

A Personal Note

Peter Ditzel

Before I left the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in 1991, I would have considered a website like this as just another attempt at persecuting God's truth. In fact, since I was for ten years a writer in the WCG's Personal Correspondence Department and Editorial Services, I might very well have been assigned the job of refuting the things said here.

If you are a member of a church that follows the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, your reaction to this site might also be less than favorable, or at least highly skeptical. I understand. But I do want you to know that I am not trying to persecute Armstrong-following churches. I present the articles on this site without maliciousness or intent to harm or destroy. What I want to do is present the Bible as it presents itself; in other words, to strive for the most natural understanding of the Bible possible. All I ask is that you genuinely and prayerfully consider what is presented here.

In the United States, as in many other nations, there is freedom of religion. We have a right to believe and worship as we like. Not only that, but we have the right—through freedom of religion and freedom of the press—to publish our beliefs and to critique those of others. This means that as long as we are not malicious, we are careful in accurately presenting facts, and do not invade privacy, we can continue with the Christian tradition to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). This does not mean that we have to be insipid. The Bible describes the Word of God as being, "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

If our beliefs are firmly founded on the Bible, we should not be afraid to prove them by reading literature critical of them. In doing so, we have nothing to lose. We will either come out of the encounter surer of the beliefs we now hold or we will discover our beliefs are false. Is this latter possibility a loss? Of course not. What a tragedy it would be to have lived our entire lives with a false set of beliefs!

Yes, it would be more comfortable to never question our beliefs, to surround ourselves with others who believe as we do, to accept at face

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value what is printed at headquarters. I can tell you from personal experience that it is very uncomfortable to find out that one's beliefs are wrong. But this discomfort is followed closely by great joy at finding the truth!

Perhaps I was even more involved with the beliefs I have now come to call Armstrongism than most who will see this website since even my job involved teaching these doctrines in articles and letters. But eventually, in God's good time, in the course of answering some very thought-provoking questions from readers, I began to see that what I had been teaching and what I was expected to continue teaching was in error. The Bible did not support it.

About the same time, the Worldwide Church of God began to make some changes in its doctrines. I saw that these changes were sometimes positive. But I also saw that they required more changes, which in turn required more. Like dominoes, my entire framework of beliefs—the beliefs I had thought proved that the Worldwide Church of God was God's true church—fell. It became evident that the small changes the church had made and any changes it might make in the future would have no real effect upon this fact: the Worldwide Church of God (and all of its Armstrongist offshoots) is founded upon false beliefs and has therefore never had a valid, Godly reason for existing.

I had to come to grips with the fact that what I had believed for years was in error and that I had taught these errors to millions of others through *Plain Truth* and *Good News* articles, brochures, and letters! Through this period of transition, the one spiritual anchor I could hold on to was God. The knowledge that there is a God, that He loves me, that He will see me through all trials, and that He wants me to know the truth about Him and what He has revealed about Himself in the Bible saw me through this difficult time.

Of course, there will be no improvement if we replace one set of false beliefs with another set of false beliefs. This is why proof is so important. For Christians, this means comparing beliefs and potential beliefs with the truths of the Bible.

"But," you may say, "I have already proved the teachings of Herbert Armstrong and his disciples (Garner Ted Armstrong, Roderick Meredith, Gerald Flurry, Ron Dart, et al.) to be true." Have you? I thought I had. In fact, all I had really done was confirm that certain words were indeed in the Bible, that Scriptures were quoted correctly.

I did not have enough information or knowledge to reach valid conclusions.

For example, in reading the Worldwide Church of God's literature, I did not prove the meaning Herbert W. Armstrong put on "forever" in relation to feasts and Holy Days, I did not prove whether "three days and three nights" must mean 72 hours, I did not thoroughly investigate the assertion that the Holy Spirit is not a Person, I did not take the time or make the effort to weigh the evidence presented about the identity of the United States and Britain, I did not establish with certainty the claim that the Worldwide Church of God was the true church. Have you?

As I write this, the faces and voices of many old friends come to mind. Mary Beth and I want you to know that we have not forgotten you. We pray that you will have the courage and intellectual honesty to read the articles on this site, to visit us often to read new articles as we post them, and to contact us with any questions and comments you may have.

Love,

Peter Ditzel