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THE FACTS... WHO REALLY CARES ABOUT THEM ANYWAY?

We are all reasonable men and women, right? When facts, of which we previously had not been aware, are presented to us, then we certainly accept and acknowledge those facts, right? And when facts are presented to us that prove that we are actually wrong or in error in some or other area of life, then we obviously change where we have been wrong or incorrect, right? After all, we are all very reasonable people.

Or are we?

Are we REALLY willing to accept ALL the facts that are presented to us, even those that challenge our own positions, or those facts that embarrass us in some way? Do we REALLY care about the facts when it comes to what we believe and practice and do?

Let's examine these questions more closely.

WHAT ARE FACTS?

Here are some of the ways the word "FACT" is defined by various dictionaries:

> "Man propounds negotiations, Man accepts the compromise. VERY RARELY WILL HE SQUARELY PUSH THE LOGIC OF A FACT TO ITS ULTIMATE CONCLUSION IN UNMITIGATED ACT."

We hate to push the logic of a fact to its conclusion, by having to act on that knowledge. We'd like to keep it theoretical as much as we possibly can. This attitude is exemplified by the scornful statement by Luc de Clapiers Vauvenargues (who incidentally died at age 32 years) that "facts are the refuge of those who have no imagination". He certainly wasn't interested in the facts!

If you don't like a particular fact, just ignore it or dismiss it.

That's what many other people do, right?

In most cases we will not squarely face all the facts about ourselves. We'll see ourselves in a different light from the way other people see us. That is what King David observed in the psalms.

> Surely EVERY MAN WALKETH IN A VAIN SHEW: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. (Psalm 39:6 AV)

David meant that we all have a facade, when he said that we walk "in a vain show". We don't evaluate the facts about ourselves in the same way that other people evaluate those facts; and without conscious efforts we certainly don't evaluate those facts the way Almighty God evaluates those same facts about us.

In any conflict situation, be it on the individual personal level, or be it on the level of international relations, at least one party is not acknowledging all the facts; or, at best, we have to say that they don't really care about the facts.

In a war situation I don't care that something belongs to you; I am going to take it from you, if I first manage to defeat you ... and the facts of rightful ownership have nothing to do with what I will do. That is the way things usually work, isn't it?

We have all, at one time or another, had personal disputes and arguments. There is a good chance that in at least some of those situations WE OURSELVES were in the wrong. That is without question true for me, and I assume the same is also true for you.

So you KNOW that we, each one of us, will very readily argue against FACTS that make us look bad in some way. That is not the way we should be; but it is unfortunately the way we are.

Now let's look at what the Bible tells us about this subject of acknowledging the facts.

Let's start by looking at Satan.

THE FACTS ABOUT SATAN

Here is a basic statement Jesus Christ made about Satan:

> Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and ABODE NOT IN THE TRUTH, because THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for HE IS A LIAR, AND THE FATHER OF IT. (John 8:44 AV)

Satan was a murderer and also a liar "from the beginning". When Christ said that Satan did not "abide in the truth", Christ was telling us that Satan does not stay with the facts. Satan denies the facts and Satan twists the facts.

To paraphrase the words of Sir James Matthew Barrie, Satan was NEVER pleased with the facts; Satan acquires facts with reluctance and gets rid of them with relief, and Satan is never on terms with the facts until he has stood them on their heads.

Let's look at a clear example of Satan refusing to acknowledge the facts. This is found in the Book of Job. God made the following factual statement to Satan:

> And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM IN THE EARTH, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8 AV)

God made a factual observation. God said something that was true and correct. And Satan certainly knew that God's statement was correct. So did Satan acknowledge the correctness of God's statement?

CERTAINLY NOT!

While Satan could not very well call God a liar to His face, he nevertheless immediately disagreed with

God by questioning Job's MOTIVATION for obeying God. Satan refused to acknowledge the facts! He did this with our typical "yes BUT ..." response, except that Satan left out the "yes" part of our typical response. He didn't acknowledge anything! Notice:

> Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, DOTH JOB FEAR GOD FOR NOUGHT? (Job 1:9 AV)

Satan is finding fault with the facts that God had presented to him. His is a typical lawyer's response, one that challenges the credibility of the facts that have been presented. Since the facts are above reproach (God is the One presenting those facts), therefore Satan does not even comment on the facts that have been presented. Instead, Satan immediately focuses on providing a different interpretation for those facts. This different interpretation is nothing other than a denial of the facts God had presented.

We all know the basic story here ... that God gave Satan permission to take everything away from Job. After Satan had taken away all of Job's wealth and killed all of Job's children, we are told:

> In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (Job 1:22 AV)

Then Satan again appeared before God, and God said to him:

> And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM IN THE EARTH, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. (Job 2:3 AV)

Again God stated a fact to Satan. Does Satan now accept the correctness of God's statement? Does he now concede that God had been right and that he, Satan, had been wrong? Does he face up to THE FACTS?

Certainly not!

Again Satan refused to acknowledge the facts of the matter. Again he simply gave the typical lawyer's response (comment: so who is the father of all legal arguments?) and asserted that different circumstances would produce a different result, thereby again questioning the real motivation for Job's obedience to God.

It was just another "yes BUT ..." response!

We need to understand that "YES BUT ..." responses are commonly, though certainly not always, very emphatic denials of the facts that have been presented, even though those responses are prefaced by the word "yes".

Notice Satan's response:

> And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. (Job 2:4-5 AV)

Not even one tiny grudging concession of the fact that Job had responded incredibly well to the overnight loss of the equivalent of multiple millions of dollars, not to mention the deaths of all of his children! That fact is simply glossed over by Satan. Satan does not deal with facts! He only deals with innuendos and with unfounded assertions and with lies (of which he is the father!) and with imputing wrong motives. Satan is the arch-twister of the facts! And Satan will NEVER acknowledge a fact that makes him look bad.

The Bible makes clear that Satan is the god of this present age, as Paul wrote:

> In whom THE GOD OF THIS WORLD (Greek "aion" means "AGE") hath BLINDED THE MINDS of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:4 AV)

By telling us that Satan is the god of this whole age of humanity, it is telling us that Satan has influenced ALL HUMAN BEINGS to think the way he thinks. That is what our minds have been "blinded" to, that our thought processes are IDENTICAL to the way Satan thinks. And since one of the cornerstones of Satan's way of thinking is to deny the facts and to argue against the facts that make him look bad, therefore we should recognize that Satan has influenced ALL MANKIND TO ENGAGE IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY OF THINKING!

When we argue against and deny facts that we don't like, then in our minds we are using Satan's shareware "operating system", and our thinking will be totally compatible with the way Satan thinks ... all of Satan's "software" will readily run in our minds. But the operating system we will be using will always be inferior to God's "operating system" for human minds. God's operating system is certainly not "shareware"; it has to be individually purchased with real genuine repentance. We can never receive a copy of this operating system from someone else. But once it has been purchased and paid for and installed, it is a far superior operating system.

Notice also Revelation 12:9.

> And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and SATAN, which DECEIVETH THE WHOLE WORLD: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:9 AV)

Exactly what has Satan deceived the whole world about? Satan has deceived all humanity about the truth of God; he has deceived all humanity about THE FACTS! Satan denies the facts, he scorns the facts, he discredits the facts, and he vehemently argues against the facts. And this Scripture means ALL PEOPLE have been deceived by him, including me and including you. Satan has managed to deceive all of us about SOME things. None of us have "all the truth". Coming to an understanding of the truth is a lifelong process for a Christian. As Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote, "TRUTH OR CERTAINTY IS OBTAINED ONLY FROM FACTS". And as we come to understand, and to accept into our minds and to correctly apply more and more facts, so Satan's deception of our minds is gradually removed in one matter after another, in one area of our lives after another. It is nothing short of a lifelong process, which God Himself will complete for us at the time of the resurrection.

The bottom line in this regard is this:

as long as we will SPONTANEOUSLY argue against facts that we don't really like, without actually being able to clearly disprove them, we will still be enslaved to the deception that Satan has cast over all humanity! We will still be in slavery!

Also, sadly, we should not at all be surprised when people in the churches of God respond to facts they don't like in THE IDENTICAL WAY that Satan responded to the facts God presented to him in the Book of Job. Satan tried to deny the facts by asserting a wrong motivation for Job. That is a common ploy used by all of us in dealing with facts we cannot disprove ... just impute a wrong motive to the one presenting the facts, as if imputing such wrong motives could somehow change the facts into fiction.

A LAWYER'S RESPONSE

Notice also this biblical example of how one lawyer responded to the facts.

> And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:25 AV)

So Jesus Christ replied, paraphrased: you're a lawyer, so how do you yourself read the law?

> He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? (Luke 10:26 AV)

The lawyer's reply makes clear that he himself actually knew the correct answer to the question that he had asked. That is a common way lawyers deal with people, by asking questions to which they themselves already know the correct answers. Here is the lawyer's reply.

> And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. (Luke 10:27 AV)

The fact that the lawyer knew the correct answer to the question he had asked shows that his question had not been asked in sincerity. He had not asked the question because he was seeking information; he had asked the question for the purpose of trying to find fault with the answer that would be given. Lawyers very commonly do this: they don't ask questions to get information they didn't know; no, they ask questions in the hope of being able to use the answers against the very people who are providing those answers. That's a cheap lawyer's trick.

Notice how Jesus Christ responded to this lawyer.

> And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.
>
> (Luke 10:28 AV)

That's the last answer a lawyer would want to receive, to be told to simply put into practice the facts he is already aware of. Jesus Christ had not provided anything for the lawyer to find fault with. The lawyer's reply to this statement makes clear that THE FACTS WERE NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIM! Notice ...

> But he, WILLING TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:29 AV)

Here we have the "yes BUT ..." response. The lawyer's desire "to justify himself" makes quite clear that he didn't really like the facts! He wanted to find a way around those facts. That is something all of us commonly do ... try to find a way to "justify away" facts that are unpleasant to us.

What follows is Jesus Christ's telling of the parable of the good Samaritan. Notice that here Jesus Christ used the lawyer's own method of forcing the correct answer! Jesus Christ was in effect "nailing" the lawyer with the lawyer's own tactics! After describing the responses by the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan, Jesus Christ asked the lawyer:

> WHICH NOW OF THESE THREE, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? (Luke 10:36 AV)

The lawyer had no choice! He was simply forced to give the correct answer. But even then the lawyer could not get himself to clearly state the correct answer as "the Samaritan". Instead the lawyer referred to the Samaritan in a more roundabout way as "he that showed mercy on him".

> And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE. (Luke 10:37 AV)

So where the lawyer had not really agreed with the facts (i.e. that EVERY other human being is "our neighbour"), where he had tried to find a way around the facts in order to justify himself, Jesus Christ forced him to first acknowledge the facts before instructing him to put those facts into practice.

Now let's look at some other Scriptures that apply to this subject.

WHAT THE BIBLE SHOWS US

Let's start with something that the Apostle Paul predicted for our age.

> This know also, that IN THE LAST DAYS perilous times shall come.
>
> (2 Timothy 3:1)

In the following verses Paul gives a description of our age. This includes people having A SHOW of being religious, but denying the real POWER of that religion.

> Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.
>
> (2 Timothy 3:5 AV)

We have always had those in the Church who are always learning and yet NEVER ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE FACTS! I know personally quite a number of people in this category ... they never seem to get the real picture, and perhaps you too know some people in this category?

> Ever learning, and NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH. (2 Timothy 3:7 AV)

Notice Paul's next statement about these teachers who somehow can never understand the facts, the truth.

> Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, SO DO THESE ALSO RESIST THE TRUTH: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.
>
> (2 Timothy 3:8 AV)

The people Paul is speaking about here are religious leaders "in the last days" (verse 1). And the point Paul is making is that THEY RESIST THE FACTS! These religious leaders will simply not acknowledge the facts! That is what Paul means by saying that they "resist the truth". And when religious leaders actively resist the facts, then, as I will explain later, we have an enormous problem, a truly staggering problem for the Church of God!

A consequence of such teachers in the Church is that Church people in general will also no longer accept sound, factually correct teachings. They will start to look for teachers who will teach the things they want to hear.

> For the time will come when THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (2 Timothy 4:3 AV)

In the next verse Paul indicated that people in the Church of God, on a large scale, will deliberately ignore the facts that contradict what they want to hear. They simply will not listen to the facts.

> And THEY SHALL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:4 AV)

They will simply ignore the facts without batting an eyelid!

Already earlier in this letter Paul had given an example of ministers who denied the facts! Notice:

> And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; WHO CONCERNING THE TRUTH HAVE ERRED, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. (2 Timothy 2:17-18 AV)

Hymenaeus and Philetus ignored the facts! The resurrection was not already past back then, and it is even today still not "past"! The resurrection is clearly still future, since none of us have yet been resurrected, and that happens to be A FACT!

The facts that are ignored and denied today are different from the facts that Hymenaeus and Philetus denied, but the degree of seriousness of the facts that are denied today is the same as back then! It is just as bad today as it was in Paul's time!

This is a very serious indictment Paul has made here (2 Timothy 4:3-4) for our age.

In this regard one forceful drive within the Church of God over the past two to three decades or so has been to get the Church of God to accept "JEWISH FABLES". Notice the warning the Jewish Apostle Paul gave to Titus in this regard.

> This witness is true. Wherefore REBUKE THEM SHARPLY, that they may be sound in the faith; NOT GIVING HEED TO JEWISH FABLES, and commandments of men, THAT TURN FROM

THE TRUTH. (Titus 1:13-14 AV)

Was Paul anti-Semitic because he would sharply rebuke any who dared to introduce Jewish fables into the Church? Was he in any way bitter towards his own people, the Jews? Or did Paul recognize the extreme danger that Jewish fables, just like any other false teachings, represented for members of God's Church?

Notice also that acceptance of Jewish fables is tantamount to TURNING AWAY FROM THE FACTS, which Paul refers to as "turning away from the truth". Fables invariably ignore facts.

Many Jewish ideas, for which some people seek acceptance within the Church of God, are simply "fables". These ideas may range from having to use Hebrew-sounding names for God to Hebrew dancing to having to use the present Jewish calendar for determining the annual Feasts and Holy Days, etc..

Should we meekly condone things that the Jewish Apostle Paul himself would have rebuked sharply?

Paul also discussed this further in his letter to the Romans. Notice:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS; (Romans 1:18 AV)

The Greek verb "katecho", translated as "hold" in this verse, really means "TO HOLD BACK, TO SUPPRESS". And thus we find that many translations (e.g. RSV, NRSV, NAS, NIV, NKJV, etc.) have correctly translated this phrase into English as "WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH".

A clearer way to translate Romans 1:18 is to say that there are those "... WHO WICKEDLY SUPPRESS THE FACTS"! And Paul shows that "God's anger" is going to be revealed against such people.

To deliberately suppress the facts, the truth, is a major transgression before God, something that provokes God to anger.

Paul continued to explain that such wicked people EXCHANGED THE FACTS ABOUT GOD FOR LIES. Deny the facts, and then replace the facts with lies, with "fables". Notice verse 25.

> THE UNREPENTANT MIND HATES THE FACTS THAT EXPOSE ITS FLAWS!

Until we recognize that our intuitive ways of thinking are identical to the ways Satan thinks, we cannot really grasp what it is that God is telling us to do by "repenting". And so in the past we have typically groped our way through this subject by saying something like "God requires us to be sorry for what we have done".

And when that fell short, because some people haven't really "DONE" very much they need to be sorry for (see the Comment below), then we have said something like "God requires us to be sorry for what we are", referring to our innate tendencies to go the wrong way.

> [COMMENT: The approximately 3000 Jews who were baptized in Acts 2:41 weren't really DOING all that much wrong. The man Job likewise wasn't really DOING anything wrong, i.e. prior to venting his anger and frustrations. Similarly, the parents of John the Baptist are both referred

to as "righteous" in Luke 1:5-6, indicating that they weren't really DOING all that much wrong. etc.]

But the problem when we are told that we must be "sorry for what we are" is that it reduces repentance to the level of A FEELING! Being sorry for what we are is a feeling we could have about ourselves, although such a feeling would have no focus of any kind; it would be very vague at best.

AND REPENTANCE IS MOST ASSUREDLY NOT A FEELING!

Repentance is a very deliberate mental process that we ourselves have to set into motion in our own minds. When Romans 2:4 tells us that "the goodness of God LEADS US to repentance", it means that God GRANTS US THE ABILITY to set this mental process into motion; but we still have to do that setting in motion ourselves.

When people, after the baptism of Cornelius, said that God had also "GRANTED REPENTANCE" to non-Jews (Acts 11:18), it again is simply a reference to God also granting that ability to non-Jews.

Let's clearly understand God's part in our repentance process.

A deceived person cannot possibly repent. Nobody can change the way they think as long as they are still deceived about their present way of thinking.

So when I say that God grants us the ability to repent, I mean that GOD LIFTS SOME OF SATAN'S DECEPTION FROM OUR MINDS! It is the lifting of that deception that ENABLES US to make the choice to change our way of thinking.

Without God's intervention we would never be able to see our way through the deception that the god of this present age has cast over all humanity; and that means that we would NEVER be capable of repenting, no matter how nice and kind and helpful a person we might be. It is the lifting of Satan's deception (some of it) from off our minds that enables us to have access to the possibility of repenting, of changing our way of thinking.

Whenever we are faced by an unfavourable fact about ourselves, then we ourselves ALWAYS have the power, with our own minds, to either acknowledge that fact or to reject that fact and to argue against it.

IT IS IN SITUATIONS LIKE THAT, THAT IT BECOMES CLEAR WHETHER A PERSON IS TRULY REPENTANT OR NOT!

In its most basic definition, TRUE REPENTANCE is:

> CHANGING OUR SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE TOWARDS UNDESIRABLE FACTS ABOUT US AND ABOUT WHAT WE BELIEVE FROM THE WAY SATAN WOULD RESPOND TO THOSE UNDESIRABLE FACTS TO THE WAY THAT GOD THINKS ABOUT THOSE SAME UNDESIRABLE FACTS!

THAT is what is meant by "to change the way we think".

THAT is what is meant by "to repent".

Repentance is not necessarily evidenced by Sabbath-keeping and by tithing and by the observance of

the annual Holy Days, because all of those things are also done by numerous people who have never been repentant. These things are simply some of the CONSEQUENCES of true repentance, but they themselves are not repentance, and they can be done by people who are not repentant.

It is the acceptance or the rejection of facts that we don't like that makes the difference between true repentance and a lack of repentance.

Let's consider one example.

KING DAVID

King David was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). Yet David did some things that are far worse than the things most average church members have done in their lives: David had many wives, in addition he also committed adultery with the wife of one of his most loyal servants, and then David had the husband of that woman killed in a very treacherous way. Yet God centuries later (i.e. in Acts 13:22) STILL had David referred to as "a man after my own heart".

What attribute about David was it that God liked so much?

The answer is found in 2 Samuel chapter 12. After David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, God sent the prophet Nathan to David. And after Nathan had told David a parable in which one rich person was extremely cruel towards a poor neighbour, despicably so, Nathan then confronted David with his guilt.

> And Nathan said to David, THOU ART THE MAN. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; (2 Samuel 12:7 AV)

For the next five verses Nathan reads David the riot act, spelling out in great detail David's guilt and the punishment David would receive. King David doesn't even have a chance to open his mouth. Then Nathan concludes his devastating pronouncements against David.

The next verse records David's SPONTANEOUS response! That is the most vital thing in our dealings with God, how we SPONTANEOUSLY RESPOND to unexpected news. Do we respond to such unexpected news the way Satan would respond to it, or do we respond the way God would desire to have us respond?

Here is David's spontaneous response to the tongue-lashing he had just received from Nathan:

> AND DAVID SAID UNTO NATHAN, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST THE LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. (2 Samuel 12:13 AV)

No excuses, no justifications, no blaming someone else, no anything ... just a spontaneous admission of total guilt! That is the expression of a repentant mind, a mind that thinks differently from the way in which Satan and all of humanity thinks. It is different from the way King Saul before David had thought. When King Saul had been confronted with his lack of obedience to God's instructions (1 Samuel 15), his first spontaneous response was to justify himself, which he did repeatedly, before finally grudgingly admitting guilt. Saul's spontaneous response was fully compatible with Satan's way of thinking ... deny any guilt as long as possible. And Saul's was not the response of a repentant mind.

It is our spontaneous responses to being confronted with unexpected facts (i.e. "with God's unexpected arguments"!) that reveal whether we are truly repentant or not. And David's spontaneous response made David different from almost all other people around him.

Now let's notice a number of other Scriptures.

MORE SCRIPTURES ABOUT FACTS

Notice how Paul referred to repentance.

> In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them REPENTANCE TO THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF THE TRUTH; (2 Timothy 2:25 AV)

Forget about the typical Protestant interpretation about Scriptures like this referring to "witnessing for Christ"! That's the last thing Paul had in mind here! That type of focus totally misses what God is really showing us here.

What Paul is showing here is that repentance has to do with ACKNOWLEDGING THE FACTS! That's right, it takes a changed way of thinking to be willing to acknowledge facts that we don't like. And if people refuse to acknowledge the facts they cannot disprove, then they also are not really "repentant", i.e. they have not really embraced a changed way of thinking; they still only think in the same way that Satan thinks.

So where does this leave people who refuse to acknowledge facts (i.e. "the truth")? Jesus Christ answers this question for us.

> And ye shall know the truth, and THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE. (John 8:32)

Unless we are willing to accept "God's arguments" that we don't really like, we are still IN SLAVERY! It is the willingness to accept unpleasant facts that defines the difference between freedom and slavery! People who are not willing to acknowledge undesirable facts are still in slavery to Satan, who responds in the identical way to undesirable facts.

That's not good news for most people, is it? This kind of news is likely to make people very angry. And so Jesus Christ stated that the people He was speaking to wanted to kill Him for having presented undesirable facts to them.

> But now ye seek to kill me, A MAN THAT HATH TOLD YOU THE TRUTH, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. (John 8:40 AV)

To tell people facts they don't really want to know can be quite a dangerous activity because it makes people spontaneously angry. Notice how Jesus Christ continued to speak here.

> And because I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And IF I SAY THE TRUTH, why do ye not believe me? (John 8:45-46 AV)

Jesus Christ said: BECAUSE I tell you the facts, therefore you don't believe Me. And then He asked the

question:

if I tell you the facts, WHY IS IT THAT YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME? WHY do you argue against the facts?

Jesus Christ Himself obviously knew the answer to His own question. He was speaking these words on the Last Great Day, typifying all the people who will be in the second resurrection. And this question will then be put to the people in that resurrection:

WHY did you argue against the facts?

WHY did you refuse to acknowledge the facts?

It is a very common thing for people to argue against the facts. And in this regard people back then were no different from people today.

Now let's look at some statements about facts that apply to the Church.

THE FACTS AND THE CHURCH OF GOD

Here is something Jesus Christ prayed about shortly before His crucifixion.

> SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH: THY WORD IS TRUTH. (John 17:17 AV)

The words God speaks are statements of facts! Staying with the facts and accepting the facts will always put us on God's side. And it is THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACTS THAT GOD REVEALS TO US (i.e. "Your truth") that separates us (i.e. "sanctifies us") from other people. God gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

Notice the effect the Holy Spirit will have.

> Howbeit when he, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, is come, he WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:13 AV)

The effect God's Spirit has in our lives is that it will guide us into understanding ALL THE FACTS. By calling it "the spirit of truth", Jesus Christ was showing that helping us to understand the facts is one of the main functions of God's Spirit in our lives.

That's what makes it the spirit of "a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7); the mind is supposed to deal with FACTS!

Regarding God's Spirit guiding us into all the facts, we should always keep in mind that IT DEPENDS ON HOW WE RESPOND to the facts that God DOES make available to our minds. If we refuse to accept facts that we don't like, THEN God will not guide us into any further understanding. God will not guide those who respond to facts the way Satan responds to facts.

In speaking to Nicodemus Jesus Christ explained the following:

> For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But HE THAT DOETH TRUTH COMETH TO THE LIGHT, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:20-21 AV)

By those that "do the truth" Christ meant those who put the facts they learn into practice in their lives, those who "push the logic of a fact to its ultimate conclusion in unmitigated act". It is the sound application of the facts we learn that is important before God. It is taken for granted that, as Rudyard Kipling observed, most people will seldom have that kind of commitment. But that is what God and Jesus Christ are looking for in us.

It is equally clear that the facts people reject are the very things that would "reprove their deeds". The motive for rejecting facts is quite clear; it is to avoid being reproved, or to avoid having to change.

However ...

> CONSTANTLY GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTS IS NOT A GAME!

The more facts we come to understand, the more accountable we become before God. It is our responsibility to strive to correctly assimilate an ever-growing number of facts that is constantly made available to our minds. And we do need to examine, study and then apply the facts we become aware of in their correct context. As Paul told Timothy:

> STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. (2 Timothy 2:15 AV)

The Greek word translated as "rightly dividing" literally means "to cut straight through something". It requires diligent study, as Paul pointed out to Timothy, for us to rightly divide the facts in the Bible. The very process of "rightly dividing", or of "cutting straight through", implies that not everything has the same value in every context. We need to learn how to correctly apply the facts we come to understand.

Those who do not "rightly divide" the facts revealed to us in the Bible are in danger of going the wrong way. And many people simply don't like to "study", i.e. to put out diligent efforts to come to a correct understanding of the facts. They want "instant facts", facts that take no efforts to acquire. But, as Arthur Schopenhauer pointed out: "A truth that is merely acquired from others only clings to us as a limb added to the body, or as a false tooth, or a wax nose".

Unless we have to exert ourselves mentally to acquire some facts, those facts will not have any specific significance in our minds. Paul's instruction to Timothy shows that God expects us to exert ourselves mentally in order to live as God wants us to live.

Notice also what Jesus Christ told the Samaritan woman at the well.

> But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24 AV)

To worship God "in spirit and in truth" means that OUR MINDS MUST BE INVOLVED in that process (i.e. "in spirit"), and our worshipping must be IN AGREEMENT WITH THE FACTS (i.e. "in truth"). Any

form of worship that is in conflict with THE FACTS cannot possibly be "worship in truth"! And unless we ourselves put forth the mental efforts to acquire the facts, we cannot possibly worship God "in spirit". Both aspects of Christ's statement are essential.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 13 the Apostle Paul gives us a description of the various attributes of godly love. The acquisition and the implementation of all of these attributes within our lives is of the highest importance in the life of a Christian. The attributes Paul has listed here primarily show how God desires us to respond, first of all IN OUR MINDS and thereafter in our outward actions, to a whole range of provocative situations.

Within that context Paul made the following statement:

> Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH; (1 Corinthians 13:6 AV)

Do we actually "REJOICE IN THE FACTS"?

It is easy to rejoice in the facts that support our ideas, that confirm our positions, and that substantiate our beliefs. But what about the facts that contradict what we believe, facts that expose the flaws in the things we have assumed to be true, and facts that require us to make some changes in our lives? What about THOSE facts?

All of us will on many occasions find that we ourselves are on the wrong side of the facts; all of us are a part of the whole world that Satan has deceived (Revelation 12:9). None of us gets through this human life experience without sometimes being wrong (Romans 3:23; 5:12); Jesus Christ is the only One who never sinned (1 Peter 2:21-22).

So how do we respond to facts that expose where we ourselves are wrong?

Before God it is really not good enough if we, when our backs are to the wall, then grudgingly concede defeat, that we grudgingly admit that the facts that contradict our position are indeed correct. Unless and until we direct our own minds in such a way, that we will REJOICE IN THE FACTS, we will still be falling short of what God expects from us.

So note carefully:

> LEARNING TO REJOICE IN THE FACTS THAT REQUIRE US TO CHANGE IN SOME WAY IS A MAJOR ASPECT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF GODLY CHARACTER WITHIN OUR LIVES!

Rejoicing about something is an emotional response. It is an expression of extremely positive feelings about something. It is a response towards something that we gladly and eagerly embrace.

For God it is vitally important that He must know with absolute certainty that, once He has given us eternal life within His Family, we will for all future eternity always respond with JOY towards any NEW FACTS He may expose us to! God will never take the risk of us then PERHAPS challenging whatever new facts He may expose us to. And it will not be good enough if we would, under such circumstances, have the attitude: "Father, I still disagree with those new facts you have presented to the Family, BUT for the sake of unity I will comply with your wishes and therefore I will not in any way oppose those new facts."

On the human level such a response might sound rather noble. But with God such a response will never

fly! Such a response will NEVER be acceptable within the Family of God, because it would sow the first seeds for disagreements. And there will NEVER be disagreements within the Family of God. That's what Jesus Christ meant when He said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), that they NEVER disagree!

So to test us for how we are going to respond in future situations, God NOW, IN THIS LIFE, forces us to face up to, and come to grips with, facts that make us look bad and that require us to change in some way. The key is always that we must be exposed to SOME situations where, in our heart of hearts we really don't want to change. We must be exposed to situations where we strongly want to maintain the status quo. It is our response under such difficult circumstances that gives God certainty as to how our minds work.

Now the key to what such difficult circumstances might be for us specifically always depends on "where we are coming from". In years gone by for many people such difficult circumstances might have been finding out about the weekly Sabbath. But for those growing up in a Sabbath-keeping environment some other difficult circumstance is probably needed to expose the inner workings of their minds to God.

For those who grow up with a knowledge of the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, it might still prove to be a difficulty to actually put this knowledge into practice in their own lives. BUT their difficulty will revolve around doing something they have always known they should be doing. That is different from having to admit that we did not understand something correctly and that we need to change our understanding.

The issue itself that exposes "facts we don't really like or agree with" to our minds is not what is important before God. The issue itself is simply the testing tool. What is important is our spontaneous response to such facts that we don't really like. So let's understand this testing process.

THE TESTING PROCESS

It is a given that all of us, including me, will initially respond in a negative way towards facts that call into question what we believe and do. The very rare exceptions to this, as for example Abraham and David, only serve to confirm the norm for the rest of us in most situations.

> [Comment: When Abraham was totally unexpectedly faced with the shocking news that he was to kill his own son Isaac in sacrifice to God (see Genesis 22), Abraham's only response was positive. God tells us: "AND ABRAHAM ROSE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING ... AND WENT" (Genesis 22:3). This response in total faith to God shows why Abraham is referred to as "the father of us all" (Romans 4:16). His response was not the Hollywood version of initial rage and resentment, before finally doing what he had been told. No, God tells us that Abraham's spontaneous response was positive towards God. The same is true for when Nathan confronted King David with his guilt, which we looked at earlier.]

Let's look at the situation of being presented with facts that expose flaws in something we have always believed, and which facts therefore put some pressure on us to make some changes in our thinking. The process that follows may go through different stages, which may include some of the following things.

1) Our INITIAL response to new facts that challenge what we believe is likely to be one of being very critical of those facts. Our minds are spontaneously filled with what we understand to be the reasons for why we believe what we believe. We are convinced that "our reasons" are sound and that the fault must lie with those "new facts".

2) Since we see those new facts as a threat to what we believe to be true, therefore we may in our own

minds do a detailed examination of all our proofs for our position. Those proofs will rehearse the reasons we have previously accepted for our own position, and will most likely be sufficiently convincing to us ourselves to reject the new facts as being incorrect.

3) Next, we then examine the new facts that have been presented, with a certain amount of confidence that our examination will show us the errors with those new facts. In some cases we may find things we believe are errors, while in other cases we may not find any errors at all. Finding what we believe to be errors with the new facts will fill us with a certain amount of relief, while a lack of any discernible flaws with the new facts will cause us to feel consternation. It is irritating if we cannot find the errors with something that "WE KNOW HAS TO BE WRONG"!

4 A) If we were NOT able to find any flaws with the new facts, then we face a choice: EITHER accept the new facts as correct and therefore change our own understanding of the matter, OR we can ignore the new facts and instead focus on trying to prove our own position by simply using "OTHER facts". This will be based on the assumption that our "other facts" cannot be disproved either, even as we could not disprove the new facts. So our "other facts" will be at least just as good as the new facts.

4 B) On the other hand, if we believe we have found some errors with the new facts, then we usually present those perceived errors, with the confidence that our position is right after all, as we had confidently known all along. It is IN THIS PROCESS that we typically expose THE ASSUMED PREMISES on which our beliefs are based. While we ourselves may have blind spots to our own assumed premises, the flaws with our assumed premises will usually be readily apparent to whoever brought the new facts to our attention. This leads to us then receiving a reply that exposes, even to us, weaknesses in our premises that we had previously not been aware of.

5) NOW THE FOCUS HAS CHANGED! Instead of being able to attack the new facts, we find ourselves in the position of having to defend and to justify our own previously assumed premises. Now WE are the ones doing the defending.

6) The chances are that we don't really have any clear evidence to substantiate our own assumed premises, and that we now can also see the flaws that have been pointed out to us. [We are considering the situation where new facts have been presented that expose errors in some of our present beliefs.] So we are faced with a choice: EITHER we admit that our assumed premises may be flawed, OR we now look for ways to prove that our flawed premises must somehow be right anyway.

THIS IS WHERE WE ARE AT THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN GOD'S WAY OF THINKING AND SATAN'S WAY OF THINKING!

Some very, very few people may at this stage admit that they can now see the flaws in the premises they had previously assumed to be correct. The great majority of people, however, will dig in their heels and try to defend their old positions, deliberately glossing over the flaws they have become aware of. And when they do THAT, then they are reinforcing in their own minds Satan's way of responding to undesirable facts.

7) The focus has now changed from attacking the new facts, to defending our own position itself, to defending THE PREMISES FOR OUR OWN POSITION. A dead-giveaway of this situation is when, because a careful examination reveals just how flawed our premises actually are, we in this particular process seek to find TOTALLY NEW PREMISES FOR OUR OLD POSITION! In other words, where someone has presented "new facts" to challenge our established belief, we try to do the exact same thing: seek NEW FACTS TO JUSTIFY THE OLD POSITION! We attempt to find new justifications for our old position, justifications that were totally unknown at the time our old position was originally accepted. This is trying to fight new facts with OTHER equally new facts.

8) In this process we quietly overlook that this new focus is in itself a tacit admission that our original premises were indeed flawed; otherwise we would not have abandoned those original premises, and there would not have been any pressure to find new facts to support the old position! In the extreme, this situation may have people assert something like: "in the past we did the right things FOR THE WRONG REASONS, because GOD wanted us to have our old teaching, even though we didn't yet understand the correct reasons". Such a response is another dead-giveaway that we will refuse to accept any evidence that exposes the flaws in our old teaching.

> [Comment: Let me here state something very clearly: God simply does NOT ever want us to do "the right things for the wrong reasons"! The reasons for why we obey God the way we obey Him are ALWAYS far more important than the actual outward acts of obedience and the outward compliance with specific instructions God has given. The very first requirement in obeying God, as we have already seen in John 4:23, is to worship God WITH OUR MINDS (i.e. "in spirit"), meaning we worship God WITH UNDERSTANDING. The next requirement is to worship God ACCORDING TO THE FACTS (i.e. "in truth"). With God, our putting into practice the instructions He has given us is simply a tool for testing our minds. Doing something correctly before God for the wrong reasons carries no specific merit at all, because such "obedience" cannot possibly have any positive effect whatsoever on the development of right character within a person.]

9) Now since this search for new facts to support an old position is one of desperation on our part, we may at times cycle through a whole range of "new proofs" for our old position, all of which, one by one, are likely to be exposed as flawed upon closer examination. But no amount of disproving our "new proofs" is going to dissuade us from holding fast to our own position. If we don't have any CLEAR support for our own position, then the next best thing is for us to present "a thousand vague arguments", in the hope that by their sheer number they will outweigh our lack of real and clear proof for our position.

The reason we cycle through a haberdashery of new proofs is that back under point #6 above we rejected the road to God's way of thinking, and instead we reinforced OUR COMMITMENT to Satan's way of thinking. And having made such a commitment, we are highly unlikely to ever back down from that position, even as Satan never backs down from his wrong positions. IT IS SATAN'S WAY OF THINKING THAT IS OUR PROBLEM IN THIS TYPE OF SITUATION!

10) When THIS PROCESS of looking for new proofs is engaged in simultaneously by different people, all trying in their way to support our old position, an interesting phenomenon will at times develop.

Person #1 will put forward "point X" as a real proof for our old belief, and in the process of expounding "point X" concede that "point Y" and "point Z" are flawed and not suitable for defending our old belief. However, person #2 will then come forward and concede that "point X" is not a valid argument for our old position, but that "point Y" is really the correct proof to use. Then along comes person #3 and concedes that both, "point X" and "point Y" are flawed, but that the real proof for our old position is "point Z". And so on it goes ... .

When this process is engaged in by a large enough number of people, you will at times find, from amongst those who are all trying to defend the same old position, at least someone who will disagree with every other so-called "proof" for our old position that has been put forward by someone else. They are all trying to defend the same thing; yet they cannot agree amongst themselves as to what the correct justification is for what they are trying to defend.

It is kind of like the confusion amongst the false witnesses at the trial of Jesus Christ, who couldn't even agree amongst themselves as to what the real "evidence" against Christ was supposed to be. Yet they all asserted that He was guilty.

11) The people who get to this stage of the process usually have no idea that they are going through a testing process, and that they are in the process of failing the test! In His dealings with us Almighty God seldom introduces our major tests with any kind of fanfare! Usually it is only in hindsight that we come to grasp the magnitude of the consequences to the way we responded to some seemingly minor test or other. Adam and Eve never got a second chance at resisting eating the forbidden fruit. Eating or not eating a small piece of fruit seems like a minor issue on the surface. But the consequences of that test were monumental. And likewise, setting our minds to reject the facts we don't like EARLY IN THIS PROCESS can have staggering consequences. The longer we refuse to acknowledge facts we cannot refute, the more we become "super-glued" to Satan's way of dealing with God's arguments, the facts!

12) In some cases a situation may be reached where the facts that contradict our old belief become so overwhelming, that eventually we grudgingly concede that we had been wrong. While in such "with our backs against the wall" situations it is better to eventually acknowledge the facts we didn't like than to never admit to the facts we cannot refute, such grudging admissions of the facts aren't really good enough before God. Any grudging admissions are only tantamount to failing the test, but with at least another opportunity to face the same type of test again in other circumstances. People in this situation will STILL have to prove to God that they will "rejoice in the truth", that they will respond positively towards undesirable facts that they will be confronted with at some point or other.

There are probably a few other stages in this process, that are also involved. But this should suffice to get a general idea of some of the things most of us are likely to experience in our responses to undesirable new factual information. The application of these points is far-reaching, covering virtually every belief and doctrine that we have in the Church.

And this article is not directed at any one specific area of our beliefs.

Now in actual practice we can change to accepting the new facts ANYWHERE ALONG THAT LINE! Anywhere along that line we are free to use our own minds to acknowledge facts that we cannot refute. The earlier we accept the new FACTS, the less painful the procedure will be for us. But a later acceptance is still better than a permanent resistance to the facts we cannot disprove. However, in that process there is a stage where our change to accepting the new facts is too late for "passing the test", and we may have to repeat the test in some other circumstances.

One major key in separating those who will accept the new facts from those who continue to resist the new facts lies in how we deal with the new information that is presented to us. As already quoted earlier, Arthur Schopenhauer pointed out:

> "A truth that is merely acquired from others only clings to us as a limb added to the body, or as a false tooth, or a wax nose. A TRUTH WE HAVE ACQUIRED BY OUR OWN MENTAL EXERTIONS, is like our natural limbs, which REALLY BELONG TO US."

Unless we make our own "mental exertions" in examining with an open mind the facts that have been presented, they will never be more to us than "a wax nose" at best or utter heresy at worst. Most people who reject new facts that challenge their established beliefs NEVER honestly examine those new facts on their own merits.

Now it doesn't matter whether we are speaking about the calendar we are to use in determining the annual Feasts and Holy Days, or whether we are speaking about the correct procedure for observing the Passover, or whether we are speaking about the Church back in 1974 changing its observance of the Day of Pentecost from a Monday to a Sunday, or whether we are speaking about any other teaching where new understanding challenges what we have always believed ... the processes are usually the

same.

So, for example:

Clear evidence was presented to Mr. Armstrong, proving that the Church was in error in observing the Day of Pentecost on a Monday. But for a long time Mr. Armstrong refused to accept the facts he could not refute. For a long time he tenaciously clung to his own way of "counting from ...".

It was only when his back was against the wall that he grudgingly, yes, grudgingly, changed from a Monday to a Sunday. And in the process he very emphatically and repeatedly denied changing because of the evidence that had been presented to him by others, stating instead that he changed only because some Hebrew-speaking Jew in Israel, whom Mr. Armstrong phoned for this information, had explained the meaning of the expression "you shall count from ..." in Leviticus chapter 23, as well as some other Hebrew expressions, to him.

Mr. Armstrong actually NEVER acknowledged the man who had brought the new facts regarding Pentecost to the Church's attention, choosing rather to claim that he himself had eventually (i.e. with the help of the Hebrew-speaker in Israel) come to understand "new facts" regarding Pentecost. In this regard Mr. Armstrong had in fact reached Step #12 in the above list (though without necessarily going through all of the 11 preceding steps) ... changing only because his back was against the wall, all the while desperately trying to save face.

THESE ARE THE FACTS!

Similarly, clear evidence has been presented to the Church about the numerous problems with us using the present Jewish calendar to determine our annual observances. (Incidentally, my own personal initial response was also quite hostile to those facts. I opposed the new facts and was determined to prove the Jewish calendar correct.) And so we have also seen most of the steps enumerated above acted out for the calendar issue.

First some people presented supposed proof for the Jewish calendar, where they in actual fact openly, but unwittingly, presented GLARING ERRORS with that calendar. Then along came other defenders who recognized that those errors were self-defeating and they therefore carefully avoided any references to those errors. There are flaws in the "19-year cycles", and there are flaws in the calculations employed by the Jewish calendar, and there are flaws in the sequence of leap years used by the Jewish calendar. These flaws demand that the Jewish calendar must be classified as another "Jewish fable" ... because it is at odds with the astronomical realities that confront us today.

But the "smart" defences of the Jewish calendar all carefully avoid facing up to these facts. They also carefully avoid facing up to the fact that Exodus 34:22 requires the entire Feast of Tabernacles to be in the autumn of the Northern Hemisphere. They also carefully avoid facing up to the fact that in Isaiah 1:14 God states in plain terms that He HATES the Jewish calendar, identified as the Jewish "new moons". They also carefully avoid facing up to the fact that Exodus 12:2 requires the first NEW MOON of the year to be in the spring. They also carefully avoid facing up to the fact that the Jewish calendar is shockingly inconsistent, sometimes starting the month on the new moon day, sometimes starting the month after the new moon day, and sometimes starting the month before the new moon day.

They also very carefully avoid facing up to the fact that the Jews themselves show that the postponement rules did not exist in New Testament times, and that they were only added much later to avoid INCONVENIENT DAYS OF THE WEEK! They also very carefully avoid facing up to the fact that the Jews very emphatically do not consider the calendar to be one of the "oracles" that the Jews have been used to preserve.

These are all facts that those who defend the use of the Jewish calendar are very careful to ignore and to avoid, just like Satan avoided acknowledging that the man Job was doing extremely well under severe pressure.

There is another point I want to address.

WHAT ABOUT LEADERS WHO RESIST THE FACTS?

Earlier I mentioned that it is a major problem for the Church of God if we have leaders who RESIST THE FACTS which they don't like.

When new facts come to light, if we ourselves are the ones to discover them, then we will also readily embrace them. But if they are presented to us by other people, then they are like "a wax nose" to us. And most of us don't like wax noses, right?

That's the way it was with Mr. Armstrong: he instantaneously accepted every "new truth" that he himself came to in his own thinking and research processes, while at the same time viewing new truths brought to him by other people with suspicion, less so in his younger days, and more so in his old age, being very reluctant to accept any new truth that he himself had not first come to understand through his own studies.

Pentecost is a case in point.

None of us start out deliberately believing things that are not true. We start out being to one or other degree deceived. And so we view any facts that challenge our beliefs with suspicion, because we just don't know how deceived we were and still are.

AND THAT IS WHERE THE TEST STARTS!

Unless we can clearly prove those "new facts" to be flawed in some way (and that also happens frequently ... that people come up with many strange ideas and teachings, which we need to soundly disprove and reject!), we then face a decision. Will we admit that we have not been able to find anything wrong with the new facts (which call one of our beliefs or practices into question), or will we dig in our heels and "fight to the death" in defending "what we have always believed and taught"?

Our response to unpleasant facts is of the utmost importance!

Until unpleasant facts are brought to our attention we had been deceived on that particular issue. And, as we are told in Acts 17:30, "the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent".

So once facts we cannot refute are presented to us, our situation before God changes. NOW God commands us to change the way we think (i.e. repent). As long as we were still deceived we couldn't really do that. But now, with the facts at our disposal, it is different.

When leaders in the Church of God THEN decide to fight against the facts they cannot refute; when leaders in the Church then decide to DELIBERATELY IGNORE PROBLEMS for which they have no answers ... THEN those leaders are in danger of "wickedly suppressing the facts" (see Romans 1:18), and that brings with it, according to the Apostle Paul, the threat of the wrath of God (same verse, first part). This is an extremely serious matter.

Paul asked the members of the Church: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). In our terms we might say: am I become your enemy because I present THE FACTS to you?

Just how do we view someone who presents to us facts we had not been aware of ... like Mr. Armstrong viewed the man who explained to him that Pentecost can never be on a Monday, or like his contemporaries viewed the prophet Jeremiah? Notice what Jeremiah said:

> Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, IF THERE BE ANY that executeth judgment, THAT SEEKETH THE TRUTH; and I will pardon it. (Jeremiah 5:1 AV)

God instructed Jeremiah to go and search if he could find ANYONE that was seeking the facts, the truth. It turned out that Jeremiah's search was pretty fruitless. In verse 3 Jeremiah continued to say:

> O LORD, ARE NOT THINE EYES UPON THE TRUTH? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but THEY HAVE REFUSED TO RECEIVE CORRECTION: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. (Jeremiah 5:3 AV)

Jeremiah understood full well that "facts are God's arguments". God's eyes are upon the truth, meaning that GOD DEALS WITH FACTS! God doesn't deal with fairy tales, like "let's make believe that today is the new moon day", when yesterday was in fact the new moon day. But the people back then refused to change, they refused to receive correction. That's not any different from today.

So Jeremiah said:

> Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God. (Jeremiah 5:4 AV)

Paraphrased and applied to our context today, Jeremiah basically said: "okay, they are just ordinary members of the Church, and they don't have the background to understand these things. So I need to go to the leaders within the Church of God and see if they will acknowledge the facts (i.e. if they will "seek the truth")".

> I WILL GET ME UNTO THE GREAT MEN, AND WILL SPEAK UNTO THEM; FOR THEY HAVE KNOWN THE WAY OF THE LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. (Jeremiah 5:5 AV)

So Jeremiah approached the leaders in the Church, i.e. all "the great men", and looked if they were willing to seek the facts, the arguments that God has prepared. But these "great men" in the Church were not at all interested in the facts.

When Jeremiah said that these great men had "altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds", Jeremiah meant that they had UNITEDLY (i.e. "altogether") CAST ASIDE RESTRAINT (i.e. "broken the yoke") AND REJECTED ALL FORMS OF CORRECTION (i.e. "burst the bonds").

Jeremiah 5:5 is a very sobering verse! The religious leaders back then simply could not be trusted, a

point that is repeated many times over in the Book of Jeremiah.

Is this also a prophecy for our age or not? You answer that one for yourself!

I feel quite uncomfortable in having to point out these statements in the Word of God. But it is very clear that all the larger organizations amongst God's people today, together with many of the smaller organizations as well, have UNITEDLY AGREED to deliberately ignore all the factual evidence that contradicts us using the Jewish calendar for determining God's annual observances.

I KNOW that at least one organization was for a time willing to reject the flawed Jewish calendar IF ONLY some of the other bigger organizations would do so as well. But that possibility fell by the way when none of the bigger organizations would do the same. They are looking sideways at each other, to be sure no one is breaking ranks on the calendar question.

THE FACTS? THEY COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THEM!

And that is very discouraging.

[Comment: While this article is not primarily about the calendar, with the principles being discussed here far transcending the calendar question, it is also clear that the calendar question is by far the most prominent example of these principles in the present context of the Church of God. So it is inevitable that specific examples will focus on the calendar question.]

If the leaders within the Church resist and ignore facts they don't like, it means the Church is in big trouble. Such leaders can have only one effect ... in God's words "THEY DESTROY AND SCATTER THE SHEEP OF GOD'S PASTURE" (Jeremiah 23:1).

God says to these ministers:

> Therefore THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL AGAINST THE PASTORS THAT FEED MY PEOPLE; YE HAVE SCATTERED MY FLOCK, AND DRIVEN THEM AWAY, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:2 AV)

Is God speaking about church pastors in Jeremiah's time, or is God speaking about church pastors in our time?

God is speaking about OUR TIME!

Do prophecies about the Church in our age speak in positive terms, cheerful and upbeat? Or are those prophecies filled with warning after warning, with admonition after admonition?

You know the answer already, right? We live in perilous times, and what we need more than anything else is faithful leaders who will acknowledge the facts, who will preach the truth, and who will reject all fables, Jewish or otherwise.

The facts are arguments that God has prepared in advance, and we must be careful never to fight against them or to pervert them.

So when it comes to the things you believe and practice, what about YOU ... do YOU care what the facts

really are?

Frank W. Nelte