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| **Rumors and their mongers**  **Robert E Fahey**  ***Good News*, 18 December 1978**     Talk about rumor is usually too simplistic. Communication people know that rumor can be a good sign because it show's interest. Somebody cares about the person being discussed. His actions are important and significant.     People talk about what is of interest to them. We have given our lives to this Work. We are concerned about — every facet of its operations. We care about the triumphs and the troubles. We discuss them both. We want to know particularly about the leadership — what they are doing, thinking, planning or even dreading. Because those activities will affect the Work and us.     We do not discuss what is of no interest to us.     If our hearts (and treasure) are in the Work, we will surely talk about it. And so we should. The problem, of course, is how we talk about it. As Herbert Armstrong has said about everything from shotguns to sex, it is not the thing, but the misuse of the thing. that is wrong. And talking about the Work and the people in it has been misused — badly.     Why?  **The demand for news**     First we must remember the old marketplace principle of supply and demand. If demand for news exceeds the supply in normal channels, interested parties begin to rely on each other for information. So any barriers that hinder the rapid dissemination of news such as censorship (in a government or a boardroom) or physical barriers arising in catastrophes (earthquakes, war. etc.) encourage rumors.     Investigators, in studying rumors, have found that people deprived of authoritative news tend to speculate. Either individually or with other interested parties, they pool what information they have to form reasonable estimates of the whole story.     There are other reasons. Events are discussed for purely entertainment value. Just to keep life and the conversation interesting.     Another common reason is to bestow status on the teller. But the specialists who study these things tell us that people who give information outside of official channels usually distort the news by distilling it ("leveling" in rumor argot) because of 1) time considerations (long distance calls are costly), or 2) the conversation is on a tact that only involves the news in part (on a tangent) or 3) the bits that support the teller's own opinion are highlighted while those that conflict are diminished Shaky at best.  **An ego trip for some**     For some it is an ego trip to know something others don't. Of course, if those around them are unaware of their ignorance, the joy of knowing is diminished. So, a bit of baiting is called for. The techniques vary from silly to stupid. They are never sophisticated. This bait becomes the whole morsel to the one who receives it; unless he can pump more out. But if not, that will have to be his meal for that day. He will add that piece to others from different sources in an attempt to form a more complete picture. In doing so, he will share his bit (a kind of barter) in discussions with others. The more "others" the better. Additional pieces of information are added or discarded as seems best.     Both the baiter and the baited are in the wrong. Together they create rumor and spread it. All to satisfy both their quests for self-esteem. Christ's prophecy that "he that exalts himself shall be abased" seems to have been overlooked. Their goal is to be exalted in the eyes of those around them. That may be their only reward.     Or, it may not. When the blind lead the blind in this way, it is not only they who fall into the ditch. Hundreds may fall with them, because the conclusions they arrive at and spread usually have an ugliness and a viciousness about them that could make a "little one" stumble. If that happens, another reward may be the promised millstone.     People appear to have an ungodly fascination with the negative and ignoble. The worse the rumor, the faster it travels. Presumably more want to hear it and tell it.     To God, builders and suppliers of ugly rumors reveal more about themselves than they do about the truth of the people and events they seek to report. He said He will have a little chat with them about it in the future. [Matthew 12:36](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2012.36).  **The age of cynicism**     There is still another reason. This is the age of cynicism. So many cover-ups have been uncovered, so many "facts" have been proved fraudulent, so many stories demonstrated to be specious, that we of this age are forced to view everything with doubt and disbelief. There is no innocence.     But that outlook does not belong in the Church. If it is, we are not overcoming the world, it is overcoming us. We would be accepting the attitudes of a dying society instead of the way of God that leads to life. If we infer that Church leadership is suspect or evil, that they willingly deceive us and are selfishly motivated, we are actually saying that Christ is not ruling His Church as He should.     Christ pictured Himself to John (Revelation 1) as standing in the middle of His churches with the angels completely in His control — totally involved! He wanted the Church to know that He is aware, active and in charge.  **Responsibility demands accountability**     When something or someone needs correcting, He can and does correct. He waits. He is criticized for delay. He acts. He is censured for severity. Part of the "living by faith" is trusting Him to govern His own Body. Especially the leadership who bear the responsibility of their office. Responsibility demands accountability.     If we believe He is the Head, our words should show it. If we do not, there is no reason to belong to this Church.     Remember, the Church is His bride. With all our flaws, He is making us into a clean, righteous and faultless bride to marry forever at His return. You would not view with favor anyone who besmirched the reputation of your bride-to-be. Nor does He. [Revelation 12:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rev%2012.9-11).     Our thinking should not be determined by the hostile, wrathful, distrusting and unforgiving world in which we live. We have been called out of it. Our minds must be transformed into the truly converted Christian mind that in an open and honest way follows Christ and the leadership He puts over us.     Perhaps the greatest problem is the way many feel free to speak about or listen" to critical words about a brother in the Church or in the ministry. The basic Bible teaching on brotherly relations is found in [Leviticus 19:18](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lev%2019.18): "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord."     The Jewish scholars expound the famous last phrase by saying, "Let the honor and the property of your fellowman be as dear to you as your own." Frankly, the honor and name of our brothers hasn't been as "dear" to us as God's law 'says it should be. And that is the basic yardstick He uses in judging us in human relations. That should be a sobering thought.  **Jesus prayed for unity**     Jesus Christ's last night on earth as a human being was an emotion-etched event. He knew He would not be physically present with His Church till His return. He knew the weaknesses, sins, faults, power struggles and selfish attitudes of those around the table with Him — and of those who would come later. He also knew they all had pride, that ancient adversary of peace and harmony in the Church of God. So He prayed.     If you examine the theme of that prayer in John 17, you will find it is unity. "...Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one..." He asked for God's special help to keep us together. That the wills, wants and pride of the members of Christ's Body would not cause disharmony. And in case anyone wanted to argue about what unity is (as surely many would)" He added "as we are." As close and mutually respectful as the Father and the Son. There is no finer example or standard for measuring unity.     With all that has happened over the last several years. the answer to Jesus Christ's prayer is probably the most pressing need for the Church today. We should all be praying for oneness — especially now.     Most things take action as well as prayer before they are accomplished. Unity is no exception. It takes positive action to produce unity — by everybody.  **Words can bring us together**     If words have divided us, words, coming from a right spirit, can help bring us together.     To begin, every member of the Body of Christ should let the honor of his fellows be as dear to him as his own.     When someone's name comes up in conversation, make your words convey the love and respect due a brother in Christ. I am not suggesting we all become Pollyannas. You can disagree with someone respectfully. (The British have developed this into an art form. For the French, it is a duty of civilized men!) The key is to assume that if he were present he would put forward sound reasons for his actions or words that are at least as valid as yours.     Next, the supply of news from official sources must come closer to the demand. Not that the supply will ever equal the demand. That is impossible. But for years there has been room for improvement.     Many rumors involve finance, Stanley Rader and even Mr. Armstrong himself. So Mr. Rader, as Mr. Armstrong's assistant and treasurer for the Work, is holding forums for employees at Pasadena. He asks for any question on any subject from the floor. The enquirers have been candid in their questions. Mr. Rader has been equally candid in his replies. So that everyone can benefit from the forums, the transcripts are published in The Good News. Regular forums of this type are planned for the future. This openness and candor will help to stop the rumor mill.  **Keep division out**     Finally, the seditious practice of fracturing into camps within the Church must stop. That is what Satan did; he got all those around him to view with suspicion and malice those that we're not members of their "sphere" group!     There should not be "we" and "they" within the Body of Christ. We should all be "us."     Christ gave clear commands to keep division out of His Church. He said, "if your brother shall trespass against you" ([Matthew 18:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2018.15)) or if thy brother has ought against thee" ([Matthew 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%205.23)), go to him directly and get it solved. That instruction was given by Christ personally.     How many reasons can most of us give for not doing it? Regardless of the excuse, we are not doing what God says. Disunity is the result.     God's Church has gone through an extremely trying, sorrowful time. If we can learn and grow from it, as a Body, God can use us more effectively.     Words, conversations, fellowship will always be a part of the Church of God. If those, words are of a spirit that helps Christ's final prayer to be fulfilled, God can put us in a position to bring light to all who are in the house. If not, we deserve to be hidden under a bushel. |
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