is of the heart, internally. We learn to judge by outward appearance -- how many minutes of prayer, how many minutes of Bible study, how often to fast. These become ends of themselves.

I am saying this -- not because you don't know this, for, of course, you do -- but to make my point that we must get to the crux issues and work on the trunk before we tackle the branches and twigs.

Then, once the trunk issues are settled, we wouldn't approach the D&R matter from a technical, "striving-about-words" approach. In the absence of clear scriptural proof one way or the other, we would be able to confidently stand back from the subject, look at it with the Spirit of God, and make a judgment.

We could do the same thing regarding second and third tithe and other issues that are coming up for question. Haven't we taught people, by implication, that God is pleased with sacrifice? Haven't we portrayed these things as a "test"? This then portrays God as being a certain way in his approach toward us.

Have we overlooked the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith? Do we understand Romans 8, Romans 10, Romans 14, the book of Galatians, etc.? Do we, in short, understand what the "new covenant" is all about?

I'm convinced that if we had the Acts 15 conference today to decide on the question of circumcision, we would conclude that this was in effect before

Mr. David Antion
July 31, 1973
Page 3

Moses and therefore is binding on us today -- that it is a test to see if we will really obey God by going through this ordeal.

Have we, to some degree, been worshipping a certain "system of religion" rather than our Creator God? Have we portrayed our Father as a Being who doesn't even hear our prayers, since we "feel" our prayers didn't get past the ceiling? Is our concept of what God is like and how He is dealing with us really accurate? Is our basic orientation toward ourselves before God, even after conversion, supposed to be continually, "Oh, what a wretch I am..."? Are we, even after conversion, just evil and filthy and rotten and always wanting to do evil? What part does God's Spirit play in our lives in the way we look at ourselves after conversion?

The questions are, as I said, monumental. I know many ministers in their areas have quietly modified their emphasis, but many ministers haven't. They haven't seemed to grasp the concept. On these issues, of all issues, we must stand together as a Church and be united. If we are not, then we are not united at all.

For example, if on this matter of healing, we conclude that it is up to the individual's faith, we must fully explain the ramifications of that and what it means. Obviously, even the leaders of the Church are not in full agreement on the matters discussed here.

These things must be discussed and resolved, I feel, at a high-level soul-searching conference before we can solve the branch issues and smaller points -- and before we can worry about media and advertising, etc. to reach out and bring in new people.

If we can begin to achieve a common understanding of the most basic issues and then if we can set goals and priorities in the Work, the financial situation and organizational problems will take care of themselves.

Someone must be willing to raise the questions -- in faith that God will guide us to a proper conclusion.

At this time, nothing, I feel, is more urgent and more important!