

David Helme

Since my January 16, 1995 memo to you outlining why I rejected the preliminary study papers on circumcision, covenants, tithing and unclean, and inviting you to consider the bias evident in the papers, I have continued to be perplexed by the outpouring of similar material.

On February 8 we discussed my February 5, 1995 letter to you regarding your public reaction to a letter you had received from Mr. Neff. In that conversation you tried to persuade me to your "New Covenant" position. I mentioned to you that one of the problems for me was the many contradictions and inconsistencies in your writings and public statements over the past year

or more. You said that although you knew I did not agree, we could still walk together because I had not spoken against your changes publicly.

I have spent considerable time in the past four months thinking over the objections I have to the administration's new doctrinal positions. Perhaps it would be helpful if I detailed some of the contradictions and inconsistencies.

Several months ago you told me, "This church has been far too Old Testament, but I couldn't tell the members that. No, not for five years." I was surprised at the time, but not knowing what you meant exactly, I set it aside. Since then I have noticed that you have often responded with a categorical denial to the accusation that there is an agenda of doctrinal changes. Yet in discussion with one minister last December you described the change on tithing from gross to net (announced in the December 6, 1994 PGR) as simply "a stepping stone" to voluntary tithing. This certainly sounds like an agenda. As you know, many have feared that "agenda" involves a move into the Protestant mainstream.

Your frequent denials of any such agenda, however, were called into question by Joseph Tkach Jr.'s statement in the PGR of April 13, 1994 in reference to the journalistic approach in "The Plain Truth: WE ARE TRYING TO POSITION OURSELVES away from the fringes and MORE INSIDE A CHRISTIAN MAINSTREAM that itself

has shifted in
the last quarter century. (emphasis mine)

If you did not agree with this agenda I am unaware of
any statement to the
contrary.

On April 30, 1994 you gave a sermon in Pasadena in an
attempt to control the
spread of rumors about doctrinal changes. The tape was
sent to all
congregations to be played on Pentecost. You said the
following about those
who were spreading the rumors:

They have no compunctions at all about
exaggerating. Like I read
from this list of rumors that are going around: we're
going to start keeping
Christmas, and we're changing the Passover, and we're
making changes to
please the Protestants to get accreditation. We will
ask members to start
displaying crucifixes, doing away with unclean
meats, doing away with
tithing and we don't believe that there's a place of
safety, we're going to
do away with the Sabbath, we're going to do away with
the Holy Days and we're
going to do away with the law...

You went on to quote Rev. 21:8, noting that all liars,
those who deliberately
mislead people, will have their place in the lake of
fire. From this I take
it that anyone spreading the rumor that the church was
about to do away with
the food laws, for example, was misleading people. Yet
in your January 5,
1995 PGR column you proved the rumormongers right.
You said:

...there is no scriptural requirement for
Christians to abstain from
unclean meat.
This perhaps did not surprise those who know you well,
because you have said
that many of the recent changes have been in your mind
since the 1970s. In
fact you used these words to me in your office on
February 8, 1995 and again
more fully on April 13. On both occasions you said
that Joe Tkach Jr. and
Mike Feazell have simply picked up on your own
long-standing ideas.

But I am getting ahead of the chronology of
contradictions.

Las year, during the Feast of Tabernacles I called from Daytona Beach to inform you of a problem with the content of Earl Williams' sermon. After Earl called you, you called me back. Following is the essence of our two conversations:

DH Earl Williams is telling people that the law is done away, that there is no requirement to keep the law--the Ten Commandments. He suggests to people that they read Acts 15 to support this (1) Further he told me that there is no evidence that the New Testament Gentiles kept the Sabbath. A member has told me that Earl's assistant, Joe McNair, stated to him that the food laws, Sabbath and Holy Days are done away, and that he (Joe) has verified this with Pasadena. Joe has also advised the member that he should not

read the book of Revelation.

JWT Earl is too blunt, well-meaning, but too blunt.

DH He is far out on the left wing. This kind of teaching will split the church if not dealt with. People are already divided here over the issue. I would like to say something about this in my final sermon on the Last Great Day.

JWT I don't want you to address this in public. We will listen to Earl's tape after the Feast and correct if necessary in the Worldwide News even naming him if the problem warrants it.

DH He is saying the law is done away, abolished, not necessary.

JWT No one in Pasadena is saying that. Mike, Joe and I are not saying that.

DH On the first day of the Feast you said you keep the law because you are saved. Earl does not want me to say publicly that he agrees with you on this.

JWT All we're saying from Pasadena is that because we have the Holy Spirit living in us we are motivated to keep the law. Dave YOU CAN LIVE WITH THAT. (EMPHASIS MINE)

DH Yes I can.

[1]

It is interesting to note that Herbert W. Armstrong's teaching on the Holy Days was examined by the Salem Conference of the Church of God Seventh Day in 1937. On May 10, the following resolution was adopted:

"Inasmuch as some have troubled the Churches, teaching them they should observe the feast of unleavened bread and yearly Sabbaths connected with the atonement of the Law of Moses, Be it moved, that we reaffirm the teachings of the Church of God on this point, and also the decision of the Apostles and leaders on this question (sic) as recorded in Acts 15th chapter, that we observe no such custom. By elders W. McMicken and William Alexander, Passed."

Later in 1937 Mr. Armstrong was asked to return his ministerial credentials for continuing to preach contrary to the Salem Conference and their resolution re: Feast Days.

Though on reflection I was not happy with what I perceived to be the intention behind the comment, "you can live with that" I still believed that you were in favor of KEEPING THE LAW by means of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That was September 26, 1994. But the inconsistencies kept coming.

On November 4 and 5, 1994 you visited Pendleton, Oregon. In conversation with a pastor you unveiled what has become the "New Covenant" approach you have now espoused--an approach that speaks of law-keeping in very different terms than the church has ever understood. Yet one week later in Pasadena you make familiar positive statements about the law in a sermon on Matthew 5, 6 and 7. You asked:

DOES THIS of righteousness MEAN THAT THE LAW IS NO LONGER IMPORTANT? AND
.... NO LONGER REQUIRED TO BE OBSERVED... and that the law no longer has any more validity or importance in our lives, which is absolutely ridiculous? OF COURSE NOT. (EMPHASIS MINE)

and:

Does this mean we are no longer obligated to obey

the law..? Yes WE SHOULD KEEP THE LAW, we should avoid even the desire to break the law.
(emphasis mine)

Later you said:

I'M NOT TRYING TO MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAW. I'm not trying to minimize the importance of the Sabbath. (emphasis mine)

and:

REAL FAITH SHOULD LEAD US TO KEEP THE LAW IN ITS FULL INTENT...(emphasis mine)

On December 3 my wife and I were in Washington DC> with you. You again spoke about the Sermon on the Mount. In that message you again made several strong statements about the requirement to keep the law, including:

Salvation is by grace, not by earning it through the law. DOES THIS MEAN THAT WE ARE NO LONGER OBLIGATED TO OBEY THE LAW? GOD FORBID (emphasis mine)

and:

Christ is saying THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL IS NOT CONTRARY OR CONTRADICTIONARY IN ANY WAY, SHAPE OR FORM TO THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW. (emphasis mine)

and you asked: IS THE LAW NO LONGER "REQUIRED OR IMPORTANT"? "the answer is absolutely not."(emphasis mine)

I remarked to my wife after services that if you would give the same sermon during your visit to Atlanta two weeks later, then Earl Williams would not agree. (Indeed some members in the Washington area stopped attending services after your sermon because they felt it emphasized the law too much and grace not enough.) I told you in the passenger van on the way back to our hotel that I thought it was a good sermon, and you expressed appreciation.

As a result I still actually believed you might give such a sermon in Atlanta.

When you spoke in Atlanta on December 17, 1994 you gave

a very different message. That sermon became the basis of your presentation to the regional ministerial conference in Santa Barbara on December 20, 1994 and the content of the PGR of December 21, 1994. This was the first time you had spoken and written publicly of the law using language and concepts that are a radical departure from the Church's previous teaching.

Now you asked "...is the Sabbath REQUIRED in the New Covenant?" (emphasis mine) You never answered this question unequivocally. You also stated:

IF SOME, EVEN MOST CHRISTIANS DON'T KEEP THE SABBATH...IT DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS CHRISTIAN...(emphasis mine)

During the past year you have repeatedly denied that anything significant is being done away with, yet Mike Feazell clearly told a small group of ministers at the Santa Barbara conference that the Sabbath, Holy days, tithing and unclean meats are "done away".

In addition, the PGR and Study Paper of February 14, 1995 contained the following from Joe Tkach Jr. and the author of the study paper respectively:

The question is, Does God tell his new covenant people to rest on the seventh day? The answer is no, he doesn't.

and

Members are free to deleaven their homes for Unleavened Bread, fast on Atonement and live in temporary shelters during Tabernacles, but these old covenant details are NOT REQUIRED in the church today, since they are not in the new covenant. (emphasis mine)

On the basis of the above three quotes it is impossible to accept that nothing significant is being done away with.

Then there is the issue of Sir Anthony Buzzard's publication THE LAW, THE SABBATH AND NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY which has surfaced among us recently.

According to Ron Kelly, its conclusions are fully supported by Mike Feazell and Greg Albrecht. Some of those conclusions include Sunday as the

appropriate day of worship, and the observance of the Lord's supper frequently as desired. I understand that at the January '95 Regional Directors' Conference the participants were told that soon the Church would observe the New Testament Passover/Lord's Supper more than once a year. then suddenly the announcement of the change was postponed until next year.

it can therefore be said that most of the rumors mentioned in your sermon of April 30, 1994 did have substance and have been confirmed by your own or your administration's statements. Time will tell whether the remaining rumors will find similar substantiation.

As far as I know, today the church is in the worst financial condition in its recent history. Upwards of 170 ministers are alienated, some terminated under questionable circumstances. The church's doctrinal position is publicly in tatters, and a significant number of its members worldwide are deeply disappointed.

it is obvious that many do not accept the so-called "new truths", which in most cases are in fact rather old errors, as I indicated to you in my memo of January 16, 1995.

[2] These concerned members and ministers are anxious to preserve the truth and way of life they have learned and which they are committed. They cannot be categorized fairly as legalists or Judaizers.

[3] Furthermore they certainly are not willing to fall under the influence of Azusa Pacific University theologians, one of whom is reported to be writing "a new constitution" for the Worldwide Church of God.

[4] while others are said to be helping the church into the "Christian mainstream" by advising on doctrinal matters.

[2] Since writing that memo about the then proposed study papers on circumcision, covenants, tithing and unclean, additional scholarly material has come to hand. It further calls into question your teaching about the Sabbath, justification, unclean, etc.

[3] In effect the same accusation leveled at Herbert W. Armstrong by the Church of God Seventh Day in 1937. See note 1.

[4] Reported to me by one of my employees who is acquainted with the theologian's son.

My own persuasion is that we have had a more complete, though not perfect, understanding and explanation of these matters under Herbert W. Armstrong than ever we do today. Put simply, "it made sense." What is surprising and encouraging is that various contemporary scholars can be marshaled in support of the Church's long-standing beliefs. All of this is said without appealing to God's inspiration of Mr. Armstrong and the long history of the Sabbath-keeping people since the first century. These too are issues which I cannot ignore.

The most disturbing aspect of our recent conversation on the eve of Passover, is that with some pride you stated that you had agreed with Richard Plache and Al Carozzo in the 1970's with regard to the place of the law in the Christian life. You said you agreed with them (and therefore disagreed with Herbert W. Armstrong) but felt that they were ahead of their time, and that nothing could be done. I remind you that Richard Plache was one of the prime movers in a 1975 attempt to overturn Sabbath observance in Britain. As a result he was put out of the church, along with Charles Hunting and David Ord, by Mr. Armstrong. If you agreed with these men as you claim, did you inform Mr. Armstrong of your radically different stance any time before his death?

In a conversation with him in September 1985 he told me that he was considering you for the position of Deputy Pastor General. He specifically asked me if you would keep the church intact. I told him I believed you would continue his doctrinal emphases. His concern was to select a potential successor who would MAINTAIN the church, keep it united, and continue its preparation for Christ's return. He thought "the work" was essentially done.

The fact that he chose you on the basis of continuity of doctrine and

practice when in fact you believed very differently, in my mind casts serious doubt whether he would have appointed you if he had known your beliefs. That you differed so much from your predecessor explains why almost every doctrinal and administrative change caused me to inform you that something was very wrong. It is only in the light of your comments about Richard Plach and Al Carozzo, however, that I have put it all together. Apparently you and I were not agreed in the first place. I thought you were upholding Mr. Armstrong, but it now appears you were not. By your own admission you were simply bidding your time. No wonder that my many protestations about radical change were never answered, and the changes proceeded as if no input had been given. And yet you continued to insist that nothing had really changed very much. Why?

Prior to December 1994 did you feel it expedient to create the impression publicly that nothing had really changed in the church's view of the law?

Was the time still not right? In any event, by mid-December, as you said to me on April 13, Earl Williams was getting out in front of you, and that could not go on. You then had little choice but to agree with him openly in Atlanta on December 17, 1994.

In light of the above it seems unlikely that you will reverse your present doctrinal and administrative course.

Of course a list of contradictions and inconsistencies does not necessarily provide sufficient reason to separate oneself from fellowship, but the implications may. I have tried very hard to support you for nine years despite the almost constant reversals and contradictions. It is with profound sorrow and regret that I have to tell you that I can no longer walk alongside you because we are not agreed on what I believe to be some of the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice. I look forward to the day when we can walk together.

Effective Wednesday, April 19, 1995 I am resigning from my employment with the Worldwide Church of God and its affiliates, as well as from the boards of the