

DOCTRINAL CHANGES

How They Affect
YOU!

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"A Christian is not converted to a set of doctrines! . . . We are saved through faith in Christ—not through belief in this or that teaching. . . . Each generation of true Christians is led into new avenues of spiritual insight and understanding. . . ."

The above statements did not come from a Protestant publication; they came from the May 1976 *Good News* magazine!

Are recent doctrinal changes in the Worldwide Church of God "new understanding"? Or, are they permissiveness masquerading under the guise of "new insight"? You need to understand!

The following statements are quoted from the May 1976 *Good News*: "A true Christian is not converted to a few esoteric doctrines or prophetic understandings. . . . One should not build his faith, his hopes and dreams, around some doctrinal or theological opinion. A Christian is not converted to a set of doctrines! He may embrace, accept and live by them. Indeed, he should; but he is converted to God! . . . We are saved through faith in Christ—not through belief in this or that teaching. . . . Our faith is not in an opinion about doctrine—it is in Christ! . . . A viable, spiritual relationship with God cannot be built upon subjective, theological arguments. Rather, a Christian must anchor his life to his belief and faith in Christ and in God the Father." (*The Good News*, May 1976, article "What Is the Spirit of Real Christianity?")

Questions to Ask

To the careless or unenlightened, these statements appear credible. But are they substantiated Biblically? There are questions we need to ask.

If a Christian is not converted to doctrine, to what then is he converted? Christ only? If this be true, why not choose the easiest available religion—one which requires absolutely nothing except belief in Christ? There are many such churches from which to choose. Why keep the Sabbath, Holy Days, or the commandments of God if doctrine is so unimportant? If all that is important is belief in Christ, how should a true Christian differ from a professing Christian? What about repentance? Where does that fit in? Is not obedience to the Ten Commandments required for salvation? Is that not doctrine? If a Christian is not converted to a set of doctrines and he is saved through faith in Christ—"not through belief in this or that teaching"—then the only thing required for salvation is to accept Christ. Millions have already done that. Are they saved? If all that is necessary is belief in Christ then it is unnecessary for anyone to keep any of the laws of God; in reality, doctrine has nothing to do with salvation! And all that really counts is belief in Christ without any knowledge of

what the Bible teaches concerning doctrine. So professing Christians were right after all and it has taken the Church of God forty years to admit its error. We would all have been better off to have remained in our former church affiliations or whatever we were. We could have lived a relatively unrestricted lifestyle. We could have been smoking, working on Saturday, not tithing; we could have been divorcing and remarrying, keeping Christmas, celebrating New Year's, observing birthdays and all the other things we did before we learned anything about Bible doctrine. That is, if what we are now told is true, that all that is important for salvation is belief in and acceptance of Christ.

Further Statements

Let's notice other statements from the *Good News* magazine: "We are gradually led 'into all truth' (John 16:13). So it is very unwise to 'freeze' imperfect human understanding of Scripture into solid concrete. Inevitably, doctrines, teachings, ideas and opinions of men come and go. . . . God does not change (Mal. 3:6). In character, intent and purpose God remains the same. . . . Doctrines may change from time to time in the light of new insight and study. . . . The Spirit of Truth is leading the Church into all truth. But this is a process which continues throughout the ages of man. . . . Since some idea or understanding about a specific point of doctrine is not the central anchor to the purpose of life, they [mature Christians] are not particularly disturbed by the positive process of growth which includes change." (*The Good News*, May 1976, article "What Is the Spirit of Real Christianity?")

More Questions to Ask

If we are gradually led into all truth and it is only now that we have Truth, then does it not follow that we may find at some future date what we now call truth is also error? And all who lived and died during the past forty years in the Church of God were deceived? Or did not have the Truth? Or were only partially led to truth?

These Church members did not divorce and remarry. They "toughed it out," in some cases, living a single life rather than committing adultery. They endured many things with unconverted mates because they didn't believe their marriages were in some state of "spiritual limbo." They kept a Monday Pentecost. They paid first, second and third tithes at great sacrifice.

Now they are told this was unnecessary! Why? Because what is now taught is a complete reversal of the past! Pentecost is now assumed to be on Sunday. Church members are allowed to divorce and remarry. Tithing is optional.

If we are saved by faith in Christ alone it is totally unnecessary for us to keep any doctrine. Or, if we are now saved in spite of doctrine, why should we observe any doctrine at all? Therefore, according to this new teaching, it was and is unnecessary to keep the Sabbath, Holy Days, and Ten Commandments.

Can "new truth" and "new understanding" contradict past truth and understanding and still be truth? One has to be wrong! Does not new truth supplement and add to past truth? If the new contradicts the old, either the old was wrong or the new is wrong. Both cannot be right. One has to be in error. It's one or the other!

Questions about Doctrine

God does not change in character. But does He change doctrine? If He changes doctrine then He also allows us to change what we believe and practice. Further, if God changes doctrine, does that not affect our character? Did any change of God ever abolish His Law and commandments? Is not God's spiritual law unalterable? Is it not a permanent standard man can rely on? Is it not the basis for righteous, holy character? Does not the building of character require absolutes? Consider: If God changes, lowers, or abolishes standards, we can conclude that while God has character, He does not require it of man. If the guideline changes so does the character. When we talk about God changing, what do we mean? Are we saying God lowers His requirements in order to make it easier to gain salvation? As expounded in the Sermon on the Mount, does not the Bible substantiate that God's changes magnified His Law and placed upon mankind a greater spiritual obligation? God did not lower His standard! Christians must live by a higher standard!

If we say that doctrine changes in the light of "new insight and study," are we not admitting we were in error? But if we had the Truth, how can we now justify a change? Changes effected by Christ were a magnification of the Law! "New truth" cannot abrogate the old without one of them being wrong! By doctrinal changes we are openly admitting we were in doctrinal error. Further, we never had the Truth and were not the true Church of God! If we never had the Truth in the past, how can we be guaranteed we now have it and are the true Church of God?

If the Spirit of Truth is leading the Church into all truth, how can both sets of doctrine be correct? If being led into all truth is the acceptance of Christ as the only important factor for salvation, why did it take the Church of God forty years to find what most churches believed all along, that obedience to God's Law is not really required?

If we say various denominations are worshipping a false Christ, what then is the basis for worshipping the true Christ? Is it not belief in the doctrine Christ brought? However, if doctrine is not important then we must conclude that professing Christians have been

worshiping the true Christ all along. If understanding doctrine is not "the central anchor to the purpose of life," what is? If it is only Christ, then did the Spirit of Truth lead the Worldwide Church of God into all truth? Or did we have the Truth and are now being led away from it? If doctrine is not important then we are free to believe anything as long as we believe in Christ. The obvious presumption is there are "many ways to salvation" and they all go through Christ.

Contradictions

Now observe the following contradictions in the *Good News* article: "Paul and others taught a way of life, a way of love. Paul said that love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8). Faith, coupled with obedience, constitutes the basis for this Christian way of life. . . . When you grasp the depth and beauty of the heart and core of true Christianity—that is, Christ in you, the hope of glory, it is not easy to be blown about by winds of doctrine, change, striving and opinions. Your life is then anchored to solid rock—the Rock that is Jesus Christ." (*The Good News*, May 1976, article "What Is the Spirit of Real Christianity?")

The article states repeatedly that the central need for the Christian is Christ, that "we are saved through belief in Christ—not through this or that teaching." Yet this author states, as quoted above, "Faith, coupled with obedience, constitutes the basis for this Christian way of life." Does the author mean the way of life as taught in the Book of Acts? If he means that, what Paul taught was different from what we have been told in the article, which stresses "belief in Christ" only. On the other hand, if the author's statement means obedience to God's law is required, we see another contradiction because obedience to the Ten Commandments (which includes acceptance of Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit and growing in grace and knowledge) involves the important matter of doctrine. Yet, we were told doctrine is not important.

Secondly, if the heart and core of Christianity is "Christ in you," how does the Bible say Christ is in you except by meeting the conditions indicated above—acceptance of Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit and growing in grace and knowledge? This requires the understanding of, obedience to and acceptance of the great importance of doctrine!

If doctrine is so unimportant, why does the author state ". . . it is not easy to be blown about by winds of doctrine . . ."? What *did* happen when the Worldwide Church of God changed major doctrine? People were "blown" in all directions by the "winds of doctrinal change."

Thirdly, if the author means that with "Christ in you," you need not pay attention to doctrine—and consequently doctrinal changes will have no effect on you—then he is contradicting what he has said throughout his entire article.

What Does the Bible Say?

Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . ." (Acts 3:19). So Christians are to be converted, that is, to change, to turn around and go the other way. They are to repent. Repent of what? Repent of sin! Sin is the transgression of the Law (I John 3:4). If all one does is accept Christ because that is "what is really important," what is the basis and need for repentance? One must know what to repent of, and that knowledge comes through correct doctrine! Paul says so! Read it in Hebrews 6:1-2. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works. . . ." So, repentance is a foundational doctrine. To accept Christ's person and then to ignore His doctrine because "a Christian is not converted to doctrine" is a total lack of understanding. See II John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (The word "transgresseth" here means "takes the lead, or sets himself up as a teacher.")

Understanding and obeying the correct doctrine is the *basis* of Christianity. To accept Christ without accepting and continuing in the true doctrine is a total failure to grasp the simplest principles of true Christianity!

How Important is Doctrine?

Much is said in the Bible concerning the importance of doctrine. It was not only Jesus' miracles that astounded the people in His day, but also His doctrine (Matt. 7:28-29)! To relegate doctrine to unimportance because "belief in Christ" is what is really important is merely a subtle ruse to alter God's Truth under the guise of respectability. It's high time we recognize what is happening!

Doctrine is so important that Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:12). Furthermore, doctrine was so well established after Jesus' ministry that the Church continued in it (Acts 2:42). Christians obeyed it (Rom. 6:17).

Paul told Timothy to charge some that they teach no other doctrine (I Tim. 1:3). He warned him, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine (I Tim. 4:16). He said to preach the doctrine (II Tim. 4:2), setting the example in it (Titus 2:7).

And Jesus said His true disciples who really obeyed God would not be confused as to what the true doctrine is (John 7:17).

How can anyone say doctrine is not important, that all that is important is "faith in Christ"? Faith in Christ requires the proper understanding of doctrine and the determination to keep it!

"What Do You Mean—God Doesn't Change?"

Next, let us consider the May 1976 *Good News* article, "What Do You Mean—God Doesn't Change?"

First, note this statement: "The religious leaders of that time were unable to accept the new understanding brought by Jesus from God the Father."

But was the "new understanding" doing away with God's Law (as is now being done), or expanding it? It should be clear from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus' whole teaching expanded and magnified God's Law—it did not repudiate it. While divorce was permitted in the Old Testament, Jesus said this was no longer allowed except for fornication (Matt. 5:31-32). But the opposite has taken place today. We are now told, contrary to Jesus' clear-cut statements, that Church members may divorce and remarry (see our article, "The Faith Once Delivered about Marriage and Divorce"). The inference is, of course, that if anyone refuses to accept these "new changes," he is a modern Pharisee or Sadducee. As the author states, "Those who resist the teaching of Christ resist God's Holy Spirit" (ibid.). But are these the teachings of Christ, or the teachings of false ministers masquerading as the ministers of Christ?

If these changes are of God then what happened to the Holy Spirit which was to fulfill Jesus' promise to lead His people into all truth (John 16:13)? But now we are assured, "Jesus explained to His disciples that the purpose of the Holy Spirit was to lead them into more and more truth. . . . This is a progressive, continuing process. Each generation of true Christians is led into new avenues of spiritual insight and understanding" (ibid.). But let's ask ourselves, does the "new insight" contradict the old? For what we now see called "truth" is a total departure from what was once called God's Truth. If we were wrong in the past then the Holy Spirit was derelict. That Spirit did not lead us into anything but error, for what was taught and accepted as Truth a generation ago is not considered Truth any longer. Remember, Truth is singular. It is permanent. It never changes. Truth is Truth. Yesterday's truth is today's truth and will be tomorrow's truth. So how could "each generation of true Christians" be "led into new avenues of spiritual insight and understanding"?

How can "new insight" contradict the old and still be called "new insight"? We might as well be honest and admit what it really is. These doctrinal changes are totally different teachings from what was once taught. Either we were wrong in the past, or we are wrong now. It is one or the other!

God Changes Doctrine?

"God changed! He altered His teaching—doctrine. . . . God has not only changed His doctrine and teaching from age to age but He has also changed His mind on occasion . . . " (*The Good News*, May 1976, p. 19, article "What Do You Mean—God Doesn't Change?").

No one has ever argued that God doesn't change His mind, but where can we find justification for doctrinal changes which have abrogated the spiritual Law of God? If you do not believe this, find out what the Worldwide Church of God now teaches about Divorce and Remarriage. To really understand, send for our article, "The Faith Once Delivered about Marriage and Divorce."

Any "changes" God made, had to do with His relationship to individuals. Nowhere is there evidence God ever intended to "water down" or abrogate His Law! Any changes God made had *nothing to do* with altering His Law. The "adjustments" God made relative to it placed a greater spiritual requirement upon man than was ever expected in the Old Testament (Isa. 42:21). The so-called "new insight" or alterations in the Church of God today are not magnifications of God's Law. They are radical departures from it!

Yet, unbelievably, we are told, "It should be pointed out, by way of qualification, that the teaching of God in terms of His written revelation has remained static for nearly two thousand years. . . . What has changed is the Church's understanding of the meaning and application of those words! These adjustments in teaching in no way change the truth of God" (ibid.). They changed the day on which Pentecost is to be observed. They allow divorce for anyone, at anytime. They say it is all right to work on the Sabbath in order to avoid persecution and then have the audacity to say, "These adjustments in teaching in no way change the truth of God." What nonsense!

Malachi 3:6

To sustain this fallacious reasoning, the author of the Good News article states, "Malachi is often quoted, out of context, to justify a rigid stance on doctrinal understanding. . . . The subject of this verse [Mal. 3:6] is God's mercy—not His doctrine and teaching" (ibid.). Whoever said it wasn't? But, by the same token, does it say God changes doctrine? Of course not! And the following verse condemns Israel for that very thing. "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them . . . " (Mal. 3:7). The conduct of Israel in verse 5 was a direct result of changing doctrine and walking in their own way as stated in verse 7.

Hebrews 13:8

"This verse [Heb 13:8] has nothing to do with whether Christ changes doctrine or not!" (ibid.).

The text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" is preceded by a dire warning against whoremongers and adulterers (verse 4), but the latter is now condoned by the Worldwide Church of God. Then, verse 7 says we must follow the righteous example of God's true ministers, not those who are utter hypocrites. Then it warns us not to be carried about by divers doctrinal changes (verse 9)—the very thing being done today! No wonder Paul tells us Jesus Christ is the same. He doesn't change doctrine to conform to pressure or what seems to be popular today. And when the *Good News* writer says the Book of Hebrews was written to encourage those "Jewish Christians who were having difficulty making the transition from traditional Judaism to dynamic Christianity," we see further evidence of Scripture-twisting to support doctrinal perversion. The Book of Hebrews was written, among other reasons, to encourage Christians to be faithful and loyal to the true doctrine just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and to avoid sin (see Heb. 2:1; 3:6, 12; 4:1-3; 6:4-6; 10:32-39; 11:13-15; 12:1-4, 14-16; 13:4).

Resist the Holy Spirit?

The Good News article tells us, "Those who refuse to change (as God's Word indicates that they should) resist the Holy Spirit as did the Pharisees of old. 'Stubbornness,' says God, 'is as iniquity and idolatry' (I Sam. 15:23)" (ibid.).

The Pharisees resisted the magnification and expansion of God's Law for Jesus did not come to do away with God's commandments in the name of "new insight," "spiritual growth," or what have you. The Pharisees resisted the change from traditionalism. They allowed divorce for every cause. Jesus did not! And to a large degree, their traditionalism was not based upon God's Word, but upon commandments of men (Mark 7:7-9). The difference today is that these present doctrinal changes do not expand God's Law. They give license to disobey it! Saul's sin was in obeying the voice of the people and not doing what God told him to do (an exact parallel of what has happened today). The recent doctrinal changes are rebellion against God's revealed way. They are contrary to God's Word and are a clever attempt to subvert all true believers under the guise of "spiritual insight."

Departures from the Truth

Recent doctrinal changes are departures from God's way of life—God's true doctrine. To say doctrine is not important, that accepting Christ is the only important thing, is telling

a half-truth. If we accepted the true Christ in the past then we accepted His teaching (doctrine). To accept one without the other is utter futility. If we did not know and believe the true doctrine in the past then we did not know and believe in the true Christ. Our religion was vain.

Either we accept our initial convictions (in the case of new converts, their beliefs will agree with those called earlier) as God's revealed truth, or there is no way we can ever know. Truth does not come by "scholarship" or human reasoning. It comes by divine revelation only (John 16:13). It is revealed. It is permanent. And it does not change! If it were progressive and changing it would make little difference what we believed because truth would change from generation to generation. Yesterday's standards and requirements would be different from today's. But God does not have a double standard. We all know better than that!

These doctrinal changes are clear-cut departures from God's Truth. They are labeled "new understanding" but in reality are the manifestations of man's age-old rebellion against God. These promises of "liberty" are destined to lead God's people back into the bondage of sin (II Pet. 2:19). "For if they have escaped the pollutions of the world [adultery, Sabbath-breaking, etc.] through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Pet. 2:20-22).

If resisting these doctrinal changes is resisting the Holy Spirit, then the Worldwide Church of God is openly admitting it was in error in the past, and that only now the Holy Spirit is leading. Yet, to say "These adjustments in teaching in no way change the truth of God" is insidious subterfuge! These doctrinal changes are a total change in major Church doctrines! Does the Holy Spirit initially inspire one way then later change to something totally different? Of course not!

Act Now!

It is time God's people stop to think. It is time they realize they have been letting others do their thinking for them. It is time they realize modern day permissiveness is being foisted upon them in the name of "new insight."

For many it may already be too late. Some have compromised so often that the real truth no longer has any effect upon them. But for those of you who fear God, it is time you remember the things you once proved. It is time you beseech your God for the guidance and

help you so desperately need. God will keep you from being deceived and will deliver you from the paths of sin and error! Can you stir yourself up to make this effort? Now is the time.

Make no mistake about it: Permissiveness is the rule of the day, no matter what you call it! And if you associate with permissive people, sooner or later you will be spiritually ruined! You can't afford to throw away salvation for the sake of friends, fellowship, a paycheck, or what have you.

If you realize what is happening to God's people and what will soon happen to you if you don't act now, then begin to obey God by disassociating yourself from those who will lead you down the pathway to destruction! God help you to act—and soon!