

Commentary — From the Margins

One at a Time

Sometimes we get so close to a situation that we cannot see the surrounding forest ... the *History Channel* currently broadcasts a documentary reality show titled, *The Ax Men*. The show is about four gyppo crews of high lead loggers on Oregon's northwest coast: Saddle Mountain, inland between Astoria and Seaside, appears in the series' video lead-in.

For a little while in my twenties, I worked the rigging on a gyppo high lead show; for longer, I fell timber in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon. I know what it is to approach a stick, glance at its lean, check to see where I should put it; then cut the face while trying to keep my footing on a steep hillside. I know what it is to stay focused on the stick as skiptooth chain tears away years of living. I know what it is to see that first hint of movement as gravity pulls the stick over its hinge. I know what it is to scramble up, out of the way as the tree falls, its branches catching enough air to threaten snapping its top off. I know what it is to see just this tree, then just that tree as one after another falls into its bed where it waits being bucked into logs, yarded to the landing, then ripped into dimensioned lumber. I know what it is to see single trees in a forest covering a mountain range. And it is this unawareness of the forest that today afflicts at least one young man who doesn't see relationships that should be as evident as the forest of Oregon's Coast Range.

The key to understanding Scripture is that the visible things of this world reveal and precede the invisible, spiritual things of God (Rom 1:20; 1 Cor 15:46).

There is a need for ministry in the church of God, and there is need for a chain of command, but there is no need for the continuation of false ministers, false apostles, false prophets that have plagued the Body for Christ throughout the entirety of its history, with the COGs now standing as dead snags ready to fall in the first storm of the season.

False apostles are not going away. If anything, they proliferate during that period known as the time of the end, and they will stand, and do currently stand so close to disciples that this forest of false ministers and false prophets are not seen for what (or who) they are. As long as no one looks at their crowns, they appear to be sound. They are certainly larger in diameter than the second growth that will be harvested. But they are all widow-makers.

The Apostle Paul said that he, not Peter, laid the foundation for the house of God, and that no one else can lay another foundation but the one he laid, this foundation being Christ Jesus (1 Co 3:10-11). It wasn't Peter that laid the foundation of the endtime Church, but Paul. A disciple needs to reexamine what Jesus said when He asked His disciples who people said He was: Peter was not the son of Jonah [Βαριωνᾶ—*Barjona*] (Matt 16:17), but the son of John [Ἰωάννης]

Ἰωάννου] (John 1:42). Peter was Simon of John [Σίμων Ἰωάννου] (John 21:16). So for Jesus to move aspiration (rough breathing) from in front of the nasal consonant /áv/to behind the nasal /vâ/is directly akin to moving a person's nose from the front of his or her face to a whale-like blowhole behind the person's head ... what Jesus pointed to when He called Peter the son of Jonah was "Jonah," the one sign He would give of who He was. He told Peter in figurative language that on the foundation [rock] of Jonah, He would build His church. Jesus used the same type of linguistic play as found in moving aspiration from in front of the nasal to in back of the nasal in, "[Y]ou are Peter [Πέτρος], and upon this rock [πέτρα], I will build" (Matt 16:18). The /os/case ending on the masculine name Peter [Πέτρ—] becomes the vowel /α/when moving from *Peter* to *petra*.

It is always to mistake to believe that the church of God is built on a foundation that Peter laid. It is simply heresy! And the Greek and Latin Churches take their authority to change Scripture from the authority Jesus allegedly gave to Peter in giving him the keys to heaven ... step away from the trees and look at the forest, please! Look at the keys that Jesus here gave to Peter:

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' [note: same sign] You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed. (Matt 16:1-4)

The context in which a red sky appears changes the meaning of the one sign. The sign of Jonah pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus' physical body is the equivalent to the red sky appearing at evening. The sign of Jonah pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus' spiritual Body [i.e., the Church] is the equivalent to the red sky appearing in the morning. The seven endtime years of tribulation are the stormy and threatening day that will begin when the dead Body of the Church is resurrected, for the gates of Hades can no more prevail against the Body of Christ than they could against the physical body of Jesus.

Now take this knowledge about the one sign Jesus will give and go to the "keys" to the kingdom of heaven: when aspiration moves from the front of a person's face—from the nostrils into which *Elohim* [singular in usage] breathed life into the first Adam (Gen 2:7)—to the back of the head where the disciple receives the spiritual breath of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] and life through being born again or born from above as a son of God, the rock upon which the church is built becomes receipt of the Holy Spirit [πνεῦμα ἅγιον] and a second life coming from this second breath [πνεῦμα]. The keys of heaven that give authority to bind and loose to the church are disciples receiving real life in the heavenly realm through being born of spirit as a son of God. With disciples having life in the heavenly realm as sons of God, disciples have life that doesn't come from the air they breathe through their nostrils. The aspiration that counts has moved from before

the nasal [the nose] to in back of the nasal, from /áv/ to /vâ/. And if you don't think that Jesus was capable of this type of deliberate linguistic play, you seriously underestimate Him.

The truly sad part of this is that Herman Melville, when writing *Moby-Dick*, wrestled with this problem, and sailed his wrestling over the heads of his own generation as well as over the heads of most scholars since.

For far too long, disciples have been standing, staring at a single tree here and there in a rainforest that stretches across dimensions. They seem unable to stand back and look at the forest.

The Apostle Paul gives one test for those who work at he worked:

I preached God's gospel to you free of charge. I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you [Corinthians] and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ... And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as I do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (2 Co 11:7-13)

Now for the ugly truth: many Sabbatarian disciples continue to cling to some vestige of the ministry of Herbert Armstrong, with many of these Sabbatarians believing that the needed authority to work in ministry must come directly or indirectly from Armstrong. But Armstrong did not work on the same terms as Paul worked; he did not build on the foundation that Paul laid, and the ministries that come from Herbert Armstrong's boasted mission don't even know where the foundation of the house of God is that Paul laid.

Herbert Armstrong was, by Paul's testimony, a false apostle. Although Armstrong did not make public appeals for moneys to be sent to him during his radio and television broadcasts, or in the literature sent to first time requesters, he certainly appealed for moneys to be sent him in many, many coworker letters. He directed that all moneys be sent to him rather than remain with local fellowships—and yes, he asked that moneys be sent to him personally during the difficulties of 1979, rather than to the corporate entity he headed.

Even when Paul was in need, working day and night at his trade to cover his expenses and the expenses of those with him, he did not ask the saints at Corinth where he was then teaching to give him money. He did not ask for their tithes or ask for offerings although he was entitled to receive them. He worked with his hands at his vocation—the ministry was never intended to be a fulltime vocation—and every one who works on the same terms as Paul worked will also work at his or her vocation to pay their way in this world.

What about Peter and the others who said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables ... we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2, 4)? Well, what about Peter? Is this why Paul was chosen to lay the foundation for the house of God, not Peter?

Peter and those with him form the lively representation of disciples in the first half of the Tribulation in at least a Homeric simile. So those disciples who live

into the Tribulation can see in advance the problems they will face in communal living.

The damage done to disciples by Herbert Armstrong is enormous although he was in a chain of successive ministries that come from the apparent 16th-Century command (answered by the Radical Reformers) that the house of God be rebuilt in heavenly Jerusalem in a manner foreshadowed by Cyrus commanding that a remnant of Israel rebuild the house of God in present day Jerusalem. Most Sabbatarians are part of the house Armstrong built for himself, or part of the house Ellen G. White built, or part of the house Andrew Dugger built. Few will be part of the house of God built on the foundation Paul laid. That choice is theirs. And every one of them needs to back away from the tree upon which he or she leans to look out and see the forest.

Paul had to defend his ministry throughout its entirety. All in Asia left him. Most in Judea wanted to kill him. Disciples in Greece questioned whether he was of God. And not much has changed in 1900+ years. Even today, some Sabbatarian disciples question whether Paul was of God, for they don't like the foundation he laid for the house of God.

It's easy to see the difficulties Paul faced, but what has not been as readily apparent as it should have been is that those Sabbatarians today who are of the house of White or of the House of Armstrong are as the Pharisees and Sadducees were in Paul's day.

Paul received his gospel by revelation (Gal 1:12), not from Peter or from any human person. The elders at Jerusalem added nothing to what he knew when he appears before them then after fourteen years. And today, in a manner similar to how Paul was called to the work he did, I was called to knowledge that doesn't come from any human person.

Peter was commanded to feed the lambs (John 21:15), tend the sheep (v. 16), and feed the sheep (v. 17). Peter fulfilled his commission in writing his two epistles, with feeding the lambs and tending the sheep found in his first epistle, and feeding the sheep found in his second epistle. He did not leave his commission to others. He did not begin an apostolic succession of ordinations that continue to this day. He fed lambs with a message to new converts, and he in his final words when feeding the sheep he vouched for Paul's spiritual wisdom and understanding. He leaves the sheep to Paul's ministering.

Where Peter's commission ends, Paul's takes over. The rock [πέτρα] upon which Jesus built His church isn't an apostolic succession that begins with Peter, but the epistles of Peter that lead to the epistles of Paul—and Peter's warnings about false prophets and false teachers went unheeded by those who were certain that they were not false even though they could not keep their hands out of parishioners' pockets.

Genuine ministry serves and does not expect to be served—and if this ministry serves God and is a workman for God, then it is God's responsibility to cover His servant's expenses, not the responsibility of the minister to beg money from his (or her) parishioners.

In an extremely clever way, God through Paul established in the 1st-Century the basis by which genuine ministers would be recognized by endtime disciples; for the ministers of Satan cannot help but ask their fellow bondservants for

support whereas no genuine minister of God will ever ask those they serve for support. If those who are served choose to support the one[s] feeding them spiritually, their decision to support is between God and themselves. It is no one else's business whether they support or do not support a minister or a ministry. And today, UCG and LCG and PCG and RCG and however many more churches of God there are that ask their members and coworkers to support their boasted ministries—all of these ministries are false teachers, false houses, false administrations of the church of God, each teaching damnable heresies that will bring destruction upon themselves, especially when the Tribulation begins.

There is only one foundation for the house of God in heavenly Jerusalem, and UCG doesn't build on that foundation. Neither do Seventh Day Adventists or Seventh Day Baptists or the Church of God, 7th Day. So while UCG and its errant cousins seek to protect themselves, using Scripture as their shield, all of them need to first quit asking for tithes and donations from disciples if they intend to work on the same terms as Paul worked. And the terms on which Paul worked are the terms on which I work.

You'll need nails on your soles if you intend to work on the same terms as I work.

Clearly Paul believes that moneys given locally should be spent locally, that there is nothing wrong with accepting what is freely given, but that it is always wrong to ask even when in need ... how many letters did Herbert Armstrong send to coworkers asking for moneys to be immediately sent to Pasadena, even if those moneys had to be borrowed? I received them, and I sent money even when I was living on poached venison. Every one of those letters now stands as an indictment of Armstrong.

When I back away from that tree I will shortly lay in its bed, I see that vast forest in which the COGs stand as snags that must be felled. Some of them are truly dangerous. Nevertheless, they must be toppled or they will blow down in the next windstorm, killing many young healthy disciples who lack the experience necessary to high-lead log a bastard growth show ... it is a tragedy that so many Sabbatarians are today trapped in the shadow of one COG or another. Most will not get clear when these snags fall. They will die needlessly.

I came out of Worldwide in a manner analogous to how Paul left the Pharisees, and I now build on that foundation Paul laid—and I'm not ashamed to say so, for I have those keys of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus left with Peter, keys that are available to others if they will also build on the foundation Paul laid. But these keys are not given to those who have their hands in their neighbors' pockets--those who grope for their neighbors' wallets cannot understand why the difference between "John" and "Jonah" has significance.

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[[Current Endnote](#)] [[Archived Endnotes](#)] [[Home](#)]