

# Letters to Joseph W. Tkach

(Changes members knew nothing about)

WCG leaders were going to the media since 1990 informing them that they had changed their doctrines. Watchman Fellowship was contacted, beginning in 1994, about members still not knowing about these changes. Watchman told us that they felt the leadership's "dilemma" was that if they changed too directly they would be admitting HWA wasn't inspired and called by God and that their whole foundation "was built on a house of cards." This was evidently supposed to be the "reason" WCG had to act in a duplicitous way, and if any member objected or questioned what they were doing, they were disfellowshipped.

Was that supposed to make it right for the WCG (GCI) to act in such a deceitful manner after decades of preaching to their members that they should *always* be honest? Is this the way God works? Does He condone lying, doublespeak, confusion and deceit? How were the leaders showing "love" by disfellowshipping those who objected to, or questioned, the changes? Didn't that make it easy for many of them to run to newly formed splinter groups where they wouldn't have a chance to undo the old teachings? Or was this all part of a deceptive agenda all along? Some of these offshoots certainly seemed to be waiting in the wings for the Armstrong fallout from WCG.

Below is a letter from a WCG member that was written to Joseph Tkach, Sr. asking why the members weren't learning about these changes. At the time, Herbert Armstrong's booklets were being discontinued and/or pulled and rewritten by headquarters. Notice WCG's reply, which skirts the real issues and even states that they are "not hiding information from the brethren."

It is worthy to note that when the major WCG doctrinal changes finally came to members through videos in 1995, they were instigated with much confusion, shouting, contradictions and blame placed on the members or believing all they did. (Read excerpts from: Video Sermon by Joseph Tkach, Sr. to Worldwide Church of God January 1995) In hindsight, did the videos do the job? Much disunity was created while the leaders continued to control the members' minds in a duplicitous and contradictory manner.

See ESN update on WCG at end.

NOTICE: WCG changed their name to Grace Communion International in 2009.

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## Disfellowshipment:

Following is the official notice from the May 3, 1995 Pastor General's Report which severed spiritual and social contacts with many ministers now in UCG. The statement bases disfellowshipping on "tradition":

## Disfellowship Notice

It is with deep and sincere regret that we find it necessary to inform you that the following named persons, former ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, have been disfellowshipped from the Worldwide Church of God, and their ministerial credentials have been revoked. Such men have either been notified of this change in their status or are in the process of being notified. To prevent further confusion among the congregation arising from the lack of knowledge regarding their status, we are advising you of their names at this time:

[**Note:** See list of names of ministers that were disfellowshipped from WCG by spring of 1996]

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Letter to Joseph Tkach, Sr.:

[all emphasis ours]

May 2, 1994

Joseph Tkach  
Pastor General  
Worldwide Church of God  
Pasadena, CA 91123

Dear Mr. Tkach,

I would like to ask you some straight-forward questions that I would appreciate an answer to.

Why is the Worldwide Church of God telling the media it has changed certain doctrines, yet the members have not yet received this information?

A few examples:

The leadership of the WCG no longer makes the claim to be the only true church. However, why did you, in a video address distributed to all WCG churches, make the statement that, "I believe with all my heart that this is the one and only true Church of God." (video of 4-3-93)

I have also heard from Watchman Fellowship that the leadership of the WCG knows the Sabbath and the Feasts were "command" for the Jews and are not binding on N.T. Christians. (Acts 15) And that you know the Jews never practiced the kind of tithing system the WCG has enforced for so long.

If these are the church's new positions, then why aren't they being taught to the members yet? **Must the changes come in stages over a period of years?**

The ministers in this area are still teaching this is God's one and only true Church, the Feast days are commanded by God, and if you don't tithe, you are stealing from God.

Why don't you announce that HWA was wrong on everything, apologize to the membership for the abuses of the past, change things to the right and correct the wrong, **let the chips fall where they may, and trust God to bring more people into the church to make up for the ones that will leave?**

**If you don't want the WCG to be considered a cult anymore**, why not even change the name of the church? Even though the WCG changes its doctrines to more mainstream Christianity, there is still a stigma in many people's mind when they hear the name, "Worldwide Church of God."

I know I am not the only one in the church that has questions. I would appreciate an honest answer to this letter.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[name withheld]

#### NOTES

*Christian Research Journal*, winter '92 ("Special Report: WCG in Transition.")  
David Hulme, letter to James Walker of Watchman Fellowship, 7-26-93.  
Michael Snyder, interview on radio station WMUZ, Detroit, 12-13-90.

WCG Headquarters' confusing answer to put WCG in a good light:

[all emphasis ours]

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123  
JOSEPH W. TKACH  
PASTOR GENERAL

May 17, 1994

Dear ...

I am writing in response to your letter of May 2. It is a pleasure to be of service.

You mentioned that you wanted to ask some straightforward questions about the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God because others claim changes have been made about which the brethren do not have information.

Mr. Joseph Tkach has been explaining the Church's doctrinal changes through his articles in *The Worldwide News*.<sup>2</sup> **He is not leaving anything out or hiding information from the brethren. If what you have heard from the Watchman Fellowship was accurately related in your letter, then they are mistaken on some points.**

First of all, you asked about Mr. Tkach's statement that this is the "one and only true Church of God." This is a statement that he doesn't make anymore. Mr. Tkach firmly believes that this is God's Church, but to call ourselves "the one and only true Church" implies that only people on the membership role of the Worldwide Church of God can have God's Holy Spirit. It implies that there can be no other assemblies of true Christians anywhere in the world, but that is not what we believe witness the groups we have been in contact with **in the Ukraine**.

The late Herbert Armstrong often referred to the Church as "the one and only true Church," but even **he did not mean what many have assumed**. He taught that the Church is a spiritual organism composed of all those who have God's Spirit. He spoke of the Church of God (Seventh Day) as true Christians, for instance. He even invited their ministers to speak at the Feast of Tabernacles up until 1945. While he was Pastor General, other groups were discovered in the **Philippines** and also in **South America** with whom we felt a spiritual kinship, and they became part of our fellowship. So using expressions like "one and only true Church" gives people the wrong impression about what we believe.

I really don't understand how there could be any misunderstanding about the Church's teaching on the Sabbath, the Holy Days and tithing because our beliefs are clearly explained in *Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God*. A new booklet on the Sabbath has just been produced called *Day of Renewal*. We came out with a new booklet on tithing in 1993, and one on God's festivals and Holy Days in 1992. **So the Church's "new" position is being taught.**

We teach that tithing is God's system for financing his Work. It is an act of worship between the individual and God. The Holy Days show that Jesus Christ is the center of God's plan of salvation being worked out for mankind. The Sabbath was kept by Jesus Christ and the apostles, and the Church today continues to follow their example. We do not believe that doing these things is what saves us. We do good works because we are saved (Ephesians 3:10).

Thank you for writing. Please let us know whenever we may be of further service.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Leimbach  
Personal Correspondence Department

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## Comments:

How many members really understood or even knew about any "changes" as far back as 1992 and 1993, or even 1994? Was the contradictory, confusing, blame-filled manner Tkach, Sr. used in *The Worldwide News* what we can truly call "explaining the doctrinal changes"? Also notice how WCG says Herbert Armstrong "didn't mean what many assumed." Assumed? Or were **taught**? He also says "If what you have heard from the Watchman Fellowship was accurately related in your letter, then they are mistaken on some points." Yet HQ **furnished** the info to WF. Then he goes on to say "the 'new' position *is* being taught." The above letter is a prime example of spin control and doublespeak.

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**Footnotes:**

1 Michael Snyder and Ruth Tucker radio interview, December 13, 1990, WMUZ, Detroit; "Unprecedented Changes Affect Worldwide Church of God," *Christian Research Journal*, News Watch, Spring 1991; *Watchman Expositor*, Vol. 8, No. 5, 1991, "Doctrinal Changes at the Worldwide Church of God."

2 See: Unavailable! The Worldwide News – Prior to September 1995 which furnishes quotes from the WN in 1994 and 1995 which show exactly how Tkach Sr. "explained" these new changes.