H0015 Hoeh What does it mean to be Protestant. A Different Spirit

A few in the balcony.

I'll bring the best wishes from the Pasadena East AM congregation where we normally attend.

Ours is not quite such soft living, but the setting here is always beautiful, although I am of the opinion that families with children do find another setting more conducive to a relationship with the whole congregation than we might in this building, which in a sense was designed for adults in terms of all the things that occur here.

I inquired of two of the elders, whatever responsibility we are all elders in that sense with ordination.

We don't have to concern ourselves with other rank, but I inquired what topic might be of interest and one of the men came up with a very, I would say, effective subject, which was beautifully introduced today, said, why do you not address the question of whether we are Protestant, what it means to be a Protestant? I said I certainly would be willing to consider that.

We haven't really looked at the broader perspectives.

I say also I might pose the question, are we Protestant? Are we Jewish? Are we Catholic? Are we Orthodox? And if not, in what sense are we not? In what sense do others share perspectives that we do or do not share such perspectives? Or why is it that with all our Buddhist friends we are not Buddhists, even though Abbot Protepsipong, that was his former title, said how is it that you're not Buddhists when you do so many Buddhist things? Or why is it possible to discuss with a Muslim, as I did many years ago, all the subjects from the Second Coming of the Christ to abortion, and I found nothing I disagreed with him on? Or he with me? In this sense, are we Muslim? Do we submit to God, which is the sense of the meaning of Islam? It would be good for us to take a look both at the world in which we live today and ask ourselves what makes the difference, what is the nature of the religions of the world around us, in a sense what is ultimately the distinguishing characteristic? I should thank Mr. Berkey for posing this question.

Now you know who thought of it.

I don't think he planned, however, that the first beautiful hymn was a Lutheran hymn today.

So I ask you also, are we Lutheran? Well, we'll take a look at this because the Bible does have quite a bit to say on subjects such as this, no matter what our comparisons may be.

I thought it appropriate to bring two volumes of the Catholic Encyclopedia in order that I could quote certain things.

In one particular subject area there is a lengthy quote from the Protestant world, in fact by a Lutheran scholar.

The subject was Protestantism.

This will give in a certain sense the highlights of Protestant's perspectives of themselves as well as the Catholic perspective.

We do, as you may know, have some of our students in the summer go abroad.

We had three young men this year participate in the excavation in Syria, the site of Tel Mozan, the probable capital, almost certainly so, of Urkesh of the ancient Hurrian kingdom that ruled in the area where Abraham's family came from in the northern regions of Syria, the upper Habur River basin.

After Abraham left the Caldees, he went to this area before proceeding after his father's death to the land of Canaan.

We had an interesting opportunity on this occasion, a Catholic, a practicing Catholic asked if he might address our group.

In addition to our study, Professor Buccellotti, the University of California at Los Angeles gave a very remarkable presentation.

He introduced himself and his wife, who was not there, as practicing Catholics.

The subject would have been enlightening, I am sure, to all of you.

But there are also those who are not practicing Catholics.

There are Protestants and those who say they are Protestants and certainly are not practicing Protestants.

There are Jews who are not practicing Jews, they may be culturally so, they may be agnostics or atheists, the same as there are some who are bordering on agnosticism or even bordering on atheism in the broader Protestant world.

So how do we, in a sense, look at ourselves and think of ourselves and think of others? There was a time, some, well time goes by, I think this was somewhere around 1975.

I had, it could have been a little later but I doubt it, I had lunch with a minister who shortly thereafter left the fellowship of the Worldwide Church of God and he pointed up that the church, well at least he pointed up what he thought the church taught, that we have a narrow view and he simply could not accept that narrow view, that we, in a sense, are intolerant of others.

We cut ourselves off, we do not have friends who are peoples of other religious convictions.

I said where did you get that idea, well he said the church teaches it, well I said you know I've been here a lot longer as it turned out of course than he was, I've been here since 1947 in Southern California and I have never heard a sermon requiring such a relationship.

I have heard sermons saying that you may have to leave friends who curse, who drink, who commit adultery, who live in sin, if that kind of behavior is going to pull you down into sin again you simply have to come out of the world.

But there's nothing said that in coming out of the world that we cease to live in the world or that we are not to reach the world or that we may not in fact discover friends in the world whom God has not yet called.

I said I have people whom I would call friends.

One man said to me long, long ago that if I have to give up shrimp I simply can't join your church.

And of course he's been a lifelong friend ever since I've known him in 1949 as both a personal friend, something developed in the sense that was unusual.

You meet some people, you bid them adieu and you never see them again in life.

We first learned of each other by correspondence.

He was for some time the chief distributor of the Journal of Biblical Literature.

On behalf of the Society of Biblical Literature, we, in fact, I don't know what his religious background is.

He is Christian.

He has a name that implies that there was another ethnic and religious background historically.

I don't think he ever attends church, but when it came to a crisis in 1979 people referred to Ambassador College as your college when talking to him.

I thought that was remarkable.

I personally know as a friend a man who risked his life hundreds of times to rescue Jews and others from the Nazi regime across the Vichy-French border to Switzerland and the Vichy-French border to Spain.

We have certainly Buddhist friends.

My wife and I correspond, I usually do the corresponding in this case, to a Muslim friend and his family who live in Fiji who I came to know in 1971.

We visited his home in 1973 outside Nandi on the west coast who had a very fine personal friend when he could not be of service to us who turned out to be a Hindu.

I regularly send a message to him every year.

In a crisis in 1982, you may remember of course when the South Pacific islands of Tonga and Fiji were very heavily damaged and food had to be sent by the church in New Zealand to the brethren in Tonga.

I also visited Fiji and called for my Hindu friend and he was planning to build a home and he had in fact everything necessary.

The storm blew everything he had into which he had put his savings out to sea and he in fact had no way since tourists were not coming through in that devastated period to care for their youngest daughter.

So this Hindu said in a very thoughtful personal letter, would my wife and I accept their youngest daughter as our child to rear her? You don't call that person an enemy do you? But he was a Hindu.

We found a finer way in our judgment and that is to help them without having to separate the family.

I said to this young minister, when Mr. Armstrong at that time mentioned Leopold of Belgium and had become acquainted with King Bhoomi Pong of Thailand, do you assume that when he calls them his friends and they in turn, as Leopold did, spoke of Mr. Armstrong in an assembly as his friend that in fact they are not? Well he really had no answer but he said of me, he said all you do of course is simply pull rank.

I don't pull rank when it comes to this.

I don't happen to be a Muslim.

I don't happen to be a Hindu.

I was not reared as a Catholic and I was converted from Protestantism.

We discover in other words that it is still possible in this world to discover that you have friends as well as enemies.

When Herbert W. Armstrong died in January, there were people who were Catholic and Protestant Buddhists, I don't know of other groups who were there.

In his illness, young Federico Buccellati prayed for Mr. Armstrong.

As a Catholic child would pray, he learned to pray essentially when he was in Syria.

So when he would pray, he would bow down with his forehead to the floor as he saw the Muslims pray.

I presume that he takes a different stance today as he has spent more and more time in this country, in his environment.

His father told me that.

Our Buddhist friends every year have remembered Herbert W. Armstrong, it is the flowers of the Buddhist community that are at the graveside of Mr. Armstrong at all times.

The Supreme Patriarch of Theravada Buddhism was prayed for by Mr. Armstrong, who sent a message wishing him speedy recovery, which he did have at the time of an earlier illness.

He died in his early nineties later.

So we have as an illustration in the church leaders in times past who had friends and who prayed for leaders of other religious communities.

We are told to pray for the leaders of the countries in which we live.

We are not told to pray for them only if they are converted and members of the church of God.

That should be obvious from Paul's statement in the New Testament when the emperors were most certainly pagan.

So it does behoove us to take a broader perspective and to analyze the story a little better than we commonly do.

If we were to go back to the time of the New Testament church, we would clearly discover that some people thought that the church of Jesus Christ, the church of God that Jesus Christ founded, was in some way simply a sect of the Jews.

And in fact, Paul addresses the Christian world as simply viewed as a sect.

On the other hand, the Jews came to think of Christians as Nazarenes in the general sense of the term that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

And later Gentiles thought of this group of people as Christians because they talked about a Messiah which the Greeks knew by the name of Christ or Christos because the Hebrew word that we translate Messiah was equivalent to the Greek word that we translate Christ.

That is someone who was anointed for a particular task and we were named after the office that Jesus of Nazareth had and ultimately the whole of the religious world that gives credence to Jesus

Christ at one level or another came to be known as the followers of the one who was anointed for a particular job, that is the Christ or Christians.

And so the religion is that of Christianity, although I doubt that most people in the world would really know the relationship of that name.

We just think it is a name that Jesus had without really understanding its background.

So in the certain sense when Paul writing to the Greek speaking people who were being called of God defined the nature of Christianity, he spoke in terms of being inwardly a Jew because there was something that the Jew possessed.

In other words, the Jew had possession of the oracles of God.

At that time there were not books of the New Testament completed as we now have them, though certainly gospel accounts came to be written early on, probably in the fourth decade of that century toward its close.

That is around 38, 39 AD in that period of time and written of course sometimes decades later.

But when Paul refers to the people of God, he spoke of them as being Jews inwardly, not merely outwardly in terms of circumcision or attending synagogue or claiming to be heirs of Abraham, but Jews inwardly in whom the law of God was being perfected.

Who understood the intent and purpose of the law? Before there were Jews who went about making quite clear that the Gentiles were sinners whether or not they had the law because they certainly violated the principles that the Jews understood from the law.

But Paul addressed them in Romans 1 and 2 and 3 in that area.

He addressed them in terms of the fact that the Jews who broke the law were no different than the Gentiles who committed all sorts of atrocities in their societies, one to another and people to people.

The one didn't have the law, the other had it, understood it and didn't practice it.

So that in fact they were both guilty.

Those who sinned without the law perished without that law.

They were simply being punished as a result of going contrary to the perspectives and views of men and whatever their consciences may have guided them to do.

Then there were those who perished according to the law, the Jew who knew and did not.

There were those Jews who sought to live by the law, one of whom Jesus said, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

That was before the day of Pentecost.

Paul writing sometimes afterward spoke of Gentiles who do the things written in the law, their conscience in a sense, being witness to those things, even though they did not know the law because as you know, many human laws are based on the principles of the Ten Commandments though not all.

And so it is possible for Paul to write about people who had not received an understanding of the law in addressing the Romans as if in fact in many cases there were those who did what was right in

accordance with how they sought to be obedient to what the society or the laws of that society construed to be right.

For basically in society adultery, murder, lying, which certainly is what the men in prison did who claimed they were all innocent, most of them are guilty, the fact remains that these are fundamental laws, stealing, coveting, which lead to lying and stealing.

The last commandment in a sense is one of the broadest and most oriented toward intent and purpose, but all societies in one way or another have had, even the communist society and the former USSR, required its people, not necessarily party members, but required the people to tell the truth to one another as comrades.

Now that's very honorable, the problem with communism of course is those who ran the system didn't tell the truth to the people.

But nevertheless, societies do have certain basic principles.

Buddhism has five, essentially the last five of the teachings of the Ten Commandments as the relationship of human being to human being.

Islam is based on submission to the revelation, the instruction that comes from the Koran, which is based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, much of which come from the Old Testament and New Testament as well as spirits who revealed in a cave to Muhammad things that he understood to be the message of God.

And so it's possible to have a remarkable communication with numerous people and to find that there are people who respect us as well as people who would argue.

We have had the respect of kings who were Catholic.

We have had the respect and still do, Leopold of course is deceased, that's why I use the past tense.

Otto von Habsburg, who most certainly is a practicing Catholic and a politician, has admired the kind of work we have been able to do, respects what we have accomplished and appreciates our recognition of his concern for the future welfare of Europe.

And he has concern for that.

What it may come to is a separate and a distinct issue.

Franz Josef Strauss, now deceased, was a guest of Herbert Armstrong in his home, the Varian Catholic, a man who said as a Catholic he had never spent such a happy day in his life and a day in Mr. Armstrong's home being able to talk with him.

Certainly we would find it difficult not to say the same thing of many of our Jewish and Muslim friends, the relationship we have with the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan's royal family, those who were secular Jews as distinct from the religious Jews at Hebrew University, some of our Muslim friends whom I know in Syria, let's take the case of Ismail Hijara, who was in Iraq since Iraqis don't have a very good reputation in this country today, which is unfortunate because there are varied people in the country.

Ismail Hijara is a teacher in Saudi Arabia.

He has worked on the excavation from time to time, and when Mr. Carl McNair, a minister, was with the students at the excavation in Syria that the Ambassador Foundation supports.

The earlier one was at Terco in the Euphrates and Tel-Mozan is near the Turkish border today.

Mr. Carl McNair was in the northern one.

Ismail Hijara was trying to understand what made our students different.

And he analyzed all the things about zeal for learning, cooperation, understanding, everything that you would associate with scholarly mindedness, academic pursuits, ability to get along with others.

And he concluded that all the others, and I would have had to say the same thing, all the others who were also there, whether from the University of Paris or Rome, the University of Arizona, whether from UCLA, Cal State, LA, or others, whether they were Catholic, whether they were Protestant, whether they were Jews or Muslim.

They all shared these things.

But he said, if that's the case, how do you explain why Ambassador students are still different? And he simply left, not knowing how to account for the fact that there was a difference as a Muslim perceives it.

And he came back shortly thereafter and said to Carl McNair, he said, now I know.

The difference is in the spirit.

There is something that has taken place in the spirit that makes the difference.

I cite to you that it was a Muslim who identified that which is so fundamental that, you know, it may have been somebody else who did it for you.

But in terms of this story, it was a Muslim who perceived that the ultimate difference between members of the Church of God and any other group he was with has to do with something that transforms the spirit in man, which is, as you should know, holy spirit from God.

That's what makes the difference.

Either that is why you are different now from what you were, from what you were five or ten or even two or three years ago.

As you look back in your life or something has happened to you that you have not grown spiritually to be different, to be able to think different, to act different.

It isn't just a change of personality.

Ismail Hijara was corrected.

It wasn't personality.

It wasn't intellect because there are other good personalities.

We have remarkable personalities on television and some not so remarkable.

But that was not it.

Now, your personalities undoubtedly have been helped.

Your health undoubtedly should be helped.

But the center of it was correctly defined as that which transforms the spirit in man.

It is in the spirit that this change is wrought that distinguishes the Gentile who is a Jew within, the Israelite who ceases to want to be a Gentile but becomes a Jew within.

The Jew who becomes a Jew within as distinct from merely without through circumcision.

That was a remarkable insight because in the end Paul says those who have the spirit of God are those who are going to participate in the first resurrection.

Without the spirit of God having joined with the spirit in man, it will be impossible to participate in the first resurrection.

It will be impossible to participate in the first resurrection.

That spirit will enable all people ultimately to be resurrected to judgment.

There are two fundamental kinds of resurrection occurring broadly speaking at three times.

One, the resurrection to life over which the second death has no power.

Then the resurrection to judgment of the overwhelming majority of human beings who have never truly adequately understood the spiritual truth of Jesus Christ.

Then of course the resurrection to judgment after the resurrection to judgment of the vast majority for those who have known better, who chose not to go along with the government of God through Jesus Christ.

Whether in the church of the New Testament or whether in the church or congregation of Israel in the old.

These are the people who have made shipwreck as Paul said.

These are not people of whom John spoke when he said they went out from us because they were not of us.

If they had been of us they would have remained with us.

There are some who make shipwreck, whom Paul very greatly regretted, had chosen another route to go and had spurned the spirit of God and all the truth and the fruits that come from contact with God.

So in a sense in the New Testament times there was a large group of people who were known as Nazarenes and they later had other terms and came to be known as the work spread among Greek speaking Gentiles as well as Greek speaking Jews as Christians.

They were as different from the Jews of New Testament times as David for example was among people in his day as Joshua, Aaron, Miriam, Moses were in their day from the rest of the nation in the family.

See Joshua tells us, he said as Moses did earlier, Moses said now you remember I have told you that when you get in the land you're going to do all these things that will bring catastrophe on you because you do not have the spirit that will enable you to obey God to do his will to think his thoughts to live the kind of life he intends you to be.

That is you don't have as he said any promise of the Holy Spirit that would make you like your Creator.

The children of Israel couldn't imagine that would be true, they didn't understand.

In the days of Joshua after his work was over it's worth reading both the story at the close of Deuteronomy, Moses' speech and Joshua's speech where you will discover that he said that you do not have the spirit to keep, to be obedient to the law.

The spirit of God was not promised to the nation as a whole, it doesn't abide in them.

So in that sense, judges, priests, kings, prophets, people whom we commonly refer to as lay people, there were some that God called all during the period that we define as the Old Testament, in other words from the founding from before the founding of the nation to the time that the Messiah appeared in the first century of the present era.

God called individuals from among those people, they were part of the congregation of Israel or the family of Israel before, but they differed by means of the spirit of God that was made available.

Jesus spoke of it clearly in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, David identified the same thing when he said, when he made a very serious blunder, a blunder of public proportion that needed to be written in the Bible.

He said, take not your Holy Spirit from me, create in me a clean heart, how God does that of course is by means of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of God.

So David understood that if the spirit of God were to leave, because he would continue to be in an unrepentant attitude, he would ultimately perish.

The spirit of God is ultimately what distinguishes God's people, even among those who may have the general revelation of God.

Now no one disputes the fact that the Jews have the Old Testament revelation, the Christians have the Old and the New, though they pay attention to the one far more than to the information in the other.

That speaking broadly, nevertheless, within the vast Judeo-Christian culture, the spread that has affected also Islam, in this vast culture, God's people differ because having the spirit of God, something occurs that would not occur otherwise.

Paul addresses this when he writes the Corinthians and says that it is the result of the spirit of God that enables us to perceive the things of God.

That is, if we didn't have the spirit of God, we would look at the Bible in general as the Jews looked at it if they came from the Jewish culture.

They looked at it in the letter of the law.

They were looking in general for loopholes, or since there were so many loopholes that God purposely left, then they tried to solve the problem by building fences and then walls around to keep people from sinning in some way.

With many other traditions that they added, Jesus addressed this question in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 in particular.

If you were to look there, Jesus said that in times past, God's law had been given in such a simple expression as, you shall not kill.

Anyone who sought to understand the intent of that law would immediately have grasped that that's where you start from.

Then you look at other examples in the Scripture and you see how you were to treat your neighbor.

When you learn from the Old Testament, the Scripture says, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, Jesus said that you should not look at the commandment as simply prohibiting killing or murder.

You should see it as also addressing the question of hate.

You should see it as addressing the question of animosity and jealousy, because all these things ultimately lead to the spirit of murder.

That is, it's what precipitates murder.

So Jesus said, he who hates his brother has in fact committed murder in his heart, just as it says, you shall not commit adultery, that he who lusts after someone who is not his wife has committed adultery in his heart.

That is, we are to examine the attitude, what motivates.

Now we are able to do that because God has given his spirit to his church.

We are able to look at the Bible in a unique way.

There was a young lady, Chinese background, a Thai citizen named Feng who is married to our one Thai graduate from Ambassador College.

Feng was an educated person of the Buddhist world, Chinese community in Chiang Mai in the north.

She first became acquainted with our student because there was one thing he didn't do, and that is he wasn't involved with women as most young men are at university age, all around the world for that matter.

And he wanted to know something about his religion, and he was very careful not to push it.

And she ultimately became acquainted with the book that was his religious book called the Bible in English.

And she did what most people who don't know about the Bible would do if she looked at the beginning.

And being Chinese, the Chinese are prone to think in terms of history.

She discovered that the early parts of the Bible certainly could not be called history because they were so incomplete.

That is the record was by no means adequate to be properly defined as history.

But she said what she found, and she could speak good English, what she found were stories.

Now I'm not using this in the theological sense like the Joseph story, this or that story.

It was in fact, however, an account or a story.

And she saw immediately that each one of these stories in those early parts of the Bible were there because there was a specific purpose in them.

It was either instructive in the intellectual sense, the spiritual sense, or it was moral in the sense of conduct.

And if you read it and did not understand why it was there, she knew right away you didn't understand what was meant by that story.

Rather a remarkable insight for someone who did not come from the Christian world.

She came to be converted, was baptized, married, and is now a responsible member.

That is an interesting point.

Her mind came to see that what was written in the Bible has a purpose for us to understand, and we should grasp what it says.

Now what is unique about the Bible is what Paul himself said.

And that is that spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

The Jews could read the law.

They could offer the Passover sacrifice every year.

But when it came to Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth was in fact slain on the day of the Passover.

The nation did not recognize him as the Lamb of God, as the fulfillment, and in fact fulfilled their part in it, both the Jews and the Romans.

Having read all about the slaying of the Lamb, the shedding of the blood, they did not grasp that someone would have to die, and they did not recognize him when he in a sense made clear that he was the one who would.

Quite a remarkable thing.

The days of unleavened bread were to picture a nation that should be free from the practice of sin.

Yet when Paul looks at the people, when Jesus looked at the people, what did Jesus say? What did Paul say? Jesus said, you generation of adults, 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 are 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, 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 moods, 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 in 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 are 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.

Man 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.

Now 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 of God or the historic church of God through time.

Notice 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 church, 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.

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

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

Now there are churches that don't believe in the immortality of the soul.

And 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 isn't 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 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.

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

He just saw it as an argument, much like the Jews saw it as 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 council, 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 single ease, 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 and we went down the line, 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 Romans.

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 archeologically 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 weren't 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.

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

One cannot deny what I saw and comically 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-Judao-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 Valdez, or Vaudois, 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 mark 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 protestance or protestance 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 LÃ¼neburg, 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 reform movements of Protestant groups, independent movements such as the 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 need to 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're 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's 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's a whole subject of itself and we have reached 1230.

To answer in simple terms, Mr. Berkeley, 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.

We 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.

And 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. But 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.