

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in: United States
Philippines
Switzerland
Kenya

April 2009

Dear Brethren:

Something I never dreamed possible has been committed in God's end-time church. An abomination has been committed in Israel (or God's end-time church) which has been generated by many false doctrines. Remember, any change away from the true doctrine revealed by Christ is a false doctrine of men, which like leaven, can leaven the whole church if not continually being put out.

There are many different types of leavening agents that cause bread to rise, just as there are different types of sin which can cause us to swell with vanity and pride without our even realizing it. One of these is the leaven of false doctrine. You may not have thought that false doctrine is a type of leaven, but that is exactly what Christ called it in Matthew 16:12:

Then they [the disciples] understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (*New King James Version* used throughout unless stated otherwise).

Why? Because the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, or any religious order of men, is like the leaven of sin which can cause us to become puffed up in our own wisdom. When this happens, it causes us to reject the revealed doctrines of Christ for the doctrines of men, and if we do that we worship God in vain.

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as
doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:8–9).

What are the commandments of men? They are false doctrines which like leaven have permeated the whole church. Because of this sin, hundreds of splinter groups have now come out of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) since the 1970s. What most people—those who were once a part of the WCG—do not realize is that there have been more than thirty major doctrinal changes in the church over the years, especially since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986.

I am not implying that the prophesied departure from truth began in the late 1980s. No, it began long before most realize, in the early 1970s. But important lessons can be learned by seeing what ultimately occurs when even "small" changes—leavening—are allowed. A little leavening entered in during the 1970s, and by the late 1980s, had leavened the whole lump.

What were the tragic results of the doctrinal changes?

I will let Mr. Joseph Tkach, Jr., the author of the book *Transformed by Truth*, answer that question. He is now the president and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, taking over after the death of his father, Joseph Tkach, Sr. On the front cover you will see a picture of the Ambassador College Auditorium with Herbert W. Armstrong pictured below it, and a huge crack going down through the entire picture. We stayed with that church until the doctrinal changes became so overwhelming that we became estranged from that body because we wanted to cling to the truth that was once delivered.

A quote from *Transformed by Truth*, pages 104 and 105. Mr. Tkach, Jr. writes:

We started making doctrinal changes in 1987, but a number of splits occurred before that—thirty-four, actually. Fourteen of those thirty-four are splits of splits. The names of these groups are revealing: The Plainer Truth; The Mystery Church of God; the Mystery of the Kingdom Ministry; and my all-time favorite, the New Moon, the Church of God in the Netherlands.

Many of these groups are still meeting, although the numbers in each are small. Some have rather tragic stories. A year after The Family Church of God began, for example, the leader and his wife divorced. [In fact, divorce became a tragic way of life for far too many of God's people and still is.] Our largest splinter group, the United Church of God, formed shortly after my dad gave the 1994 Christmas Eve sermon. It has about eighteen thousand members. The Global Church of God [now called the Living Church of God] counts about seven thousand members and is led by one of Mr. Armstrong's first students, Roderick Meredith. The Church of God, Philadelphia era, is the oldest of these major splits and has about three thousand members. [PCG is led by Gerald Flurry and began in about 1989, I believe]. . . .

So after all the doctrinal changes of the past few years, here's where we stand: Close to seventy thousand people remain with us, which means that we have lost about seventy thousand members. Only thirty thousand people, perhaps less than that, attend splinter groups. A larger group of forty thousand people sit at home, confused, frustrated, and not knowing what to do or what to believe. So they go nowhere; they're dropping out of everything.

So that has been the tragic result! Why? Because the ministry of WCG has dealt treacherously with the wife of its youth! That wife was Christ's wife, the Church. We became part of that wife (the Church) when we entered into a covenant relationship with God at baptism. At that time we became a part of Christ's potential, future wife.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb [Christ] is come, and his wife [the Church] hath made herself ready (Revelation 19:7, *King James Version*).

The Church of God today will be the future wife of Christ if she is making herself ready now. The word "wife" is used here instead of the word "bride" because physical Israel of old, symbolic of what would happen to spiritual Israel (God's Church in this end time), was married to Christ before a separation took place.

This is why God says to His children today in Jeremiah 3:14: "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you . . ."

Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce [to sober her up]; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. [By having relationships with false gods, or today, false churches of the world.] So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees (Jeremiah 3:8–9).

As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, So is the house of Israel ashamed; They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets, Saying to a tree [symbolic of a religious leader], "You are my father," And to a stone [a false Christ], "You gave birth to me." For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble They will say, "Arise and save us." [But then God will say:] But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble; For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah (Jeremiah 2:26–28).

The spiritual lesson today is that the stones are symbolic of antichrists, and the trees represent false leaders or ministers led by these antichrists. It says this would happen near the return of Christ in 1 John 2:18:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

These are imposters who have risen up right within the church. How could this happen within God's church, you ask? Malachi 2:1–16 tells the whole story. It is a story of treachery, deceit and infidelity by the priests and ministers of God. A prophecy of what did happen to ancient Israel and what would happen again in this end time to God's Church.

And now, O priests [ministers of God's truth], this commandment [or warning] is for you. If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name [by speaking the revealed truth], Says the LORD of hosts, I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already [Why?], Because you do not take it to heart. [Referring to the correction I am giving you through Malachi.] Behold, I will rebuke [corrupt] your descendants [your seed—those you generate with false doctrines] And spread refuse on your faces [referring to the dung of your polluted sacrifices or teachings], The refuse [or dung] of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it. [That is, one of the Feasts will take you away with it; likely referring to the corrupted Day of Pentecost which they now celebrate on Sunday.] Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue, Says the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. [That covenant with Levi, referring to the priesthood, was like a marriage agreement that they would always be one with God so that His covenant with them would continue forever.] The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest [or minister] should keep knowledge [or law], And people should seek the law from his mouth [from the priest's mouth, not from their own understanding of Scripture]; For he [the priest] is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. [That is why it is so important that the minister speaks the truth revealed by God.] But you [the priests] have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. [Because] You have corrupted the covenant of Levi [which was a covenant of life and peace], Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore I also have made you [priests] contemptible and base Before all the people, [Referring to a time when they will be ashamed and embarrassed. Why?] Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law. [They have compromised the revealed truth with false doctrine.] Have we not all one Father? [Were we not all generated by one voice of the end-time servant, Herbert Armstrong?] Has not one God created us?

What is the word "Father" referring to in this context? Hold your place in Malachi and turn over to 1 Corinthians 4:14–16 for some insight. Paul is speaking to the Corinthian church.

I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

Why were they to imitate Paul? Because he was a "father" to them and they were all initiated into the faith through his instruction. Paul was not violating Christ's instruction to avoid calling any man "father" (Matthew 23:9). He was not trying to take God's place. He was simply confirming the means God used to raise up those churches in Christ's name. In the same way Herbert Armstrong was a "father" to us, because we were all initiated by his work in Christ through the Holy Spirit. He begot us by a clear, deep teaching of God's Word before it was muddled up by those whom he taught.

Back to Malachi 2:10:

... Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the *fathers* [the covenant of life and peace—referring to the fathers God would use to teach us the true gospel]? Judah has dealt treacherously [referring to God's priesthood or ministry], And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem [where the truth was generated by the fathers through Jesus Christ], For Judah has profaned The LORD's holy institution which He loves [the institution of marriage, because]: He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

The *King James Version* says: "for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."

Did that happen recently, brethren? Did God's ministry marry the daughter of a foreign or strange god?

On page 200 of the book *Transformed by Truth*, Mr. Tkach, Jr. says:

As I conclude these words in early May 1997, we have just received a press release from the National Association of Evangelicals [a liberal group of Lutherans]. Its first two sentences read: "The Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has voted overwhelmingly to accept the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), headquartered in Pasadena, California, into membership. The application process included examination

of doctrinal changes which have taken place in the once-controversial denomination.

So did Judah (God's end-time priesthood) marry the daughter of a foreign god? Yes! This book is a written record of that occurrence!

May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this [Does what? Marries the daughter of a foreign god.], being awake and aware [of this occurrence], Yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts! [after marrying the daughter of a strange god] (Malachi 2:12).

The *KJV* says: "The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar [or the teacher and the student], out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts."

The offering here is referring to a polluted offering which comes as a result of this corrupt marriage to the daughter of a foreign god. Also, this corrupt marriage resulted because of polluted sacrifices on God's altar.

Turn back to Malachi 1:6–8:

A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, "In what way have we despised Your name?" You offer defiled food on My altar [The altar of the Lord is God's table where the spiritual food is presented to the people for their spiritual growth.], But say, "In what way have we defiled You?" By saying, "The table of the LORD is contemptible." [In other words, you say the doctrines, the spiritual food, is not good: they need to be changed. So they despised God's name by changing the doctrines or the sacrifices made on the altar.] And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably? Says the LORD of hosts. [These sacrifices refer to polluted food—or doctrine—that they now offer on the altar, the table of the Lord.]

And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He [the Lord] does not regard [or even take notice of] the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands (Malachi 2:13).

Why will not the Lord receive it? Because the offerings are polluted with false doctrine, which causes the weeping of many tears because a separation is about to take place among God's people because of these false doctrines that they teach. God does not receive any offering if it is polluted with false teachings and doctrinal changes.

Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness Between you [referring to the priests] and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And *your* wife by covenant (verse 14) [emphasis mine].

The *KJV* says "*the* wife by covenant." Not your wives, but the wife—singular—by covenant. If this verse were discussing only physical marriages, the words "priests" and "wives" (both plural) would be used. But instead the plural word "priests" and the singular word "wife" is used, which I believe is referring to the wife of Christ, the Church.

Now I accept the fact that physical marriages were also involved, because the priests and leaders during the time of Ezra were foremost in the trespass of marrying strange wives while they were in captivity.

When these things were done [referring to the preparation for rebuilding the temple], the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass." So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished [astonished that God's people had done this while in the captivity of sin] (Ezra 9:1–3).

So physical marriages to strange women were involved, but I also believe that Malachi 2:14 is referring first and primarily to the wife of Christ and then to the physical marriages that resulted. These marriages had to be fixed before they could be involved in rebuilding the Temple of the Lord.

Remember, Christ had only one wife, the Church, and some very evil and deceitful things are happening to Christ's wife, as we will see. The priests that God chose to teach His wife, the Church, have not been faithful to their calling or to the covenant that they made

with God. They have polluted the spiritual food that God gave them in the beginning, and in doing so they have dealt treacherously and deceitfully with Christ's wife.

But did He [God] not make them one [Yes, He did!], Having a remnant of the Spirit? [We were all united by one spirit.] And why one? He seeks godly offspring [or seed for the Kingdom and the family of God]. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth (Malachi 2:15).

Did the ministry deal treacherously with God's end-time Church, the wife of Christ? Let me read again from Mr. Tkach's book *Transformed by Truth*, beginning with the flyleaf:

A major cultic church is transformed from within. Its leaders publicly repudiate key doctrines. Christian churches from all denominations open their arms to the Worldwide Church of God.

The Worldwide Church of God has embarked upon a course virtually uncharted in church history

Joseph's personal transformation, as well as the transformation of the Worldwide Church of God, has not come without cost. Income has plummeted, staff have been laid off, membership has declined, churches have broken off into splinter groups, families have separated, and friendships have been severed.

Gone is our obsession with a legalistic interpretation of the Old Testament, our belief in British Israelism, and our insistence on our fellowship's exclusive relationship with God [the teaching that we are the one true Church]. Gone are our condemnations of medical science, the use of cosmetics, and traditional Christian celebrations such as Easter and Christmas. Gone is our long-held view of God as a "family" of multiple "spirit beings" into which humans may be born (Page 9).

We have branded evangelical Christians as false or worse. But, by God's grace we are changing. . . . We have grown and changed a lot in the last few years. [Yet in the beginning they insisted they were not changing. So it has been a story of change, but also a story of deceit and mistrust.] . . . It is also a story of mistrust and suspicion. And, sadly, it is also a story of rejection and separation. Those who would not continue on the journey that God was taking us on have left. Family and lifelong friends have rejected some of us. But we

have found new brothers and sisters who support us. [And who were they? Friends from mainstream Christian churches of this world.] (Page 11).

What does God say about being a friend of the world? "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The *Living Bible* says: "You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband's enemies." The ministry of WCG has fallen in love with their husband's enemies, and God is jealous.

Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? [It provokes God to jealousy when we go to the religions of this world.] (James 4:5).

Deuteronomy 32:16–18 will verify this:

They [Israel, God's church in this end time] provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons ["devils" in *KJV*], not to God [because Satan is the god of this world and its religions], To gods they did not know, To new gods, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock who begot you [Christ] you are unmindful, And have forgotten the God who fathered you [see Exodus 33:16].

How will it be known that we have found grace in the sight of God? Moses asks a question and then answers it.

For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth (Exodus 33:16).

Why? Because God wants us to be righteous and we cannot do that by fellowshiping with the world, because continued fellowship with the world will cause you to begin to compromise your faith and become defiled.

Continuing from *Transformed by Truth*:

The Worldwide Church of God (WCG) is a small denomination with a large name. In the course of its short history, there have been nearly half a million people who have passed through its doors as members. Even though the denomination never had an attendance larger than 150,000, nearly everyone has heard of *The Plain Truth* magazine, *The World Tomorrow* television

program, or the Ambassador Performing Arts Concert Series in Pasadena, California. Many remember the name of Herbert W. Armstrong [because he was the one who fathered us and the first voice we heard on the World Tomorrow broadcast].

While many have exited the Worldwide Church of God over the years, some still cling to Herbert W. Armstrong's teachings, and others have been transformed by the truth. . . . Some feel the current leaders of the Worldwide Church of God are courageous disciples of Christ, while others view them as demon possessed.

As you might imagine, some people look upon their experience in the Worldwide Church of God as nothing short of wonderful. Others reject totally the validity of what has happened [believing it must be a con job, and surely this could not be happening. I was one of them, brethren]. (*Transformed by Truth*, pages 12–13).

As president of the Worldwide Church of God, I can understand why readers might be hesitant about accepting the changes that have taken place in our church over the past few years. . . . maybe you're doubtful because you know that no unorthodox Christian sect in history (until now) has ever turned from its erring path to seek the way, the truth, and the life as proclaimed in the Bible . . . (page 16).

Incredible! And what is more incredible is this: the fact that they have turned away is now one of the strongest proofs that they *did* possess the truth before they turned away because only the nation of Israel ever did this to their God.

In Jeremiah 2:11–13 God is asking Jeremiah a question.

Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? [The implied answer is "No. Never!"] But My people have changed their Glory [their God, their sonship in the God family] For what does not profit.

The *Living Bible* says: "Look around you and see if you can find another nation anywhere that has traded in its old gods for new ones—even though their gods are nothing."

Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate [or shocked or dismayed], says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters [beginning in

1974 with the rejection of the true day of Pentecost], And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water (verses 12–13).

The water is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. They did this by joining themselves to a false god—the National Association of Evangelicals—which is not led by the Spirit of God.

So was the WCG's turnaround and rejection of the true God a con? No! Because it really happened, and it was made known in a TV interview to the whole world on the "Pat Robertson's The 700 Club." Mr. Tkach, Jr. and Mr. Pat Robertson were marveling over the fact that no church had ever done this before. This was indeed unprecedented in church history, and it was not a con.

Continuing with *Transformed by Truth*:

. . . As the leaders of the WCG began to refocus the church on Christ, many members of the church doubted the changes. They thought all would soon return to the familiar ways of the past. The changes weren't for real. Talk of change must be exaggerated. Things would get back to normal.

That all changed with a landmark sermon my dad [Joseph Tkach, Sr.] gave on Christmas Eve 1994. This is often called "The New Covenant/Old Covenant" sermon, and it once and for all convinced the skeptics within our own church that the changes were for real and that they were permanent (page 23).

On Christmas Eve 1994, my dad began the three-hour sermon by saying, "This is going to be a long afternoon." His message would fundamentally change forever the Worldwide Church of God. As one writer later put it, my dad "had to show that it is not a sin to work on the Sabbath. This was *the* single most important decision in the history of the denomination. . . . My father knew he might touch off a firestorm with this sermon (page 24). . . . In three hours he covered a wide assortment of topics. In some of his most important remarks he:

- affirmed that the church is no longer bound to the Old Covenant but is in fact a New Covenant organism [free from law-keeping];
- insisted that salvation is by grace through faith and is not gained in the least through law keeping;
- declared that members who needed to work on Saturday to care for their families were not committing sin;
- proclaimed that tithing is not a requirement for salvation but is a voluntary action performed in service and love to God (page 25).

The Sabbath, if you remember, was to be a sign between God and His people to the rest of the world (Exodus 31:16–17). How can it be a sign if you do not keep the Sabbath day holy by not working on it? That is why this teaching is a lie, and is as filthy as the animals they now eat.

When he finally began wrapping up his sermon three hours after he began, my dad reminded his listeners once more: "We are saved by faith, not by rules [or law-keeping]. . . . (page 29).

What a lie! What vomit and filthiness! It brings to mind where God is speaking to the drunkards of Ephraim, or Israel:

But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way [they became intoxicated with the doctrines of false religion]; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean [There is no place clean of the vomit of false doctrine.] (Isaiah 28:7–8).

Continuing:

. . . after my dad gave his Christmas Eve sermon in 1994, some people went out immediately afterward to a lobster dinner. It wasn't that they needed lobster; they wanted to make the statement, "I'm not bound by this anymore."

I've had lunch or dinner with several others who have ordered similar items. I don't know if they're eating these things just to see how I react or if they really want to enjoy the new experience. One friend, a longtime church member, ordered a plate of mussels. Every insect in the ocean was on his plate. And you know what? It really didn't trouble me at all.

I've tasted shrimp, I've tasted pork, I've tasted just about everything now (page 39).

These are my words now, and I say these unclean things which Mr. Tkach has been eating are as filthy as the false doctrines which he has been feeding Christ's wife, the Church.

2 Peter 2:22 has a name for these people. "But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.' "

Who are these who turn away?

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

So what will be the end of those ministers who have turned back to the vomit and mire of false religion? Before I answer that question let us hear what Mr. Tkach, Jr. had to say about it in his book.

Since the news about our changes in the WCG began to spread in the evangelical world, Greg Albrecht, Mike Feazell, and I (and others) have periodically been asked to appear on various Christian radio and television programs. Inevitably the host will ask us, "When did you come to the Lord?" [or when were you born again?]. . . .

Frankly, this question of when we came to know the Lord presents a problem for us. Long before the changes began, all of us were functioning as ministers. We were baptizing people and performing weddings and counseling and preaching sermons years before the transformation of our church. So what should we say about our ministry before the changes took place? Was it invalid? Was it un-Christian? Was it illegitimate? Do we believe that the only true ministry we've performed occurred after the changes and not a moment before?

I don't think so (page 32).

I guess he believes he was a true minister before and after the doctrinal changes. Now how can that be, and what happens to all those who were converted, baptized and married before the doctrinal changes took place? And what happens to those who have died in the faith before the doctrines were changed? Were they lied to and now condemned to the Lake of Fire? I don't think so, not for a moment. The sobering truth is that those who have turned away from the truth which was once delivered will perish if they do not repent. How do I know? The Bible tells me so.

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall *not* be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin

which he has committed, because of them he shall die (Ezekiel 18:24) [emphasis mine].

Was violence and treachery involved and directed at Christ's wife in all this?

" 'For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce [or the putting away, *KJV*], For it covers one's [wedding] garment with violence,' Says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 2:16). Why? Because there is always violence involved when a putting away or divorce occurs. The cutting apart of two who were once united creates pain and violence. The *KJV* says "for one covers violence with his garment." In other words, he tries to hide the violence generated by the separation.

Was violence involved when the ministry dealt treacherously with Christ's wife?

Because of the separation that has happened, Mr. Tkach, Jr. wrote on page 73:

. . . Some of my friends from high school and college days think I'm demon-possessed. If they don't go that far, at least they're convinced I was never really converted. Most of them won't talk to me. And those who do talk to me often tell me things I'm not so sure I want to hear. One longtime friend, a man I've known since high school, recently left us to join one of the splinter groups. Upon his departure he told me, "Boy, its amazing Joe, how many people just can't stand you They hate you. They're really angry."

Our offices continue to receive a steady stream of angry letters (usually anonymous) which denounce us for leaving "the truth" and embracing Protestant lies. . . .

Of course I'm not the only one singled out for such letters. Greg Albrecht, who heads Plain Truth Ministries, not long ago received a long, vitriolic five-page missive that blasted him for every sin in the book. . . . At the bottom of the letter the author signed off, "May you burn in hell, Your brother in Christ."

The reaction to all this from those who have left us is both interesting and sad. I have been told many times, "You guys make us sick. You're just going to the world and to these harlot daughters to seek approval" (page 75).

So a lot of violence was generated when the true doctrines were changed. Fistfights actually broke out in some congregations, and the police had to be called to end the violence. The church which proclaimed life and peace suddenly became a church of violence *until* a

separation took place to end all the fighting, the bickering and the arguing over what was really "the truth." How sad!

The unity and oneness were gone! For how long? Until a messenger would come to purify the sons of Levi who had gone astray.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me
(Malachi 3:1, *KJV*).

Many thought that messenger was Herbert Armstrong who came to restore all things as a type of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11–13). But you cannot restore something to the people until it first has been taken away. That messenger is yet to come in this end time to restore what was taken away. Who is that messenger? Continue in Malachi 3:1:

. . . and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple [the Church], even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, says the LORD of hosts.

And why is Jesus Christ coming? To clean up the priesthood!

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien—Because they do not fear Me, Says the LORD of hosts. For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. [If God were to change, we would all be destroyed for our sins, and that would be the end of that.] Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, "Says the LORD of hosts. But you said, "In what way shall we return?" Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:2–9).

The WCG suffered financial losses when they began to change doctrines. Why? Because the people quit tithing. They changed the tithing doctrine from a tenth of your income to whatever you wanted to give. Some actually thought the offerings would increase. They did not understand human nature. Instead of increasing, the income dropped by one third and then continued to drop as the doctrines were changed. Mr. Tkach tells the story in *Transformed by Truth*, page 72:

Receipts worldwide in 1990 amounted to more than \$211 million. By 1994 . . . income stood at about \$164.6 million. The following year income dropped to \$103.4 million. In this past year our receipts totaled about \$68.5 million. We expect a national income of \$38 million in 1997.

That is a decrease of over \$170 million in just a few years. That is what happens when you change doctrines using human reasoning. Consequently, he continues by saying:

We were forced to lay off most of our headquarters staff, cut circulation of *The Plain Truth* magazine, sharply reduce subsidies to Ambassador University, end our acclaimed performing arts series at Ambassador Auditorium, and sell off many of our assets. In addition, we put up for sale our fifty-one-acre Pasadena world headquarters and financial realities dictated that we do the same with our Ambassador University campus in Big Sandy, Texas.

All this happened in part because they were robbing God by not tithing due to doctrinal change.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat [good spiritual food] in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it [not only physically, but spiritually] (Malachi 3:10, *KJV*).

So that has been the tragic result of what happens when you change doctrine using human wisdom. It is also why this little remnant will continue to cling to those doctrines that were revealed to us in the beginning. Remember, any change away from the true doctrines that were revealed by Christ to His end-time servant, Herbert W. Armstrong, is false doctrine of men; which like leaven, can leaven the whole church and bring about a tragic result.


So as not to end this letter on a negative note, I would like to close with Malachi 3:16–18, a scripture that is encouraging to those who remember what they were taught.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him." [That is because he is like a jewel which is not receptive to change once its character is formed.] Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.

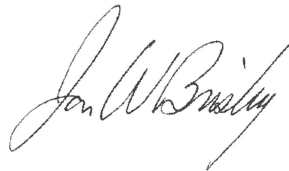
May God grant you the ability and the power to comprehend the seriousness of doctrinal changes, and the ability to remember what we were taught in the beginning when the Church was blessed for so many years.

Our love for you all will never change.

Yours in service and devotion,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard W. Litz".

Richard W. Litz

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby".

Jon W. Brisby