

## 931113 Being Cooperative in Church Unity HLH SB CA

It's been a number of years since I've been here.

I've been twice to Sun City since you left a previous building and came to this one.

I think I know more people there than I remember here, partly because a number are related to those who work in Pasadena.

Since Mr. Seifak reflected a bit on life, I would only have one apology to make to him.

I did not teach him diving.

I do say now that learning to swim and therefore also the arts of diving, where and when is a very important matter because no small number of young people, children in particular, cease to live to the age that any of you are because they've made innocent mistakes.

They didn't know how to respond.

And one of the most important things that little children need to learn and adults as well is to remain calm and not get excited if they think they have a problem in the water.

That comes, of course, from familiarity with it, but familiarity should also go hand in hand with the rest of the information that we should have as we grow up and realize, as any sailor does, that the beautiful ocean can also be a grave.

We're very pleased that Mr. Seifak has been able to accomplish what he has done all these years.

I certainly say he stayed on the straight and narrow.

It would be hard to get very far from that in his situation.

And we've been pleased, I think, the church that is knowing him and his wife and family, his parents.

I've been very grateful for what they have meant in terms of stability, which leads me to the introduction that I will present today to a topic, an introduction that is perhaps more important than the topic itself if you listen carefully to what I'm saying.

We are here because the church was asked by Jesus Christ when he was addressing the father to be one, and in being one, we realize there is a purpose in that.

Any group of people that divide and scatter cannot do the work they should.

If we roll back time, we will discover that in the last century, a large group of people in the 1830s, beginning in 1831, were being called out of various denominations in the Christian world to hear a message presented by a prosperous farmer who had become a minister, a person of Baptist background to my recollection, and he was commenting on things in prophecy aspects about the return of Jesus Christ that he had not perhaps dwelt on earlier, and it became very important to him, and this became known historically as the Second Advent Movement.

A large number of people were disappointed in 1844, which was the second date he thought events might occur on the basis of an unfortunate misunderstanding in reading Daniel 8, but that's beside the point today.

Out of those people who were called and were listening to the important message about the return of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God, there were those who became enamored of certain prophecies that a young lady, Ellen Harman, was receiving certain messages, and there were those who were quite dubious about them.

Ellen Harman later married Mr. White, and is known as Ellen White, from which the Seventh Adventists take their movement.

But among those who did not accept the influence that she had in that movement were groups of people scattered from New England to West Virginia, scattered from Missouri to Michigan, and we know today as people who assembled together at the second year of the Civil War to establish the Churches of God, a name which, while still in fellowship earlier with Adventist people who were enamored of the visions of Ellen White, were found to be in need of organization, and so they gathered together because the majority of people who had been called out at that time had simply gone back to many of the traditions that they had had in terms of how often to observe the Lord's Supper, let us give one illustration, and so customs that the Methodists had were absorbed into the Seventh Adventist movement.

The interesting thing is that these people were called out but had no real organization until the Adventists, as such, organized under that name, not accepting the idea of the name Church of God, which is given in the Scripture, a name which was chosen by those people who concluded that the visions of Ellen White did not have the kind of validity essential for their lives.

I know some very wonderful people in various groups of the Christian world as well as non-Christian, so this is only a background of the story of organization that is important in why we assemble.

I will just make a footnote and then go on and say we have my wife and I, a Hindu family we have known for many years since 1973, we've known a family of Muslims since 1972 that we correspond with nearly every year, our friends the Boutalates who work in archaeology and responsible for the excavations in Syria in which the Foundation has participated are practicing Catholics, a man who was honored by Jews many times and other groups, Christians most certainly, who risked his life more than nine hundred times to rescue Jews and other people from the Germans and the Vichy French in World War II, who delivered these people personally across the border with Switzerland and helped to deliver others into Spain.

This is the Seventh Day Adventist Elder whom I've known since 1956, a man of remarkable character who was honored earlier this year at the Holocaust Memorial Season.

I was there when in Arcadia he received that award, and he is now in his eighties.

We have friends and God is intending to call all people, so what I am saying here is not meant as a criticism in any way.

What I'm getting at is that the churches of God came together to work out their responsibility as individual and local congregations having had no real organization up to 1862 and 1863.

It was in this period of time at the time of the Civil War that perhaps we would say the crisis in the nation mirrored the crisis in the church, and sometimes we don't realize how often this is the case.

The Civil War was tearing the country apart, and the people whom God was calling out to be the foundation of the work that this work now is were being called out of various denominations by William Miller, eighteen centuries after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Those people coming from different backgrounds may have had the view of local congregational autonomy as Baptists do.

Presbyterian or congregational autonomy may have had Episcopal perspectives, as in the Methodist Episcopal Church, for whatever reason they had numerous concepts in the background in terms of church government.

The whole Christian world has never clearly had a perspective on church government.

This is why we have the Catholic and Orthodox worlds as we do, why in the Orthodox movement there are national churches, why in the Protestant movement we actually have denominations named after kinds of government.

That's what a Presbyterian church is, that's what a congregational church is, that's what a Methodist Episcopal Church is, it is a church with a different perspective on government.

I don't know if you've really focused on that, it wasn't particularly doctrine, it was a question of government, because the Protestant Reformation reflected in these groups had to face the question of government at the very time that the crisis between the different Christian perspectives in Europe was occurring, that is, was Mother Church the church, and what do you do if you protest and are indeed separated? Anyway, in the 1860s till the 1930s the church had no clear perspective on government.

The church began to do a publishing work.

In 1931 the churches of God, in fact, had the question of government paramount and they split one centering in Salem, West Virginia, the other in Standberry, Missouri.

What is important is that it was at this time that Mr. Armstrong in the northwest of the United States in Oregon was ordained to the ministry by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God.

Now what is significant, of course, is that that became a very lively branch within the churches of God, and Mr. Armstrong was a participant and was asked to be, in a sense, a leader in the area in the Willamette Valley of the various people who had no resident minister at that time sent to them from Standberry, Missouri.

The bulk of the people in the Willamette Valley in Oregon, in fact, essentially worked with Standberry, Missouri, but many had family members who were following leadership in Salem, West Virginia.

Now when Jesus prayed that the church be won, he certainly meant to see that such as was happening among God's people in 1931 and thereafter should not have to occur.

That would tell you that there was something fundamentally wrong.

The church was asleep in reality and needed to be awakened to its responsibility and be what it ought to be.

I will not go through the history because that's not the purpose of my message today, but I want you to know why you are here and others are not and what you learn because of why you are here.

Crises did not stop in 1931 as they continued, and ultimately the people in the Willamette Valley who were called of Christ through the ministry of Herbert Armstrong as a minister in the Church of God

Seventh Day to start with, and in general a minister who was understood to be in the ministry by both Salem, West Virginia and Standberry, so there's no misunderstanding about that.

Those people began to coalesce in the area of Eugene and support the opportunity to have a radio broadcast, and that broadcast became known as was a kind of religious service such as ours with singing, prayer, I take it, I don't recall ever hearing the earliest scripts.

It was called the Radio Church of God, that it was the Church of God, in other words, on radio as distinct from one meeting in San Bernardino.

The brethren were however meeting in Eugene, Oregon.

There was a center on a religious broadcast, then there was a magazine.

Now in those days, what is interesting, and for a long time since the 1860s, ministers would be involved in the off and on publishing of the Bible Advocate or some other name of the Church's publications.

Later on when radio came, it was not uncommon for the local congregation to support a local radio program.

There was no clear organization in the Churches to unify the efforts of the Church and want you to get to perspective.

So the Eugene Church did support a radio program.

The bulletin that had been published by and essentially a lively publication because of Herbert Armstrong in those days came to be later the good news, but Mr. Armstrong and the Eugene Church continued the publication of the bulletin of the Oregon State Conference of the Churches of God Seventh Day.

Well, there came a time when indeed, despite the cooperation of the brethren with Salem West Virginia, which was the area that Mr. Armstrong felt had the leadership, and we must remember that the leader in the Church up to that time, A. N. Duggar, was the one who was centered in Salem West Virginia.

There were those who didn't like him and those who did, and that was an unfortunate state of affairs.

But nevertheless, that is the way things were in the 1930s.

The 1930s were a state of what we would call spiritual turmoil in the world, just as we had spiritual and military and political turmoil in the world.

As we failed to realize to what extent the Church being made up of people called out of the world goes through similar situations, like the split among the people in the 1860s at the time of the Civil War in the U.S. and all the divisions and confusion at the time of the 1930s, when we had most certainly a world that was not in harmony and was clearly going in the wrong direction that led to World War II.

Anyway, the brethren in the Willamette Valley heard the program and supported it, and there were people who were called in Oregon and Washington, and so the efforts of the Eugene Church came to have significant results in the area, and the magazine was established a month later in support of the program.

It was never intended to be in competition to the Bible advocate of the Churches of God's seventh day, nor was it ever raised as an issue at the time.

What is important to realize, of course, is that even in those days Mr. Armstrong had not truly understood and said so the question of Church government.

That was still a question everywhere among the brethren that are known as the Churches of God, no matter where headquarters were then.

We will not go into the crisis that developed in 1937 and 1938 when, in fact, the Salem West Virginia branch decided to make a decision and terminate the relationship between themselves and the brethren in Mr. Armstrong in the Willamette Valley in Oregon, centered in Eugene, of course.

The Church did not walk away, that is, the Church in Eugene, from the others.

The situation was that they could no longer cooperate, and Salem West Virginia made certain decisions that simply were impossible to fulfill, centered around the question of baptism and what was required of people before you could be baptized, which was simply inappropriate and irresponsible if any minister would have followed such a matter.

There is no statement, no series of things that have to be done before baptism when people have repented and believed Christ's message.

However, what is significant is that this branch of the Church began to do a lively work, and the others were simply scattered.

We have groups in now Idaho, there have been in Israel, West Virginia, the relationship between Standberry and Denver, Colorado is simply an administrative one, they work together because they moved headquarters west, but the churches of God's seventh day were shattered as a result of not having an understanding of the government of God.

What happened, of course, is that Mr. Armstrong came slowly but surely to realize the importance of the rule of Christ over the Church, and how he does it and through whom.

This is not a sermon on Church government, but let me tell you the story of the seventh day Adventist Elder who rescued the many Jews and others from Vichy France in last war.

He was at our home one day, one evening, he and his wife, and he asked, who is the head of the Church? His answer was, in his mind, the answer I was to give him, either some group of people or a single individual.

Well, I said, Jesus Christ is the head of our Church.

No, no, you said, I don't mean that, I mean who is the head of the Church? Well I said, Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and I explained how Jesus Christ works.

And suddenly his eyes since opened, and he said, oh, what you mean is that government in your Church is based on faith.

You actually believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church.

Now of course, if you don't, then you really don't believe what is fundamental to this Church.

Now if Christ, and he is, is the head of the Church, then Christ makes certain decisions.

Now in a family, we do learn that the husband is the head of the wife, or certainly the single parent, mother or father, is the head of the family if there is a loss of one member due to one reason or another.

And the head of the wife is the husband, and the head of every husband is Christ, and the head of Christ is God the Father.

That's clearly stated in the teaching of the New Testament.

Now so we don't misunderstand my premise here, I would like to know of you wives how many of you have been living with a husband who has been perfect while Christ is his head.

Now my wife is not here to raise her hand, so I would like to see, I'd like to meet that man.

All right, you get a point, don't you? We are not perfect, or as a minister, Mr. Norman Myers told me, about a man who wanted to join a perfect Church, he said, well there's no use joining this one, because if you did it wouldn't then continue to be perfect.

Everybody is in this life, that's the goal, be perfect, said Jesus, as your Father in heaven is.

That's the state we should be in, but we wrestle with human nature, in mind and body, thought.

So what is significant in all this is a recognition that even if Christ is which he is, the head of the husband in a family, this does not mean that every husband seeks to please Christ as well as his wife.

Sometimes he seeks to please his wife when he shouldn't, sometimes and very often he seeks to please himself or his boss.

So also we discover that even in the Church we have to face the fact that everyone who has any responsibility in the Church is still a human being, and the government of God must be seen in such a context so that no one person, even an apostle, as in the case of the book of Galatians with respect to Peter and Paul, and remember Peter was the one who was ultimately the responsible person in the group of the twelve.

He was not above them in some other office, but when you have a group such as twelve there has to be a decision maker when there is, let's say, the question of six minds thinking in one direction and six minds thinking in another.

That's just the reality.

The Church is a group of people called out by God the Father and under the jurisdiction and leadership of Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the Church and ultimately of humanity at large.

Our function in the Church is to be submissive to the guidance of Christ.

Christ has the responsibility, and if you please, the problem to get his ideas into the minds of those he is calling.

That's every one of us, and that's also those in the ministry or even for terms of other responsibility in the Church, in the deaconship, men and women.

One of the ways that Christ has, and that which is fundamental to my topic here, is that we should gather together, and in gathering together every week or for that matter at other occasions as in a Bible study, we gather together to learn as a group.

What a Church service is is a learning experience but is not an academic learning experience.

It is a learning experience that involves spiritual and eternal matters, and it occurs on the day that God sent aside that we should rest from our other labors and ideas and focus on what is most important in life.

So we are together here as one group as in every city or community throughout the world where God's people are gathered together.

We are here to learn.

Those who are not here, apart from the question of health, that is, those who have chosen not to have fellowship and be one, are simply not here to learn, and this is as important as what you may be learning.

It is more important, in fact, because the unity of the Church is more important than any one teaching or doctrine.

Jesus prayed that the Church may be one.

Paul wrote that we should have as a goal that we come to the unity of understanding in the faith that represents what Christ wants the Church to be and to know.

The emphasis, therefore, is that we grow toward understanding as we abide in and remain loyally a part of the Church, and as we grow together toward the unity of the faith because you know we all start from different backgrounds with different things we learn.

Some things we never learned, we must learn, other things we must unlearn.

But what is not in question is that we should be one working together under the leadership of Christ to fulfill the function of the Church both to announce the message and to be trained for our responsibilities when Jesus Christ establishes the kingdom of God over the nations, which in itself is a training for further responsibilities after the thousand years when we deal with all the people who will be resurrected who have lived and died without truly understanding what we now are privileged to know.

Mr. Armstrong knew correctly, even if he didn't understand some things about Church government, that ultimately what holds the brethren together is that we have the love of God which leads to the fulfilling of His law as distinct from sin that has afflicted the world.

Mr. Tkach recently pointed this up.

It should not be a question of do you believe this, do you believe that, or do you believe something else, and if you don't we have nothing to do with you.

Americans have a tendency, I don't say other people do not, but Americans have a tendency that represents perhaps one extreme.

You meet a stranger, and if you discover that you agree on the things you talk about, you can be friends, but if you find that the stranger disagrees with you, most Americans simply discontinue any possibility of friendship.

Americans want to be friends with those with whom they can agree.

That is a trait of character.

Now there is a people in the world that is a kind of opposite, and I don't say they're the only ones, and then there are those in between.

They are the Greeks.

When the Greeks meet you, you're another Greek, let us say, and you agree, well you're like friends that they have.

And if you disagree, then the two Greeks want to really be friends and discuss things, because to a Greek an argument is very interesting and stimulating and important.

It does the opposite in American minds.

Now I'm saying this because this is one of the fundamental characteristics that's involved in the present matter being presented to the church.

Dr. Stavrinidis, who is Greek, presents it in terms of logic and argument, a discussion.

If you had a discussion with him for an hour and come to no conclusion, you might be like the Englishman who did and said, well, what have we accomplished? He was disillusioned that he came to no agreement.

Dr. Stavrinidis said it was a wonderful hour.

We were able to discuss every possibility.

And they're still both friends, but for the one, it was delightful.

Now this is an important thing to have us think about.

The church today has a responsibility to consider that whenever anything needs to be discussed and presented, we have a responsibility to be here and to examine the scriptures as those in Berea did when anything was presented.

This has been the teaching of the church for a long time.

Mr. Armstrong said, you know, not only to blow the dust off the Bibles you didn't use, he said, open your Bibles and look in it for yourself and see what it does say.

Don't assume because, he said on TV or on radio or wrote it in the magazine, that just because we said it, it was so.

He said, on the other hand, if you do discover that this is indeed a group of people or a broadcast or a publication that Christ is using to do a work, you do have a responsibility to pay attention and to give special heed and to most carefully examine what is being said.

Now when people come every Sabbath, they are able to hear what Christ is bringing to the attention of the church, whether the ministry clearly understands what Christ is seeking to do or not.

That's beside the point.

The point is that when you are here, you're in a position to listen.

If you decide this is not where you want to be, then you're not going to be here, and you won't be in a position to listen, and you will have severed your relationship.

Therefore you see in the long run, it is especially important that we recognize in a time when there are individuals who, for varied reasons that need not be discussed here, have decided to walk away from their responsibility that they may have had in the church.

If a person or a minister concludes that Mr. Tkach doesn't understand something that the church had previously understood, he has a different perspective, and Mr. Tkach is apparently not going to change his mind on something, there are those few who have decided that therefore they should leave.

Because as one said in a publication, it became apparent that Christ was not going to change certain things in the church because the person responsible, or Mr. Tkach in this case in particular, doesn't understand it.

And if Christ is not going to change it, and if something that this person thought be an error is going to remain in the teaching of the church, then he decided that he would now have to leave the church and do what Christ was unable or unwilling to do in the church.

Now the logic of this, no, logic isn't the word, is it? The illogic is that anyone who thinks this way has to assume that the one whom Christ leads always has to be right.

But what do you do when Mr. Armstrong examined Mr. Armstrong and found it was wrong on this point of that? Or what does a husband do when he finds that the decision he made last year was not the best decision? He should make another one.

Just because a man makes a wrong decision or a children's mother, if she's having to be responsible directly for the home, makes the wrong decision, you don't wake up to family.

You work out in accordance with the family responsibility as we work things out spiritually in accordance with the church.

Now when we do, then we discover exactly what Paul is saying when he said, we are to grow toward the unity of the faith till we come to that state.

We don't, we can argue in the delightful Greek sense over Greek food, there are some people who argue and it comes to blows.

I don't know whether it's the Greek food that makes Greek arguments easier to take, but you get a sense that different people approach things quite differently.

And of course this has to do with personalities.

There was a man who was a former editor of the plain truth, now no longer with the work.

I don't think I agreed with him on anything I discussed for years.

Now that doesn't mean we didn't have areas of agreement.

But the most remarkable thing was we found our discussion was always pleasant.

He was ultimately a British background.

And we could agree to disagree and there was no problem whatsoever.

Yet I know of another person who was no longer with us, with whom I knew that I should not even enter into a discussion, because there would be no possibility of even tolerating the discussion further than knowing that we would not agree.

That is, there are personality differences and you will find that to be the case.

You can't discuss everything with everybody.

So we learn that there are some people who can take discussions much more widely than others.

Two Jews are constantly discussing, you know, the old proverb, two Jews, three opinions.

I was at Sinai with a former governor general who ruled the Sinai in the 1956 war with Egypt when the British and the French were involved, you remember, over the Suez Canal.

We were visiting when the governor general after 1967 was there.

This was in 1971.

The first thing I learned, you had two governor generals and they both disagreed on where Mount Sinai was, even as they were at the foot of it.

Well, it illustrates a point.

Now they got along all right.

It was a delightful discussion.

I think one of them was correct.

The former governor general major wrote him, in any case, we recognize the reality of things that no husband and wife make or come to decisions and views if there is any open discussion with which they will always concur.

Now there are some who just go along with either one or the other mate.

That depends on the situation, but we're not talking about people who really don't exercise responsibility.

It is important to realize that, and I take the family as an illustration, because sometimes we fail to realize that Christ is the head of the husband as Christ is the head of the church.

And don't assume that because he's the head of the church, the church is always perfect or reverse if he's the head of a family, that the family is always imperfect, that Christ can do one thing right and not the other.

The answer is we should grow to become like him till we all come to the same stature.

We're not in terms of how many feet or inches tall you are, but stature in terms of responsibility.

There are people who do have stature before others.

No one can doubt that President Lincoln has had in his day and most certainly has achieved historically world stature, probably the most important single president we ever had.

There will be differences of opinion on that.

But if you were to read, for instance, his second inaugural address to the Congress in 1865, when Congress was being addressed, the election was 60 and then 64, so the inauguration was 65, you will find a distressingly tragic situation in the nation yet, but it was nearly over, was being addressed by a mind that probably was closer to the mind of Christ and the mind of the Church of God than any other president has ever expressed.

President Lincoln was not a member of a church, the only president who was not a member of a religious denomination, and he was looking for it.

In fact, the church came to become what it was in his day, but it was so small.

The church was in fact, when he grew up, not really viable except for individual people.

It didn't become viable until 1862 to 63, and in the midst of war, their voice was hardly heard.

And that's why he never did find the church in his day.

But leadership ultimately for men and women is a question of stature and character.

We have remarkable men and women in the world.

We have remarkable men and women in the world of the Bible.

The goal in any family should be to seek that relationship, which leads to harmony, and to the goals and success for which, if they're right goals, the family is established.

That's true even in life itself.

We have a responsibility.

My wife and I, since both her parents and mine are deceased, all having been born in the last century, and in reality it's hard to realize both hers and mine would all be a hundred years or older.

That was another generation that is gone.

We have a responsibility in that sense as the elders in our family toward our children and our grandchildren, and we have a responsibility to set an example and to give advice as is appropriate without being meddlesome.

So also does any parent to the child or the husband who's the head of the wife in a family.

But in a local congregation we have responsible people, deacons, deaconesses, elders, and ministers of various responsibilities in the church.

We are to grow, to come, to understand whether doctrine or other things, but we cannot do that if we're not here.

If Christ is governing and guiding the church, which He is, therefore to be here is very important.

If there is a question that is something surprisingly new, what we need to do is remember what elders and not elders in this case, but maybe older people in that sense, but people said of a minister who left.

Why did he leave us when we needed him most? It doesn't matter who such people may be by name, but it was interesting to realize that when people assume that Christ cannot rule the church, then we discover that they leave the flock.

Instead of being there to support the brethren through the emotional trauma that some have, but through study, through whatever it may be the situation, our purpose is to remember that God has sent Christ to call through the ministry and through your own personal relationships other people to come to see what we do.

Some of us come from a secular, not a religious background.

Some may come from a non-Christian background.

Some are Jews.

We have some Africans in Nigeria who come from a Muslim background.

We have some people, in this case a lovely young lady who's since married, Fong, who came from a Chinese non-Christian background in Thailand.

She came to be acquainted with a young man who was a graduate of Ambassador College and different from other Thais, Fong is a Chinese name, she's a Thai Chinese background.

She asked a young man what he stood for, what made him different from others.

He explained, and so she wanted to meet the people that essentially made him different.

I'll leave it at that because she didn't get the big picture yet.

And she met a number of people at the Festival of Tabernacles in 1988 when I was there, and she became interested in what the church was teaching and began to read the Bible for the first time and discovered in there what the Bible is all about.

She has since become a member.

They have established a school in Northern Thailand for the teaching of English and are prospering quite well in a country where the teaching of English is very important.

I think that perhaps that's a lesson that we can't learn in our society today as easily as the Thais can learn it.

We have a large population of underprivileged people who have not absorbed the English language that is necessary if they're going to live here and work and prosper, but that's beside the point now.

It's a separate subject that should not be overlooked, however.

We'll hear as a group of people to examine the information that the church presents.

Now from time to time, there will be new things come to light.

There was a time Mr. Armstrong didn't understand church government, then a time when he did begin to understand it, and the church did.

There was a time that certain things in the Bible were unknown or unclear and a time to correct some things.

God has never said that he would give us all truth at once.

The spirit of God leads God's people into all truth.

The problem, of course, is that some of us are old and die before we find it all, but that is not the issue.

The issue is the state of mind of your attitude or, if you use the figurative expression, your heart, the state of mind of your attitude.

So the important thing beside meeting here today, and regularly so, and holding to the unity of the church that is governed by Christ, note that because there are people who make an issue of that

question when, in fact, their church is not governed by Christ, the next important thing is your attitude.

You must have not merely open-mindedness.

Now there are some people who have mistakenly said the church taught that we should keep our minds closed to things that the church didn't teach.

I suppose that they think that is the case because they did, not because they were told to.

The church says, or should say if it doesn't, you are to guard the door of your mind in terms of what you allow in.

You are not to shut the doors of your mind to allow nothing in.

You are to guard the doors of your mind to know whether the message is the message of the serpent representing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or the messenger of the tree of life.

You do have a text as it happens today that Abraham didn't.

We call it the Bible.

I have here the Old Testament as only the Jews have it without the New Testament.

We have a situation where we must recognize that there are all kinds of voices out, and I don't mean that you hear in here.

I mean all kinds of voices that speak in print and magazines and newspapers and other publications on television, radio, through the movies, whatever.

Many messages, many messengers, all sorts of ideas.

It is therefore important that you guard what it is that you decide to allow in, and you must recognize that that responsibility is that you do so in connection with what the Scripture is telling you.

That is, to examine what you hear by what the Scripture is clearly making plain, and to recognize the fact that you should pay special attention if the Church of God, which you have come to recognize as God's Church, is speaking when there are things you may not have understood before, or the Church concludes, should be reexamined and or corrected.

When it comes from certain sources, you may want to be very much on guard.

When it comes to other sources, you may not need to be.

You will have to learn how to guard the doors of your mind, but you don't do it by throwing everything open and letting any and every voice come in, and you don't guard the door of your mind if you decide to close the door and lock it, then you're not any longer on guard duty.

You see, to guard the door of your mind means you are examining information, and you are listening, and you pay attention in accordance with your perceptions of the responsibility of those who are speaking.

When somebody in the ministry proposes to explain things unrelated to the ministry, you may not find the evidence as satisfactory as when that person is dealing with those things for which he is directly responsible.

You learn in every field of study or every area of thinking or practice that there are those people who are more or less skilled and those who are speaking from experience and knowledge and training.

When I read a writer who says, scientists tell us, you know what those words mean, scientists tell us, those three words tell me a lot about the person writing.

The first point is he's not a scientist.

Therefore, I treat what he says with far greater care in terms of what I allow to enter my mind than when a professional scientist is speaking, like the crippled British author who is certainly a genius in his field who has written on the question of time in a book that was on the bestseller list a few years ago, Stephen Hawking, is that his first name? I think so.

I don't want to get him mixed up with Stephen King.

Someday the knowledge of Stephen Hawking will surprise Stephen King.

It will be a horror story, you know, when something happens to the universe and God intervenes.

That's going to be a shock.

Now you realize in reality that there are people who know more or less about a topic and the more that a person is respected in his field, the more it pays you to pay attention and let's say keep the door wider open if it is an area over which you have some control.

Now if you are not trained in an area, you need to recognize how much information you simply are prepared to pay attention to because you may not have a way of judging it.

If Paul was speaking and they didn't have any scripture to test him, they simply had no way of knowing.

And you know, when I hear some people speaking in certain fields, I have no way of knowing.

Therefore, I don't assume that I have to accept what is said or reject.

In the first place, I have no authority to reject and no competence to accept.

I would have to merely say a person who has this kind of training has drawn the conclusion.

Whether I find it later to be true or false will remain for the future.

But you have to recognize that when theologians speak about the nature of God, which is of course where I am leading to, theologians are an interesting group of people having debated this subject now for at least 18 centuries.

And so that tells me a little something, that after all this time there are undoubtedly theologians who know more than others do.

But there is no consensus absolutely among theologians.

That's just the reality.

Now for you to assume that you can make a pronouncement where even the ministry in the church is told that it was not trained as theologians are, I'm talking about the church of God, the seventh day or ourselves, it doesn't matter, any group, no.

Our training at Ambassador College, unless we did other training, was essentially a training in biblical studies, which is not necessarily the equivalent of theology at all.

And theologians are not always trained in philosophy.

So I would only tell you to start with, you have a responsibility before Christ on any topic, this one included, to decide first that if you think you don't agree, or if you think you do, you have the same ultimate decision to make, and that is to stay with the church where Christ is head.

Then you have a responsibility to examine your attitude, because some people are like a few that I know, every new and novel thing is the latest thing they accept.

And then there are those who decide that everything new and different couldn't be right, and both are making a fundamental mistake.

What you have to do is examine both the kind of mind you have, are you entertained by the new and the novel, or are you somebody who doesn't like to give thought to anything that can disrupt quietness in your life? And in addition to that, you need to examine your attitude toward leadership and toward the church and toward Christ, because He's looking, and God, the Father in heaven, is looking to see what you are, not necessarily what you come to believe, but to see what you are, because God doesn't ask you, non-theologian that you are, to try to prove every point that may take theological skills where the Bible gives no clear and explicit answer.

God does not expect you to make a decision pro or con in an area over which you have no control and for which no scripture or no intellectual area of theology has come to your attention adequately to make a decision.

You simply decide that you cannot make a decision.

You don't decide that since I don't know, I'm going to make one or the other, because there's a 50-50 chance you're wrong, and if both are incorrect, there's a 100 percent chance you're wrong.

You don't have to decide everything.

Do you think you have to decide everything in the world that comes to your attention? Of course not.

I don't decide everything just because I hear in music things that I like or don't like as much.

I can't decide that I must make pronouncements in every area of art.

That's a very marvelous verse in Philippians here that was read to you in the Sermonette, chapter 4, verse 8.

Yes, we should examine things that are true, that are honest, that are just, that are pure, that are lovely, that are of good report.

If we're going to be judged for virtue, if we're going to be praised for the decisions we make, we should think on these things.

But that doesn't mean you can all come to conclusions.

I think that's something most of us recognize, but we haven't really given some serious thought to that.

You can't come to conclusions on everything because if you do, you probably are hasty of mind not having adequate facts.

In the question before us of the nature of God, there is a tendency among theologians to guard their turf and to imply that the Bible says less about it than it does.

Among philosophers, there is always the feeling that we philosophers know the answers ultimately because we have the tools to judge whether the conclusions of theologians or other people would be right on the basis of reasoning and logic.

But that ultimately rests strangely on whether your premise is correct.

Reasoning may lead to logical absurdities if the premise is not correct.

Let's understand some things here so we know this is more than just a topic we are on.

There are certain areas in which there is more than merely belief.

There is practice that is involved.

You have to recognize that there is government in the home and government in the church.

There is also government in the nation, and when Christ returns there is going to be government in the world far above what the UN has, which really isn't world government.

There will be decisions made as to what in the church should be taught and what should not publicly.

There will be decisions made in the home as there are also in the nation.

We live in the state of California in which there are certain decisions made with respect to driving.

Now I don't agree with every rule in driving.

I agree with most of them, and I think California comes closest to the divine concept.

It says, if you read carefully, there is a principle governing what you do that comes very close to the law, to the statement which says you shall love the other driver as yourself.

California's principles are far better than many which have not been enunciated in other areas because in California we've had to define those principles or we wouldn't be here in some cases.

We would be by the sign of a cross somewhere.

We have to respect certain things, and as long as the laws of men do not conflict with the laws of God, we should then obey the laws of men or submit to the penalty if there is a conflict.

That's the general principle and teaching of the church.

That's the responsibility of the ministry.

We should respect the authority in the church as to what is being taught.

Now I will say there were times when the church had a certain teaching on the historic background of Passover in the Old Testament where I had the freedom to explain what the church now teaches.

And there was a time when the church did not have that same freedom and I did not discuss it from the pulpit.

I would tell anybody what verses were involved and why some people drew this conclusion on the basis of these scriptures, why some people drew another conclusion, let's say the church's official position, on the basis of these scriptures.

It is your responsibility to examine the evidence.

It is mine, as a minister, at least to tell you what the official position is, not to hide it from you, because I don't have that problem happily.

The sermon isn't long enough, so I don't even have to address that.

There's only a few minutes left.

But I would be, I think that's what every minister has a responsibility for, that is you shouldn't wake up some morning and realize the church's understanding is way out here and your minister has said nothing about it.

In the home, children have a responsibility to conform to their parents' basic decisions and a wife to her husbands and the husband to Christ's leadership here.

And of course, one of the things he should learn is to love his wife and to be concerned for her.

So we recognize we have responsibility to conform if there are things we must do so long as those things do not alter our relationship to Christ.

Let us take an example in the Bible, Acts chapter 2, verse 1, where we have just such a thing.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees incorrectly understood Pentecost.

The Sadducees incorrectly understood Pentecost.

In each case, one had certain truth that the other lacked, the other had certain truth, but also a certain error.

The Pharisees were correct when they said that a chief of the first harvest was never to be cut outside of the days, I'm sorry, let me correct that, was never to be cut after the days of unleavened bread.

The Sadducees allowed it.

The Sadducees said that the Sabbath referred to was the seventh day of the week.

The Pharisees said it was the first holy day.

Now this is not a time to discuss that, but it led to something in the year that Christ died.

He died on a Wednesday, according to the official teaching of the church, even though other people are getting ideas.

He died, and in that year the first holy day was a Thursday.

Therefore, the Wavesheaf was cut Thursday night in accordance with the tradition of the Pharisees, and therefore day one was Friday and day fifty was a Friday.

The Sadducees insisted that the sheaf should not have been cut till the close of the Sabbath, and Sunday was therefore the first of the fifty days, and Sunday should have been Pentecost.

So in that year Pentecost was observed officially in the community on Friday and on Sunday, and so the text of Scripture says, and this is what it means, and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, it did not fully come until that Sunday, even though it had already officially arrived in accordance with those who sat in Moses' seat on the previous Friday.

It would have been the responsibility of the community to respect the situation.

Luke respects the situation by defining the fact, just as Jesus said, the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat and do what they tell you to do, even though their works may show that they don't even do some things themselves that they say.

So Acts 2.1 is an illustration of what can happen administratively.

Now we don't have such a problem today, but in that day you would have been expected to pay respect to the authority so that if your belief was indeed that Sunday was the correct day, which it happens to have been in this case.

You would have had a responsibility to do that even if you reframed from certain things on the previous Friday out of respect to those who had defined it as Pentecost.

Now that's an extreme case, but it's a reality.

That can happen.

Happily, we have not such a division in the Church like that, but we learn that we may have to, shall we say, cooperate and be submissive in areas as long as nobody tells you, you can't keep Pentecost on Sunday.

Now when they tell you, you can't keep it on Sunday, which is the correct day, and if you try to do so, you're going to be expelled, let them expel you.

That's not your responsibility anymore.

If the Church decides that what is right is wrong and that you're not even allowed to do it, that's not our problem today.

The Sadducees kept it correctly and were allowed to.

Now that's an important distinction.

In the question of the nature of God, the Church has not dealt with any discipline in connection with the subject and doesn't intend to.

It deals with discipline in connection with attitudes, whether you decide to leave the Church.

Both individuals who were prominent in the Church for years and have now worked together in a community not this far away, left the fellowship of the Church before any discipline was involved.

They made one made a decision to leave, the other made a decision to incorporate while within the fellowship as a competitive organization, just so you know what can happen.

I'm making this plain because in reality we should learn that there can be differences of opinion.

Don't assume that Mr. Tkach cannot readjust his thinking in some areas.

There was a time he was far more strict than I might have been over makeup, and now he has essentially released you from responsibility.

I'll tell you why.

Let me just take a moment of time, I can finish it with this, because the principal governs all of these things.

There was a time, if you wore makeup, you were worldly because nobody in the Churches as a whole did unless they were.

It was at that time that when makeup came into the Churches, not just the Church of God, Radial Church of God, that controversy did arise, and makeup was one of the things that tended to demarcate whether you were worldly or not, and it was a controversy in the Church.

Now, I came into the Church at a time when some women did and some did not before there was any decision, and I made a decision.

My mother never wore makeup, and I will say plainly you would never have caught her wearing makeup, but she was born in the last century, and different people have different perspectives.

I decided that this was God's Church, and I was willing to sit down by a woman who wore it as well as one who didn't.

That was not a matter between me and them.

That was the matter between them and Christ.

So there was a time when there was a firm decision against, then permission, then a decision against perhaps less firm, but Mr. Tkach administered it dutifully, sometimes I think more firmly, than I might have, because I had originally made a decision in my own mind that I could understand those who did and those who didn't.

There are some women who think they actually do look better, and I think Mr. Armstrong realized that that was the case, that some women do feel that, and it isn't done out of the other things that can be labeled very negatively in particular vanity.

So today the Church has made a decision, and Mr. Tkach changed his mind.

We decided that makeup shouldn't be the one thing that women have to give up in order to come to the Church to learn that they should be baptized, but that was the practice for a while, so that has been corrected.

By that I mean that the leadership of the Church, just as in any family, can change its perspective as it reexamines matters, and we should learn to be cooperative, and if you say that you don't agree, well you have a responsibility to check your attitude, a responsibility to stay loyal and listen, a responsibility to weigh the question, to examine any such question with the scriptures here, and to recognize that there are indeed some areas over which you will never in this life have adequate control to know fully the answer unless there is clear enough scripture to enable you to arrive at a conclusion.

And as a minister, I have my opinions regarding certain things, whether it be that every little boy in the Church of God must be circumcised or not.

I would say that every Jew who is converted to Christ has a right, as a Jew, to have a son circumcised.

The Church teaches that circumcision is not required for salvation.

The Church has generally had a positive view in this country, less so by the nature of medical science in Britain.

But if you don't know what the answer is for you, you should check out what is, in fact, the evidence and know what you're doing, because when you make a decision medically for health or any other area, you become responsible.

Sometimes we cannot make a decision.

We simply don't have all the facts.

Then we submit to the teaching of the Church.

If you can't decide for yourself clearly what the Bible is saying, you do have a responsibility to tell your children what the Church's official teaching is, tell them why you can't come to a conclusion because you have no skill to enable you to come to such a conclusion, or if you do, this is why you agree.

Or if you don't, I have sent a paper in, let us say, you, as a parent, might say, and I did not understand their answer.

We just simply have to say that there can be differences of opinion.

No, I think if we look at that, we don't have to do what some people want to do.

And that is to decide that the Church is the Church on the basis of a single doctrine and set of on the basis of the love of God, which is made possible through us by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

There are some visitors here from the Gardena Church.

I had discussed the nature of God already yesterday evening with one of them, and I decided not to focus on that topic here because it's something appropriately that should be developed locally.

And I felt I should give some fundamental background, and I hope what I have covered here sets out the principle, some of which we were discussing yesterday evening, the degree to which you may or may not be able to make a decision and the respect that you accord to people who are responsible for certain areas, either in or out of the Church, for that matter, over which they have skill and control of information.

Not all of us, my wife, has more control of information in nutrition than I do.

There are things that I rely on her judgment.

Now I don't say I proved it to myself, and I find that generally her judgment in these areas proves to be correct.

And let's say I yield to those decisions, and that's what we do.

On the other hand, it doesn't mean that I proved it.

I don't kid myself.

Now when I am convinced in an area over which I have control of the facts, for me it is not a question that the Hebrew calendar as we have it is the calendar for the Church.

I have control over the facts and know how to make a decision for me.

But I think that there are some people who don't, and therefore they need to know whether it's their responsibility or not, and as long as the calendar, let's say, determines the holy days, because the

holy days other than Pentecost, and even that can be affected on occasion by a whole week at a time, the holy days are dependent on the Hebrew calendar.

Just as the revelation of God about the nature of God depends ultimately on how much is here that you can examine and the skills with which you can reason and the premises that you can examine from which to reason.

I appreciate the assignment of being out here.

I hope that what is said here is essential today as a background for any topic and for that matter for your relationship to the Church for as long as you live this life.