

The "New" Church of God Messenger

A Newsletter for the People of God

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Articles

Born Again: The Kingdom of God! by David Ben-Ariel (Toledo, Ohio)

Jesus was sent to Earth to deliver a Message to mankind. A startling message from Outer Space - the third Heaven - from our CREATOR GOD. A correct understanding of what that REVELATION is - the one and only true Gospel - separates God's Church from all others and exalts the pure religion above every false way! (John. 17:17).

There is only one way to enter God's Kingdom - and that is through Christ! (Acts 4:12). He is the Key that unlocks God's Royal House, the Open Door to the Universe, the Gateway to Eternity, the Immortal Pioneer who has led the way! All other ways are dead ends and will self-destruct (John. 10:1).

GOD IS REPRODUCING HIMSELF! That's the glorious Good News that Jesus boldly proclaimed! The Gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD announces the GOD KINGDOM: A Spirit-Born Kingdom of God-Beings! A Royal Family that we can enter! (Rev. 3:21). A Divine Family that will administer God's Government throughout the universe and eternity! (Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:18).

God became man, so man could become God! (John. 1:14; Matt. 10:25). Mankind has been created after the GODKIND, and after a life of conversion, of changing for the better, of going through the process of purification (becoming more God-like, more Christ-like, more Kingdom-like) we can be BORN AGAIN BY A RESURRECTION - just like Jesus was, the firstborn of MANY brethren! (Rom. 1:4; 8:29). Presently, we're far too human, but soon we're to be transformed into glorious, immortal Spirit! (John. 10:34-35; Ephes. 4:24). This is what Jesus told Nicodemus, the Jewish religious leader. He didn't beat around the bush, He got straight to the point and told him: "You must be born again!" (John. 3:3).

Jesus elaborated on this bombshell, seeing Nicodemus was dumbstruck (just like so many religious people today!), and explained that if your parents are flesh and blood humans, it's only natural that you're also human. "That which is born of the flesh IS flesh." You're nothing more or less. Kind after kind (Gen. 1:27). And if you're born again by a Spirit-composed GOD, it's only supernatural that you'll become a Spirit-composed God! "That which is born of the Spirit IS Spirit" (John 3:3-8). Human-beings can become GOD-BEINGS! But first we must be BORN AGAIN!

Unless we're born again - by a RESURRECTION - we can't even see or enter God's Royal Family! The apostle Paul clearly taught the same as Jesus: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy (flesh and blood), we shall also bear

the image of the heavenly (Spirit). Now this I say, brethren, FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD...but we shall all be CHANGED... raised incorruptible... and... put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:48-53). When will mortals become immortal? (Proving we're not now!). When will we change our composition and character? "...at the last trump" (vs.52) - NOT during this life, but at Christ's Coming and our resurrection (Rev. 11:15; 20:6)! How plain and simple!

Why have the vast majority of professing Christians been deceived on this point? Why do they go about bleating that they're "born again" already? Jesus said, "that which is born of Spirit IS Spirit" and Paul said, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Will you believe the Bible or traditional Christianity? (Mark. 7:7).

But will we actually become GOD-BEINGS? (I John. 3:9). Will God be our literal FATHER? Will we take on His FAMILY NAME? (Ephes. 3:15; Rev. 22:4). Yes! Because it's REVEALED that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (I John. 3:4), "who shall change our vile body (flesh), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Spirit), according to the working whereby HE IS ABLE even to subdue all things unto Himself"(Phil. 3:21). Even as David and Daniel prophesied of the BRIGHT FUTURE God has in store for us, when we'll inherit His divine nature and form: "... I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake (at the resurrection), with thy likeness" and "shine...as the stars for ever and ever" (Ps. 17:15; Dan. 12:3). Again, kind after kind (Gal.4:19). What a glorious hope and calling!

Mankind created after the Godkind, born again at the resurrection, Spirit-composed and Divine! THIS IS THE WHOLE PLAN AND PURPOSE OF GOD! Soon it'll be mission accomplished in our lives and we'll experience the "finishing touch" to our spiritual creation (Phil. 1:6; Rev. 1:8; Ephes. 2:10). We're actually the Kingdom of God in embryo - the PIONEERING COMMUNITY of an advanced civilization - who'll soon help establish HEAVEN ON EARTH! Meanwhile, may we continue to develop and reflect the HOLY, RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER of God in joyous anticipation! (II Pet. 1:4).

Diversity Madness!

by Richard Frates (Easley, South Carolina)

The Devil is a Diversity Professor: The "Diversity Doctrine" is: Racist, Depraved, and Insane. Honor and respect is to be lavished on the Diverse - Based on Race and Sexual Perversion. Forced Acceptance is to be imposed on All by Law. That is complete folly - And a Satanic Attack on those who are Not the Favored-Race or Sexual Perverts. Who do not fit into Professor-Diversity categories of - Victims of All who are Not what they are! Arrogant Shallow-Minded Lawmakers and Judges make Special Laws to Protect the "Diverse" from the Non-Diverse? Absurd! The lifestyles and beliefs of the - Non-Diverse - are Not worthy of the - same protections and freedoms. That is: Intellectual Madness and an attack on "Equal Rights" freedom of thought and speech is Shackled in fear of offending "Diversity-Darlings" and the Devils who praise them. Who must be loved or hated and why - Politicians and Judges will decide?

The Media: Sings a Diabolic Song Proclaiming, "good and evil" Mind Slaves of the Mad Left Media - Politicians, Judges and Educators Dance and Sing Along. Question for Professor-Diversity: Is being normal and non-diverse a problem? No - As long as they are Convinced that the Diverse - because of - Race, need protection from White People and the - Sexually Insane - those who believe they can change their gender, need protection from Normal People and - all Sexual Perverts - need protection from God and those who believe God.

Those who indulge in Bestiality are Really "Diverse" can they join Professor Diversity's strange family, receive - forced acceptance - Special Laws protecting them from Criticism? How Diverse does one need to be: To become a Diversity Professor? Why are Universities Infested with Diversity-Madness? Professor-Diversity - Does "Freedom of Sexual Orientation" include - My and most Americans "Sexual Orientation" in: Matthew 19:4-5? "The Creator made them male and female and said: For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife"?

Obviously Not: That is legally "Discriminated" Against - and Banned from being taught in universities or public schools. Professor Diversity - You, Politicians and Judges: "Discriminate" Against an Individual's Right of "Freedom of Sexual Orientation". There is No Freedom. Subjugation based on Race and Sexual Perverts Dominate. Equal Rights Repealed? Politicians and Judges have made: Believing God against the Law - Why? Because they believe the Devil?

True Diversity: God Created Everyone Diverse and Unique; There will Never Be Another You! That is the only True Honest Concept of Diversity. Everyone is - one of a kind - Diverse - without regard to Race or Sex.

Sexual Perverts will be sexual perverts without Law: So why make Law Promoting Sexual Perversion? To Appease the Devils Faithful in Media and "Discriminate" against those who "Believe God." Why are politicians and Judges allowing themselves to be driven - Like Dumb Mules - by Professor-Diversity? Special Rights: Based on Race and Sexual Perversions are Tyrannical - Unconstitutional Unequal Targeting of Law.

Drunk on the Devils Wine of Hate your White Neighbor: Senator Tim Scott of SC, made this Diabolical Statement "Diversity is the -fabric of our people and makes us the strong nation we are". That is Evil. And the same as saying: A variety of - Sexual Perversions and - Skin Colors - made the nation strong. God "builds up nations and destroys them" Not Racist Professor Diversity. Senator Scott said "I am against all types of hate" and the damned hypocrite promotes hate for God and all who believe God with his "Equality Act." That Criminalizes God's Word and gives - LGBT - License to Attack Christians who believe God. Only Sexual Perverts can be "Equality Act" Victims and only those who believe God "Equality Act" Guilty.

Our Civil Rights Law has Surrendered - Racial Equality: And Effectively Makes Black Racism Legal! Only Blacks can be "Civil Rights" Victims and only Whites Civil rights Guilty. Pandering Politicians and Judges - Surrender Godly Morality to - Sexual Perverts. Tim Scott is a Black Racist: He said "I will Never Forget - Blacks were slaves in America" but he Did Forget - white people today are Innocent, and he was Never a slave. And Blacks were the first Black Slave owners and Black Slave traders. Black Racists Love to play Victim and Justify Hate.

The "fabric of a Nation - that promotes Lasting Peace, Security and Freedom is: "Love God and your Neighbor" Not, Race, and Sexual Perversions. A "Fabric" of a Nation based on Race and Sexual Perverts will-lead to National Subjugation and Slavery. Freedom, of Thought, Speech and Religion Abolished. Universities Fire Professor Diversity: Promote "Love your neighbor" instead of Pandering to one by Targeting another!

The definition of diversity is: "A wide diversity of opinions" but to Professor-Diversity truth is a foreign language. Equality of Rights: Do Not exist. Diversity-Madness - Rules over - Equal Rights. A twisting of hearts, minds, and conscience - is their devoted work. Jeremiah 23:14 - Describes them: "They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that No one turns from his wickedness." And Jeremiah 7:28 "Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips." To Diversity Professors, Leftist and Media: Deception is Truth - Darkness is Light and imposing their Darkness on the masses Heaven. "Inclusive Behavior" is: The term used by Diversity Professors for those whose minds they have - Defeated. It Means Surrender - Close your hearts and mind to "Good and Evil" and accuse those who will Not.

Diversity professors are racist: Teaching white people are racist and blacks are Not is Racist and endorsing Black Racism. Racism is in the heart the skin is innocent white or black. Racist terms, that are used by professor diversity: Person of color - That is a Racist Statement - everyone fits into that designation except white men women and children.

White is also a color, stupid. The charge of "Racial Profiling" is Racist Profiling all White People and Playing-Victim. Politicians, Media, and Judges are hopelessly Homophobic. Homophobia really is: Fear of being criticized for Not Approving Sexual Perversion. Transgenders are a Fraud: Dr Frankenstein - Cannot - Create a woman out of a man. Why is that madness pandered to? Medical malpractice: Drug and mutilate the sexually insane appease their insanity? Equality of Rights: The President should write this Executive Order: In Court All are considered the Same Race and Male or Female. No one is to be Rewarded or Condemned based on Race or "Sexual Orientation." Politicians support that Equality of Rights Statement. Some defeated conservatives, to avoid criticism close their eyes to truth, surrender, and call themselves "Inclusive". They Boast "I am Not Homophobic." Those words will condemn them in the Judgment. Calling those who believe God "homophobic" is the same as calling God insane!

Professor-Diversity Objective: Slavery of the spirit. Blind Minds of the ability to distinguish between Good and Evil: Result - Complete Madness. Romans 1:28 "Since they did Not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a Depraved Mind." Defeated Pastors: Proudly invite Sexual Perverts into church fellowship - instead of calling on them to repent - Ezekiel 3:18-19 Condemns them. Thieves who repent do Not identify themselves as thieves! Preacher instead: Call on Politicians to Ban public school Sex Ed - it is nothing but LGBT indoctrination and how to be sexually promiscuous without consequences.

Brothers and Sisters Repent: God sees your heart Not skin color and calls on Sexual Perverts and those who praise them to Repent. Do Not accept the Devils Faithful as your - Mind Slave Masters. Politicians, Judges and Preachers - By your words you will be Acquitted or Condemned - Matthew 12:37. Judgment Day is the day of your death - you will Not remember being dead. God - Paid our Debt of Sin, by the Sacrifice of his Wonderful Son.

Jesus Christ Crucified - is Light that Shines Beyond the Grave. Praise God.

The Cure for the Tragic American Condition **(Copyright) by Richard Markland (London, Ohio)**

What is it about prosperity that opens the door to complacency? Urgency is nonexistent when everything is convenient and within reach. According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Eleventh Edition: Prosperity- "Self-satisfied: especially

when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers; unconcerned." Simply put, a sense of urgency has no place within the American mindset if life is going well.

It has been eight decades since Americans were asked to sacrifice, both in the cost of lives, and personal comforts. The generation of World War II was a far cry from what Americans have become.

This is a generation in which people are living longer. Personal incomes provide the ability to satisfy both wants and needs. Sports, movies, video games, music, drugs, alcohol, the occult, and pornography are just a few of the nations' golden calves. As a pastime, what many Americans view as mere interests are actual addictions people are enslaved by.

An aspect of freedom given little consideration to is whether people will face reality or embrace self-made worlds of fantasy. A choice must be made. Reality is cold and hard. It is something everyone will eventually have to face. Fantasy is make believe, easy and embraced by many people, but completely false.

Most Americans are completely unaware and unprepared for the future. Dangers are increasing yet ridiculed by people who do not want their personal comfort zones violated. Society is overwhelmed by people who are self-satisfied, oblivious and without a need for one another and God.

The God Americans claim to worship reflects the nation's culture. Due to prosperity and contentment, God is only looked to with urgency when a crisis occurs. Otherwise, he is simply someone many people look to when convenient. It is a double standard and hypocritical.

Isaiah 29:13- "The Lord says, 'These people worship me only with their words. They honor me with what they say, but their hearts are far away from me. Their worship does not mean anything to me (it is completely unrecognized). They teach nothing but human rules that they have been taught (NIRV).'"

God is taking note every single day of how people are living. A day of accountability on an individual and national level is coming far sooner than most people realize. Isaiah 29:14- "So once more (history will repeat itself). I will shock people (emotionally and physically) with many wonderful (amazing and astonishing) acts. I will destroy the wisdom of those who think they are wise. I will do away with the cleverness of those who think they are so smart (NIRV).'" Both professing Christians and non-Christians alike will soon see who the true God of the Bible is. Americans are about to witness and experience on an individual and national level exactly how God views the American way of life.

God deeply desires a complete change in the lives of people. He does not want people to suffer the consequences for disobedience. Joel 7:13-14- "Don't tear your clothes to show how sad you are (don't just show outward signs). Let your hearts be broken (deeply repent). Return to the Lord your God. He is gracious. He is tender and kind. He is slow to get angry. He is full of love. He will not bring his judgment. He will not destroy you. (14) Who knows? He might turn toward you and not bring his judgment. He might give you his blessing... (NIRV)."

The promise of protection is conditional. Obedience to God must be on his terms. What is not realized by many people is how easily they can believe they are obeying God, but in researching the Bible carefully with an open mind, far more is required than merely believing and talking the talk.

Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees

by Gregory Diaz (Wayne, New Jersey)

Christians are commanded to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 2:3). Christians should be open to gaining a deeper understanding of the bible. Therefore, let us consider one important concept that has not yet been understood, although it is a priority for the church to observe. It is clearly in the bible. It is also clearly in contrast to the wisdom of the world. For this reason, it has been ignored, explained away, or rejected. As Christians we must be willing to follow the bible completely and accurately. Otherwise, there is no point in being a Christian.

Of course, unless God gives us ears to hear we cannot hear. However, if God gives us ears to hear and a heart to learn we have the choice to open the door to Jesus. We know that Jesus will come and sup with us if we do. If we have ears to hear we are commanded to hear.

Before Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, died he appointed a successor. After some time had passed some people in this organization questioned whether this was the choice of Jesus. They split off to form new organizations. And now, as we get closer to the end of the age, we may wonder how or where Jesus is guiding his

church. We know the bible says Jesus is knocking at the door of the Laodicean church. We know the gates of hell do not prevail against it.

If Jesus is knocking at the door of the church, he is currently on the outside of it. (Likewise, the Laodicean church has or soon will be outside of the body of Jesus since He spews them out of his mouth.) We should consider that since Jesus is outside of the church, the church ought to be looking for ways to let Jesus inside. Therefore, let us consider that if the Laodicean church does allow Jesus back in it may again become the Philadelphia church. Notice the phrase in Rev 3:12 which says, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT." This seems to imply that the Philadelphia era temporarily goes out and becomes the Laodicean church era. It then returns again to the Philadelphia era and goes on to become the wife of Christ.

How would Jesus be knocking? We know from the bible that God sets the leadership in the church. We know He first sets apostles. Of course, his choices may be different than ours. As an example, consider the first era church where God chose Saul. Saul was likely the last person the church thought God would call to make an apostle. He was an outsider to the church. He had been persecuting the church! Yet this was God's choice.

The word apostle means one sent. This implies that an apostle is an outsider to those he is sent to. The bible teaches that every church age has an angel or a messenger. Since an apostle is "one sent" an apostle is a messenger. Therefore, apostles are outsiders sent with the message of Jesus to each church era.

God tells the church to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1). He commends the Ephesian era church in Rev 2:2 for having "tried them which say they are apostles and are not." This instruction is to all Christians yet perhaps even more so to lay members. Consider that there would be no need to try the spirits if there were a human church organization in place to transfer or select leadership. This is a major fault and biblical blind spot in the church. Mr. Armstrong also made this mistake by teaching that he was the only apostle.

In John 8:31 Jesus tells us that in order to be true disciples we must continue (learning) in His word. Yet the attitude of the Laodicean church era, the current era says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" This prophecy is now being fulfilled.

Christians are taught to be as the Bereans who had "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We diligently check our bibles during and after every sermon. However, it would seem that the first part of this verse has been overlooked. For example, are Christians ever taught to receive "the word with all readiness of mind" from messengers on the outside of their organizations? Yet this is biblical. The Bereans did this and were therefore blessed to receive the gospel. Let us remember Hebrews 13:2 which says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." It is STILL necessary to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

During the days of unleavened bread Christians are commanded to remove leaven - a symbol of sin. In Luke 12:1 Jesus teaches us to "first of all, beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (According to Albert Barnes' "Notes on the Whole Bible" and other commentaries the phrase "first of all" has the meaning "above all things beware" etc.) Matt 16:12 tells us this leaven is the DOCTRINE of the Pharisees. Christians should be aware that watching out for this doctrine is the priority of the church of God! It should not be surprising to realize that this is the main topic of most of the new testament. Christians will need to cleanse itself of this leavening.

Acts 15:5 shows us clearly what the doctrine of the Pharisees is. It says, "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Let us carefully consider this chapter and this verse. The question of whether or not gentile believers needed to be circumcised was a great controversy in the early church. Here it is important to understand that a sinner could not be circumcised. Therefore, this question concerns whether or not to allow sinners to enter into fellowship with the church.

Let us understand the importance of fellowship. Fellowship is a form of communication and therefore a vital component of the gospel message. We know that God inspired it on Pentecost at the founding of the church. Romans 10:17 says "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Also Malachi 3:16 says "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." And Hebrews 13:16 says "But to do good and to communicate forget not."

Just as the spreading of iniquity is characterized as a mystery (2 Thes. 2:7) so is the spreading of righteousness through fellowship (Ephesians 3:9). Considering this mystery helps us understand the difference between the old and new covenants. According to the old covenant the sinner should be "cut off from among his people" and therefore severed from the congregation and from God (Numbers 15:30). This is similar to how Adam was removed from the garden of Eden and the tree of life. But now since Jesus paid for our sins, we again have access to the tree of life, to God's spirit and therefore to fellowship with God and each other.

This explains how that "the commandment, which was ordained to life," Paul found to be unto death (Romans 7:10). The reason is that the law severs us from fellowship since we have and inevitably do sin. And we understand that being severed from God leads to spiritual degradation and death. However, we are now made free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). And this allows us to fulfill the righteousness of the law by regaining access to God's life-giving spirit. Therefore, it is the penalty of the law, or that severance, that we are no longer under the threat of.

The book of Galatians confirms this idea. By this letter we know that even the apostle Peter misunderstood the truth of the gospel. Here Peter by separating from the "sinners of the gentiles" had turned to a false gospel.

Now when reading this it should be understood that gentiles always had the opportunity to convert to Judaism. However, they first needed to be circumcised. This involved a complete transformation of beliefs and obedience. Therefore, circumcision should not be considered as merely a physical operation that you either have or haven't had done. In order to receive circumcision a person must first conform to an acceptable standard of righteousness. Genesis 17:1 says, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Verse 11 says "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." Circumcision is a token or sign for righteousness and is therefore a symbol for it.

Therefore, clearly the actual operation of circumcision is not required. However, the essential point is that what it symbolizes is also no longer required. In other words, the idea of living up to an "acceptable standard" of righteousness in order to fellowship with Christians that have already attained or been raised up in that standard is likewise not required.

Understanding the letter of Galatians this way shows it to be as relevant today as when it was written. No one can be justified and/or made perfect by the "works of the law." Or, in other words, no one can be perfected by the threat of being cut off from fellowship. In Galatians 2:16 Paul says, "for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And in Galatians 3:3 Paul asks "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Notice in Galatians 2:21 Paul says, "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain". Here Paul does not say that we do not need to become righteous. Instead, we see him explaining the new covenant method for becoming righteous. Again, we understand as Paul explains this process, that the physical act of circumcision is only the sign of a person living righteously.

Notice Galatians 3:2-5. Here Paul is discussing the "works of the law" rather than just the physical operation of circumcision. Here we should understand that the "works of the law" cannot be referring to works of righteousness. This would make no sense at all since the goal of a Christian is to live a righteous and godly life. Rather Paul is again talking about the correct method for attaining righteousness and perfection. Therefore the "works of the law," and "curse of the law," must be viewed as the authoritative severance of sinners which had been the policy under the old covenant. Paul is contrasting the fear of being cut off to "the hearing of faith". In other words, the gospel method of attaining to righteousness is through communication and inspiration.

Notice that in Galatians 4:13-15 Paul compliments the Galatians on receiving him. They did not despise him or reject him because of the infirmity in his flesh. In other words, they did not reject him as an imperfect sinner (which they might have assumed because of his infirmity.) Verse 17 again shows us that the doctrine of the pharisees is one of separation. It says, "They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them." We see that the Pharisees are zealous to separate from the uncircumcised. The word pharisee itself means one who is separated.

Paul warns in Galatians 5:15 "if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." In other words, "judge not" one another as Jesus said in the sense of authoritative control. Do not "mete out" judgment. This divides the church. Discerning judgment however is very different and necessary.

Notice again in Galatians 6:1 how that Paul describes the gospel method of inspiring righteousness through meekness rather than a method of authority. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Note here that Paul is talking about faults. In other words, he is talking about sinners and how to treat them.

Let us therefore understand that the definition of right and wrong as defined by the law has not changed. The law still defines sin. Romans 3:20 (Young's Literal Translation) says "wherefore by works of law shall no flesh be declared righteous before Him, for through law is a knowledge of sin." Romans 7:7 says "...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet."

It is interesting to consider how communication compares to the science of genetics. Through science we know that both healthy and unhealthy genes are passed from generation to generation. Likewise, character may be communicated from person to person. So genetically if a population is isolated it begins to suffer degradation at a faster rate than it otherwise would. In this way a species can go extinct. Likewise, the policy of isolating sinners causes spiritual degradation. However, Christians with access to God's perfect spiritual DNA can pass on righteousness as lights and as the salt of the earth. Fellowship gives life but separation causes death.

The question of circumcision is today as relevant as in the first century. Christians should of course strive to become righteous. However, the correct method of attaining to that righteousness can only be through faith which comes by communication. Christians should not separate from those who have not reached an acceptable "appearance" of righteousness nor restrict them from attending their assemblies. The victory over sin must come from inspiration rather than by the fear of the death caused by severance. This is the difference between the old and new covenants. Therefore Romans 16:17 says to AVOID "them which cause divisions." It DOES NOT say disfellowship them. Let us not add to God's word!

We must avoid the doctrine of the pharisees. Therefore whether the bible calls this the leaven of the pharisees, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (the many coming in Jesus' name "conquering and to conquer"; Matt 24:5, Rev 6:2), the doctrine of Balaam (attempting to curse the utmost; Num 23:13), the doctrine of fornication (Rev 2:24), meats (or doctrines Heb 13:9) offered to idols, blood, things strangled (IE dictatorial strangleholds), or the requiring of circumcision etc. it is all the same idea. It is the doctrine of disfellowshippment. It is the ruling of man's government over God's church. It is this leaven that Jesus told his disciples to first beware of.

Christians can shine as lights to sinners without becoming sinners. We have the access to God's holy spirit if we obey him. The idea is that church government must always be executed by the use of supernatural power. By doing this Christians will come out of Babylon.

Other Items

A Blast from the Past

Is Disfellowshipping a Christian Practice?

by Arlan Weight (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Is disfellowshipping and suspension a Christian practice? If so when should it be done? Who should do it? Can we prove it from the Bible? Is the Bible specific enough for us to know? How does it square with the teaching of Jesus? Have many people become confused?

From my first encounter with the **Worldwide Church of God** in the late 60's and early 70's disfellowshipping was a common practice. Not being close enough to issues I never really knew the details of why certain people were put out of the church; I only knew it was something that was done quite regularly.

As I recall the scenario usually went something like this. Trouble would brew between church members or some person would have a problem with something. Maybe a girl would wear too much make-up or wear clothing not appropriate. At that time, an issue that usually was attributed to young men was hair length. Many people were coming into the church at that time and the Biblical teaching on these things was not familiar to some. Other issues such as Sabbath day observances, Holy day observances, tithing and other things were being questioned.

So consequently, if someone questioned doctrines, the leadership, or some other issue that might be viewed as divisionary, the minister would contact that person to talk. It might only be over something that would be construed as a bad attitude. If the person did not accept the ministers counsel he or she might be asked to stay home from services for a week or two. This is known as 'suspension'. If the person decided not to come back to services, no one would even know. All they would know, unless they asked the minister pointedly, is that the person decided not to come anymore.

If the person decided to push the issue, the minister might take one or two deacons with him next time. If the person was still not convinced, he/she was stepping out of line, the issue began to get more serious. If, over a certain length of time the person might disclose some of the issues that were going on to some other person, the minister might look on the matter as divisionary and grounds for disfellowshipping.

The next time you hear of the person is one Sabbath you come to church and before the sermon or during the

sermonette time the minister will announce to the congregation that so and so has been disfellowshipped. The discourse may go something like this:

In accordance with Biblical commands and the doctrine and longstanding practices of the church, it is my unpleasant duty as a pastor to announce the disfellowshipping of John Smith from the **Worldwide Church of God** for cause. As a result of this disfellowshipping, members are asked not to fellowship with Mr. Smith.

The Church does not bear any ill will toward Mr. Smith or his family but wishes repentance and reconciliation to the church and to this fold.

If the person became sorry for the offense, he/she had caused, they could apologize and could be welcomed back into the fellowship once more. Sounds simple, sounds logical, but did it work? What were and are the fruits?

In all my 30 years of being associated with the church rarely have I seen anyone who has publicly been disfellowshipped, come back into the fellowship of the church under these circumstances. Most often the suspension turned into disfellowshippment and further alienation to the point where that person no longer was even heard from and was soon forgotten. In passing conversation that person's name might be brought up in where the question is asked 'I wonder why so and so never came back. I cannot imagine what the problem might have been. Certainly, it was not so bad as to stay away from church. Oh well. Sure, hope he/she comes to see the light'.

If this is a practice that God ordained to correct individuals, to bring them back into the fold, why does it seem so few ever return? Maybe it is just me, but how about you? How many people have you seen return to the fellowship of the church? If indeed the numbers are few, why? Furthermore, if it is supposed to be the method of the church to deal with problems, what are we to make of it? Is God a failure? Would He give us instruction knowing most of the time the person would turn away? Does He care? What is His attitude?

As I recall in those early years, we were all very excited about learning new things out of the Bible and we all seemed to fall in line with the practice of disfellowshipping as well. All of us were in some way or other taught by **Herbert W. Armstrong** and **Ambassador College**. Most of what we were hearing, and studying was honorable, was right, and was the truth. **Mr. Armstrong** continually said, 'don't believe me, just because I say it, believe what you read out of the pages of your own Bible.' Again, we were all so excited about it and were committed to go through anything to stay with it. Disfellowshipping was one of those things we did not want to happen to us.

As we look back now, we must ponder and think about some of the things we, as a church, did. Did we do these things as a matter of following Christ's instruction or did we carry out some instructions taught by **Herbert Armstrong** as he understood the Bible? **Mr. Armstrong** often used the example of a crate of apples. If one of those apples turned rotten, it had to be thrown out or else the whole crate would turn rotten.

Let us stop right here and take a close look at this premise. Is this view of problems in the church and how they are to be dealt with, scriptural? Is this the way Christ would have handled them? Really? Before we answer that question, we must be sure. We cannot simply trust our own human logic. We must read and study the things Jesus taught and lived. If what we are doing can stand up to that test, of course it is right. But on the other hand, if we see a misunderstanding or conflict here, we have got to find out what it might be.

Could it be possible **Mr. Armstrong** may not have understood everything and that he might have overlooked something? **Mr. Armstrong** was a great religious leader of our time, but he was not God. He was not infallible. He made mistakes, but he always said one of the signs of God's true church was, that it would be willing to change once proved it needed to. Another thing **Mr. Armstrong** said was that if any issue started out on a false premise, any conclusions later on would have bad fruits and would turn out wrong. This too is most absolutely true and is scriptural.

But let us step back for a moment and take a bird's eye view of the church in this 21st century and where it has come to. Look at the many splits and schisms that have occurred since **Mr. Armstrong's** death. Why? Why after his death? Why not before his death?

To me the answer is simple. **Mr. Armstrong** governed on this basic premise that this is the way church government ought to operate. Nip the problems in the bud before they have a chance to develop and get full blown. If you could do this, you could maintain a pretty tight and smoothly run operation. So, in order to do this a minister had to keep a close watch on things. He may even have unwittingly encouraged informants to keep him abreast of goings on.

If he sensed the problems getting out of hand, he had to deal with them promptly, even if it meant getting rid of the rotten apple' causing it. This, again, was done in all sincerity in keeping with what **Mr. Armstrong** had taught. And it was carried out with all the more zeal when he deeply viewed it in the best interest of the 'flock'. He was to be the shepherd of his local congregation and it was his 'duty' and responsibility to God and to Christ.

So again, the question, is it a right principal from scripture to remove someone from the fellowship of believers? Is it a thing that Christ delegates to someone on earth to do, to issue a directive telling someone, unless they change their way of thinking, they were not to attend services, and those who do attend are not to contact that someone? What scriptures should we turn to and prove these things? We must look at and evaluate every scripture that seems to give this instruction in the light of all others on the subject. In addition to that, we must evaluate everything in the light of which Christ taught and lived.

'Marking' (Romans 16:17-18)

'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.'

This verse usually accompanies any formal disfellowshipping. It is used to lend support to the practice. The context of the verse is in the closing part of the book, or letter to the Romans, that Paul wrote in about 56 AD. In the first part of the chapter Paul commends certain of the faithful people, even giving their names. And then at the last gave this admonition to be careful and avoid those who might be stirring up trouble. Let us analyze this verse closely.

To do so we must lay aside any preconceived notion about things. We must lay aside in our mind any thoughts we might still have, remembering how so often it was used in the past. And as **Mr. Armstrong** also said, 'it was much harder to unlearn error than it was to learn new truth.' So then let us proceed to read this verse as if it were the first time, we read it.

First of all, we can see Paul is addressing the general assembly of all the church members at Rome, for he says 'Now I beseech you brethren'... If he were writing to some evangelist or some other person, he most certainly would have made that distinction. Proof of this is when he wrote the book of I and II Timothy. So then by saying brethren, he is saying. Look you all know what you have learned from me or the Old Testament scriptures. If anyone seems to be contrary to that, do not be taken in. A good way would be simply to avoid them. Because in the very next verse he says why 'by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple'.

Is this anything different than what Christ said? Notice Mat. 24:5. 'For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many'. Or how about Mat. 7:15 where he says, 'beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.' Same thing. Basically, here Christ is speaking to his followers. He is not just speaking to one person to have that person warn the flock. He is speaking to those who would follow Him and His message. Paul simply told the people at Rome the very same things Christ foretold over 25 years before. This was not something new.

Secondly the word 'mark' comes from the Greek word 'skopeo', which simply means 'consider' or 'take heed'. We might say it this way to take note of those people and what they are saying. Again, hearken back to what Christ said. He said 'beware'. Paul said 'mark'. No difference.

But how has this word been used? Has it not been used in a most emphatic way? Whenever a person is 'marked' in this way that person is 'branded' by name. If some in the congregation were not aware of that person being a problem, they are now forewarned. It begins to color anything that person might say to you in the future. It imputes an evil motive might be lurking in that person and you best not be talking to them.

It also insinuates that the 'minister' is in the best position to know this and he is only doing it for your good. Both of these ideas could, more than likely, be false. He might, deep down in his heart, think he is doing it for your good, but what about individual responsibility. Both Christ, as well as Paul, laid the responsibility to 'beware' or 'mark' squarely on the shoulders of each and every follower... not to any individual leader only.

In other places Paul specifically names a person that may have turned aside from the faith, but Christ rarely did. In Luke 13:32 He called Herod a fox. But rarely did He forewarn anyone about some specific individual. He was so careful not to do that, even his own closest disciples did not know who would betray him. Doesn't that sound a bit strange in light of this foregone discussion. Rather Christ spoke in generalities such as with the Scribes and Pharisees. Whenever Christ spoke of someone by name or singled them out, it usually was in praise of that person or to honor them in some way.

In summary, we should be able to see, that 'marking' someone in this way, as pointed out in Romans 16:17-18 is something all of us must continue to do. Take note of what any and all are saying. If it measures up, fine. If not be careful. The responsibility is ours. It is not given to any man who claims to represent Christ, or in Christ's service as a command to 'brand' that person.

1 Corinthians 5

This is another example that is used to support the disfellowshipping practice. It is the example of a man having an affair with his own mother. Let us examine this example closely.

First of all, Paul again is writing this letter to the church at Corinth. It is thought to have been written prior to Passover about 55 AD. Notice the words 'Unto the church of God which is at Corinth...' (1 Cor. 1:2) So the instruction is written to a body of believers, not a certain evangelist, such as Timothy. It was their collective responsibility to deal with the problem, not a specific minister.

Another thing we can glean from this first letter is that the church at Corinth had not grown that much, spiritually, since its inception. Even though it had been over 20 years since Pentecost in 31 AD they still were carnal. (1 Cor. 3:1-3) Knowing this, it must have been quite difficult to live in a city such as Corinth with its temple prostitution and other sinful practices and not be affected. It could very well have been a city very much like the city of Sodom in which Lot lived.

Paul no doubt felt a deep responsibility to write a stern warning to wake them up. He had been told of the goings on in that city and probably understood the conditions there. None-the-less there could be no excuse for the kind of behavior of some man carrying on with his own mother this way. It had to be dealt with!

So, he wrote the letter, and since it was prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread he also used it as teaching a lesson of how leaven works in our lives. Just a little can affect the whole lump. He was all the more disturbed about the situation because they felt good about themselves in that they were able to tolerate it. They were puffed up. So, Paul proceeded to give them instruction of how we are to hate these kinds of things. Not that we hate people, but the sinful behavior generated by the society around them.

Writing to the Church at Ephesus Paul basically said the same thing. This church area, no doubt, was afflicted with the same type of society at that time. In Ephesians 5:11 he admonishes them 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness, but rather reprove them'...

Again, the scripture is consistent in this regard that if you continually rub shoulders with people of a corrupt nature, it is going to rub off. You will eventually be affected. Take a look at 1 Cor. 15:33 Paul says, 'Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners'. The Greek word here for communications is 'homilia' meaning 'a being crowded together. The word for manner is 'ethos' meaning habit. So, a good rendering of this verse could be 'Don't kid yourself, if you continue to tolerate evil, you, yourself can be corrupted and develop the same kinds of habits.

But let us be honest about it. This example of the immoral person in 1 Corinthians 5 is far different than most disfellowships you and I have been familiar with. Most of the problems in the church start small and grow over misunderstandings of doctrine or leadership and are perceived by some as leading to divisions. They are not one and the same and to use this as supporting the practice of disfellowship is misapplying scripture.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

'Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.'

This is another verse which some might use to claim it is okay to 'shun' a person in the church. It is also used in support of the practice of disfellowship. So again, the verse must closely be evaluated on the context in which it was written and held up to the instruction Jesus taught and lived.

The Young's Concordance renders the meaning for withdraw as 'to withdraw self, avoid, beware of. So, Paul is instructing the Thessalonians again to beware of and stay away from the brethren who are practicing a certain manner of living. Those who walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. What is he talking about?

The Greek word for disorderly here is 'ataktos' meaning 'unruly or out of order'. So, what does this mean? The very next verse Paul explains that he had heard there were some who were not working and going about into everyone else's business but their own. He is simply saying stay away from that and do not begin practicing that kind of behavior. Again, very much like 1 Cor. 5, if you get too close to that type of person you begin to take on their habits. So, Paul is telling the brethren there to 'beware of'.

And when Paul is mentioning the tradition, he handed down to them, he is simply saying go to work and earn money to provide for yourself and your family. Do not mooch off others. Be productive. It was his example and was what he wanted them to do.

This instruction is not to shun or stay away from the people but rather from the behavior of those who were being disorderly. It is the behavior that is the problem not the people. Again, like Eph. 5:11, he says 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them...'

The fellowship one is not to have is with the unfruitful works of darkness, not people. So, when this verse is used to support disfellowship, it has been taken out of context and is wrong.

TO BE CONTINUED IN ISSUE #5

Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Try to hold this to one or two paragraphs. And email it to: church-of-god-bismarck@hotmail.com Be sure to let us know what you are commenting on.

Holy Days 2021

Passover - March 28, 2021 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Unleavened Bread - March 28, 2021 to April 3, 2021

Pentecost - May 17, 2021

Trumpets - September 7, 2021

Atonement - September 16, 2021

Tabernacles - September 21 to 27, 2021

Last Great Day - September 28, 2021