

## Another Spirit2

You go about seeking to kill me something that Abraham never sought to do, and yet you claim to be his children when, in fact, you were the children of the devil.

That is, they had in them not as a whole, they had in them not the Spirit of God, that had not been promised, they had, in fact, unconsciously absorbed the ideas of the devil, and if we may use the term, the Spirit of the devil motivated them.

Hence lying and stealing and adultery, plotting, those were characteristics, not just of that society but of the world at large.

What was missing was the Spirit of God.

What had entered them was something else, that is, the Spirit of the devil.

Jesus addressed this question very importantly.

Let me turn to it in John 14.30, because it's the opposite.

It's what characterizes other than the Church of God.

Hereafter Jesus said, I will not talk much with you, this is the authorized version, my little Bible, for the Prince of this world comes, that was Satan, and has nothing in me.

The Spirit of the devil had not influenced the mind and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, but all of us grew up in a world that was different because we simply were a part of the world.

And so a part of nature that we now define as human nature is, in fact, the thought pattern, the moves, the attitudes of the devil.

Jesus said he had no need that any man should tell him what was in man.

John makes this clear in his Gospel account.

Jesus knew what was in man.

The Holy Spirit enabling us to read Scripture enables us to know how much of the influence of the devil has been in us as individuals, and we gradually put that out and put it aside.

This attitude of hostility toward God's teaching in his law, a spiritual law, not merely the law and the letter, but the real spiritual intent.

Now we live in a world today in which we are confronted with different perspectives.

We are not directly a part of the social community of the Jewish world.

We have grown up in what we would generally identify as the Christian world.

Some of you have come from a non-Christian background.

Some might be Jewish, a few of our brethren are Hindu, usually Reformed Hindu, but I'm not trying to identify all of that.

We're posed with a more specific question.

So let's look at what has come to be characteristic of Christianity and ask ourselves how it is that the Christian world came to perceive the Bible in a way quite distinct from certain fundamental points of understanding that we have and share.

For example, there is a fundamental concept called the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

One is an immortal soul dwelling in a material body is the normal catechetical definition.

I learned that initially as a part of the German catechism of the German Methodist Church, which does not now exist anymore in the United States, though I seldom went to church.

Yes, I was familiar with the Methodist catechism in German.

I became familiar with the Catholic, my Sunday missile, and what was taught all these things before I ever heard Herbert W. Armstrong or the World Tomorrow program.

But the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is fundamental.

If the Church of God were to be defined in terms of this subject, we would often be called soul sleepers, because those who believe in the immortality of the soul believe in a non-sleeping, conscious soul after death, or at death, however you want to define it.

So one needs to ask, what is it that distinguishes this difference between the mind that accepts the immortality of the soul and the mind that accepts the revelation of Jesus Christ through the prophets and the apostles? For the Bible plainly tells us in Psalms, Ecclesiastes, scattered through the Bible, the living know that they shall die, the dead know nothing.

In the grave they do not praise God.

Jesus spoke of death as a sleep.

We shall not all sleep, said Paul, so there is not a conscious immortal soul in man.

Whatever is of spiritual nature or of spirit is not in itself conscious once the body ceases to function.

This is very fundamental.

How could this remarkable difference occur if the same spirit motivated the minds of the writers of the Bible and the Church and Christianity as a whole and the Jewish world as a whole, where at least they have access to the Old Testament? You see, it isn't a question of importance as to where the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came from, whether from Egypt, whether from the Greek mind that had gone to Egypt to learn about it.

What is important to ask is why the human mind can read such a doctrine into Scripture or out of it, however you want to define it.

There must be something different in the mind of man and woman, since we like to distinguish men and women.

There was a time when we thought of ourselves all as brethren, but in our very anti-masculine women's movement today we must distinguish the two and accommodate their thoughts.

What is important is to ask what makes the mind of a member of the Worldwide Church of God, or the historic Church of God through time, recognize that the teaching of the Bible is not the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, when in fact that is the fundamental teaching of the Mother Church,

the established churches of the Protestant world, and in some cases also of the sects that did not come out of the Roman Catholic Church or the Catholic Church.

It ultimately is the question of what the Spirit of God is.

That is the Spirit of God, not some counterfeit spirit.

There are churches that do not believe in the immortality of the soul.

Certainly the Seventh-day Adventists do not, certainly the Jehovah Witnesses do not.

But they differ on other things, for the Seventh-day Adventists do not have the knowledge of the gospel of the kingdom of God as described in the Bible and especially the book of Revelation and the prophets.

But that is not an issue for the moment.

The issue will be how come? We have, of course, the doctrine of Sunday, which has come to be a day of assembly for the overwhelming number of Christian communities.

What is it that enables people in the Church of God to understand when we should assemble, whereas others reading the Scripture conclude that they should assemble on another day and not rest on the Sabbath day? It is not necessarily a question of who taught it, how it arose.

The question that I pose to you, which ultimately answers all of these, is what is it in our minds that enables us to understand and what is missing or what is different in the minds of those who don't? Now I grant that every one of these points can be an argument that some one person sees clearly, but it just is an argument.

There are those who can argue the subject of the Saturday Sabbath tithing that there is no immortal soul, but they see it only as an argument against someone else.

My wife's father was a marvelous arguer on that point.

He understood almost every basic truth of the Bible, and he used it against those who practiced the general religious views, if you please, of those who had the beautiful song, first of the two today.

So when he came to actually putting these things to practice, he simply couldn't.

He just sought as an argument, much like the Jews sought the law as an argument against the Gentiles.

They would criticize the Gentiles for adultery, murder, lying, and stealing, and yet allowed it in their own community.

They just couldn't see it in themselves.

They saw it only as an argument.

What is missing, of course, is the Spirit of God, which enables us to see what the Bible says, to see not only what it means in Genesis chapter 2, the beginning verses, to see it in terms of the law, to see it in terms of Ezekiel's warning to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, to see it in terms of the example of Jesus, and to see it in terms of the practice of the New Testament Church.

And to see clearly all those verses that people think says something else in either perspective on the immortality of the soul or the doctrine of Sunday.

Then you have, essentially, the doctrine of heaven, in which, in the end, the ultimate goal of man is a particular place where God's throne is.

With no clear understanding at all of the gospel message, that is the gospel of the kingdom of God.

What that kingdom is, what it shall do, where it shall govern, and where God's throne will ultimately be established.

The doctrine of heaven is clearly linked with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

However this was derived is of no real consequence for the moment.

What I ask is how you can read the scripture and come up with a conclusion different from the Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish worlds, or, for that matter, the other religious communities around the world.

Then, of course, we have the doctrine of law.

Now here the world is very divided because religion in many cases is a part of the world.

Some religion tends to be withdrawing from the world, but where religion is clearly a function of the world as a part of society, there is the need of law.

And hence you will have in the Protestant world such arguments as law versus grace.

Or law and grace.

You will have the law was nailed to the cross, but nine were revived again, and so we have nine commandments, and the tenth one is the Sabbath we don't have.

You have all sorts of arguments within the Christian world.

There are those, perhaps more so in the established churches, who would say the law is holy, just and good, as Paul did, but revised by the church councils, which is why the church no longer observes the Sabbath, but has Sunday as a day of assembly.

But it is not a Sabbath, according to most.

Now is it that we are unable to read the law and see certain things in it, for instance, that the Jew does not, that the Christian does not? Now of course the Jews, as a part of their cultural heritage, have the holy days as well as the Sabbath, for as a nation they learned a lesson that the house of Israel did not and the Gentiles never had at all.

There were also those of the house of Judah who perished because of their sins and never learned that lesson.

But that's a cultural matter, so they do have it.

But the Christian world that once started out in the New Testament clearly observing the festivals as now most Catholics and Protestant and certainly Jewish scholars would recognize because in the scholarly world of the intellect more and more people realized that we do represent the characteristics of the Jerusalem Church and Jewish Christians at the beginning of Christianity.

I explained what our practice was and was not.

To an English writer is a singleese.

I spent nearly an hour with him who is the writer on what is Buddhism.

There is a paperback which is used in American and other universities where the English language is.

Professor Rahula asked me about our religious perspectives.

We went down the line, we went through the fundamentalist group, the evangelical group.

Certainly we weren't an established religion.

Where we like SDAs, Jehovah's Witnesses, what did we practice, and his conclusion was that we represent the original Jewish Christianity.

The Jew, of course, saw us in another term as the heirs of the Jerusalem Church.

What may we ask led the Christian world to become something so different from the original Church established with which the Greek Christians had fellowship, who followed the example of the Jewish Christians in Judea? What made the Christian world come to be essentially historically anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic for centuries, though now there are significant apologies? What made the Christian world drive the Jews out of Spain 500 years ago? In fact, in this month the Jews celebrate the destruction of the first temple, the destruction of the second temple on the same day, and the expulsion of the Jews from Granada in Spain on the same day, the Hebrew calendar, not necessarily of the Roman.

What came to be, if I may say so, missing in the mind of more and more people who thought of themselves as Christians? What was missing in the mind of the Jew that finally required even every Jew who attended synagogue by the end of the first century AD to curse the name of Jesus of Nazareth in order to participate in the synagogue service, long denied by the Jews, now archaeologically confirmed as reality? What led to this antagonism to Jesus by the Jewish community and the antagonism that separated Christianity from Judaism, and at the same time what was going on in the world of the Gentile as a whole that there developed this antagonism to God's holy days, the Sabbath that led to the development of the immortality of the soul, the substitution of Sunday? And you can go name all the rest.

In the end, there is only one fundamental answer.

The Spirit of God was not in those who could not see the truth.

For the truth is spiritually discerned.

The revelation of God is discerned through the Holy Spirit.

Now that Spirit that comes to the Church is said to come to all the others.

The question then is just very simple.

There is the true Jesus, and Paul says another Jesus.

Paul also warned of those who had come to accept another Spirit.

You can go to other groups of people, and there will be another Spirit, a different kind of Spirit.

And they aren't all the same either.

There is the Spirit of argument, the Spirit of the intellect, there is the Spirit of service, the Spirit of emotion.

Every one cannot deny the Spirit of service in groups like the Salvation Army.

One cannot deny what I saw in Comishly in Syria, the Armenian Catholic Church, not Orthodox, publicly having to serve Christian refugees as Syrian and Chaldean Christians who have fled Syria.

I'm sorry, fled Iraq and now live as refugees in Syria who cannot go back to their homeland.

These are the city-dwelling people who have been in those cities all this time, who recognize their identity.

Yes, there is the Spirit of service.

There is also the Spirit of following human tradition, the Spirit of reason, the Spirit of emotion, all sorts of variations.

I think we have to get back to a recognition that ultimately what differentiates the Church of God from any group, whether it be Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, or any other non-Judeo-Christian group, is ultimately whether the Spirit of God is in you.

That's what it amounts to.

If indeed God should choose to call someone, as he called the Catholic Peter Waldo, or Chaldez, or Godoy, nine centuries ago, or if he should call someone out of the Methodist Church, one of the Protestant groups, as William Miller was called out, or if he should have called out a John the Baptist from the Jews, if he should have called different people from different backgrounds, you'll note that in each case there was at least contact with the Bible culturally, religiously, because that's how they could get a start.

That is, they had a knowledge that was a part of their background.

God has never called anyone to lead a group of people out that sought to do the will of God who came from another religious group, because they never had access.

Now, he may call people.

We have people who have come from Islam, people who have come from Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, other forms of Christianity who come out of the world of agnosticism and atheism.

We could name all the backgrounds.

What is remarkable, of course, is how many in the Church of God are actually converted from the outside.

By that, I mean they are converted to the teachings of Jesus Christ as the Church of God has taught it, as distinct from merely being an heir of a family in one, two, or three generations who have been part of the Church of God.

I had here not knowing how much time, I just wanted to be sure I had it for reference if need be the Catholic encyclopedia, I wanted to draw attention to one interesting thing that it says near the close of one of the points of issue, and that is to what extent what we call conversion is very rare.

Most people are in fact a part of their own religious background.

What you have is a recognition that by nature most people are born into Islam, born into Catholicism, born into each of these groups.

Now there can always be a time when mature adults take on a different perspective the need to reform an organization, and hence we have what is called the Reformation.

These started out as in a sense people who were interested in reconsidering the teachings of the Church in the beginning of the 16th century, the 1500s, 1517 is when we marked the specific time.

But the group of people who challenged some of the things after listening to, but not solely to, Martin Luther and Augustinian Monk, were interested in protesting, if we may use that specific term, protesting imperial decrees.

And so the word Protestants or Protestants came to be applicable to those who did not follow the decrees of the government of the Holy Roman Empire.

In a sense the highest level of government remained Catholic in the Empire at all times, and within the Empire you had certain rulers over the various states.

For example, in the story of the rise of Protestantism we really pick it up in one of the diets, the diet at Worms in Germany, in April 1529 in Speyer where the Elector Frederick of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, the Margrave of Albert of Brandenburg, the Dukes of Lüneburg, the Prince of Anhalt, all those who were electors of the Emperor, the deputies of fourteen of the free imperial cities entered into solemn protest not to extend further toleration in their areas to Catholicism.

They entered into a protest and the intent was not to extend toleration now to Catholics in their area.

So that's how Protestantism arose.

Essentially Western churches today differ significantly because many have arisen as later reformed movements of Protestant groups, independent movements such as a whole, the Baptist Adventists who arose quite separately, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the International Bible students or Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.

So you have, in fact, in Protestantism essentially the continuity of a group that arose out of Catholicism and Protestants today speak of themselves in terms of that, or they may simply refer to their non-religious background, because there are many people who class themselves as Protestants when they merely mean they are indifferent to religion, and certainly therefore not Catholic.

The fact that most Muslims think of themselves as Muslim by birth, that you are Protestant by birth, Catholic by birth, and that you have a situation where conversion is so rare, this is indeed indicative of what is characteristic of the Church of God, and that is that the vast majority of families in the Church have all come as a result of conversion to Jesus Christ and assembly with the fellowship of the Church of God, and those families that arise from it, we think of them as often second or third generation Christians.

But the overwhelming majority, I don't think I have you raise hands, but I think most of you would recognize that the change that has taken place in your case is something that happened to your mind, things that you would never have understood as a child or as a teenager or as a young adult or even an older adult, depending on what age you were being called.

See the gifts are all the calling of God.

If God decides to reveal it to you, you will learn of it whether or not you want to at the start.

Herbert Armstrong did not want to at the start.

Mr. Joseph Tkach was a young man and in that sense represents a relationship that is different because his father and mother, too, came to understand certain things in the Bible that they didn't understand before.

So in a certain sense, Mr. Joseph Tkach Sr. was a participant of what we might call that first generation of conversion, but there was no doubt that in fact he has experienced something that begins another story, and that is that each generation has to make its own decision also.

Our children are not automatically spiritual members of the Church of God merely because they are born in the family.

There has to be that point of belief and repentance, not necessarily in any specific order here because children may believe some things or they may repent of some things at different stages, but belief almost certainly must precede repentance in the sense that if you repent of something, it is something that you believe that you haven't done right.

So belief and repentance and ultimately baptism opens up the opportunity to you to receive the Spirit of God, at which point, that is, you are not a member of the Church because you were baptized, you are a member of the Church because the Holy Spirit baptized you into the Church, but that is a whole subject of itself, and we have reached 1230.

To answer in simple terms, Mr. Bertie, no, Jesus Christ and his Church are not to be named after any one particular group of people.

Of course, he knows that, that's why he wanted me to talk to you about it.

We are, in one sense, Jews inwardly.

We are, in the sense, a Church with a hierarchical government, and so there are aspects that we associate with Catholicism.

Many do recognize the Bible as the ultimate revelation of God to man and the foundation of all knowledge.

It's a foundation, a very much Protestant perspective.

To us, the Bible is a living book, not a dead book, but we also have a living government, Jesus Christ being the head of the Church.

So a Seventh-day Adventist put it plainly, when I explained and explained and explained to him the nature of the government, he said, well, then you don't have a democratic government where you vote to decide.

You have a government based on faith.

That ultimately is very traditional in terms of Jewish understanding of the ancient priesthood and of the Catholic perspective that there is, indeed, a responsibility of government.

But in no sense of the word do we have the full perspectives of any of these groups.

We are Jews inwardly, and we are Christians.

We recognize that Mary is the mother of Jesus, that Mary was blessed.

And we don't have to run away from some of those verses that Catholics regularly cite that Protestants somehow have had needless aversion to.

So we recognize the ultimate authority in practice is in the Bible, even though Protestants often say so, they themselves don't always understand in practice that matter.

But in the end what differentiates us is that the Holy Spirit of God has come to this group of people to enable us to understand the Bible and to prepare for the first resurrection and the kingdom of God.

And it's all done through what Christ did, as we heard in the Sermonette, and what God the Father has done in the sense of sending us the Holy Spirit, which gives us the spirit of understanding of these spiritual things that are not in the pages of the dead but of a really living book, because they are those pages, what's printed on them, the Word of God.