

Who Taught Herbert W. Armstrong?

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By J. Phillip Arnold

HOUSTON, Texas—From 1870 to 1920 this great “Work of God” spent millions of dollars in media outreach, both printed and electronic, announcing the coming Kingdom of God as a worldwide witness.

This Work revealed “true doctrines” about the soul, the resurrection, heaven and hell, the Millennium, the second resurrection, the Hundred Year Period, and the Great White Throne Judgment.

This mighty Work railed against “Christendom,” the immortal soul, eternal torture in hellfire. This Work boldly taught new truths to the “daughters of Babylon.”

This Work proclaimed the Mystery of the Divine Plan of the ages by declaring in its many publications that only a “little flock” is called NOW. The vast majority of mankind is blinded. Their first chance at salvation will come AFTER the return of Jesus Christ. Then most humans will be saved.

As early as 1881 this great Work insisted that the meaning and purpose of life was to become members of the Family of God, to be “partakers of the divine nature.”

This Work taught that the main purpose of the church today is to develop *character* so that in the Millennium resurrected Christians could rule as kings and priests in the wonderful Age to Come!

Yes, from about 1870 to 1920 this Work boomed out this controversial message to a disbelieving world. Millions and millions were warned and thousands converted!

BUT WAIT!

Mr. Armstrong was *not yet born* in 1870! He was not even a Christian till about 1927. How could there be a great Work as early as 1900 teaching all these things?

What “Work” having all these “Armstrong doctrines” reached millions over 50 years **before** Armstrong knew these doctrines?

How can this be?

Obviously, it was not the tiny “Sardis era” of the Church of God. They were small and never taught God’s *Mystery of the Ages* or a Divine Plan of the Ages in which most of mankind would be saved. Their *Bible Home Instructor* written by A.N. Dugger denied that doctrine, and their statement of faith denied it. HWA says Sardis did not know these new truths in his sermon of 6/5/82.

So why have you *never heard* of this great Work of 1870-1920? Why has it been hidden?

This stupendous Work was run by an amazing man, a businessman with advertising skills who produced attractive publications with huge circula-

tion, a man who took the Gospel message throughout the world, as a witness of the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

This man was named Charles T. Russell (1852-1916) from Pennsylvania.

His main newspaper was *Zion’s Watch Tower* (ZWT). His coworkers, the International Bible Students.

After his death in 1916, his great Work fell into the hands of others who *betrayed* him. They *mutated* it into something he never wanted, an authoritarian sect now headquartered in Brooklyn, N.Y. The congenial “Pastor Russell” never dreamed his freedom-loving autonomous groups of open-minded Bible Students would scatter after his death, and the property and presses fall into the hands of his rivals and usurpers, the Jehovah’s Witnesses. He was never one.

Charles T. Russell built from scratch his amazing Work that preached the Kingdom of God as a witness to all nations. Millions of his books were everywhere. CTR taught MANY truths that HWA discovered over 50 years later. *Some of these doctrines are so identical that an honest person must wonder if HWA got them from Russell and his circles.*

Did HWA cherry-pick from Russell’s books major doctrines that made the Radio Church of God (WCG) radically different from mainline churches? Did Armstrong get “Armstrongism” from the brilliant Charles T. Russell?

Let’s look at *two key doctrines* to unveil the connection. We know HWA taught *two major doctrines* that are *alien* to all Catholic and Protestant churches, but nearly *identical* to Pastor Russell.



J. Phillip Arnold

From about 1870 to 1920 a Work boomed out the controversial message about being born again into the God Family! Millions and millions were warned and thousands converted!

What are these two alien doctrines?

Not the Sabbath Day. Because there are millions of Saturday Sabbatarians in the world.

Not the Feast Days. Because millions of Jews observe these annual days.

Not the “lost tribes” as USA and Britain doctrine—there are many Anglo-Israel groups since the 1700s.

Even the doctrine that there is no immortal soul and the need of a resurrection is not unique to HWA. Many churches agree with that.

What about the Kingdom of God on the earth during the Millennium? Is that alien? Again, no. Because there are dozens of churches that teach it. Same with Bible prophecy, name of church, clean and unclean.

What are THE *two special* “Armstrong doctrines” that no Protestant or Catholic church teaches or has ever taught? These two doctrines are *contrary* to all those churches. And would be hated and rejected by them as ALIEN to them. Both of these doctrines are alien to even the Churches of God and the Seventh-day Adventists.

The FIRST of these two unique “Armstrong” doctrines so alien to all other churches is: **This is not the only Day of Salvation.** God is *not* now try-

ing to save all humanity. God *has blinded* most of mankind so that they cannot be saved. God has predestined only a very few chosen “elect” to be called now. Only these few, the “little flock,” can hear and understand God’s truth and become part of the Church of God.

Armstrong taught that the vast majority of all mankind will die without being called. And all these will have their first real chance at salvation later *after* they are resurrected from the dead and stand before the Lord in the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20.

Did Billy Graham preach this message? Did Billy Sunday and Dwight Moody preach this doctrine? What about John Calvin or Martin Luther? Does the Catholic Church teach it? The answer is No. They don’t. Nor do the thousands of sincere missionaries who risk their lives trying to convert pagans in African and Asia! It is contrary to the very essence of their mission and purpose.

Even the Church of God (7th Day) and Seventh-day Adventists reject Mr. Armstrong’s teaching that a “fair chance” after death will be given the VAST MAJORITY OF MANKIND, with **most** of mankind being saved *after* death in the World Tomorrow. Remember how shocked you were when you first heard of this idea?

This unusual doctrine radically separates the WCG from all of Christendom. It is this unique and radical doctrine of “Fair Chance” or “Future Probation” or “Wider Hope” that made the WCG church so *very different* from all these other churches on the corner. Don’t you agree?

Look how this doctrine played out to make the WCG so different from other Christians in other churches (I am not criticizing the doctrine; I am examining some of its effects.)

■ The WCG did not try to “convert” others to Jesus Christ. HWA said God had to “call them” before they could possibly be “converted.”

■ It did not send “missionaries” into remote regions of the world to convert the unsaved.

■ It said that most people in the world were supposed to be blind now so that they could be called later AFTER Jesus Christ returns. They had hard lessons to learn now.

■ But members knew they were “called” **now** because we UNDERSTOOD these *truths* and had the Holy Spirit. We few had truly repented and were given these truths taught by HWA.

■ We felt that we were a “special” group of called out people who walked around knowing key Bible truths to which the rest of mankind were blinded.

■ We believed that God had predestined us to be called now long before we were born. Others were predestined to be blinded now, but would be called later after Christ returns, after they had died.

■ Even good members of Christian churches were “blind” and were NOT predestined to be called now. They had a “false salvation.” We “knew” they were not true Christians because they were “blind” to the *truths* that God had revealed to us through Mr. HWA. They could not agree with us because they

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Garner Ted Asked a Good Question

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were blinded. But these deceived and blinded so-called Christians would get their first real chance at salvation in the next life during the Great White Throne judgment period of some one hundred years.

■ As members of the church, although it was not our duty to try to convert blinded people, it was our duty to support Mr. Armstrong in getting out the gospel as a “warning” message to “witness” to the world. Not to change or convert anyone, but to bear witness to the truth. This meant in practice that we kept our true identify as God’s chosen few with his special truths “undercover,” even “secret” from our neighbors. After all, they had not yet been called to salvation. They were blind as bats.

■ This meant that only a *chosen few* were invited to local church services. Only those who showed some evidence that they were being “called” were allowed to attend services. So this alien doctrine caused us to downplay the existence of our local churches so only the elect would discover their existence.

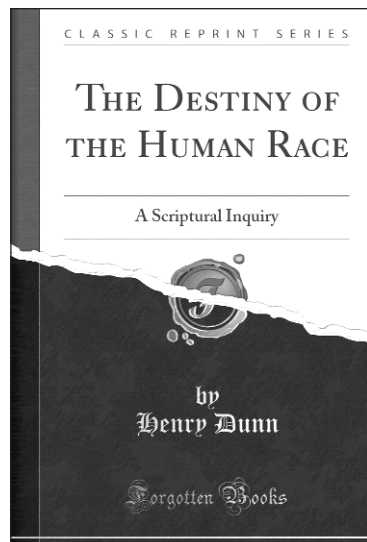
■ This led to ministers and members often looking at nonmembers as if they were unholy “outsiders” who were incapable of understanding God and the Bible. Not that they were just “sinners” in need of repentance, as Billy Graham might say, but that they were “walking dead” *unable* to repent, unable to understand, unable to come to Christ. Their turn would come *later*. For now, they do that which is natural to carnal man.

■ An effect of this alien doctrine was that members could “relax” and have less anxiety about the eternal fate of their loved ones, knowing that they would not likely go to hell but would one day bow the knee to God and accept the truth and be saved. In fact, those of us called now would one day minister these truths as “kings and priests” to the unsaved after Christ returned.

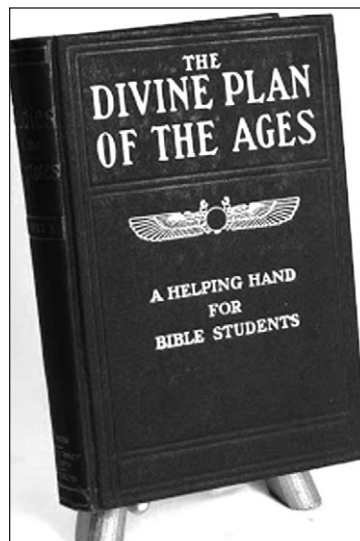
■ This distinctive doctrine also gave Mr. HWA and the church a “big picture” of God’s divine Plan. Most churches taught that Satan destroyed God’s plan in Eden by turning Adam and Eve against God, enticing them to sin. Most churches said that God was now in the business of trying to save a few of mankind from this disastrous “fall.” But HWA used this alien doctrine to teach the Mystery of the Ages where the Divine Plan allows God to save almost all human beings. Adam and Eve and their descendants are in the process of learning through their suffering and disobedience that there is a better way. After death, this better way will be revealed clearly to them, and the vast majority will repent and convert once their minds are truly opened. With the guidance of the glorified Elect who have been called in this life, they will be saved.

■ For Mr. Armstrong, this doctrine shows that, in the end, God wins and Satan loses. Most humans will be saved.

■ Protestants and Catholics have traditionally taught that hell will be very crowded and heaven not so much. Augustine called mankind a “damned mass.” John Calvin taught that God predestined the elect for salvation and those not called are predestined for hellfire. Non-Calvinists rejected this kind of predestination, but insisted that human freedom to choose God ends at death. For most churches, there is no hope for nonbelievers after death.



HISTORICAL THEOLOGY—Dr. Arnold on a visit to Israel (*upper right*). **Above and lower right:** Books by Henry Dunn and Charles Taze Russell. See Dr. Arnold’s article on these pages for information about the writers of the two books. [Courtesy photos]



■ This led to Garner Ted Armstrong’s famous question: “If a missionary has a flat tire and fails to reach people in China before they die, are they destined to roast like a marshmallow in hell?”

These points show that the *effect* of this first alien doctrine was *profound* on Mr. Armstrong and members. It changed his entire approach to evangelism, and it ricocheted his church into a different direction, knocking it out of the orbit of all other churches.

The **SECOND** doctrine that is radically different from what you hear preached in churches every Sunday is the *ultimate destiny* of the saved: to become members of the “God Family.” This is the *mystery hidden for ages*. It is the very *purpose* of human life. So said Mr. Armstrong. We are to become, not angels, but “partakers in the divine nature.”

It is rather shocking to our brains to discover

It is shocking to discover that Charles T. Russell had been teaching two unusual ‘Armstrong’ doctrines before HWA was born in 1892.

that Charles T. Russell had been teaching *both* of these unusual ideas before HWA was born in 1892. Crack open Russell’s books and you will see that he taught these alien ideas of Fair Chance and becoming part of God’s divine family over 50

years **BEFORE** Mr. Armstrong did. No other church taught it when Russell first taught it. To prove this instantly, you may type these terms and topics into the search engines at:

<http://www.ctrussell.us/ctrussell.nsf/Dedication?>
and <http://www.biblestudentarchives.com/links.html>.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not rejecting or defending these unique ideas. I am explaining only **WHERE** they came from. And when and how. And trying to figure out why we were never told where they came from.

So *where* from and *how* did HWA get these two unusual doctrines? He was not born with them as a Quaker. And his good Methodist wife, Loma, did not teach them to him. We know that the Church of God (7th Day) and SDA did not teach them.

Before we find out just how HWA got these alien doctrines, it is helpful to first ask **WHEN**.

WHEN did Mr. Armstrong **BEGIN** teaching the first of these two unique doctrines, the one we affectionately call “Fair Chance” and “Future Probation”? If we can locate **WHEN**, it may give us a clue as to **HOW** and from **WHERE** he got them.

Do you assume HWA taught it as soon as he opened his mouth to preach in the late 1920s? Do you assume that his powerful voice boomed out the “Fair Chance” doctrine over the radio in the early 1930s in Oregon? Did the very early *Plain Truths* and coworker letters teach that the vast majority of people are predestined to be blinded by God, but that God has predestined a *chosen few* to be called **NOW** to be members God’s church?

Or is it more reasonable to believe that HWA preached for years and years the traditional doctrine taught by most Protestant churches including the Church of God (7th Day) that the church’s mission is to “save lost souls”? If so, this would mean that from about 1930 to 1940 Armstrong would have preached something like this:

“Greeting, friends, this is Herbert Armstrong with the plain truth about today’s world news and the prophecies of the World Tomorrow! Friends, you need to blow the dust off your Bibles and find out what the Bible really says. It is time for you to repent and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior! Now! Today! Before it is too late! This radio program is calling you now to give your heart to Jesus Christ, to repent and believe the gospel. Today you can pray the sinner’s prayer and begin to live a life of obedience and faith. If we as a country repent and accept Jesus, our nation can escape from God’s end-time wrath. It is your free choice. I urge you to come to Christ today. And I urge you to tune in daily to this radio program as we spread the gospel to lost souls everywhere.”

In this imaginary talk, I have recreated what I believe HWA preached at the very beginning of his ministry. It is based on reading his earliest letters and the early *Plain Truth* magazines. A quick

search of the words “born again” and “souls” in early issues of the *PT*, his coworker letters and his articles in the *Bible Advocate* and the *Messenger of Truth* in the 1930s will show that HWA preached a

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When Did HWA Change Two Doctrines?

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highly evangelical gospel warning the nation of dire prophecies due to their sins and calling upon them to repent and accept Jesus Christ and his truth to get their souls “saved.”

There is no evidence found that HWA preached the two “alien doctrines” in the late 1920s or 1930s. His writings from those years never mention either of them. In fact, he says the opposite. For example, a close reading of the *PT* for June/July 1934, page 9, shows that he believed there were no Gentiles or sinners alive after the *close* of the Millennium to be converted and saved. During, yes. But not any in the second resurrection after the thousand years. That door to salvation closed when the thousand years ended.

Further, the HWA of that period writes in the *PT* of November 1934, p. 1, that the lost must be “born again” by receiving the holy spirit. Then in December 1938, p. 5: “Being truly ‘born again’—thru real broken-hearted repentance and faith in Christ” is the first step.” HWA is on an evangelistic mission to get people to be “born again” and to “save souls.”

In the *PT* of August 1934, p. 7, HWA writes of the “lost, helpless, dying souls.”

In the November 1934 *PT*, p. 8, he speaks of bringing “many souls to Christ.”

In the December 1938 *PT*, p. 5, he says “and that souls may be saved.”

In the January *PT*, 1939, p. 5, he writes “and souls may continue being saved.”

By August 1939, p. 6, his wording changes to: “We praise God for the salvation of scores and scores of souls.”

In November 1939 on p. 3 it changes to “We praise God for the salvation of hundreds of souls.”

But then, in the August/September 1940 *PT*, p. 4, he begins to sound different.

He now says readers should support his work so that “*this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness!*” And “PRAY, as never before, for a continued great harvest of souls.” This remains the same for the November/December 1940 issue. And it continues the same through the issue of September/October 1941.

Although the call to pray for a great harvest of souls appears in the March/April 1942 issue, there is now a personal appeal from the HWA to support his work that preaches the gospel as a “witness” to the world. HWA writes on p. 4:

“God has a great work for us to do. *This Gospel of the KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness and then shall the end come.* Yes, we have WORK to do!”

Finally the change is clear. In the August/September 1942 issue there is *no mention of saving souls*, nothing about praying for a harvest of souls. Instead there is a strong article “What Is It All About?” on page 7 where he sounds very much like Charles Russell!

Here in 1942 he claims that the world order is falling apart, and that we are on the verge of the final thousand years in God’s seven-thousand-year Plan. Like Russell, he writes that Satan has had 6,000 years to push his way on the world; now it is

time for God to bring his way. No mention of a “soul saving” mission. That had been dropped a year before. In fact, he writes on page 8: “All Israel . . . shall be saved. The Gentile nations who have not heard Christ’s name will then hear and have their chances. . . .” Herbert Armstrong has a new bold voice. It is the first distinct echo of CTR.

What do we conclude from this review of the how the *PT* went from saving souls in the 1930s to preaching as a “witness” from 1942 on? Seems most likely that HWA for a few years had been absorbing Russell’s alien ideas either through reading “Pastor Russell” or being persuaded by someone familiar with Russell, or both. A few hints appear in the mid ’30s; they begin to germinate by 1940 and take root by August/September 1942. But when do they fully blossom for HWA into the alien doctrines we are tracking?

Can we determine WHEN he clearly *switched* to the two alien doctrines of Fair Chance and “participation in the Divine” that you and I know he was clearly preaching when we met up with him?

Since you and I know that he *eventually* began to teach them, all we have to do is to keep reading chronologically his publications until he plainly tells us about one or both of them. Right? At some point in the *PT*, he must begin to teach them!

But when? And why? And who taught him? What caused this major *shift*?

Prior to 1943 I see no evidence that he preached this new alien doctrine of Fair Chance, certainly not becoming divine. Do a search of the HWA library at <http://www.herbert-armstrong.org/index2.html> for those very early years and try to find these two

said to represent a 100-year period when 99 percent of all humans who ever lived would have their first real chance at salvation!

So now we know 1943 was the year WHEN Mr. Armstrong first began to clearly publish this idea so alien to traditional Christianity. But why that year? What happened about that time? Where did he get this new alien idea from? Did he meet someone new who had these ideas?

Don’t assume that he made it all up from his own personal study, as if it suddenly dropped from heaven. As we saw, Charles Russell had taught similar ideas.

Even though traditional Christianity did not teach this alien idea of Fair Chance and divine destiny, there were a very few *mavericks* who did teach it. They were in Charles Russell’s circles of “Bible Students.” In fact, I am convinced that Mr. Armstrong got this idea, and the “born into the Family of God” idea, from either Russell’s publications or from these maverick students of the Bible. As we have seen, they did not originate in Church of God (7th Day) circles.

Let’s look at them and their founder Charles Russell more closely. We know that he started a “circle” that taught the alien idea of Fair Chance and Future Probation during the Age to Come (World Tomorrow). It was a great Work teaching that at the resurrection the elect would be *born again into* the Family of God to partake of *the divine nature*. Even though HWA taught nearly identical doctrines, Russell was never mentioned as an earlier source. The impression was given that God was the only source for these “truths.” But HWA knew about

Pastor Russell. In fact, he wrote one article mentioning Russell, while denying that he was a member of one group associated with this “circle.”

In the July 1953 *PT* Armstrong wrote: “*No! I Was*

Never a Jehovah Witness. . . .” He did not lie. It was true; he was never a *member* of the JWs. But notice that he says on page 6 that he had “read some of their writings and their books.” He also admits having knowledge of “Pastor Russell” and his “people.” Notice HWA correctly uses the term “predecessor” to refer to Russell and his circles in a way that distinguishes them from the later JWs. This shows that HWA knew *more* than most anyone does about the exact relationship between the Work of Russell and the JW usurpers who came later. But, still, HWA goes so far as to claim:

“*I have never belonged to, attended any meeting of, or had any remote semblance of fellowship with the ‘Jehovah Witnesses’ predecessor, the ‘Pastor Russell’ people I did not learn any of God’s TRUTH from the ‘Jehovah Witnesses’ sect. I have, of course, read some of their writings and their books, and I have been glad to find that they have certain truths, as all sects and denominations have (though mixed with dangerous errors), but God had already revealed these truths to me long before I read of them in their literature.*”

Stop and think. If I could show you proof that the Russell circle(s) taught these two exact doctrines over 50 years BEFORE HWA, would you be willing

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Prior to 1943 I see no evidence that Mr. Armstrong preached the new doctrine of Fair Chance or the doctrine of being born again into the God Family.

major doctrines of what became “Armstrongism” later. You will come up empty.

But, out of the sheer blue, in *The Plain Truth of November/December 1943, p. 8*, BOOM, there it is! He boldly proclaims this new truth: a full-blown article, “Predestination, Does the Bible Teach It?”

The article is not just about predestination but about WHY God predetermines some to be “called” now and others to remain “blind” as bats until they die and are later resurrected for their first real chance at salvation. He lays it out clearly: Those called now will be “born again” at the Coming of Jesus Christ and will serve as kings and priests during the Millennium. They will then teach those unsaved dead who are made alive in their physical bodies to get their first real chance at the Great White Throne Judgment. Clearly, HWA has thought this idea out carefully over time and now booms it out clearly. But never any mention of why he changed. Or where he got it.

This new idea was expanded in following articles until the full-blown doctrine was fully formed. By the early 1950s it and the idea of becoming divine were firmly in place, with the biblical festivals said to picture this “plan of salvation.” Even the Last Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles was

Both Men Taught the ‘Divine Nature’ Destiny

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to *consider* that HWA may have gotten these ideas from Russell’s circle one way or the other?

If he did, it would mean that the two MOST DISTINCTIVE doctrines that HWA taught were taken from the Watch Tower circles! Something he never admitted publicly. Something he denied. Something that may have been covered over by that first generation of ministers and Ambassador graduates—if they even knew. It would mean that HWA’s debt to Russell was never admitted or paid.

Today that debt has come due.

Of course, this does not mean that there is anything “bad” about taking truths from Russell. A good doctrine can originate from offbeat sources. But it is bad not to *give credit where credit is due* or acknowledge the people who gave it to you. Nowhere will you find Mr. Armstrong admitting where he got these alien ideas from. He just states it as a fact of the Bible, as if one day

he woke up and there it was clear as a bell. Although he confesses that he read their literature, he does not admit that these major exact doctrines were taught by Russell

and his Bible Student movement. Never any mention of Russell’s great Work that taught the Hundred Year Period and becoming “divine” as early at 1900! *Charles Taze Russell left out in the cold.*

As we said, Charles Russell was the leader of this great Work from about 1870 till his death in 1916. Russell was a prolific writer on Bible topics, publishing millions of pages. As a wealthy businessman from Pennsylvania, he paid for his numerous publications on the Bible himself as well as the cost of a very popular early “movie” on the Bible called *The Docu-Drama of Creation*, costing millions in today’s dollars, shown in cities throughout the U.S.A. and Europe. He did not demand tithing to a “headquarters.” Like HWA, CTR knew how to get an audience’s attention and hold it. He challenged all churches to rethink their doctrines and return to the first century church as portrayed in scripture.

Russell was a young man in his 20s when he first heard of the idea of “Fair Chance” from a Bible researcher named George Storrs. Storrs was Charles’ elderly mentor in the late 1800s. Storrs had been through the Millerite movement of 1844, but did not become a Seventh-day Adventist afterward. He continued to preach the Second Coming of Christ and Bible prophecy. He came to believe in a literal kingdom of God on earth during the Millennium.

In his *Six Sermons*, he boldly taught there was no immortal soul, and that the resurrection from the dead was when the dead would return to life. He also denied an eternally burning hellfire. For a while he was puzzled over why God would resurrect the lost only to cast them into the lake of fire where they would be returned to unconscious extinction. Why

not just leave the wicked in their graves?

As Storrs was pondering these issues about 1870, he came across a book by Henry Dunn, an educated Englishman, titled *The Destiny of the Human Race*, first published in 1863. From a sickbed Storrs spent months studying this book. In it Dunn argued that there would be a future chance

majority will be called later after the resurrection of the dead and given their first real chance at salvation. Those called now in the Body of Christ will be transformed into Spirit and serve as administrators and ministers to physical humans during the Millennium and thereafter. But, now, only a few are called in this “church age.” The unsaved dead will be granted their first real chance of salvation after Christ returns. Russell shocked Christendom by declaring:

“We can imagine for instance, Nero, the murderer of his own mother, the murderer of many of the Lord’s faithful disciples, coming forth **Nevertheless the great atonement sacrifice in redeeming the race included Nero, and he must have a share, an opportunity, for profiting thereby.** Whatever measure of light and knowledge he lacked previously he will surely get in *the world to come*, in the Millennial age, when he shall have been awakened under the favorable conditions then prevailing. And his shame and contempt, thank God, may gradually be lifted, until he will be

free from them provided he shall be responsive to the blessed conditions of that time. He will have a hard road to travel because of his miserable use of opportunities in the past; but his shame and contempt will culminate either in his full acceptance of the Divine blessing of restitution to perfection or to his utter destruction in the second death”

(<http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/russell/HG3.pdf>).

Russell also taught the second of these “alien doctrines” that HWA evidently also picked up from him years later:

“As we thus get before our mind’s eye the glory which God hath in reservation for them that love him, the Church, the body of Christ, and that we shall not have a resurrection to flesh, but be changed by resurrection power, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, **to be spirit beings, glorious, powerful, divine** The reward of the Church on the contrary will be incomparably higher; not only will the first resurrection bring these to the spirit plane and grant them joint-heirship with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom, but we are assured that it will signify to them the attainment of the *divine nature*, which is far above angels, principalities and powers. The *high condition* to which the Church is to be elevated is not described in the Scriptures

because it is beyond the power of the human mind to appreciate” (<http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/russell/HG3.pdf>).

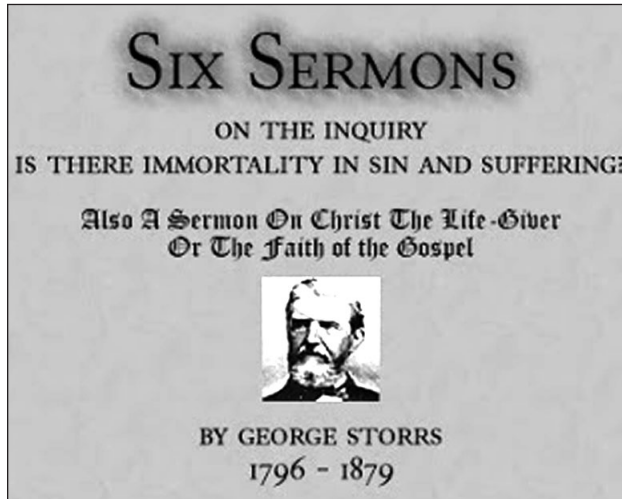
Russell’s books were everywhere and are still available online and in stores. Groups of his original Bible Students continue to meet in cities everywhere.

It appears that Mr. Armstrong became acquainted with Russell’s ideas prior to 1943. These two major doctrines clearly do not appear in his publi-

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CHURCH RESEARCH—Above right: Dr. Arnold conducts a seminar of his Reunion Institute in Houston. Above: Charles Taze Russell is pictured with an issue of his Zion’s Watch Tower newsletter. Lower right: A volume of six sermons by George Storrs. See the accompanying article by Dr. Arnold about Mr. Russell and Mr. Storrs. [Courtesy photos]



for all those who had died without hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There would be a “Fair Chance” for infants, the “retarded” and those who never heard. This opportunity would come after the first resurrection when Christ’s kingdom would be set up on earth. This is very much like HWA taught beginning in 1943.

Storrs took Dunn’s alien idea and polished it and pushed it in his monthly magazine *The Bible Examiner*. The young Russell read the *Examiner* and met Storrs and the two became mentor and friend. Russell went on to convince others of this Fair Chance doctrine and published his own magazine called *Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence* from 1879 to 1916.

Before Russell’s death in 1916, he had published and distributed millions and millions of

Charles Taze Russell was a young man in his 20s when he first heard of the idea of ‘Fair Chance’ from a researcher named George Storrs. Storrs was Charles’ elderly mentor in the late 1800s.

tracts explaining this alien doctrine. His greatest work is the six-volume set *Divine Plan of the Ages (Studies in the Scriptures)*.

In it he first shows the evidence for a Creator God, then shows the inspiration of the Bible, and then explains the mystery of God’s plan for humanity. He clearly says that Satan did not ruin God’s plan in Eden, nor is Satan winning the battle for souls. Instead, God’s plan is to call a few now to be the “Body of Christ,” but the vast

HWA Added the Teachings 1938–1943

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cations in the 1930s, but we have seen hints of his growing familiarity with them. And, of course, after 1943 we see them and slightly modified versions of them everywhere in WCG publications, especially in the early 1950s in articles and in the Bible Correspondence Course.

You may ask: “Could it be that Mr. Armstrong simply came up with the same ideas *independently* through his own personal study without any use of Russell’s books?” No, this does not wash.

Look at this: Can you find anyone anywhere in the world at any time in history who taught that Isaiah 65:20 proves that there will be a “Hundred Year Period” during which the resurrected unconverted will live “out their days”? You will name *only* HWA and his many publications, such as *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* And in the *Bible Correspondence Course* edited by Dr. C. Paul Meredith.

But, I can show you that Charles Russell and his trusted associates said the same thing over 50 years earlier in his *ZWT, Food for Thinking Christians* and the *Divine Plan of the Ages*. For example, here is just one of dozens of references to the idea:

“Any who sin wilfully, against full light and ability, will perish in the second death. And should any one, during that age of trial, under its full blaze of light, spurn the offered favors, and make no progress toward perfection for **a hundred years**, he will be reckoned unworthy of life and will be ‘cut off,’ though at a hundred years he would be in the period of comparative childhood. Thus it is written of that day: **‘As a lad shall one die a hundred years old; and as a sinner shall be accursed he who dieth at a hundred years old.’** (Isa. 65:20—*Leeser*) Thus all must have at least one hundred years of trial; and, if not so obstinate as to refuse to make progress, their trial will continue throughout the entire day of Christ, reaching a culmination only at its close.” (*Divine Plan of the Ages, Studies in the Scriptures*, p. 144).

The Divine Plan of the Ages is an amazing work as it broke new ground in 1886, opening up possibilities that HWA and the WCG could modify and expand upon.

We should acknowledge that there is a very real connection between HWA and CTR—not only on the Hundred Year Period and the Fair Chance idea, but also in many other ways. Both men focus on prophecy, the truth of the “soul,” the annual Passover for the Lord’s Supper, the earthly kingdom, and the need for a fair chance for humanity. It also jumps out at you in how Russell lays out his *Divine Plan of the Ages*. Much like HWA in his approach, Russell starts with *the existence of God, the proof of the Bible, and then the mystery of the divine Plan of God*. Like Russell, HWA used similar terms for it, such as “*Mystery of the Ages*,” and “*this Master Plan of the ages*,” PT, March 1961, p. 3.

But wait. There’s more.

Russell respected the Old Testament and used it to clarify the New Testament constantly. He used Temple symbolism to explain the plan of salvation, much like HWA used the feasts to show a near

identical plan of salvation. Although Russell did not observe the Sabbath, he respected it as an important symbol of the Christian life and taught that communion should be taken once a year on Nisan 14, Passover. He wrote about the feasts and taught that Tabernacles represented the time when God will set his hand to save all mankind. Although Russell was ambivalent on the identity of the “lost tribes,” some in Russell “circles,” such as George Storrs, identified them with the US and BC, as HWA would.

In my opinion, HWA began to integrate CTR’s *Divine Plan of the Ages* into his teachings between 1938 and 1943, studying it closely. Even earlier, his studies in the Portland library may have introduced it to him, or even an encounter with someone in Russell’s circles. Possibly he came across articles hinting at these ideas in the various publications that he read. Although the Church of God (7th Day) taught against Fair Chance, an occasional article may have mentioned it in refutation. *The Bible Advocate* of 1928 number 37, page 377, has a W.J. Davis commenting that God had predestined a few in this age to be the Bride of Christ and teach others during the Millennium.

Learning about the *Divine Plan of the Ages* and other writings of CTR, I believe, convinced HWA by 1943 that the alien idea of future probation and a Fair Chance for all was scriptural. So, in the November/December PT of 1943 article on “Predestination,” for the first time in print HWA explains that families should not worry about whether their lost love ones fighting in World War II died lost or saved. He shows that *only a very few*

ideas. Now that we are aware of HWA’s knowledge of Russell, we have to consider the possibility that during the 1930s he was introducing some of these ideas in his sermons, especially during the feast days regarding the Plan of Salvation. Opposition arose perhaps more due to these ideas rather than keeping the festivals.

For certain, by 1943 he was preaching and publishing Fair Chance to Sardis whether they wanted to hear it or not. Old-timers still living could shed valuable light on this sudden “switch.” One wishes John Kiesz was still alive since that Church of God minister worked closely with HWA up till about 1945 when HWA dropped him “like a hot potato,” according to Kiesz. If this split was over Kiesz’s “holy ghost” altar calls (<http://www.giveshare.org/library/hwa/hwabio.html>), it may support the theory that HWA broke with “Sardis” in part due to his teaching Russell’s ideas that only those predestined to be called now can come to Christ at this time; there were no pleading invitations to the altar in WCG services.

An indication that Fair Chance was a problem for Church of God leaders at that time is found in the fact that the Salem, West Virginia, branch (as did Stanberry) denied Future Probation/Fair Chance as early as 1933, and again in 1936, and listed as one of its important doctrines that:

“*The wicked dead are resurrected to final judgment, with no probation but will be eternally destroyed*” (http://www.originofnations.org/HRP_Papers/Historic%20CoG%20Fundamentals.pdf).

This shows that the idea of Fair Chance was affecting the Churches of God in the 1930s from some source. Since HWA is known to have emerged from them with that doctrine on his lips, it may well be that he was the source of the problem.

Perhaps he had not fully formed it during those years and kept it on the low, since HWA cooperated with the Salem group during this time. In fact, it is clear from the 1938 doctrinal statement of the Radio Church of God that at least the church at that time as a whole did not accept Fair Chance or divine participation. Although he does stand apart from Sardis by using the Russell code words “called” and “character” in the document, the statement is clear:

“... *There shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust—the just to eternal life as spirit beings upon earth, the unjust to receive the second and final death in hell (Gehenna) fire in which they shall perish in eternal punishment*” (http://www.originofnations.org/HRP_Papers/Historic%20CoG%20Fundamentals.pdf).

As his understanding of Russell’s Fair Chance became clearer to him in the early 1940s, and as he associated it with the feast days, the rift with Church of God (7th Day) widened. By 1947 Mr. Armstrong left Oregon behind for Pasadena, California, to spread his “alien” doctrines to the world.

When looking for early connections to Russell as a source for Armstrong’s adopting Russell’s doctrines, one could speculate that much earlier HWA and wife Loma saw the movie produced by

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Charles Russell and his trusted associates wrote about the ‘Hundred Year Period’ 50 years earlier in his Zion Watch Tower, Food for Thinking Christians and Divine Plan of the Ages.

are predestined to be called now to be part of the body of Christ, but that most will have a fair chance after Christ comes. Future articles over the years would flesh out the details, including the Hundred Year Period and the “third resurrection” to the lake of fire for the recalcitrant wicked.

No doubt these 1943 “new truths” caused divisions in his church in Oregon and with the “Sardis” churches. Could Armstrong’s attraction to Russell’s ideas have been one of the factors, other than “feast keeping,” that caused the evangelical Church of God leaders to be suspicious of him all along, leading to a final break? We have always heard that “feast keeping” was the issue that drove a wedge between HWA and the Church of God in Stanberry and later in Salem. But several of their ministers attended feast sites in the 1930s, and some continued it after HWA went his own way. It may be the way in which HWA “taught” the feasts, not the fact that he had church services on those days, that caused an uproar.

Future research may show that he taught that the feast days revealed the Plan of Salvation in which a Fair Chance would be given to the unsaved dead! If so, that would have caused a real stir—mixing Russell’s ideas with Church of God

C. Paul Meredith Hungered for Truth

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Russell in 1915, since his *The Docu-Drama of Creation* was showing in Chicago during the time when the Armstrongs were living there. The movie highlighted the Fair Chance doctrine and caused a sensation when it was shown.

From the *Autobiography of HWA*, we learn that the Armstrongs were avid moviegoers. But about this time Loma had a religious impression that they were attending too many secular films. Thus she would be ripe for viewing Russell's magnificent *Docu-Drama*. If she drug HWA along to the show, perhaps the seed for Fair Chance and a sense of God having a Divine Plan were sown in the creative mind of the young Armstrong as far back as about 1915, long before his conversion in the late 1920s—but would not bear fruit till years later. This may or may not be true, but what we do know is that by 1943 HWA taught these two highly unusual doctrines preached only by those intimate with Russell's circles.

Now that we know *when*, can we answer *how* did Mr. Armstrong get so committed to Russell's Fair Chance doctrine about 1943? Why then? What pushed him to put it all together so coherently at that time?

If you want to try to harmonize his 1953 denial of learning from Russell, perhaps you could stretch a bit and blame it on an *intermediary* who brought HWA these alien doctrines without telling HWA that they were taken directly from Russell. Maybe it is a combination of both. HWA may have read Russell in the '30s and *also* had discussions with someone he respected who had been in Russell's circles and believed these doctrines. Since we know that HWA did not often credit other authors (such as J.H. Allen, author of *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*) for "truths" he published in the *PT* under his own name, we should not think it strange that he would not credit Charles Russell.

What appears to secular eyes as near plagiarism or lying appears differently to the religious zealot. The man convinced that he has a special "calling" could easily deny that any other human taught him because that man is so consumed with the semi-mystical impression that God is leading him. He could honestly perceive his use of others' ideas as God's leading him to correctly pick and choose new truths from the trash heaps of theology in Satan's world. God leads him, and no other, in recovering and polishing these "truths." So such a person actually would walk around thinking that he did not get these truths from any man, but from the Spirit of God Almighty. Historians would word it differently.

This sense of "mission" also allowed Mr. Armstrong to do what you or I would never do: bully other ministers as "ministers of Satan" when they taught doctrines that he thought were wrong. Yet he can switch to a new doctrine without considering himself as having been one of those minions of Satan when he had preached differently months before!

For some reason, Mr. Armstrong was not able to

"live and let live" on these special "truths." If you did not receive these truths, he exorcized you to Satan's camp. Some might diagnose that as un congenial behavior for a person who himself is switching doctrines rather often.

Returning now to our sleuthing, can we find a clue that **someone very special came onto the scene** about 1940 who influenced and, possibly, even *convinced* HWA of the Fair Chance doctrine?

Who could that masked man be? What was his/her name? And why don't we know more about that significant figure, if he exists?

If HWA was moved to accept Russell's Fair Chance doctrine *by someone else very familiar with them*, then that unknown person would need to meet the following criteria:

- He must be very knowledgeable about the Bible to persuade Mr. Armstrong.

- He must be very familiar with this Fair Chance doctrine.

- He must be himself fully aware of Russell and this circle of "Bible Students."

- He most likely would be a mature person of some stature, not a teenaged Herman Hoeh or Rod Meredith, for example.

- Not someone, like Dugger, from the Church of God (7th Day), where that doctrine was denied.

- He most likely would be someone who continued with HWA and not someone who momentarily crossed paths with HWA.

- If he continued in the WCG, this person would likely have continued to write on the topic of Fair Chance, perhaps as its major and best expo-

nent in the WCG. He would likely over time insert more and more of Russell's ideas into Armstrongism.

In it we see that Dr. C. Paul Meredith was about 40 when he first had contact with the 50-year-old HWA **about 1942**. The eulogy clearly says that C. Paul and Herbert spent much time writing *letters* to one another and also on the *telephone* across country, from Missouri to California. Clearly, this was a mature and educated doctor that Mr. Armstrong took seriously about the very time HWA began to switch to the alien doctrine of Fair Chance.

As a lifelong student of the Bible, Meredith read widely and hungered for truth. The eulogy says that C. Paul researched *many* churches until he settled into the WCG. He had a mind for details and was the best in the "Work" at using scripture after scripture to build powerful arguments for his conclusions, as seen in his Bible Correspondence Course lessons and his publications on Jesus' resurrection and his fascinating *Satan's Great Deception*.

No wonder HWA respected his views and took him seriously. He was formidable, but posed no threat to other leaders since he was a writer, not a public speaker. So, Dr. C. Paul was Armstrong's "resident expert" on Fair Chance, as well as a leading exponent in the early 1950s of the idea that we would become members of the God Family.

Look at the vectors:

In or about 1943 HWA switches from the traditional view of salvation to the alien view of Fair Chance, going so far as to claim that God *blinded* the vast majority while calling only a very few people to his church on this side of the resurrection. This was so contrary to his Quaker roots, Church of God (7th Day) and any church "on the corner."

What a maverick idea!

And, then, in or about 1942, Mr. Armstrong is in contact with Bible expert Dr. C. Paul Meredith and begins very lengthy correspondence and phone conversations with him

that eventually lead to Dr. C. Paul moving to Pasadena, writing ingenious articles and course lessons on Fair Chance and our divine purpose. A careful reading of his other publications shows a familiarity with several of Russell's ideas.

Also, in or about 1971, I personally, while at Ambassador College, Pasadena, was told by Mr. Lawson Briggs, a top researcher who had worked closely with Dr. Meredith, that Dr. C. Paul Meredith had once been in Russell's circles. Lawson was a brilliant man with humility and kindness and spoke highly of C. Paul Meredith. These circles could include Bible Students, Dawn groups, and Layman's Home Missionary groups, JWs or others related to Russell's Work.

I was surprised to hear that our famous Dr. C. Paul Meredith, author of our prestigious Ambassador Bible Correspondence Course, had been influenced by the Jehovah's Witnesses or Russellites of some kind. Then I recalled that I had also found in the Ambassador College library in Pasadena a very large collection of Russell's early *Zion's Watch Tower* newspapers, from about 1880 to 1916!

At the time, I wondered why they were in our library and who would have ever thought to have them there. This unusual discovery means that

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Since we know that HWA did not often credit other authors, such as J.H. Allen, for 'truths' he published in the PT under his own name, we should not think it strange that he would not credit Charles Russell.

Who could he be?

I believe the answer is staring us *smack in the face!*

Just look at the name of the author of the WCG article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?" *Whose* name is there?

And *who* is the editor of the Bible Correspondence Course in 1965 for Lesson 39, which covers in minute detail this alien doctrine of Fair Chance? Who is he?

The answer is Dr. C. Paul Meredith.

Yes, Dr. C. Paul Meredith (1902-1968), early Evangelist-ranked minister and *uncle* to the younger Rod, wrote "Is This the Only Day of Salvation" in the 1958 *PT*, August, p. 19, explaining that this is **not** the only day of salvation. He also wrote the carefully argued *Bible Correspondence Course* Lesson 39 in 1965, marshaling in detail the best defense of this alien doctrine, and wrote other articles on being born at the resurrection into the Family of God. This man was a walking Bible.

Most importantly, read his "obituary and eulogy" written by his nephew, Rod, in 1968 (<http://www.hwalibrary.com/cgi-bin/get/hwa.cgi?action=getmagazine&InfoID=1387723682>).

How Did HWA Find 'Fair Chance'?

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someone with some authority had placed scores of copies of Russellite papers in the AC library. With Lawson's identifying C. Paul as a former member of Russell's circle, I would wager that he knew all about that collection of *Watch Towers* in our library. His writings indicate that he was very well versed in circles that taught the Fair Chance doctrine and the idea of "partaking in the divine nature."

And now it makes perfect sense. With his vast knowledge of the Bible, Dr. Meredith was able to make a very strong case to HWA for "Fair Chance." He may have discussed by letter and phone this alien doctrine with Mr. Armstrong months before Armstrong wrote the 1943 article on Predestination/Fair Chance. It seems likely that Mr. Armstrong had already read some of Russell's works, like the *Divine Plan of the Ages*, and was edging closer and closer to Fair Chance. The encounter with Dr. C. Paul Meredith would have then confirmed him in his convictions and sealed the deal.

In this view Dr. Meredith would have over time collaborated with HWA in modifying Russell's ideas so as to create their own "Armstrong brand" within a broader Russell "circle." They would have transferred into the Russell "circle" while discarding his outdated prophetic views and adding OT law-keeping. In recent times, Bible Students themselves have discarded some of Russell's ideas on prophecy but maintain the two major identifying signs of Russellism: Fair Chance and "participation in the divine nature."

Don't misunderstand. HWA did not consider Russell as his mentor or teacher. But he was influenced by Russell's views as mediated to him by Dr. C. Paul Meredith, especially the major doctrine of Fair Chance and our destiny as divine sons of God.

Over the years Mr. Armstrong polished and tweaked Russell's views so as to better fit his own views on prophecy and the Sabbath, and even on "pyramidology." Armstrong was impressed with the biblical message possibly contained in the Great Pyramid as Russell had published, but wisely chose to keep it backstage, unlike CTR. He and Meredith and others would continue to adopt and adapt Russell's views.

The fact that Mr. Armstrong switched from trying to "save lost souls" to the Fair Chance doctrine of Russell about 1943 shortly after meeting Dr. C. Paul Meredith, a student of Russell's ideas, indicates that a causal connection exists.

Of course, with more research this can be further clarified. Perhaps surviving members from the Oregon churches of about 1940 could be quickly consulted. Old *Bible Advocates* could be searched in case discussions of Fair Chance were circulating. Missing publications by HWA, if found, could help too.

Also, access to the papers of Mr. Armstrong held by *Grace Communion International* would surely reveal the extent of the Russell connection. One imagines that among the personal papers of Mr. Armstrong are Charles Russell's books and *Watch Towers*, as well as letters between HWA and

Dr. C. Paul Meredith discussing how Russell brought much "truth" to light.

Probing this question by *Grace Communion International* would be a generous contribution to thousands of those whose lives have been touched by these ideas. It could help free up many to re-think these issues more clearly.

To review, the growing influence of Charles Russell's ideas on HWA appears to take the following shape:

In the May/June 1938 issue of the *PT*, p. 5, HWA writes an article attempting to show that God has a "Plan" that he is working out through history. The way the article is written strikes me as an indication that he has begun to appreciate some of the writings of Russell, but only on the surface. He uses terms familiar to Russell, such as "plan," "vindication," "object and purpose" (Russell's "object and manner") and "called" and "blinded." And he is clear that the Millennium will be a time where those who *live over into it* will have a chance at salvation. And we know he knew of the Russell circles because in the August/September *PT* for 1940 on p. 7 he shows familiarity with the JWs by writing, "A certain religious sect has been much in the news recently because its members refuse to salute the flag . . ."

But it is not until the 1941 *PT* of May/June that he uses more and more of Russell's terms and concepts. In that issue he writes of "God's Divine Plan," "Restitution" and "harvest of souls" and waxes much on the topics familiar to Russell, such as restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine, the need to be "overcomers," the 7,000-year plan, the

"salvation shall come to the millions."

Here, in 1942, for the first time HWA states strongly, as did CTR, that one is "born again" at the second coming of Christ when the elect become spirit beings. For the very first time HWA publishes that God is not trying to save the world now! He says on pages 8-10: "It will astonish some, but the truth is that the six thousand years of human history so far on earth have NOT constituted the period in God's Plan set aside for saving the whole world. . . . The purpose of this present dispensation is to fit spirit filled Christians, through trial and test through development of Christian character . . . for a position as king or priest in the Kingdom." **Not to save the world now** is his point. Never before, to our knowledge, had Armstrong published such unique ideas, doctrines so alien to the church on the corner! This point is pure Russell.

Then suddenly in 1943 HWA booms out the teachings of CTR on Fair Chance. It is in the November/December issue of the *PT* on page 8ff. A full-blown article detailing it all: "Predestination, Does the Bible Teach It?" It is not just about predestination, but about WHY God predestines some to be "called" now and others to remain "blind" as bats until they die and are resurrected for their first real chance at salvation. Those called now will be born again at the Coming of Jesus Christ and will serve as kings and priests during the Millennium and will then teach those unsaved dead who are made alive in their physical bodies to get their first real chance at the Great White Throne Judgment.

This is revolutionary! No other Armstrong article or letter or publication boldly proclaimed such an alien idea! Wonder what the Eugene, Oregon, church members and those in the Church of God (7th Day) circles thought had happened to HWA!

But, there it is for all to see to this day. A huge SWITCH. True, for a few years the leaven of Russell had been rising in Armstrong's teachings, but now it was there for all who had eyes to see. Of course, HWA salted it with his own ideas by insisting it would be commandment keepers who would form the elect of God and that the unsaved would arise at the end of the thousand years, not *during* it as CTR thought.

Conversations with Church of God folk who knew HWA in these early years indicate that, until shortly before 1943, Armstrong taught that the unsaved dead would be resurrected "during" the Millennium, exactly as Russell believed. This is a telltale sign that he had been studying Russell. Richard Nickels reveals:

"The Conns and Bobbie Fisher cite a 1940s incident that they vividly recall. Mr. Armstrong had at first thought that all of the dead would be resurrected during the Millennium. A woman named Belle Rogers set Armstrong straight when she pointed out the scripture in Revelation 20 about the resurrection after the Millennium" (<http://www.giveshare.org/library/hwa/hwabio.html>).

Over the next 10 years Fair Chance and the

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Wonder what the Eugene, Oregon, church members and those in the Church of God (7th Day) circles thought had happened to HWA!

"appearing" of Christ to rule on the earth, and of immortal Christians over mortals who will gain salvation then during the Millennium.

By September/October 1941 HWA sounds even more like Russell as he discusses God's Plan to build "character" (a favorite point of CTR). Like Russell, he refers to Satan having 6,000 years to rule mankind, but the seventh thousand years will be the time of God's saving mankind. He argues that God is "fair." And, like Russell, he says there are two classes of Christians now, those worthy of the "high calling" who will escape the Tribulation and those who will have to go through it. He refers to "Jehovah" at one point. *But, still, there is no mention of the Fair Chance for the unsaved dead and no hint whatsoever of our divine destiny as members of God's family.*

Finally, HWA makes the leap. In 1942 in the *PT* of August/September he writes "What Is the Purpose Being Worked Out Here Below?" and "Hitler's Thousand Year Plan." Both of these articles are flush with Russell's ideas and expressions. For example, he writes that some are "called during this dispensation," "vindication of God's laws and ways," "the object and purpose of his Plan," the "Christian life is a training ground . . . a high calling," so that later

Why Did HWA Not Tell Us?

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“divine nature” would be more and more clarified and explained. As early as 1944 and again in 1946, *The Plain Truth* expressed a higher and higher understanding of the purpose and destiny of Christians. These articles asked “Why You Are Alive?” and answered that God is creating the highest possible beings, those with spiritual character, and that these immortal beings will be much higher than the angels.

By the early 1950s this idea will rise to the level of what Charles Taze Russell proclaimed way back in *Zion’s Watch Tower* of December 1881:

“Thus we have a family of Gods, Jehovah being our father, and all his sons being brethren and joint-heirs: Jesus being the chief, or first born.”

Compare Russell’s words above to those below from HWA in the *PT* of May 1957, p. 19:

“In the God Family there is the Father. Jesus Christ is called the Son of God, and we can become Sons of God. There is a Father and a Son—a family relationship That is the very purpose of God, to reproduce Himself.”

The *Good News* and *Plain Truth* magazines in the 1950s–1970s hit this topic often with such statements as: “We are to become God” and “Teach other people how to become God” (*The Good News*, October 1964, pp. 16-18).

But why did Mr. Armstrong and Dr. C. Paul Meredith want to keep this connection to Russell secret forever? It could be that Dr. Meredith never told HWA that he got Fair Chance from reading Russell, but this seems unlikely because the *Divine Plan of the Ages* was too well known for Mr. Armstrong to have missed it in his studies. Surely Dr. Meredith and he discussed the book.

Clearly, HWA admitted in the 1953 article that he had read Russell’s ideas.

Also, it seems Russell’s grand vision of God’s Divine Plan influenced HWA to write in similar terms of God’s having a great plan as found in his *Mystery of the Ages*.

No, it appears to me that the connection to Russell was kept very quiet because by 1943 Russell was long dead, and his Bible Student Movement was eclipsed by the infamous Jehovah’s Witnesses headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. There was no way that HWA wanted to be associated with that group under the firm control of usurpers who had mutated Russell’s autonomous Bible Student groups into an authoritarian dogmatic sect.

Plus, these were not Sabbath commandment keepers like the Church of God (7th Day). Mr. Armstrong would not recognize them as part of the line of the “true church” stretching back to New Testament times as he thought Dugger and Dodd had laid out in their *History of the True Church*.

See Armstrong’s dilemma? How could he admit that he got the two *most important* doctrines in the entire church, in the entire Bible, from circles around the JWs? Sure, Russell was *never* a JW, but, once Armstrong got tainted with that connection, he knew that the WCG would be branded forever as a radical “cult.”

At all cost, he would wish that connection to remain **hidden**. No credit is given to Charles T. Russell in WCG literature. No mention of his great Work forming truth-seeking Bible Students in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Not even a “thank-you” to Dr. C.P. Meredith for his role in helping HWA with these new doctrines appears thus far in my research.

In 1953 HWA feels it is necessary for him to publish an article denying that he had gotten his special truths from Russell. Obviously, some suspected a connection. I must conclude that Mr. Armstrong wanted to *hide* his profound connection to Russell’s circles, even though he clearly borrowed the Fair Chance doctrine and the Hundred Year Period idea from Charles Taze Russell’s publications or followers.

Stop and think. HWA always explained how he came into the Sabbath and Feasts. He explains how he was baptized. How he found out about the Church of God (7th Day). It is just plain odd that he never once tells us HOW he found the Fair Chance doctrine! He never discusses how he came into this “truth.” The one doctrine that is so very important to him he never gives us even a HINT at when and how it was given to him. The silence is so deafening that one could conclude that Mr. Armstrong thought that Russell was so brilliantly persuasive that he must deliberately conceal any trail that could lead people to his works, since they also contain “dangerous errors,” as HWA wrote in 1953 (similar terms are used in the *PT* by others when hinting that there are circles that have similar truths on Fair Chance).

Out of the blue in 1943 Mr. HWA reverses his position on salvation and switches to Fair Chance. See it for yourself in the PT of November/December 1943.

But one red flag could not be deleted. Out of the blue in 1943 Mr. HWA reverses his position on salvation and switches to Fair Chance. See it for yourself in the *PT* of November/December 1943. That fork in the road *could not be hidden* because the *PTs* before 1943 preached “saving souls.” It flags you to a stop.

Future researchers of this topic will uncover more about the influence of good Dr. C. Paul Meredith on WCG doctrine. But even now we can find more clues to his peppering the church with Russell’s creative ideas. We have noted that, over 50 years before the *PT* started, Russell writes of the destiny of true Christians to become partakers of the “divine nature” and to be like Christ “for we shall see him as he is.” As we saw earlier, Russell writes in the *ZWT* of December 1881 that Christians will become Gods in the Family of God! Read this and marvel:

“Our high calling is so great, so much above the comprehension of men, that they feel that we are guilty of blasphemy when we speak of being ‘new creatures’—not any longer human, but ‘partakers of the divine nature.’ When we claim on the scriptural warrant, that we are begotten of a divine nature and that Jehovah is thus our father, *it*

is claiming that we are divine beings—hence all such are Gods. Thus we have a family of Gods, Jehovah being our father, and all his sons being brethren and joint-heirs: Jesus being the chief, or first-born.”

Once Dr. Meredith is on staff in the late 1940s, the *PT* and *Good News* teach this idea of becoming “divine” more and more clearly as the years go by. Dr. C. Paul Meredith played a key role in elevating this doctrine to center stage. In the Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 8, p. 16, we read in words so similar to Russell:

“When God’s Spirit emanating from the very person of God enters into a man, it IMPREGNATES that man WITH the VERY LIFE OF GOD—it plants within that man or woman the divine nature of God, to develop the very character of God, until we, through His Spirit, BECOME LIKE GOD—until we THINK AS GOD THINKS—until we see things with the same attitude as God sees them, and we act as God acts—yes, until WE BECOME GOD, even as Christ is now very God—born MEMBERS OF THE GOD FAMILY WHICH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . being ‘born again!’”

Other remnants of Russell’s ideas are sprinkled in WCG literature. A careful reading will find the use of Russell’s favorite terms like “ransom” for the sacrifice of Christ and “vindication” and “plan” and building “character” throughout Meredith’s and Armstrong’s writings. Russell believed that the body of Jesus disappeared in the tomb, and that Jesus was raised as a “spirit” who could put on different clothes and “looks” but was not flesh and bone. Dr. C. Paul Meredith conveys very similar ideas in his article “What Will You Be Like in the

Resurrection?” in the May 1957 *PT*, p. 21, *The Good News*, May 1952, p. 3; and in the *PT* of March, 1957, p. 21. Look at these unique ideas taught by Charles Russell that Dr. Meredith and, perhaps,

HWA and others inserted into WCG publications:

■ Jesus is the son of God, but that sonship began at his birth in Mary by the holy spirit, not before his birth in eternity, although he then was preexistent as the Logos.

■ Jesus was raised in a spirit body. His human body was completely transformed into spirit. It could appear as a human, but, like our glorified future heavenly body, it was not flesh and bone as mainline Christianity teaches.

■ We are saved NOT by the death of Jesus. We are saved by the LIFE of Jesus. Romans 5:10 was emphasized. We are justified by his death, saved by his life, meaning that the resurrected Jesus lives in us, enabling us to qualify, and meaning that Jesus himself qualified by living a perfect human life.

■ Very low Christology when speaking of Jesus. The Logos emptied itself fully. Jesus had no divine power of his own. The Father who dwelled in him did the works. In fact, Jesus could have sinned but he yielded to God and overcame so that he could qualify as the future King, be resurrected, etc.

■ Adam was not made immortal. Adam would have died naturally. He could have eaten of the tree of immortality, but did not. We all die as Adam,

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