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The PLAIN TRUTH About the "STP" and WHY God Did Not Choose Scholars to Determine His Doctrines

by Herbert W. Armstrong

There is a tendency to want to become "scholarly"--or to look to "Scholars" as authorities for God's doctrines.

We need to understand this point! For God has NOT chosen the scholarly to receive, comprehend, understand, and reveal to His Church His true DOCTRINES and customs. Some have not realized that fact.

While I was overseas carrying Christ's Gospel into nations around the world, my son decided, overstepping his authority, that he would like to see our Church doctrines re-examined, questioned, refined, organized and systematized in a more "scholarly" manner.

I presume that naturally he was prompted in this by the urging of a scholar more recently come among us--that is, compared to such men as Drs. Hoeh and Meredith, Raymond McNair, and Dibar Apartian --and not as thoroughly grounded in God's Truth. Intentionally unknown to me, and without authority to do so, he set Dr. Robert Kuhn, with the help of a few others, to work on the project.

God is emphatically not opposed to knowledge and understanding. But modern "scholarship" speaks a language all its own. Many of our substantial, understanding, "middle-class" (as the world classifies) members might need an interpreter to translate this "language of scholarship" into ordinary English.

What magnet draws one to want to become "scholarly"? The appeal to vanity leads many. I think it is normal for all of us to have inner feelings of inferiority. The "scholar" has been trained in the higher educational levels of universities, to acquire this badge of scholarship. It is not only a manner of speaking and writing. It is a way of thinking--an attitude. And I will say bluntly it is injected by Satan. It is a form of intellectual vanity!

The intellectual and scholarly professor--especially if he has a Ph.D.--uses this acquirement to intimidate his students. The "scholarly" attitude and manner holds itself loftily above those being addressed. He is in an exclusive class that disdains the proletariat.

But what kind of men did JESUS call and choose to be His apostles? NOT the "scholarly" but men called by the scholarly as "ignorant and unlearned men." But that does not mean illiterate or devoid of knowledge.

They were knowledgable men of BALANCE, of GOOD UNDERSTANDING, common sense, and good and capable minds. They simply were not trained in the acquired higher social mannerisms and culture of the time, that ante-dated modern "scholarship"--injected by Satan in our time.

The Apostle Paul was perhaps better educated in the world's knowledge than the twelve, but by no means a "scholar," like the modern variety.

I suppose it is natural that I should have asked myself many times why God called such an unscholarly man as I. I have known scores of men of better minds, greater mental capacity, superior abilities, more stature and appearance and personality. Many or most of these were "successful" in the world, as the world evaluates success. Yet GOD CHOSE NONE OF THEM!

While I have known many of better minds, still I believe God gave me a good mind, and a natural gift of understanding--and a good deal of common sense. I am certainly no "scholar" nor an "intellectual." I am sure the "scholars" consider themselves very superior to me. But this I know: when God conquered me, brought me to BELIEVE in Him--and further, to BELIEVE HIM--believe what He says, I was willing to accept it. God revealed to me early that HE is a God who WILL NOT COMPROMISE. He will not WATER DOWN His Truth. It would have been easier for God to have compromised just a little with His Law --to just say, "I have power to forgive sins by simply SUSPENDING the PENALTY of sin." That way He could have prevented sacrificing His only begotten Son, and Jesus could have escaped the agony of a humiliating death. But rather than water down, or compromise one trillionth part of an inch with His Law, God paid our penalty in our stead by giving His Son Jesus, and Jesus paid the death penalty to save us from the penalty of our sins--the second death (man already was consigned to die the first death BEFORE Christ came "as in Adam all die.")

Therefore I know I was willing to let God put it in my heart NEVER TO COMPROMISE with His TRUTH!

If I am proved wrong on a point I will change. My mind will be open for truth new to me--and all this has been abundantly proven. Perhaps that may partly explain how Christ came to choose as His Apostle one who would consider himself a lowly worm.

I was discussing this matter of intellectualism and scholarship with Mr. Rader. Out of curiosity, grinning a little, I asked him, "How would you categorize me, in this regard?"

"Well, definitely you are not a scholar or an intellectual--but you are a well-educated man who has understanding, common sense, and BALANCE."

What is the magnet that draws certain ones to train for "scholarship?"

First, I believe it is that inner feeling of inferiority which I believe we all have--but we don't like to admit it. However, we desire to find a way to "ride over it" to relieve our consciences, and, further, there is the magnet of intellectual vanity.

Nearly all "scholars," of course, have come up through the channel of this world's system of modern education. I suppose we seldom stop to realize this entire system has been swayed by Satan. Nevertheless, a college or university student finds himself suffering from being mentally and psychologically INTIMIDATED by professors who speak this "language of scholarship." The professor purposely makes the student feel uncomfortable and inferior. His own VANITY causes him to assume a superior attitude. This, in turn, stirs up anew the innate feeling of inferiority in the student. He begins to want to acquire this same "SUPERIOR" demeanor and bearing.

However, once a "scholar" he will seldom change his mind. He is right--he knows he is right--others are wrong--his intellectual vanity will not let him admit error.

Did you realize that in the world of jurisprudence, a jury of twelve is always composed of people of common, ordinary background --and never of "intellectuals" or "scholars"? Reasons? A lawyer will tell you the "scholar" does not have an open mind--and he will not change his mind on evidence.

Now the Worldwide Church of God is composed, as was the first-century Church, of the average, common people--few illiterate, and very few "intellectuals."

But the theological seminaries, and the universities, especially on the higher levels, have fallen heir to the attitude, demeanor and the language of "scholarship." The Bible dictionaries, the commentaries, religious encyclopedias, and other such works are all scholarly, well organized, classified and refined.

I think my son was influenced into engaging in a "scholarly" project, to re-examine, question, refine (that is, water down and change) alter, organize and systematize the beliefs and teachings of the Worldwide Church of God--as he and the "scholars" would like to have them presented.

The entire project was carefully and deliberately kept from me. Men who might have seen the drift setting in, to COMPROMISE with God's TRUTH, yet present it in such a scholarly manner that the Church would accept it, were forbidden to contact me or be fired!

Dr. Kuhn, who tells me in writing he wrote most or virtually all of it, with some input, is a scholar, who, as stated above, had come more recently among us, compared to such men as Drs. Hoeh, Meredith and Zimmerman, or Raymond McNair, Dibar Apartian, etc.

Now HOW did Jesus Christ, as HEAD of the Worldwide Church of God, put HIS truths, doctrines and practices into this Church? The answer is, through His own chosen apostle!

But my son did not agree with Christ's Apostle. I did not know of the width of that disagreement. I remember that when I had preached a sermon, probably as far back as 1955, he strongly disagreed, though I soon forgot it. I did think he was almost wholly in agreement on biblical doctrines.

Now it happens that Christ put His doctrines in this Church through His own chosen Apostle. Had I known my son was so far out of harmony, he would never have held the office he held and abused.

Much in the "STP" is in error--much of it so subtly and in a minor way that it might not be noticed by many. I have undertaken to correct these errors. The "STP" is, of course, null and void. It CANNOT be salvaged. But I shall try to correct the errors, minor as well as major, as time permits.

THE PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT THE COVENANTS

by Herbert W. Armstrong

One of the most important doctrines Jesus Christ has put in His Church is that of the "Old," and the "New Covenants." WHY should these be misunderstood? For that matter, WHY should the Sabbath truth, the annual holy days and festivals, tithing, healing, or even salvation? Yet they are misunderstood.

God has made a number of covenants, among them the Noachian covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, what we call the Old Covenant with the nation Israel, the separate Sabbath covenant of Exodus 31:12-18, the Davidic covenant, etc.

In fact, it might be of passing interest to know that my first "sermon," if it could have been called that, was a message to Church of God people near Jefferson, Oregon, on a covenant that appeared to be news to them--the separate Sabbath covenant of Exodus 31:12-18. Whether worthy to be called a sermon or not, it was enthusiastically received with joy--for those people loved the Sabbath, and rejoiced in receiving new light concerning it.

However, I am concerned here only about the "Old Covenant," and the "New Covenant."

Let me first define "covenant." Webster defines the word as a "usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement: compact." In the biblical usage a covenant is a contract or agreement, solemnly binding, under which God promises certain rewards or blessings, conditioned on man's promise of performance.

A grave mistake very often carelessly made is to confuse the word "covenant" with "testament." We speak of the New Testament, and the Old Testament Scriptures.

A testament is not a covenant, and a covenant is not a testament. Yet common usage seems to confuse them. It is important, at the outset, to understand the difference.

The word "testament" is defined as: an act or written instrument by which a person bequeathes, or wills certain of his possessions to another. It may or may not be a conditioned will. It is not necessarily payment or reward for work or obligation performed.

The Old Covenant between God and the nation Israel was NOT a testament or will. It was an agreement by which the children of Israel

covenanted with God to obey Him, and God promised material and national blessings and dominance. But He did NOT give--or promise to give --the Holy Spirit and eternal salvation.

Before proceeding further, let's get everything in its proper setting.

The first man, Adam, was required to make a choice. The super archangel Lucifer, having become Satan the Devil, an immortal spirit being of tremendous supernatural power, was there when Adam and Eve were created. In order to QUALIFY to receive God's Holy Spirit, symbolized by the tree of life--and also to restore the Government of God to earth--Adam had to make the choice of whether to reject Satan and Satan's attitude and way, and choose to obey God and the Government of God.

But Adam chose to reject God, and believe Satan. He made the fateful decision--for himself and his posterity which is the whole world. God drove out the man from the garden of Eden, and shut mankind off from access to the Holy Spirit--except such as God should specially call.

We need the above background to understand. Too often people start viewing biblical teaching in a manner comparable to tuning in a "movie" two-thirds of the way through. We need this background of what went before.

God had called Noah, and saved humanity alive through his family. God had called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), fathers of the PROMISES. One of the promises to Abraham was multiple "seed"--nations, the promised land--material national greatness.

Four hundred and thirty years after Abraham God called the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to be a special people of God, and to inherit the promised land. Other nations were still CUT OFF from God. God had specially prepared and called Moses. Through Moses God made the proposition to the Israelites. He gave them their choice.

God proposed to the Israelites: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians...Now, therefore, IF ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19:4-6).

There was a very large IF in this covenant agreement. But the people glibly agreed. "All that the Eternal hath spoken we will do," they promised.

So the covenant was ratified by blood (Ex. 24:4-8). It was also a marriage covenant by which Israel promised to obey her Husband. It made them a separate NATION. Its basic law was the spiritual Law --the Ten Commandments. He gave them His civil law of statutes and judgments to govern them as a nation. He also gave them, as a CHURCH or congregation, the law of Moses--a sacrificial law as a substitute for the sacrifice of Christ to remind them of sin, and a ceremonial law of physical works (Grk. ergon in N.T.) which were rituals, and things to do morning, noon and night--a temporary substitute for the Holy Spirit.

But something was wrong with that covenant. Religionists generally seem to blame the wrong on God. What was wrong was the flagrant disobedience of the people.

The prophet Jeremiah summed it up: "Behold the days come, saith the Eternal, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers...which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Eternal. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel; After those days, saith the Eternal, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31-33).

This prophecy was inspired by one of God's holy prophets, to become part of the FOUNDATION of the Church of God under the New Testament. And so, in teaching the Church, this was quoted in Hebrews 8:6-10.

Most Protestant churches teach that the fault with the Old Covenant was God's Law, and that as the Old Covenant was made with Israel the New will be made with GENTILES--and as the Old had Law, the New abolishes God's Ten Commandments and is based wholly on PROMISES. Our ministers need to know how to meet that erroneous teaching.

The New Covenant is made also with the House of Israel and the House of Judah (Heb. 8:8). A Spirit-begotten Gentile becomes one of Israel spiritually, of the Household of GOD (Eph. 2:19).

The New will remedy the fault of the Old (disobedience of the people) and will be made with those in whose hearts is the spiritual Law of God, as these scriptures say.

The Old Covenant was made with the carnal children of Israel, and was a marriage contract in which Israel engaged in whoredom exceeding individual human harlots.

The Old was made with a people on their PROMISE to obey. They disobeyed. The New shall be made only with a Spirit-born Church, a people who, in this mortal lifetime, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, have OVERCOME Satan (as Jesus did, and as the first Adam failed to do), have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, and have already PROVED their obedience. The Old was made with sinning mortals. The New will be made with righteous immortals!

Now, where are we, today?

Both Israel and Judah violated their solemn agreement with God (actually the One who became Christ). As a wife, they spiritually ran off. Finally God gave Israel a bill of divorce (Jer. 31:8). Yet, even after that He entreated Israel to return to Him--but she wouldn't.

To make that Old Testament marriage finally end, Christ, her Husband, died, so that she might be cleansed of her sins, and become party to the New Testament. In Romans 11 we read of how converted

Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree, broken off and grafted into the natural Olive tree of Israel. But it shows how the natural branches, broken off because of sin, may also be grafted back into the Israel tree.

Then WHAT ARE WE UNDER TODAY?

The Old Covenant is ENDED. The Apostle Paul said "God who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6).

Yet the New Covenant HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE! Its terms and conditions have been revealed to us through Christ. We ministers preach it. And even though as a final MARRIAGE COVENANT it has not been made --that is, in contract language, "signed, sealed and delivered." We who God has called are privileged to have God's Law written in our hearts, to have the life-begetting, sin-overcoming Holy Spirit to open our minds to spiritual UNDERSTANDING, to guide us in God's ways, and, within us, to EMPOWER us to overcome Satan, and DO THE WORK OF GOD!

But some have seriously MISUNDERSTOOD--hopefully not any of our ministers. Seeing that the Old Covenant has ended, and supposing the Old Covenant and the Old Testament are one and the same thing, they reject, for example, Malachi 3:8-12, which makes failure to PAY the tithe each OWES to God the SIN of STEALING--and the HEINOUS SIN of stealing from GOD at that!

In the days of Jesus' ministry, the writings we now call "the Old Testament," were not called that. In fact the Old Covenant was NOT A TESTAMENT AT ALL! Those writings then were called "The Law, the Prophets, and the writings," or the "Psalms."

When Jesus said, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets," He was saying that He did not come to end the "Old Testament" (as we now call them) Scriptures. God's CHURCH is built on the very FOUNDATION of the Apostles AND THE PROPHETS, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone!

Much of the Church's doctrine and teaching comes from the Prophets, as their writings are recorded in what today we call Old Testament Scriptures.

The Old Testament Scriptures record for us, today, all the history of ancient Israel, the Old Covenant, and God's dealings under that Covenant.

The Worldwide Church of God is based on THE WHOLE BIBLE.

Those CALLED of God are privileged to live according to the conditions of the NEW Covenant, though the actual covenant has not been, as we might say today, yet "signed, sealed and delivered." Those NOT called specially by God are, as were all outside Israel in Old Testament times, cut off from God--not being now judged--neither lost nor saved. Their time is yet to come!