

the Cults Exposed

Worldwide Church of God:

Introduction: “Yet Another Recovered Gospel”

I. The Armstrong Empire (1931-1986):

Herbert W. Armstrong: the Apostle of Anglo - Israelism

1892 - Herbert W. Armstrong was born in Des Moines, Iowa with a Quaker background. Moved to Chicago with a intense desire to become rich but had little success in sales and advertising.

1917 - Married Loma, who a was Methodist. She was also this third cousin.

1926 - Move to Oregon. Loma adopted the seventh day Sabbath views of the Church of God (Seventh Day). HWA studied the Bible to refute his wife’s views. He became convinced not only of the seventh day Sabbath, but also observance OT dietary laws and feast days, as well as the doctrines of conditional immortality, and annihilation of the wicked. (Stretching credibility, HWA denied Adventist influence.)



Herbert W. Armstrong

“I plainly what a decision was before me. To accept this truth meant to throw in my lot for life with a class of people I had always looked upon as inferior... It meant to be cut off completely and forever from all to which I had aspired.”

1931 - As early as 1926 Loma had had a dream in which an angel called her husband to the ministry, but HWA ignore it for years. HWA finally gave up his business and was ordained. Soon after HWA was asked to leave because of his doctrine of “British Israelism” as well as his harsh criticism of the church’s evangelists.

Note: **British Israelism** is the belief that the Anglo-Saxons are the lost tribes of Israel. Britain is identified with the tribe Ephraim and the United States with the half tribe of Manasseh. (HWA traces his lineage through David and Abraham back to Adam).
The Jews (Judah) are under a divine curse and not to be viewed as Israel.
The throne of England, Queen Elizabeth II’s throne, is the throne of David.
The “Stone of Scone” is the rock Jacob used for a pillow in the OT and was later transported to Britain by the prophet Jeremiah.

Note: *Saxon* = Isaac’s son; *British* = *berit* [the Hebrew word for covenant] plus *ish* [the Hebrew word for man] hence the British are “men of the covenant.”

This scheme had been taught at least 100 years prior to HWA. HWA’s writings closely resemble those of J.H. Allen’s, *Judah’s Scepter and Joseph’s Birthright*, 1902.

1933 - In Eugene, Oregon begins the independent Radio Church of God with ten other members. HWA used a borrowed mimeograph machine to publish *The Plain Truth* and used free 15 minute radio spots to announce his "recovery of the gospel." HWA claimed for himself a unique place in history like the Apostle Paul or Peter Waldo (13c. French reformer).

Note: Lost Gospel. HWA claimed that the true gospel has been lost since AD 69 until its recovery in 1934 by HWA. This true gospel deals with the offer of the kingdom to Israel rather than salvation as contemporary preachers proclaim.

"For eighteen and one half centuries the gospel was not preached. The world was deceived into accepting a false gospel. Today Christ has raised up his work and once again allotted to nineteen year time cycles for proclaiming the same gospel, preparatory to his second coming."

AD 31-69 = two nineteen year cycles
AD 1934-1972 = two nineteen year cycles

Ironically, Christ did not return in 1972; the only significance of this date was the expulsion of HWA's son, Garner Ted, for adultery!

1947 - HWA moves radio program to Pasadena. Ambassador College, Pasadena is also started. As founder HWA authority was absolute. He requires all students and faculty to attend his lectures. A campus was later started in England (1960) and Big Sandy, TX (1964).

1967 - HWA's wife Loma died.

The WCG grew rapidly due to:

- [1] Their firm beliefs amid the rise of liberal vacillation.
- [2] Their soft sell approach, no solicitations to give or join. (Members paid a triple tithe!)
- [3] Their proclaimed moral conservatism amid the new morality.
- [4] Their positive hope of a new world tomorrow in an age of war and despair.

Garner Ted Armstrong: the Popular yet Wayward Son

1931 - Garner Ted, youngest of the Armstrong children, was born. He rebelled at the religion of his parents and joined the Navy after high school.

1954 - age 23, enrolls at Ambassador College and embraces his dad's religion as "the religion of Jesus Christ."

While in his early thirties GTA served as a popular radio broadcaster, the exec. vice president of the Worldwide Church of God, the exec. editor of *The Plain Truth*, and the president of Ambassador College. He was being groomed to succeed his father.



Garner Ted Armstrong

1966 rumors persist over the next four years of misconduct lead to three banishments by HWA followed by restoration. HWA concealed the nature of the misconduct.

1971 - HWA privately puts GTA out of the church but soon allows him to return after "repentance."

1972 - Again GTA was kicked out of the church, this time with the knowledge of high ranking church leaders, The issue of adultery becomes public knowledge in the nation's newspapers. HWA only acknowledged that GTA "had fallen into the bonds of Satan."

Note: Actually GTA had been adulterous for many years and with over two hundred women! The current issue causing scandal was GTA's affair with a young stewardess on his jet. GTA desired to divorce his wife, Shirley, for her. (Also note, HWA had previously forced GTA and Shirley to marry when she become pregnant.) HWA deliberately covered for his son. At the same time, he hypocritically ejected another minister in 1968 for a single offense.

Within four months of GTA's ouster church revenues dropped 40%. GTA was soon found to be repentant and restored to his speaking ministries and church activities. He confessed to sinning against "his wife, his children and the church." The night following his return sermon was spent with his mistress casting doubt on his sincerity.

1972 - Al Carrozzo, after presenting a tape and letter entitled "Everything You Wanted to Know about Headquarters Ministry but Were Afraid to Mention," left the WCG to form the Twentieth Century Church of God (*aka* the Associated Churches of God). Carrozzo, an insider for years, documented GTA's prolonged sexual immorality as well as HWA's financial extravagance.

1973 - HWA announces GTA as his eventual successor citing the example of David appointing Solomon prior to his death. This announcement was not well received by insiders.

1978 - Final breach occurs between HWA and GTA. HWA accused his son of attempting to seize control while he was ill. (Actually the issue was GTA's sexual immorality. GTA privately threatened to destroy his dad if he exposed him. GTA had known for years that his father had been incestuously involved with his own youngest daughter, Dorothy. This incest happened for a decade from 1933 to 1943. Understandably these issues were not made public at the time.)

1978 - GTA starts the Church of God, International headquartered at Big Sandy, TX. His message remained the same.

Note: Twenty years later, in 1998, GTA was dismissed by the leaders of the Church of God, International which he had founded. GTA had been videotaped in a massage parlor, charged with sexual assault on one of the parlor's workers, and was also known by church officials to be involved in a prolonged extramarital relationship with a church member half his age. Within months GTA formed the Garner Ted Evangelistic Association and a new church, the Intercontinental Church of God (only a few churches have joined in with him).

Worldwide Church of God ... Church of God, International... Intercontinental Church of God

Herbert W. Armstrong, the Final Years

1977 - HWA married his second wife, Ramona, who was 45 years younger than he. They were divorced in 1984.

1979 - Church was placed in temporary receivership when HWA and his associate Stanley Rader were accused of the improper use of church funds for their own benefit. Rader, a Jewish lawyer and long time associate of HWA, had been baptized in 1975. Rader convinced HWA to spend millions of dollars on cultural and humanitarian projects in order to gain

respectability for the church. HWA courted world leaders giving lavish gifts for photo opportunities with these leaders. (Note: The case was dropped in 1980 as the result of a state law prohibiting state investigation of church fraud and mismanagement.)

1986 - Joseph Tkach, Sr. appointed as successor by HWA shortly before his death. Tkach had been with the church since 1957

Armstrongism's Theological Distinctives

From Garner Ted's current web site (*these views reflect the views of HWA as well*)

1. GOD -...God is a single family presently consisting of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT - The Holy Spirit is the spiritual extension of God, containing the essence, power and mind of God. God uses His Holy Spirit to beget Christians as His sons and daughters. The Holy Spirit spiritually strengthens Christians, converting their minds to be more God's mind. The Holy Spirit also serves as an earnest or guarantee of future eternal life.

5. MANKIND- Humans have no inherent immortality as flesh and blood physical beings; however, they can receive eternal life as a free gift from our loving and merciful creator God.

7. SALVATION - The penalty for sin is death, but salvation is the means by which God saves mankind from the penalty of sin so that he may be given eternal life. Working through His Son, Jesus Christ, the salvation process includes one's calling, repentance, baptism, justification, receiving of the Holy Spirit, then living a life of faith and obedience, and finally, birth into God's Kingdom as a spirit being.

13. GOSPEL - The gospel is the message preached by Jesus Christ and His church about the history of Jesus Christ and the future Kingdom of God to be established by Jesus Christ, the restoration of God's government on earth, and how mankind can enter Kingdom and government.

14. RESURRECTIONS - The hope of all mankind and the promise to the Christian is that they will be resurrected from the dead. The Bible refers to four resurrections. (1) the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the firstborn of God and man from the dead to become the pioneer of salvation; (2) the resurrection of the saints at the return of Jesus Christ when the true believers shall become members of God's family. This is called the "first resurrection" (3) the resurrection of all who have ever died without having understood God's way, back to physical life for their first opportunity for salvation; (4) the resurrection of those who have refused to repent and have rejected God's way and are called the incorrigibly wicked, to be consumed in the lake of fire. This is called the "second death".

Additional Beliefs and Practices

1- Absolute control. Any question of the Work is blasphemy.

2- Secrecy. Church phones were unlisted, churches had no signs outside, meetings were closed to the public. One had to make application and be interviewed to get a first visit. A second invitation to attend was conditioned on acceptance of church views.

3- Triple tithes. The first is to support the church. The second to further ones family spiritual growth. The third due every seventh year, was for charity

4- Prohibitions: medicine, political or military involvement, celebration of Christmas and Easter, wearing cosmetics, etc.

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Joseph Tkach, Jr.

II The Tkach Era (1986-Present):

Joseph W. Tkach: Re-Examining the Faith

1986 - Joseph Tkach (pronounced "Ta-Kotch)", made Pastor General of the church, his leadership style was that of an administrator, delegating the church's television and writing ministries.

1988 - Tkach allows member to go to doctors, take medicines, observe birthdays and wear cosmetics. Some of HWA's writings were withdrawn since Tkach questioned whether the prophetic speculations could be proved from Scripture.

1989 - 3,000 leave to form the Philadelphia Church of God to preserve HWA's doctrines.

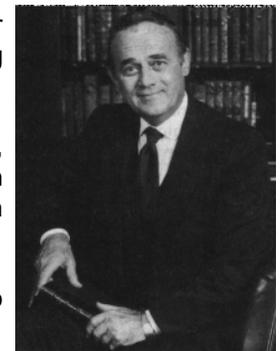
1990 - Tkach concludes the focus of the gospel is Jesus Christ and grace and not prophecy or the millennium. More HWA writings were pulled.

1991 - Tkach revised the church's explanation of what it means to be born again denying that humans become Gods. He accepted the deity of the Holy Spirit and begins a study of the lost ten tribes' identity. Some decrease in attendance begins.

1993 - WCG accepts the doctrine of the Trinity. Church says Christians may vote.

1994 - WCG affirms that there are Christians in other denominations. TV programing is canceled. In December, Tkach rejects required keeping of all Sabbaths (weekly or annual), tithes, and dietary laws. Note: The Sabbath change was most controversial.

1995 - 12,000 members and hundreds of ministers leave to form the United Church of God. Others stopped going to church altogether. Income dropped 50%. The WCG experienced a renewed faith in Jesus Christ rather than law keeping. Tkach rejected the doctrine of British Israelism and permitted observance of Christmas and Easter.



Joseph W. Tkach, Sr.

Joseph Tkach, Jr: the Completed Journey

- 1995 - Tkach dies having designated his son, Joseph Tkach, Jr., as his successor as Pastor General. Joe Tkach, Jr. was approved by the WCG board of directors.
- 1996 - Joseph Tkach, Jr. writes an editorial in *The Plain Truth* apologizing to their members and others who were hurt by their false teaching and practices. Ruth Tucker, a respected author of books on the cults, writes an extended article in *Christianity Today*, "*From the Fringe to the Fold.*"
- 1997 - The WCG is accepted as a member of NAE (National Association of Evangelicals).

Conclusion: *"Willing to Change for the Gospel"*

What are the marks a cult?

Armstrong Era

- ✓ Authoritarian Leader
- ✗ Additional Revelation
- ✓ Defective Gospel
- ✓ Novelty and Exclusivity
- ✓ Loyalty Mechanisms
- ✓ Historical Revisionism

Tkach Era

- ✗ Authoritarian Leader
- ✗ Additional Revelation
- ✗ Defective Gospel
- ✗ Novelty and Exclusivity
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- ✗ Historical Revisionism