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WHAT IS REAL REPENTANCE?

Repentance is a very personal and individual thing. It is something that takes place between an individual and Almighty God. It is neither my purpose to pry into that very personal experience, nor is it my purpose to make anyone feel guilty or bad. But here is what is of importance for us to understand:

Before we can actually do something God requires of us, we must first clearly understand exactly what that "something" is. If we are unclear in our own minds regarding **what exactly** God wants us to do, then it follows that the risk is very great that we will not be in a position to comply with what God expects from us.

For example: If a father says "son, go work in my vineyard" (see Matthew 21:28), then it is assumed that the son understands what exactly he is expected to do in the vineyard. If the son goes to the vineyard and doesn't have any idea what his father wants him to do there, then the son obviously cannot possibly do what his father would like him to do. And so the son will end up either sitting around doing nothing, or else the son does some activity that the father didn't intend for him to do. Likewise, before we can follow God's instruction to repent, we must have a clear understanding of **exactly what it is that we are supposed to do when we repent**.

There is a very great danger that if people, who do not understand what real repentance is, are baptized, **then** they may in some cases not meet God's expectations, because they don't do what God expects people to do when God instructs us to repent. And if that is the case, then God will **not** give His Holy Spirit to such people, even if they were baptized by a minister of the true Church of God. And then such people will assuredly not be in the first resurrection.

You may be convinced that you clearly and correctly understand repentance, and **I certainly hope you do**. But the facts are that over the past half century tens of thousands of people, who had never repented, were baptized and therefore none of those people ever received God's Spirit. This lack of understanding has affected vast numbers of people! This is a huge problem, which I believe will be responsible for **multiple thousands** of people ending up in the lake of fire, because they had never really repented when they should have repented. God is not playing games.

These people were baptized by ministers of the true Church of God, but they were not repentant. That includes some people who were baptized by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong himself, and in all likelihood it also includes people baptized by every other minister of the Church who did any baptizing at all. I now know that I too have baptized some people who were not really repentant. Yet at the time I thought those people were repentant; and the people themselves thought so too. At that time I clearly still lacked a certain amount of understanding.

And so only later did it become quite clear to me that those people who had been baptized had in fact not repented at all.

The problem is that **real repentance is not something we can discern physically**. But we baptize people based on what we are able to observe, based on what we can see these people do, the words they speak, and how they change their conduct and their behavior, etc.

So it shouldn't surprise us to learn that pretty well all of us ministers have made some bad judgments

regarding the people we decided to baptize. Such "bad judgments" have been with the Church right **since its very inception**.

In Acts chapter 5 we have the account of two people, **Ananias and Sapphira**, who had never really repented; yet had managed to get themselves baptized. Soon afterwards the preaching of Philip resulted in another unrepentant person, **Simon Magus** by name, being baptized (see Acts 8:13). Peter's statement that Simon Magus was "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23) makes clear that Simon Magus had never really repented, even though he had "believed" (see verse 13 again). When Paul spoke to the assembled ministers from Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, Paul stated quite openly that he felt that **some of those very ministers** would in the future speak perverse things to draw away followers after themselves (Acts 20:30); almost certainly those were men who also had not really repented in the first place.

So **this present age is no different** from the way things went in the first century A.D. We too have had numerous unrepentant people baptized, tens of thousands in fact. It ties in with what Jesus Christ said, that Satan would manage to sow "tares" within God's Church (Matthew 13:24-30). The word "tares" is not a term that applies to people who are really repentant; yet these "tares" manage to get into the fellowship of the Church; **they manage to get themselves baptized**, and sometimes even rise to leadership positions within the Church. Tares are clearly unrepentant people who have been baptized.

THE THINGS WE MINISTERS LOOKED FOR

Before baptizing a person we have usually looked for a number of things. We wanted to know whether the person was willing to obey God's laws (e.g. keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, tithe, not eat unclean foods, etc). We wanted to know if they were repentant, by which we usually meant: prepared to acknowledge that they had broken God's laws in the past and that they were determined to change in those areas of their lives where God's laws required a change. We wanted to know if they had counted the cost, of being willing to endure persecution and other trials that might result from changing their way of life to now conform to God's laws. We may have wanted to know if they were prepared to humble themselves before God, if they had an attitude of humility. We may even have wanted to know whether they were prepared to submit to "the government of God", which we erroneously claimed exists only within the Church of God. (Today there is no Government of God anywhere on earth!)

To determine the answers to these things we would look at the things people were willing to change (start keeping the Sabbath, stop smoking, etc.), and the things people would say. If they spoke in humble terms about themselves and if they had started to implement the laws of God we had brought to their attention, then we would usually take that as evidence that they were indeed "repentant", and so we would baptize them. (I'm simplifying this somewhat.)

And certainly, **very many** of the people we baptized under such conditions were indeed repentant.

But here is the point:

This process of counseling people for baptism which I have just described, and which by the way is far more thorough than any example we find in the New Testament, is only partly focused on true repentance. It largely ignores what repentance is all about. So let's examine this subject more closely.

WHAT IS GOD REALLY LOOKING FOR IN US?

People sometimes make the mistake of viewing God's laws and God's instructions to us as an end in themselves. We need to recognize that God is **not** looking for people who will for all future eternity keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, which things only represent steps in God's plan that will at that future point in time have been completed. The Sabbath will not be kept on the New Earth in the New Heaven. The Sabbath was specifically created for mortal human beings to observe and to benefit from (Mark 2:27).

So the question is:

What exactly is God looking for in you and in me, and in people who have been called to repent?

Let's start by seeing what God is not primarily looking for in a person. God is not primarily looking for people who will merely **do the things He tells them to do**! God is not looking for someone who merely does all the right things and has all the right actions!

Now certainly, we must do the right things. We certainly must obey all of God's laws. But it is not our actions about which God is primarily concerned.

What God is first and foremost concerned with is our minds! First and foremost God is concerned about how we think!

If our **thinking** is right before God, then the right conduct and the right actions will follow from that. But by themselves the right actions (e.g. Sabbath-keeping, etc.) have no merit or value, i.e. if they are not the product of the right way of thinking. And we should immediately realize that the right actions can at times also be produced by a wrong way of thinking.

Doing what is right with a wrong attitude or from a wrong motivation is of no value at all; it is no better before God than outright disobedience.

For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but to this [man] will I look, [even] to [him that is] poor and **of a contrite spirit**, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:2)

It is a certain frame of mind, which God is looking for. That right frame of mind will most assuredly be totally submissive to all of God's laws and instructions.

Because **the carnal mind** [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then **they that are in the flesh** cannot please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

Again, it is **the mind** which is the problem, and which must be changed. Verse 8 tells us that those with the wrong mind "cannot please God", even when they do the right things (keep the Sabbath, etc.). We are all still physically "in the flesh", i.e. physical mortal human beings. But with the expression "they that are in the flesh" Paul is referring to the way the minds of such people work.

A little further in the book of Romans Paul stated:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

So let's define what we mean by "a repentant person".

A repentant person is someone whose **mind** has been renewed.

But outward physical actions (Sabbath-keeping, tithing, not smoking, etc.) don't really require a renewed mind. There are any number of people on earth today who don't smoke, or who do try to keep the Sabbath, or who tithe, or who don't eat unclean foods, etc. and **their minds have never been "renewed"** from the minds which they have had from childhood onwards.

Now we tend to be impressed by outward actions. So when someone tries to keep the Sabbath, or when someone refuses to eat unclean foods, or when someone is willing to tithe, then we are impressed! We may overlook the rebellious and self-righteous attitude they, in some cases, may still have, and readily accept their tithes and their Sabbath-keeping. We are easily impressed by outward actions.

But God looks **first** at the heart!

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD sees* not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks on the heart**. (1 Samuel 16:7)

God's **first** intent for us human beings is not to have individuals who will just obey His every command; the "holy angels" of God (see Revelation 14:10; etc.) already do that perfectly. When God determined to create the Family of God, it was (and still is) His intention to create **beings that will think the same way He does**; beings that will inherently have the same outlook and viewpoint and perspective of life as the one God has; beings whose minds will automatically operate from the "GIVE-principle", as opposed to Satan's mind working from the "GET-principle" (as Mr. Armstrong used to explain it to us); beings whose minds will be guided by "love" as opposed to people whose minds are guided by selfishness.

We like to surround ourselves with people who think just like we do! We don't really want to be around people who don't accept our values, at least not if we have a choice. And God does the same! God will surround Himself with beings who will think the same way God thinks.

When God resurrects us into His Family, it is **the mind** that is resurrected, and then placed in a body composed of spirit. The molecules and atoms which make up our present physical bodies will not in any way feature when we are resurrected or, if alive at that time, changed into spirit beings.

Now the consequence of a mind being "renewed" to see everything in life from God's point of view is that it will motivate the person to **want** to do everything that is "God's desire". **A renewed mind represents a very powerful motivation.** Such a mind will certainly strive to obey God's laws in every aspect of life. But it will go much further. It will not only ask: "What do I have to do?"; it will also ask: "What would God like me to do?"

As the Apostle John explained, God hears the prayers of those who are motivated by a desire to please Him.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, **and do those things that are pleasing in his sight**. (1 John 3:22)

The renewed mind must operate from a motivation of desiring to please God in every aspect of our lives. Because the mind understands that all of God's instructions for us are just and pure and for **our** good anyway, therefore that renewed mind will endeavor to please God in any and every way possible.

It is a far cry from the mind that says any of the following things:

1) "Well, as long as God does not specifically forbid me to do this, then I don't see why I shouldn't do it." Note that this is a mind that does not "see" something. This is a mind that lacks understanding.

2) "What do I **have to do** in order to be in God's kingdom?" This is a selfish perspective and motivation! This is a buying and selling attitude.

3) "As long as there is no **specific** commandment from God against these things, I will feel free to dress the way the world does, to groom myself the way the world around me does, and to participate in the customs and traditions of the people around me." This mind is not looking for what God would like from us; this mind is only interested in knowing how far it can go without directly transgressing God's instructions, in clearly identifying the boundaries.

4) "As long as it is not one of the unclean foods listed in the Bible, I will feel free to eat whatever I like. If I eat things that are bad for my health, things that contain carcinogenic substances or other substances that are known to adversely affect human health, then that's my business." This is a very selfish mind. I certainly don't mean this to be fanatical or extreme; but there are also plenty of things in our present world that are **obviously** bad for us to consume.

A COMPUTER ANALOGY FOR EXPLAINING REPENTANCE

Many of us are familiar with computer concepts. Perhaps an analogy from the world of computers can help to clarify **the process of coming to repentance**.

Every computer has **an operating system** which manages all the functions of that computer. Examples of operating systems are: DOS, Windows, OS/2, Unix, Solaris, Linux, Android, etc.

With the operating system installed, **the user then adds** all those **software** programs that he feels he will want to use: word processors to type letters and manuscripts, spreadsheets to do book-keeping functions, database software to store large bodies of data, Bible-software to do Bible study, encyclopedia software for research purposes, computer games, educational software, etc.

Prior to repentance we, in analogy, are like a computer which has been loaded with a large volume of software. That "software" in our brains represents the way we are as people, the beliefs we hold, the customs we observe, the knowledge we have, the skills we have, our experiences, etc. That "software" in our brains determines how we as individuals function and operate, how we respond to praise and how we respond to correction, in short, how we live our lives.

But all our actions are controlled by an over-riding "**operating system**" in our minds. That operating system is called "**the spirit of the world**, the spirit of the kosmos", see 1 Corinthians 2:12. That is the operating system for over 99% of humanity! Before repentance that was also our operating system, even if we grew up in God's Church. All the software in our brains functions because we have that particular operating system installed in our minds!

Now when we came into contact with the truth of God, we learned about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, etc. We also learned that some things are bad, like smoking is very damaging to our health. We also learned a lot of head-knowledge that may not have an immediate and practical application, such as: human beings don't have an immortal soul, there is no ever-burning hellfire, heaven is not the reward of the saved, etc. We may also have learned that certain customs which society at large accepts are in fact pagan in origin (e.g. Christmas, Easter, etc.). These are all things that happened when we came into contact with God's truth!

Now here is what has frequently happened to many people in the past, when they came into the Church

of God:

People threw all of the old "software" out of their minds and replaced it with new and correct software. Examples: they threw out Sunday-keeping and replaced it with Sabbath-keeping; they threw out eating pork and sea-foods and replaced that with a diet limited to only clean foods; they threw out Christmas and replaced it with observing God's Holy Days; they threw out the belief in the trinity and replaced it with the understanding that God is in the process of building a Family; etc. In short:

They replaced all of the wrong "software" in their minds with the new understanding (the new software) they had come to understand.

Doing all this will certainly make them different from all of the other "computers" all around, since they no longer run all the software programs that are installed in other people's minds. They will be perceived as being different to people around them. Running different software programs in our minds will make us different from people around us. Many times people perceive members of other churches (JW's, Mormons, Adventists, etc.) as being different from them, largely because people in these churches do run different software programs in their minds, even if those people still use the same operating system. That is why we in God's Church are likewise perceived as being different.

So these people who came into the Church had become different from others around them, **but that "becoming different" is still not real repentance**!

Repentance is not a matter of throwing all of the old "software" programs out of our minds! That's not it at all! However, that is precisely **the only thing** that some people in the past ever did; they simply threw out of their minds the old software programs, and installed new software in their minds!

However, the real key for a godly repentance is this:

We have to change the whole operating system, and not just "the software"!

The operating system determines **how** the computer will function. And **different operating systems work in totally different ways** to other operating systems, even when they produce the same or similar end-results.

We need to understand that different operating systems can achieve the same results! That is, **on the surface** the results appear to be the same, **but** those results were achieved in completely different ways.

And here is the point: the way something is achieved (a letter is composed, etc.) on a PC (i.e. Windows) is internally completely different from the way that same thing is achieved on an Apple-Mac (i.e. Unix). **The hidden inner workings in the two operating systems are not compatible!** So a program created for use on a Windows computer will simply not work on a Unix computer.

Now in one regard this is where our analogy stops.

As long as we get a letter looking like we want it to look, **we don't really care** whether it was produced by a PC or by an Apple-Mac. Our only concern is the end-product, that the letter we get looks right! **For us the end result is everything!** We don't care about **how** that end result was produced!

BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT GOD DOES!

With God: the end result must be right, yes! But that "right end-result" is only of value if it is produced by the right operating system! **If the wrong operating system produces a good-looking end-result, then**

that is still not acceptable to God. The reason is this: the right end-result produced by the wrong operating system is like a house built on an insecure foundation; it will not last!

Satan himself initially had "good works". But Satan also had the wrong operating system in his mind. And so Satan's initial "good works" didn't last. And good works produced by human beings with the wrong operating system likewise will simply not last! That is what Satan's rebellion against God proved!

So when God looks at us human beings, before looking at the software programs that are running in our minds, **God first looks at the operating system** that is installed in our minds. Only after that does God look at the software programs running in our minds. God does this because God knows that some of the software which **God** wants us to willingly install in our minds will simply not work with the wrong operating system.

The Apostle Paul explained it this way in Hebrews 4:12-13.

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things *are* naked and opened** unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

The expression "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" means that God immediately recognizes which operating system underlies the actions in a person's life. The intents of the heart reveal what makes that operating system work. So these verses tell us that the Word of God will reveal whether a person's mind functions along the lines of the world's operating system, or whether it functions along the lines of God's operating system. To God all things are "naked and opened"; i.e. the software as well as the underlying operating system in every single human mind is immediately apparent to God.

When a computer achieves the right results, then we human beings are satisfied, and we don't care how the computer achieved those results. But God never accepts the right results when they are produced by the wrong operating system. That's what Paul explained in Romans.

So then they that are in the flesh **cannot please God**. (Romans 8:8)

Over the course of our time in God's Church many of us have probably read or heard this statement over a hundred times, and it has become somewhat blas. It is easy for us to respond to this verse with "yes, yes, we already know that, so can we move on?" But what if there is a chance that this verse actually applies to **you**? Do you know with absolute confidence that you don't fall into this category? People in this category don't know this about themselves, and when they are then confronted with this information about themselves, they will be "speechless" (see Matthew 22:12).

Anyway, the point is that "they that are in the flesh" use the wrong operating system, and that operating system is incapable of producing anything that will please God! The results which that operating system produces are of no value. With God the software is always secondary to the operating system that is being used. Thus, for example, it is impossible for Satan to please God, simply because Satan's selfish operating system is indelibly impressed into Satan's very nature.

Now **it is God's desire that we change the operating system of our minds** to a new operating system, on which it will be impossible to run many of the old software programs we grew up with. When God resurrects us and places our minds into new spirit-bodies, it is not enough for God to know that we have decided to never again run any of those old software programs in our minds. God must have the absolute assurance that the old software programs simply **cannot** run on the new operating system

installed in our minds.

With that new operating system installed in our minds, then, when we are resurrected as spirit beings, it will truly be **impossible** for us to sin! And real repentance is a foundational requirement for achieving this result.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

"His seed" refers to the Holy Spirit, which is the vehicle for installing God's operating system in the resurrected person's mind! It installed God's way of thinking. Now consider the difference between someone coming into God's Church and someone joining one of the churches of this world.

When a person joins one of the world's churches, he is in many cases required to accept some new software into his mind. He is expected to do things a certain way, perhaps even required to dress a certain way or to speak a certain way. Typically that church doesn't care about what goes on in that person's mind; usually they don't care what thoughts he might think. As long as he complies with all the new software requirements, he is fully accepted by that church. However, all of his old software, from before joining that particular church, is still very capable of running without any impediment. And he is likely to retain some or much of his old software.

And because his mind shares the same operating system with people in all the other churches of this world, therefore he can easily identify with many other churches, even when some of them run a few items of software that he doesn't have. Irrespective of which church he has joined, in most cases **he can agree with them** about Christmas and Easter, about God supposedly being a trinity, about human beings supposedly having an immortal soul, about there being an ever-burning hell, etc.

But when a person comes into God's Church, that person is first of all required to change the way he thinks, the way his mind functions. That's what real repentance is. He will also be required to install some new software in his mind, but only after first replacing the old operating system of his mind. When that old operating system is replaced, then his old software no longer functions properly, or at best it can only run with enormous stress of conscience.

WHAT IF THE OLD OPERATING SYSTEM IS NOT REMOVED?

Now when a person comes into God's Church but does NOT root out the old operating system and replace it with God's operating system, then two things happen.

First of all, **the new software** which God requires us to install in our minds will be perceived as **very stressful**. It wasn't made to run on that old operating system, and so "running God's laws" will be quite stressful for such a person, like trying to run a Windows program on a UNIX computer.

We need to understand that there is nothing stressful about any of God's laws! So here is the conflict that sometimes arises: God's laws are a joy to the new operating system, but they are an enormous burden to the old operating system.

The new operating system fully agrees that God's "yoke is easy and His burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). **The old operating system, on the other hand, will perceive God's "yoke" as very difficult**, and God's "burden" as very great, viewing God as "a hard man" who is always trying to get something for nothing (see Matthew 25:24). These **totally opposite perceptions** of the software God wants us to

install are the result of the two opposing operating systems.

In other words: Both of these individuals may obey God's laws and instructions. So in their outward actions of obedience (Sabbath-keeping, etc.) there are no discernible differences between these two people. They both do all the right things. But one is relaxed and inwardly joyful, while the other is stressed out and inwardly critical or even resentful. And frequently the speech and the conduct of such people will also bring these differences in inner responses to God's way of life out into the open.

These differences go back to these two individuals trying to run God's software on two completely different operating systems.

The second thing that happens with the person who has retained the old operating system in his mind is that it will still be very easy to run all of the old software. This is the reverse of the above point.

For a mind that has installed the new operating system, it will be extremely difficult to run the old software without enormous pangs of conscience. Oh yes, the new operating system can still find ways to run the old software, but it will always produce enormous stress to do so.

But if the old operating system is still fully in place, then the mind may for a period of time choose not to run some of the old software, but nevertheless it is still fully in tune with how to run that old software; and if it does run some of the old software, then this will produce far less stress for that individual than for the one who has the new operating system fully installed in his mind.

Let me give you an example.

Over the past 60 years a considerable number of members of God's Church have committed adultery. This includes both lay members of the Church and also some ministers. Even in my own limited knowledge I am personally aware of over a dozen different cases. So within the Church on a worldwide scale this has been a real problem. Now in these cases some of the individuals involved fitted "situation #1" below, while other individuals involved fitted "situation #2" below.

SITUATION #1:

A member of the Church, for whatever reasons or circumstances, secretly commits adultery one time. That person had not anticipated the possibility that they could end up committing adultery. People in this situation were simply caught off guard and in a moment of weakness had then committed adultery. But it was not premeditated in advance.

Immediately afterwards the person has enormous pangs of guilt. Such people hate the fact that they allowed themselves to be drawn into some compromising situation. They have great remorse, and determine to see to it that they will never again allow themselves to be drawn into any situation that could lead to further acts of adultery. Such a person usually has God's operating system installed in his or her mind, and the person's response to sinning reveals that operating system. This situation applied to King David when he committed adultery.

SITUATION #2:

A man or woman is a baptized member of God's Church. In a number of these cases the man was even a minister who preached sermons almost every week. But in this situation the person is **regularly committing adultery**. They make no attempt to change. In a number of these cases, rather than trying to change, the individual (more often, though not exclusively, the man) in fact seeks to get rid of the present spouse in order to marry the person with whom they have an ongoing adulterous relationship.

And at times **they don't rest until their adulterous relationships have been legitimized**; i.e. they don't rest until they get what they want. Not uncommonly people in this situation even seek ways to justify their adulterous relationships, at times even blaming their innocent defrauded spouses for their adultery.

Now this approach is very clear evidence that the mind involved does not have God's operating system installed. Such a mind is very clearly still functioning with the old operating system of the world. And in their cases the old operating system had indeed managed to run some of God's software, at least well enough to create with other Church members an impression of conversion.

So here is the point of this example:

All of the above people were officially members of the Church of God. The individuals in "situation #1" above were most likely converted individuals, who had prior to their act of adultery received God's Spirit upon genuine repentance. It is God's Spirit that will remove the old operating system from a human mind and then enable us to install God's operating system. And that new operating system gave them severe pangs of conscience over what they had done.

But the individuals in "situation #2" above had clearly never replaced the old operating system in their minds. And so their ongoing adulterous relationships didn't cause them any major conscience problems, not enough to cause them to stop committing adultery. We should understand that **individuals in this situation had never really repented in the first place**. Their lack of real repentance was the primary reason why the old operating system in their minds had never been replaced by a new operating system. Their so-called "repentance" had really amounted to refining the skill of running God's new software on their old operating system. In the past this included some ministers!

OBEDIENCE PRODUCED BY THE WRONG OPERATING SYSTEM

As already stated, doing what is right with a wrong attitude or from a wrong motivation is no better before God than outright disobedience. That is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the example of the pagan soothsayer **Balaam** (see Joshua 13:22). Think of this example as **a parallel to people committing adultery**.

When Balaam was approached by the messengers of the king of Moab, God very clearly instructed Balaam: "**you shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people for they are blessed**!" (Numbers 22:12). All the way through the account it is quite clear that Balaam only obeyed God very reluctantly. He was in a wrong frame of mind towards God all the way through this episode. Balaam's outward obedience to God's instructions was of no value in the eyes of God, and so God saw to it that Balaam was soon afterwards killed for his resentful obedience (see Numbers 31:8).

Even though outwardly Balaam was forced to obey God, the operating system in his mind, the way his mind worked, was hostile to God, just as we saw in Romans 8:7. This is evidenced by Balaam's repeated efforts to find a way around God's clearly expressed will, that the people Balaam had been called upon to curse were in fact "blessed by God".

And so in God's sight Balaam's forced obedience was in fact of no value at all for Balaam himself. He paid with his life for his resentful attitude.

The lesson for us is that obedience to God's laws is only of value when it is produced by the right attitude and the right frame of mind. The underlying attitude and the motivation are always more

important before God than the outward physical acts of obedience.

To make this quite plain:

There is **no value at all** to people keeping the Sabbath or tithing if they still employ the wrong operating system in their minds. It is not Sabbath-keeping or tithing that God is looking for! God is looking for people using their minds based on the right operating system. So, for example, there is no point in trying to get together with people from other churches who also happen to keep the Sabbath, if those people have not changed the way their minds function!

There was no value whatsoever to "co-workers" who still employed the wrong operating system in their minds sending money to the Church, in response to Mr. Armstrong's Co-Worker letters. I personally always disliked those letters intensely, because they were, as far as I was concerned, simply attempts at coaxing people into sending money to the Church. Mr. Armstrong himself on one occasion in my presence back in the late 1970's freely acknowledged that he wrote those letters for the explicit purpose of motivating people to send money to the Church.

So to make this quite clear:

"Co-Worker status" means nothing at all before God! A person either changes the operating system in his mind or he doesn't change it. There is no in-between status; there is no apprentice status for true Christianity. So when someone who is still breaking the Sabbath sends his tithe to the Church, that tithing isn't worth anything at all. The same goes for Sabbath-keeping for someone who is in an ongoing adulterous relationship or some other clear violation of one of God's other laws. That's the principle of James 2:10.

Let's move on. Now let's take a look at the word "repent" itself. Let's look at the words that are used in the Greek text of the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK WORDS FOR "REPENT"

Let's start with Matthew chapter 4.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

The word translated as "repent" in this verse is "**metanoeo**". This word is composed of the prefix "**meta**", which means "with, after, behind, etc.", and the verb "**noeo**". This verb is derived from the noun "**nous**" which means "the mind". Thus the verb "noeo" means "to understand, to perceive with the mind".

The verb "metanoeo" is used 34 times in the New Testament, and it is always translated as "repent" in the KJV. So here is what this word "metanoeo" means.

It means:

- **a change of mind**, **to reformat the mind**,

- **to think differently with the mind**,

- **to perceive from a different point of view than before**.

This is just another way of saying: install a new operating system in the mind, a totally new way of thinking and reasoning.

So the point is this:

We should clearly understand that the instruction to repent is **addressed to the mind**! It is not really directly addressed to the outward physical actions.

When we tell someone to repent, we are telling them to change the way they think, to think from a different perspective to the perspective they have used until that point in time. We are telling them to install a new operating system in their minds. Any changes in their conduct and behavior should be **a consequence** of them having changed their way of thinking. But none of those changes in their actions and in their conduct in themselves constitute real repentance. **This is what the Greek word "metanoeo" tells us!**

Now there is also **another word** in the Greek N.T. text which is also translated as "repent". That is the word "**metamellomai**", which is used six times in five verses of the N.T.

As we can see, this word starts with the same prefix "**meta**" which in this case is joined to a form of the verb "**melo**". This verb "melo" means "to care, to take care, to care about". It is an expression of concern for something. Today we would use the expression "**I'm sorry**" to convey the feeling conveyed by the word "metamellomai".

The word "**metamellomai**" is in all six instances also translated as "repent" in the KJV. But it really **has nothing directly to do with real repentance**! "Metamellomai" is frequently a consequence of real repentance, but it is not real repentance of itself, since "metamellomai" can be very effectively displayed by people who are still totally carnal and unrepentant. And so this word should most emphatically not be translated as "repent". The places where "metamellomai" is used in the New Testament are: Matthew 21:29, Matthew 21:32; Matthew 27:3; 2 Corinthians 7:8 (twice in this verse), and Hebrews 7:21.

The "care and concern" which are implied by the word "metamellomai" do not require a totally different way of thinking; they don't require a new operating system in the mind. "Metamellomai" is something both, repentant and unrepentant people are capable of expressing. "Metamellomai" is usually a positive and desirable emotion, but it doesn't go nearly far enough in respect to what God requires with the word "repent" (i.e. metanoeo). To go "far enough" in God's sight requires a new operating system to be installed in the human mind before that mind can be reconciled to God.

THE WORD "METAMELLOMAI"

To see clearly that this word "metamellomai" does not refer to what God requires from us, that it is only an expression of some concern and therefore can also be expressed by people who are in fact still "unrepentant" (i.e. they are still without "metanoeo"), let's examine all of the places where this word is used in the New Testament. Here they are:

He answered and said, I will not: but afterward **he repented**, and went. (Matthew 21:29)

This is the parable where **a father had told his two sons to work in the vineyard**. In this statement here Jesus Christ did not mean that this son "repented" and was ready to become a true Christian and place his entire life into submission to God's will. If that were the case then Jesus Christ would have used the word "metanoeo". Jesus Christ was simply saying that this son afterwards felt bad and

therefore decided to do what his father had asked him to do.

Don’t think for one moment that when a father tells his child to do something which the child at first refuses to do but later has a change of heart and then does what the father had instructed, that this change of heart is all there is to a real, godly repentance! **Many unrepentant people have at times felt bad** about some things they have said or done and they have then tried to make good the damage they had caused.

But that is not what God means by "repentance". Translating the word "metamellomai" as "repent" has only served to confuse this matter. A better translation of this verse in today’s terms would be: "... but afterwards **he was sorry** and went."

The next place where "metamellomai" is used is a few verses later in the same account.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen [it], **repented not** afterward, that ye might believe him. (Matthew 21:32)

Again, Jesus Christ was not saying that these hard-hearted "chief priests and elders" (see Matthew 21:23) should have come to a real repentance after having seen how the publicans and harlots responded to John the Baptist. Jesus Christ was not speaking about repentance in this context. After all, even "the publicans and the harlots" who believed John the Baptist were not necessarily really repentant either.

For that matter, even Peter and the other apostles were at that point in time not yet repentant; all of them only came to a real repentance later. Nor did Christ mean that the belief which the publicans and the harlots extended to John the Baptist should have produced a real godly repentance in those priests. Christ simply meant that the priests and the elders **should have had some feelings of remorse** (i.e. they should have felt sorry for their response to John), once they saw how the common people responded to John. But remorse is not repentance.

The next use of this word "metamellomai" is by Judas Iscariot before he committed suicide.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented himself**, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (Matthew 27:3)

In the next verse Judas even used the words "I have sinned", acknowledging his guilt. And then he went and hanged himself. Suicide is not the expression of a truly "repentant" mind and this is not an expression of real repentance either. Matthew 27:3 simply tells us that **Judas was sorry** for what he had done. We need to realize that even unrepentant people can say the words "I am sorry" and "I have sinned"!

An example from the Old Testament that comes to mind is that of King Saul, who also used the words "I have sinned for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD" (see 1 Samuel 15:24), and yet he too was not really repentant. This is clear even from Saul’s subsequent conduct right after he spoke these words.

Next, in 2 Corinthians 7:8 Paul uses the word "metamellomai" twice.

For though I made you sorry with a letter, **I do not repent**, **though I did repent**: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though [it were] but for a season. (2 Corinthians 7:8)

As far as real repentance before God is concerned, there was nothing about his first epistle to them that would have required Paul to "repent". Paul hadn't done anything wrong! Paul is simply saying: "I am not sorry (or not concerned) that I sent that letter to you, though I was at first sorry (or concerned) for sending it."

For that matter, Paul's use of the phrase "I do not repent" makes absolutely clear that this cannot possibly be a reference to real repenting. If the word did mean "repent", then this statement would imply that Paul was still carnal and unrepentant. When we carefully think about Paul's statement here, we should be able to understand that this cannot possibly be a reference to what God means by "repentance".

Regarding this verse, the Greek word translated as "sorry" is "lupeo" and means "sorrowful", whereas the word translated "repent" is "metamellomai" and this focuses on "being concerned". Today our use of the word "sorry" covers a broad range of meanings and applications.

At any rate, it should be clear that Paul was not speaking about real repentance in this verse. Let's now see the last place where "metamellomai" is used.

(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and **will not repent**, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) (Hebrews 7:21)

Since God is totally sinless, it should be clear that this reference has nothing to do with the "repentance" that God requires from us either. The context here is that God the Father has absolutely guaranteed that Jesus Christ will be "a priest for ever after the rank of Melchisedek"; and the statement that God "will not repent" simply means that God will not regret that He has guaranteed this position for Jesus Christ.

It is clear, however, that this use of "metamellomai" has to do with God not changing "**His mind**". The mind is certainly involved in this use of "metamellomai", as it also is in all of the previous uses. But there is a component to, or an ingredient in, the word "metanoeo" that is not present in the word "metamellomai". That component is a completely new operating system.

Let's now compare these two words "metamellomai" and "metanoeo".

Both Greek words involve the use of the mind.

To go back to **our computer analogy**: with "metamellomai" we throw out some of the bad software, software that was causing us problems or that could cause us problems. Whether those software programs are "sin" or not is not really the issue. The point is that running them could make us feel unpleasant (or having run them caused us to feel unpleasant) and therefore we want to get rid of them. The rest of our mind stays unaffected when we throw out those particular programs. That is a vital point to keep in mind.

With the word "metanoeo" we also throw some bad software out of our minds. But we go much further than that. We throw out the entire old operating system and then install a new operating system. The reason we do that is because we have come to see that the old operating system was at the heart and core of all our problems, rather than our problems being due to certain bad software programs in our minds. Once we have installed a new operating system in our minds, **then** we also do not reinstall all of the old software programs. And in any case, many of them are not compatible with the new operating system, and many will not run very easily on that new operating system.

It should thus be clear to us that in the NT only the word "metanoeo" refers to what God requires from us when He instructs us "to repent". It is not really helpful at all to also translate the word "metamellomai" as

"repent". In fact, that has only confused the issue. It would be much better and more appropriate to consistently render the word "metamellomai" as "to be concerned, to be sorry".

And while the word "metamellomai" could just as well have nothing to do with moral guilt before God as it could with acknowledging some real guilt, the word "metanoeo" **always** involves a state of "missing the mark" before Almighty God, not necessarily in conduct and actions, but always in attitude and in the way we process information (i.e. seeing a mote in others versus seeing a beam in self, etc.). So **"missing the mark" need not necessarily involve wrong actions** (though for all people apart from Job, who God Himself said was unique, it has also involved wrong actions!), but it will **always** involve **a wrong way of thinking** and a wrong perspective, one which produces self-righteousness, etc.

One last point regarding these two Greek words: of the two words, only the word "metanoeo" is used in the imperative mood, i.e. we are only commanded to "metanoeo" (to repent)! Nowhere is there a command that we are to "metamellomai" (to be sorry, or to be concerned)! Therefore it follows that if we choose to use the English word "repent" to express the action God has commanded us to perform, then it is simply not appropriate to also translate the totally different word "metamellomai" into English as "to repent". These two Greek words have different meanings, and **those differences should be preserved** when they are translated into English. It is not correct to render "metamellomai" as "to repent".

This brings us to the next point.

A WRONG FOCUS

The fact that the translators have always translated both of these two words "metanoeo" and "metamellomai" with the one English word "repent" illustrates that they themselves didn't understand the clear distinction between what God requires from us (that we repent, i.e. "metanoeo") on the one hand, and a quite common human emotion (to be sorry, to be concerned, i.e. "metamellomai") on the other hand. Their brilliant linguistic skills could not surmount the barrier of 1 Corinthians 2:11.

Thus it should not surprise us that we too can very easily approach the subject of repentance with a wrong focus. **Having such a wrong focus is a part of our difficulty in correctly understanding real repentance.**

For example, we may have said things like:

- "What am I supposed to repent of?"

- "I have repented of the sin I committed yesterday."

- "Have you repented of your sins?"

- "Okay, I repent of having said that about you."

- "Look, I have now repented and you ought to forgive me."

This last specific statement is the expression of a totally and completely unrepentant and carnal mind! Can you imagine how God would have responded to David, if David, after committing adultery, had said to Nathan: okay, I have now repented and therefore you really ought to forgive me; so let's get this over with? The utterly selfish and unrepentant attitude underlying this statement should be glaringly obvious!

Even in the outline for **the baptism ceremony**, as provided to ministers by WCG headquarters four and more decades ago, it was stated:

"... as a result of **your repentance of your sins**, which is the transgression of God's holy and righteous and perfect law ... I now baptize you ..."

The problem with this statement is that it focuses the word repentance on **actions**, on sins. There is **no direct focus on the mind**, on the way of thinking. The correct focus really should be something like this:

"... as a result of your repentance, by which we mean **the changed way of thinking of your reformatted mind**, which changed way of using your mind has produced in you a guilt and a sorrow for having previously lived contrary to God's perfect law, and which changed way of thinking has now produced in you a zeal and a fervent desire to in future live in harmony with, and in submission to, all of God's laws ... I now baptize you ..."

Yes, **that is somewhat verbose**, and I don't mean that all those words have to necessarily be incorporated into the baptismal formula, but **the understanding of this concept has to be included in the counseling for baptism**.

And ministers need to stop using the phrase "repentance of your sins"!

The person to be baptized **must clearly understand** that what God requires of him is that he must change the way he thinks; he must change the way his mind has worked in the past.

A consequence of that changed way of thinking is that he is required to live by all of God's laws and instructions and wishes, and he is to do so with the correct frame of mind, a willing mind. That is what God was looking for in Deuteronomy 5:29.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

God was looking for the people of Israel to use their minds in a certain way!

When someone says: "What am I supposed to repent of?", it shows that they are **focusing on actions**, on things they may have done which are contrary to God's laws. They are focusing on sins of omission and commission. The same is true for someone who says: "Okay, I repent of having spread this rumor about you." It is again a focus on outward actions. But **that statement doesn't focus on the heart**, on the way of thinking that decided to spread the rumor in the first place. Repentance is not a focus on sins! It is a focus on changing one's mind to accept a totally different way of thinking.

Repentance is not primarily about what we do or don't do!

Repentance is primarily about **how we use our minds**! And then what we do or don't do is a consequence of how we use our minds. In repentance we have to change the mind first before we can change the actions in an appropriate way. We have to change our minds first so that there will indeed be "such a heart in us" (Deuteronomy 5:29 again).

So these statements ("what am I supposed to repent of?", etc.) ignore the wrong operating system that is installed in the mind! At our initial repentance, after learning the truth of God, we have to root out a totally wrong way of using our minds and replace it with the way God wants us to think, the way that reflects how God's mind works.

When we have sinned subsequent to our initial repentance and conversion, then it means that we have to a greater or lesser degree allowed our former way of thinking to re-establish itself in our minds, and repentance requires that we again root out that former way of thinking. And it most emphatically requires that we stop doing what is wrong.

While repentance is something that must take place in the mind, it most assuredly will manifest itself in outward actions and conduct and speech. It is just that some of the actions produced by the wrong operating system can **also** look very convincing; and that makes it very difficult to discern the difference when looking at the outward actions alone.

It is somewhat like the difference between the **stars** and the **planets** in the night sky: to the untrained eye they look alike. It is only when we observe them **for a considerable period of time** that it becomes clear that the planets are unreliable deceivers (which is what the Greek word "planetes" means) when compared to the stars; that the planets **keep changing their positions** in relation to all the stars around them.

That is typical of the unrepentant mind; **it also keeps changing its position**, and hates to be tied down. An unrepentant mind is an unreliable mind, and that is one of the reasons why God will not have unrepentant minds in His Family.

The actions produced by a truly repentant mind and the actions produced by an unrepentant mind can at times look alike and be very difficult to tell apart, even as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a planet from a star.

Sometimes **the most difficult people to counsel for baptism** are those who actually know that they haven't really "**done anything wrong**", because our natural focus is on outward actions. Sometimes **people who have grown up in God's Church** are in this situation.

They have always kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, they started tithing when they earned their first income, they may have been protected from negative influences in this world, they have never believed and practiced pagan religious customs, they have always accepted the true teachings of the Bible, and there really is nothing bad in their background that they need to be ashamed of or feel guilty about. The worst things in their lives are that they have had wrong thoughts and they may have at times lied to their parents or to other people to get out of trouble.

A minister counseling such a person for baptism may have searched desperately in order to come up with something that will produce a feeling of guilt in the person's mind, just so that there is something for the person "to repent of", so the minister can help the person see what repentance is supposed to be. That was not a good approach!

In order to persuade the minister to baptize them, some people in this situation may sometimes even exaggerate some of the relatively minor flaws in their past, things that other people going through the process of repentance would not even think about, just to convince the minister that they really do see themselves as just as "evil" as the rest of humanity. And even while they say those words to the minister, deep-down they know that there isn't really anything they will be changing from the way they have always lived (i.e. growing up in God's Church). But it is expected of them to say the right things in order to be eligible for baptism. And so that is what they do.

Now there is nothing wrong with their unspoken feeling that after baptism they will continue to live as they basically always have, in harmony with the laws of God. They'll continue to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days; they'll continue to tithe and not eat unclean foods; they'll continue to be helpful and kind towards other people; etc. In none of those specific things does God

require any change from them.

It is not that they view themselves as being perfect. Their "falling short" of the mark has always been basically on the same level as the "falling short" of those who are baptized. **We all fall short**; but those who have grown up with the way of life taught in the Bible haven't necessarily fallen "more short" than we who are baptized have fallen short since the time of our baptism.

The problem lies with our wrong focus on our words and on our deeds!

THE EXAMPLE OF JOB

Let's consider the story of Job, because it presents a close parallel to our situation today. You know the story. God told Satan that Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and hated evil (see Job 1:8). And **the standard statement in our old baptismal formula did NOT really apply to Job**! Does that surprise you?

Our old baptism formula says:

"... as a result of **your repentance of your sins**, which is **the transgression of God's** holy and righteous and perfect **law** ... I now baptize you ..."

But there weren't any "sins" you could point to in Job's life. When **God said** that Job was a perfect and an upright man, then God was telling the truth. God always tells the truth! But we have tried to find some "sins" in Job's life, because after all "there is **none** righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10), right? We have **reasoned** our way into finding some "sins" in Job's life. And don't Job's statements "behold I am vile" (Job 40:4) and "wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6) prove that Job must also have sinned secretly in some way?

No, they don't!

But our reasoning is based on **our wrong understanding of real repentance**! In order to justify the need for repentance, we simply must find some evidence of sins. **We cannot conceive of the idea of real repentance if there are no sins** (i.e. if there are no transgressions of God's law) that we can point to. But that is the lesson of the Book of Job, that repentance doesn't have anything directly to do with sins! **Repentance is not about sins.**

So let's get back to Job:

The problem with Job was not that he was running the wrong software in his life. Job's problem was that **the wrong operating system** was still installed in his mind! And all the software Job was running in his mind on this wrong operating system was producing almost identical results to the ones that should be produced with the right operating system. But **the results produced are not enough with God**.

Producing the right results on the wrong operating system does not give any guarantees for the future! And God wants guarantees for future conduct! And those guarantees can only be produced when we run all our mental software on the right operating system.

Regarding the wrong operating system not giving any guarantees for future conduct: consider that even Job himself proved that the old operating system does not give any guarantees for future conduct. After all, Job did "lose it" from chapter 3 onwards, when he started out by cursing the day of his own birth. So

it has been proved by Job that the right conduct produced by the wrong operating system is not able to give any guarantees for future right conduct. And that is why God, when salvation is the issue, will not accept right results that are produced by the wrong operating system.

What Job had to change was the way his mind worked! He had to change the way he thought about God, and the way he thought about himself, and the way he related to God. That is why, when he came to real repentance, he said: "... but now my eye sees you" (Job 42:5). His mind had taken on a totally different perspective. And so in the next verse Job is then able to say "wherefore I abhor myself and repent" (Job 42:6).

These two verses, together with Genesis 6:5-6, are probably the best biblical explanation of the process of repentance: first a person's eyes must be opened to grasping God's way of thinking, and then the person can make the active deliberate decision to change the way he uses his mind, i.e. he repents. Unfortunately in the past we never saw it this way!

THAT MUST CHANGE!

People who have grown up in the Church of God are far more like Job than they realize!

Even before baptism they already have the right software installed in their minds. But **they still have to change the operating system**, irrespective of how well they may have applied all of God's laws all of their lives up to that point in time.

Like Job they may very well have lived "good lives" without major sins or transgressions; and so like Job they too nevertheless still have to install a completely new operating system in their minds. It is not the actions they have to change; it is the way they use their minds that has to change.

And that, sadly, is something that many who have grown up in the Church have never done, because they never understood that they too had to change their way of thinking, that they too had to install a completely new operating system into their minds.

Let me repeat that! When people who have grown up in the Church of God and who have always fully accepted all of the Bible's teachings, come to repentance, what they have to change is the way they will in future use their minds, irrespective of whether or not there are also certain actions or conduct that they may also have to change. With the help of God's Spirit the person will after baptism use his mind differently from the way he used his mind prior to repentance.

To spell this out plainly: at real repentance the important thing that has to change is **the way our minds work**! We have to first reformat our minds and then install a new operating system in our minds. Only then can we install "the new software" into our minds. And the new operating system God requires us to install in our minds is not really compatible with the operating system we grew up with from birth onwards, even if we grew up keeping the Sabbath, etc.

People who have grown up in the Church can **skip the step of installing new software in their minds**. But they nevertheless still have to first reformat their minds and then install a new operating system in their minds. With that new operating system in place, they can then reinstall the software they have always had during their years in a Church of God environment.

Repentance is like our minds have to change from using the operating system of an IBM-compatible computer to using the operating system of an Apple-Mac computer (or changing from the Apple-Mac system to the IBM-compatible system, without implying that one of these two systems is better). We must change to another operating system which is not compatible with the one we have used up to that

point in our lives. This applies to all people, **from Job on down**. It applies to people who grew up in the Church, and also to people who had no prior contact with the Church.

Now once that new operating system has been installed, THEN we who did not grow up in the Church find that **the old software programs** don't really run all that well on the new operating system (i.e. they **create conscience problems**). Some old programs may not run at all! Yes, where necessary we can still achieve the same results with this new operating system and the new software, as we used to achieve with the old operating system running the old software. But there is a difference in how that is achieved.

When God looks at us human beings and wants to know who is repentant and who is not repentant, then God does not look at "what software programs are they running in their minds?". God doesn't say: let Me look at their actions and conduct. No, what God really looks at is: "**what operating system is installed in their minds?** Just **how** do they use their minds? Let Me look at their hearts."

A MAJOR WEAKNESS IN OUR PAST UNDERSTANDING

It is totally misleading to tell someone to "repent of your sins"!

Nowhere does the Bible instruct us to repent "**of our sins**"! The reference in our baptism formula to "your repentance of your sins" is regrettably very misleading.

Check your own Bible with the help of a concordance. **Nowhere** are we instructed to repent of our "sins". That concept is never used in the Bible. That concept of "repent of your sins" goes back to numerous non-Church of God preachers who wanted people to change certain aspects of their behavior, the fire-and-brimstone preachers of 100 years ago who wanted people to stop drinking alcoholic drinks, to not play cards or to dress a certain way, etc. They wanted people to conform to their particular standards, by supposedly repenting of certain sins.

We also had some of those types of preachers in the Church in the 50's and 60's and 70's! They would get all fired up and make us feel terribly guilty because of some or other sins. But mostly those fiery sermons were just a lot of garbage, intended to sway us emotionally. And by focusing on **actions**, they very effectively misled us about the real meaning of the word "repent".

Now I don't mean to imply that it is wrong to give sermons that address specific forms of conduct. It is fine to discuss conduct and behavior. Where the problem arises is when any wrong behavior is discussed in the form of "we need to repent of gossiping" or "we need to repent of selfish conduct", etc., because that way of presenting such things **equates "repenting" with "being sorry"**. And yes, we should indeed be sorry if we have spread gossip or if we have slandered other people, etc.

But the problem is that such statements obscure the correct meaning of "repent". Being sorry for having done wrong is a consequence of repentance, but being sorry is not repentance itself. Repentance is to change a wrong way of thinking, a selfish and self-centered way of thinking, the "get-way" of thinking. The right way of thinking is the "give-way" of thinking, the godly perspective on everything. When the wrong way of thinking is really changed, when we begin to see ourselves as the ones with beams in our eyes, a major consequence is that we desire to change all wrong forms of conduct that come to our attention.

Now regarding the "powerful preachers" who told us "to repent of our sins", I don't mean that they intended to deceive us about the real meaning of "repent". But that's what happened

nonetheless. **Those preachers themselves were in most cases totally clueless as to what repentance really is.** Those sermons deceived us into equating repentance with feeling sorry for past sins, and thereby prevented us from understanding that repentance is about changing the way we use our minds, and not about feeling guilty about past wrong actions. **Remorse is not repentance**, though it may at times be a precursor to real repentance.

And that approach very effectively derailed a correct understanding of real repentance. It directed the focus for repentance in a completely wrong direction.

Let's look at a few Scriptures.

But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners **to** repentance. (Matthew 9:13; see also Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:32)

This Scripture speaks about "calling sinners to repentance". But it does **not** tell us to repent "**of our sins**"! In fact, this verse doesn't actually tell us what repentance is. We are expected to know that "to repent" means to change the way our minds think and reason.

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism **of** repentance **for the remission of sins**. (Mark 1:4; see also Luke 3:3 and Acts 2:38)

This Scripture shows one of the reasons for baptism that is based on a real repentance; and that one reason is **the forgiveness of past sins**. But again this says nothing about "repenting of your sins".

The Bible instructs us "to repent", yes, but repentance does not focus on sins; it focuses on **changing the way we use our minds**! The expression "to repent of your sins" has been one huge, enormous, gigantic deception, whose sole purpose (i.e. Satan's sole purpose in foisting this idea on unsuspecting minds) was to thoroughly obscure the real meaning of the word for "repent" (i.e. the meaning of "metanoeo").

As soon as we expand God's instruction to read "repent **of your sins**" we have in effect diverted the focus away from the mind and onto our actions. And we have forgotten the lesson of Job.

And we are missing the intent of God's instruction to us. The actions suddenly become more important than the underlying motivations for those actions. And that is a huge mistake!

It is not questioned that we need to **confess** to God and **acknowledge** our sins and determine to **stop sinning**; but these things must all be **a consequence** to us changing the way we think, the way our minds function. King David and King Saul both at one point said "I have sinned". While the words were identical, Saul's statement expressed the wrong way of thinking, while David's statement expressed the right way of thinking.

Focusing on "the things people need to repent of" should never be an end in itself. But unfortunately **all too often** that is the only thing a very large number of people have ever focused on, trying to "repent of sins".

That was precisely the focus of **Job's three friends**, who were strongly corrected by God Himself; they looked for sins in Job's life, and they simply assumed that Job must have sinned, even though God Himself actually said otherwise. And when that is the focus, then it is sometimes extremely difficult to get people to understand what is really expected of them when they repent.

That is also why **so many people who have grown up in the Church of God**, and who have a good

attitude and a desire to live by God's laws, have frequently **had a hard time trying to figure out** what they were supposed to do when they repented. And underlying that problem is **this wretched focus on sins**! And in that process we ministers counseling such people for baptism have frequently taken the identical approach that Job's three friends took in trying to convince him of some or other sins.

Back in the 60's ministers commonly tried to persuade people who asked for baptism that they were sinners. And yes, all those people were sinners; but that focus effectively prevented people from understanding what repentance is really all about, which is changing to a different way of thinking, a different way of using our minds. That old approach instead focused people's attentions on sins and on "being wretched", etc.

CONSIDER THE EXAMPLE OF GOD

When human beings turned out to be totally depraved and evil and hostile to their Creator, then we are told: "**and it repented the Eternal** that He had made man on the earth, and **it grieved Him at His heart**" (Genesis 6:6). It should be obvious that in this verse the word "repented" has nothing whatsoever to do with "repenting of sins"! God has never sinned!

This verse is another clear illustration that "repent" simply means "to change one's mind"! That's what God did in this context! God changed His mind regarding how He was going to deal with mankind. And this was really the first indication that **after the flood** God would set a different plan in motion, a changed way of dealing with man. God had "repented", i.e. God had changed His mind about how He was going to continue to work with human beings.

Another OT example of God "repenting" is in the Book of Jonah. When Jonah preached in Nineveh, then the people were sorry for their wickedness. Note that in Jonah chapter 3 the people did not "repent" in the sense of "metanoeo"; the people only responded with regret in the sense of "metamellomai". Nowhere in that context does it use the word for "repent" in reference to any of the people of Nineveh. In this context the word for "repent" is only used in reference to God. So don't mistake what the people of Nineveh did with real repentance! Those people did not repent! What they did is **express sorrow for their evils**, but those Ninevites did not ever change the way their minds worked.

Now consider something very basic!

When any human being comes to the point of real repentance by God's standards, then that human being has his one and only chance for salvation **right then**! If after a real repentance a person turns away from God's truth and God's way of thinking, then that person can only end up in the lake of fire! Such a person who, after previously going through real repentance, turns away from God's ways can never be in the second resurrection! God doesn't give anyone more than one opportunity, after that person has come to a real repentance.

What the Ninevites did is not what God means by "repentance". What the Ninevites did is nothing more than "metamellomai". They didn't "repent"; they simply expressed genuine sorrow and regret. That's all they did. And for a people whose minds God had never opened to His truth that was enough to avoid an impending penalty. But it wasn't even remotely enough to become eligible for the things that apply to anyone who really "repents".

In Jonah 3:9 the Ninevites were hoping that God would repent, i.e. change His mind about destroying them and their city. And Jonah 3:10 tells us that "God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them and He did it not". Again, the word "repent" simply means "God changed His mind".

The Hebrew verb in all these verses translated as "repent" is "**nacham**". This Hebrew verb has a range of meanings. It is used to express things like sorrow, regret and comfort. It is interesting that in the Greek language LXX translation of the OT this Hebrew verb is sometimes translated as "metanoeo" and at other times as "metamellomai". So **already in the Greek translation of the Old Testament the distinction between "metanoeo" and "metamellomai" was blurred**.

When the Hebrew verb "nacham" is used in reference to God, it invariably means nothing other than that **God** "**regretted something** He had done or that He intended to do", and that because of this regret **God "changed His mind"**. Implied is usually that God will thereafter do something differently from the way God had done or intended to do before He "repented".

The numerous times this word is used in reference to God should make clear that it really has nothing at all to do with "sinning"! Let's consider a number of additional examples of where this Hebrew word that is translated as "to repent" is used in reference to God.

And **the LORD repented** of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:14)

While Moses was on the mountain with God, the people had made the golden calf. When God determined to destroy them all and start again with Moses, Moses pleaded for Israel, and the above verse expresses God's response to Moses' intervention for Israel. Clearly the word "repented" again means nothing more than that **God changed His mind**, in this case relenting on the penalty He had intended to impose on Israel.

And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for **it repented the LORD** because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. (Judges 2:18)

When Israel sinned, then God imposed penalties upon them, in the form of being afflicted by their enemies. So when there was a good judge and the people responded at least to some degree to that good judge, then God changed His mind and took that penalty of foreign dominance away from Israel.

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. (1 Samuel 15:11)

Here God was simply telling Samuel that **God regretted** having made Saul king. God changed His mind regarding Saul, by then selecting someone else to be king.

If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, **that I may repent me** of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. (Jeremiah 26:3)

Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and **the LORD will repent him** of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. (Jeremiah 26:13)

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and **the LORD repented him** of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. (Jeremiah 26:19)

In all of these verses the word "repent" means nothing other than that God changed His mind. That's what it **always** means.

The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD. (Amos 7:3)

The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD. (Amos 7:6)

Based on Amos' intervention, **God changed His mind** about imposing certain penalties at that time.

All of these verses, and there are more than 20 other places I could cite, show very clearly that the Hebrew word "nacham" when it is applied to God and also translated as "repent":

1) Has nothing at all to do with sinning.

2) Simply means "to change one's mind", which is another way of saying "to think differently".

Here is what we need to understand:

The word translated "repent" doesn't somehow have one meaning when it is used for God, and then have a completely different meaning when it is used for man. **When the word "repent" is used for man, then it has exactly the same meaning that it has when it is used in reference to God!**

The concept of "repent" has nothing to do with sinning! It has everything to do with changing the operating system that controls our minds. It has everything to do with changing how we use our minds. And to stop sinning must be **a consequence** of having changed the way we use our minds, but to stop sinning in itself is not repentance! That idea has been **one huge deception**!

While we are examining this word "repent" here in the Old Testament, let's also consider some verses that people sometimes misunderstand.

And also the Strength of Israel **will not lie nor repent**: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent. (1 Samuel 15:29)

And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and **the LORD repented** that he had made Saul king over Israel. (1 Samuel 15:35)

We have already looked at verse 11 of this chapter, where God clearly told Samuel that "it repents Me that I have set up Saul to be king". Yet in verse 29 Samuel then tells Saul that God "will not repent". And a few verses later, in verse 35, it tells us once again that God "repented that He had made Saul king".

And then Psalm 110:4 tells us:

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110:4)

So what is it? **Does God repent or does God not repent?** Some people have tried to explain this apparent contradiction by assigning different meanings to the word "repent" in these verses. But that is simply not correct.

In the verses that tell us that God repented the word "repent" has exactly the same meaning that it has in the verses that tell us that God does NOT repent. **The meaning of this word doesn't change.**

The word always refers to "changing one's mind". And with God "changing His mind" or "not changing His mind" is never a carte blanche statement! **It is always a conditional statement!** So every statement that says that "God repented" refers to something very specific! And every statement that says that "God does not repent" also refers to something very specific!

[Incidently, this principle also applies to Malachi 3:6, where God said "for I am the Eternal, I change not". This statement "**I change not**" **is** really **restricted to** the statement that immediately follows, which is "**therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed**". But the expression "I change not" is most certainly not intended to be a carte blanche absolute statement, which some people try to apply to all kinds of circumstances. God has repeatedly changed His mind on many issues, in response to man's unacceptable conduct. Every time the Bible tells us that "it repented God" is an example of God changing His mind.]

This is probably best explained in Jeremiah 18.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; **If that nation**, against whom I have pronounced, **turn from their evil**, **I will repent of the evil** that I thought to do unto them. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; **If it do evil in my sight**, that it obey not my voice, then **I will repent of the good**, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jeremiah 18:7-10)

Notice that **it is quite possible "to repent of good"!** That's what God said right here.

These verses make clear that concerning people God is always prepared to change His mind, both regarding penalties that God has pronounced, and also regarding blessings that God has pronounced. In other words, God is always prepared to repent! The thing that motivates God to repent (i.e. to change His mind regarding something He intended to do) is if people change their response to God.

So **you have the power to make God "repent"**, by which I mean that you have the power to make God change His mind about you. If you either change from obedience to disobedience or you change from disobedience to obedience, then God will likewise change His mind about you as an individual ... and that is all that the concept of repentance means!

The penalties God has pronounced are based on people disobeying God and rejecting His way of life. When disobedient people change to a way of willingly submitting to God, then God "repents" by not imposing the penalty He had already announced.

Similarly, the blessings God has pronounced are predicated on people obeying God and joyfully submitting their lives to God. So when obedient people change to a way of disobedience and rebellion, then God likewise "repents" by withdrawing all the blessings He had already announced.

Everything God has promised, the blessings and the curses, is always conditional on a certain form of behavior by the people involved, based on the operating system that is controlling their minds. It is conditional as long as the people involved are still capable of choosing a different way to respond to God.

Now once the individuals to whom God has made certain pronouncements (be that blessings or curses) become incapable of ever changing the way they respond to God, **then** God's statements to those individuals also become unconditional!

For all of us that point of God's statements to us becoming unconditional is when we die (or when we are changed in the twinkling of an eye). For Jesus Christ, God the Father made the unconditional promise that Christ would for ever be "a priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4) because of the Father's absolute understanding of Christ's character, having co-existed together for all past eternity.

For all of God's servants in the past (Abraham, David, etc.), God's statements to them became

unconditional when those servants of God died. For King Saul the removal from kingship became unconditional after Saul had not carried out God's instructions regarding Amalek. So Samuel's statement in 1 Samuel 15:29 ("God will not lie nor repent ...") was intended to apply specifically and exclusively to the previous verse. Verse 28 says:

And Samuel said unto him, **The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee** this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou. (1 Samuel 15:28)

So God will not repent, i.e. change His mind, regarding His decision to take the kingdom of Israel away from you and your line. In other words, you, Saul, have had several chances to make good on your previous short-comings. This was your last chance. So this time God's decision to remove the kingdom from you is final. And regarding this matter God will not change His mind!

So here is the point we need to understand:

For everything God plans that involves people with a free will making up their own minds, there is initially always the possibility that God could change His mind in some regard or other. That is so because **God's plans** for beings with free independent minds **are always prepared to deal with any response**, good or bad, from those beings with independent minds. God's initial plans are based on expecting a certain positive response from those beings with free independent minds. However, if those beings (be it angels or be it human beings) respond with rebellion and disobedience and a rejection of God's way of life, then God will always "repent" by changing His mind about what to do for or with those rebellious beings.

That is why God has included in His plans **periods of testing** for both angels and human beings. Those periods of testing allow God the opportunity to "repent", to change His mind, should those beings respond to God with rebellion. Now once those periods of testing have been completed (for the angels that is already the case, and for us it is at the time of death), then God's statements to those individuals also become absolute and unconditional.

I mention this to explain that God will readily "repent" both when sinners change and freely submit to God, and also when previously righteous people turn away from God's truth and from God's way of life. Statements that say that God will not repent or will not change need to be understood **in the context** within which those statements are made, because such statements have a very specific application.

Now there is **one distinction** between God repenting and us human beings repenting. That distinction is as follows:

1) **When we repent**, we are required to throw out not only all the wrong thoughts (i.e. the wrong old software), but we must also throw out the old operating system, by reformatting the hard drive in our minds and then **installing God's operating system**. We need to voluntarily install a totally new way of thinking into our minds. In that process we have changed or renewed our minds.

2) **When God repents**, God obviously does NOT install a new operating system in His mind. God starts out with the correct operating system. So when God changes His mind about something (e.g. when He modifies His intended plans, like withholding a blessing because of disobedience, or withholding a penalty because the people involved have changed away from disobedience to God, etc.), then that involves **nothing more than a change in what God will or will not do**.

Let's go back to the statement about God in Genesis 6:6.

Understand that when we "**repent**", i.e. when we change our minds, then that **always has**

consequences! So when God "repented" in Genesis 6:6, then it was really inevitable that **something had to change** after the flood. To put this in very blunt terms:

If God had continued to follow the identical plan for mankind, without any modifications whatsoever, after the flood when compared to the plan that God set in motion at the time of Adam's creation, **then God would not really have "repented"**! But Genesis 6:6 clearly tells us that God did repent! And therefore **something had to change** after the flood in the way God was working with human beings.

In the past **none of us ever picked up on this statement** in Genesis 6:6. Instead of **understanding the word "repent" based on what God did at that time**, we instead allowed the false religions to deceive us with their twisted interpretation of "repent of your sins"! That expression totally blocked any possible correct understanding of what it really means when God tells us "to repent"! This is another whopper of a deception along the lines of Revelation 12:9.

So to make this clear:

When you repent, then something in your life has to change! If after your repentance nothing at all changes in your life, then you also have not really repented!

Repentance always requires change! And the greatest change of all that is required of us human beings is a change in the operating system for our minds.

Now the closest we will come to finding something in the Bible that ties "sins" to the instruction to repent is Paul's reference in Hebrews 6:1 to "the foundation of repentance from dead works". Notice that Paul did not use the word "sins" because **Paul wasn't thinking of sins** when he wrote this expression.

Paul used the expression "dead works". **"Dead works" are not necessarily "sins"**; they are just works that don't achieve anything as far as the process of salvation is concerned. Playing a game of tennis or golf is "a dead work". That doesn't make tennis or golf bad; it simply means that these things don't do anything for us as far as salvation is concerned. So don't mistake the term "dead works" for "sins".

Paul's own "past good deeds" were all "dead works", without having been sins; and that is precisely why Paul attached no more value to those past good works than he attached to "dung" (see Philippians 3:8). In the process of striving for salvation the value of those things was insignificant.

What Paul means by the expression "repentance from dead works" is that we must change the focus of our minds. When we change the way we think, then one result of that changed perspective will be that many of the things we thought were so important to us, over a period of time become quite unimportant. We come to see that ultimately they have no real value. That's what Paul himself did; he had repented (i.e. changed the way his mind worked), and as a result he could see that his past "works" were "dead". That's what he meant in Philippians 3:7, when he said:

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." (Philippians 3:7)

He wasn't referring to sins at all. That should be obvious from his statement in the previous verse that "concerning the righteousness which is in the law, (Paul was) **blameless**" (Philippians 3:6).

Paul was speaking about **the futility** of all his past good deeds, his years of having faithfully kept all of God's laws. **There wasn't anything wrong with his past good deeds**, not at all. It is just that everything good he had ever done before his repentance had not brought him a single inch closer to salvation than if he hadn't done any of those past good deeds! **As long as those good deeds had been done with the wrong operating system in his mind, none of those good deeds had brought him**

closer to salvation. That's why Paul referred to them as "dead works". This is something that people who have grown up in the Church of God need to understand, because this is also true for them.

With the expression "repentance from dead works" he meant that we need to change our way of thinking! Instead of seeking to accumulate "good works", which was the typical approach when Paul had been a Pharisee, we need to concentrate on changing the way our minds work. Good works are never supposed to be an end in themselves. Good works are supposed to be nothing other than the outward manifestation of how a person's mind works.

So in a sense **Paul was also like someone who had grown up in the Church**, with not really many things to change (apart from "stop persecuting and killing true Christians", that is). With the changed outlook in Paul's mind all those past good deeds had lost their value, because Paul realized that all along while doing those good deeds his own mind had been controlled by a wrong way of thinking.

Paul's life before repentance, and also the life of someone who has grown up in God's Church, is somewhat like a child collecting stones or seashells or stamps, or cards, etc. Then, when they grow up those things lose the importance they had during childhood. As Paul put it:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but **when I became a man**, **I put away childish things**. (1 Corinthians 13:11)

He put away "childish things" because **his thinking had changed**, not because there had been something wrong with those "childish things". And Paul came to see that all of his Sabbath-keeping and all his other "good works" before repentance had no more value than a child's collection of seashells.

Now if you make a study of every occurrence of the verb "repent" (i.e. metanoeo) in the New Testament, and in every instance remind yourself that "repent" means to change the way we think from the world's selfish way of thinking to God's way of thinking, THEN you should see that **the Bible does not talk about "repenting of sins"**, that the intention to not sin again is really only a consequence to having repented.

I know **it is hard to break old habits**; but we should really determine to not use any variations of the expression "to repent of your sins", because that expression only confuses what repentance really should be.

We should not confuse "metanoeo" with "metamellomai", because that is what many of us have done in the past. **We have focused on being sorry for specific events** (things we have done or said or thought) and **we have then assumed that our being sorry was proof of being repentant**. And yes, being sorry should certainly be a part of real repentance, but it must go much further than that.

This is important to understand!

When we add the expression "**of your sins**" to God's command to us to repent, then we are actually **forcing** the meaning of "metamellomai" onto the word "repent".

You simply cannot retain the biblical meaning of "repent" (i.e. metanoeo) in the expression "to repent of your sins"!

This expression "to repent of your sins" forces us to assign the meaning of "to be sorry" to the word "repent". And that results in us having a distorted view of the correct meaning of the word "repent".

Thus:

- When someone says: "**I will not forgive him for having done that until he repents**", the person means: I will not forgive him until he states that he is sorry for having done that; I expect him to express sorrow and remorse.

- When someone says: "**Have you repented of your sins?**", he is asking: do you have sorrow and remorse for your past conduct? Are you prepared to acknowledge your guilt? But that's not repentance!

- When a husband says to his wife: "**I have repented of having had an affair and therefore you now ought to forgive me**", he is saying: I am sorry for what I did and therefore you should now forget my transgression and not hold it against me. But with that attitude **he hasn't repented at all**, because his statement is an expression of that same old way of thinking (selfishly!), wanting to have his guilt removed! His attitude is the same attitude that King Saul had when he said "I have sinned".

- When someone says: "**What am I supposed to repent of?**", he is saying: what is it that I have done wrong? Where am I guilty of having sinned? Show me what I have done wrong. This focus also has nothing to do with real repentance!

- When someone says: "**I repent for having told others what you had told me privately in confidence**", he is saying: I am sorry for having said certain confidential things about you. But **sorrow is not the same as repentance**!

In all of these situations people have misused the word "repent", basically by assigning the meaning of "metamellomai" to this English word "repent". But God has not instructed us to "metamellomai"; God has instructed us to "metanoeo", to change the way we think and change the way our minds work and reason, to change the operating system that controls our minds. And **the correct meaning of "metanoeo" is regrettably lost in all of the above situations**.

As already stated earlier, part of the blame for our blurred understanding of the concept of repentance lies with the translators who chose to also translate "metamellomai" into English as "repent". That was a huge mistake because it equated metamellomai with metanoeo. But these two words really have different meanings. Let's not perpetuate this mistake of the translators.

So how do we go about repenting? Is it something we do or is it something that God has to "give" to us? How do we repent?

DOES GOD "GIVE" US REPENTANCE?

In the New Testament the first time the word "repent" is used, it is by **John the Baptist** in Matthew 3:2.

And saying, **repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt. 3:2)

The next time the word is used is by **Jesus Christ** in Matthew 4:17.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt. 4:17)

In both of these verses the word "repent" is used in the imperative mood. This mood is used to express **a command**. The imperative mood is also used for the word "repent" in Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Revelation 2:5; Revelation 2:16; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 3:19. Thus of the 34 times it is used (in 32 different verses) this word is used **10 times** in the imperative mood, stating **a clear**

command.

Now God only gives us commands for things that He expects **us** to do; God does not give us commands for things which God Himself will do. So the first thing we should have clearly in our minds is this:

Repentance is something we ourselves have to do! It is not something that God will ever do for us!

Remember that "repent" means "to change the way we think". But we on our own are incapable of changing the way we think. **We need God's help** in this process. So let's look at two other verses.

After the Apostle Peter had returned to Jerusalem from baptizing the non-Jew Cornelius and reported the whole matter to the Church there, then people responded by saying:

"... then has God also to the other nations **granted** repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18)

And the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and said:

"... if God peradventure will **give** them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Timothy 2:25)

Here we have two Scriptures that tell us that God "grants" or "gives" repentance. In both of these verses the Greek verb is "**didomi**", which means "to give".

So the question is: how can God possibly **command** us to do something, when it is impossible for us to do that unless He first **gives** it to us? I mention this because some people seem to think that repentance is all up to God, that if people don't repent then that isn't really their fault. **That view is not correct!**

What God "grants" or "gives" to people is **the ability** to repent, the ability to change their way of thinking. In our analogy, God gives us **access** to the new operating system, but we have to do the installing ourselves. This "access" to changing our way of thinking (to renew our minds) is given to us through the Holy Spirit. Here is how it basically works.

The Holy Spirit **opens our minds** to understanding spiritual things. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 Paul explained this, that it is through the Spirit of God that we can be enabled to understand the things of God. The Holy Spirit also enables us to have **a spiritual perspective** on life.

So the point is this:

When God has opened our minds to understand spiritual things **that is when God has "granted" us the opportunity to repent**, to change the operating system that controls our minds.

This then presents us with **a choice**. We still fully understand our old way of thinking and reasoning, but we can also understand life from God's perspective (to a small degree). This then puts us into a situation not unlike the one Israel found themselves in at the time of Moses, when God said:

"... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose** life, that both you and your seed may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

For us to choose to repent, to choose to install God's way of thinking into our minds, represents life. And **if we choose not to install God's way of thinking** that represents death, in the same way that God set "life and death" before ancient Israel. Once our minds have been opened to some degree, then **we have to make a choice**. God deals with us just as he did with Israel!

It is not a matter of God not having "given" repentance to all those people who are still unrepentant in this world, though that is certainly the case for the vast majority of unrepentant people alive today. But **there are also those individuals** who were given sufficient understanding by God to be able to make a choice regarding the way their minds work, and **they chose to reject God's way of thinking** for any number of different reasons, and therefore they never came to repentance, to that different way of using their minds.

God's calling enables us to make a choice. And anyone who has been enabled to make such a choice is accountable to God if they make either the wrong choice or no choice at all.

The understanding God made available to people who have chosen to not repent may have fallen "**on stony ground**" or it may have fallen "**among thorns**" and choked. But they chose not to accept God's view of how we human beings should live, even though they had been given access to this understanding.

God requires us to put out effort in order to install His way of thinking into our minds. **It doesn't come naturally or easily.** We have to work; we must be willing to yield and to submit to God's guidance.

The point for you and for me to keep in mind in this regard is this: God has **already** given you and me access to the new operating system for our minds. There is nothing more God has to do to grant us "repentance"! With God having already opened our minds to understanding His will and His purpose, it is now up to us to voluntarily install God's way of thinking into our minds; and it will require **active effort on our part, in the face of pressure to stay with the old operating system**, for us to install the new system for the way our minds should work.

Real repentance (i.e. **really** changing the way our minds work) most assuredly requires a great deal of effort on the part of the person who is "repenting". It takes enormous effort to install a totally new way of thinking into our minds. And in most cases this is only achieved over an extended period of time. But installing a different way of thinking is not something God does for us!

So what about you? Where do you stand?

WHAT ABOUT YOU AND YOUR REPENTANCE?

I mentioned at the start that it is not my intention to make you feel guilty or to have you question your own repentance and conversion. But you do need to know, and know that you know, that you did indeed repent when you were baptized and became a part of God's Church. You cannot afford even the slightest degree of uncertainty in this matter, because your repentance becomes the foundation on which your relationship with God is built.

People who have not really repented don't actually have any foundation for their relationship with God, **even when they keep the laws of God**. The only foundation for any relationship with God is that we human beings change the way our minds work to the point where we see things from God's point of view.

It is not important that you had perfect understanding at the time you were baptized ... until our dying day there will always be room for growth in knowledge and in understanding in our minds. So don't be perturbed if, after having read this article, you now feel that there were some things you didn't really understand before. You can still know that you really did repent back then.

There are two points that you can examine in this regard. The first point involves **the requirement for** real repentance, and the second point involves **the evidence of** real repentance.

The most important requirement for real repentance is commitment! When you repented, did you make an unconditional commitment to strive to always seek God's will in every area of your life, a commitment to strive to please God in whatever way possible? Did you make a commitment to diligently seek out how God wants you to live and what it is that He would like you to do in every area of your life? Are you still committed to these things, or has your resolve "mellowed"?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

The commitment that God is looking for goes far beyond the matter of determining to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, to tithe and not to eat unclean meats. Those things are all just "the milk" (see Hebrews 5:12-14). The commitment requires an active search for the will of God and a desire to understand the mind of God, and to then conduct our lives in a manner which will result in us pleasing God.

For example, a lot of Israelites saw fellow-Israelites committing "whoredom" with Moabite women (Numbers 25:1); but there was only one man, **Phinehas**, who did something about it because he understood God's will. Phinehas took a spear and he ... "thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly" (Numbers 25:8). God then said that because of this zeal for God by Phinehas, He was turning His anger away from Israel (Numbers 25:11). **Phinehas was committed to God**.

Now our commitment to God today does not require us to go out and kill people, as was the case with Phinehas. But it must certainly go a long way beyond mere compliance with given instructions. **Compliance is not commitment!**

Real commitment to God requires us to translate every biblical principle we become aware of into practical applications in our lives (as far as that is possible). How did Phinehas know that it would please God for him to kill those two people? How did he know that God would not look upon him as a brutal murderer? Phinehas understood how God viewed the immoral conduct of the Israelites. Phinehas' action was proof of his commitment to God.

How can God see proof of **our** commitment to Him? God sees our commitment by our diligent efforts at turning the principles God has revealed in the Bible into practical applications in our own daily lives; our diligent efforts in this regard show God our desire to want to understand His mind, and to then implement in our daily lives what we have learned about the mind of God.

To put it another way:

Keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days and tithing, etc., only requires us to install "**new software**" into our minds. That new software is certainly important, but it is of itself not evidence of real repentance. It is our diligent efforts at understanding the mind of God and, as much as is possible, of seeking out the principles God has revealed that lead to us pleasing God, that is the evidence that we have indeed installed a new "operating system" in our minds. That approach shows God that we have embraced a

new way of thinking, that we now have a different perspective of life.

So have you embraced a different way of thinking and reasoning from the way the people in the world around you use their minds? Or do you reason just like they do, but with a few bits of different software installed in your mind.

Now if we are really looking, then **sooner or later** we see principles that are in conflict **with what we are doing or what we would like permission to do**. It is then that the commitment we made is tested. If at times like that we suppress what our conscience tells us to do, then our commitment is not very strong. Yes, at times we all fall short; but we still have to face the truth.

Now for you, **you yourself** are the only one (on the human level) who knows what sort of commitment you have made to God, how strong that commitment is, whether it is still as uncompromising as it was when you first believed or whether it has mellowed to accommodate some of the ways of this world. You are the one who knows this.

IF you can tell yourself before God (you don't need to convince anyone else of this point) that you did make an unconditional commitment to God, and that this unconditional commitment to God has only become stronger with the passage of time, **then you need never doubt your original repentance**. Whether or not you have at times slipped up and fallen short in applying this commitment is not the question. All of us have slipped and fallen short. Important is whether or not we still have that commitment and strive to live by it.

We need to understand that when some people slip, then they also lose the commitment they had possessed. We need to be sure that this is not true for us. But we should recognize that when we slip, then we always face a battle between the two operating systems. Satan looks upon any slip-ups on our part as opportunities to try to reinstall his way of thinking in our minds. So whenever we sin, we face a battle between two conflicting ways of using our minds.

That's point one. Now let's look at point two.

The evidence of real repentance (which leads to real conversion through the free gift of the Holy Spirit, see Acts 2:38) is a changed mind, a changed way of thinking! That is really the only evidence of real repentance!

So how can you know whether your mind has indeed been "renewed"?

The Apostle Paul explained that a renewed mind has three major components. These three components of God's way of thinking are:

- a spirit of **love**,

- a spirit of **power**,

- a spirit of a **sound mind**. (See 2 Timothy 1:7)

Jesus Christ further explained that the Holy Spirit would **guide us into all truth** (see John 16:13). And the Apostle Paul explained that the Holy Sprit opens our minds to **spiritual understanding** (see 1 Corinthians 2:11). These are all components of the new operating system.

So how do these things translate into practical terms?

Yes, a renewed mind will have understanding of spiritual things. God's Spirit will enable converted people to understand God's plan and God's purpose, as well as understanding the Bible, the Word of God. But **much of this "understanding"** is really very basic and it **is also understood by many people who have never yet repented**. There are many "Bible scholars" and "Bible commentators" who have never gone through the process of real repentance, yet who have written commentaries on the Bible which can provide certain knowledge and information. While the understanding of such people will be lacking in some areas, it is often correct in quite a few other areas that involve technical information.

So clearly a renewed mind has to go beyond understanding much of the Bible. And it does! **A renewed mind has much more than just access to additional knowledge and understanding.**

What 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us is that the operating system of a renewed mind is one based on "power, love and a sound mind". In other words, **the perspective of mind for everything we do and understand is from a foundation of power**, and it becomes a desire to see God's will fulfilled, an outgoing concern (i.e. "love") for humanity as a whole from God's point of view. This is in contrast to the natural perspective of "me first". Yes, none of us will have this godly perspective perfectly, but **there should be some evidence** that our perspective has at least changed in that direction, towards God's way of thinking.

People in this world will "think it strange" that those who are converted don't have the same goals and purposes and don't think the same way they do (see 1 Peter 4:4).

But let's get down to our level.

Most of us are in **daily contact** with many people who are not in God's Church and who have never yet really repented. And many of those people may indeed be very fine people. But as you interact with them (and I mean in non-religious matters), can you see that **they just don't think the way you do**, that they have **different priorities**, that they have **a totally different vantage point** on so many issues, that things they view as important are often so unimportant to you, that **they have fears and insecurities** which don't perturb you, that often you **only have very few things in common** with them and **lengthy personal discussions become difficult** to conduct, that at times their manner of speech makes you uncomfortable, that **their reasoning doesn't make sense** to you, that **they simply don't understand** your perspective on many issues of life, etc.?

To state this very plainly:

The more you readily identify with the world and its ways, the less likely it is that you are really converted! Revelation 18:4 instructs repentant people to "come out of" Babylon, which is representative of the world's ways. And we did "come out" when we installed God's operating system in our minds.

Let's consider one biblical example regarding the two different ways of thinking:

While death is never pleasant, a godly perspective should help us to not sorrow even as other people in this world sorrow who have no hope (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13). The Apostle Paul himself was not all that concerned about whether he would continue to live or whether he would die (see Philippians 1:21-24). And while people can accept that the elderly must all die sooner or later, the death of a young child is a much harder matter. Now consider and compare the perspective of King David with that of his servants. This account is found in 2 Samuel chapter 12.

After King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, God struck the child with sickness. While the child was sick David fasted, to see if God would perhaps have mercy on the child and let him live. On the

seventh day the child died and then **David immediately**, after first praying to God, **broke his fast**. To his unconverted servants this just didn't make sense. They said:

"... What thing is this that you have done? You did fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, you did rise and eat bread." (2 Samuel 12:21)

From their perspective the mourning only really started when a person died. But **David had a different perspective.** He said:

"... While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But **now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?** ..." (2 Samuel 12:22-23)

Exactly! What's the point of fasting once the person we are concerned about has died?

The purpose for which David fasted was totally different from the purposes his servants would have thought of. We too should understand, like David, that there is no purpose in fasting and weeping for someone who has died. [At a time of death the expression of concern, empathy and compassion is for the bereaved who remain alive, not for the deceased.]

The point here is that **David had a different mind-set**; he viewed life from a different perspective to those around him. That's one of the effects that results from installing a new operating system in our minds; it gives us a different perspective on very many different issues.

There are many areas in life where **the renewed mind** of a repentant and converted believer **will have a totally different perspective** from the common average perspective held by people in this world. That worldly perspective, in its ultimate form, was put into words by Satan, the god of this present age, when Satan said to God:

"... Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." (Job 2:4) **This is the world's operating system!**

The contrasting perspective of the godly operating system was stated by Jesus Christ, when He said:

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) **This is God's operating system!**

These two perspectives are diametric opposites. And these two perspectives on life are the products of two different operating systems in a human mind.

Here is a major key:

MOST OF THE PERSPECTIVES IN THE NATURAL OPERATING SYSTEM ON ALL OF THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT LIFE CAN IN SOME FORM OR OTHER BE LED BACK TO JOB 2:4. AND MOST OF THE PERSPECTIVES IN THE GODLY OPERATING SYSTEM SOONER OR LATER LEAD BACK TO JOHN 15:13.

If you can grasp this point, then you are well on the way to understanding the major differences between the two operating systems.

This goes far beyond mere outward actions, which initially in many cases may appear very similar for both operating systems. It really goes back to "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (see Hebrews 4:12) which underlie those outward actions. **In the two operating systems the same actions are the result**

of different thoughts and intents of the heart!

Now in the following example keep these two perspectives in mind:

1) **Satan says:** a man will give anything to save his life (or the lives of his loved ones). Therefore **Satan will always seek to intimidate us** & fill us with fears for our lives!

2) **Jesus Christ says:** we need to be prepared to lay down our lives. Therefore **God wants us to not give in to fears**!

Now supposing **someone kidnaps our wives or our children**. And then they demand a ransom or they will kill our wives or our children. What would **you** do? **Would you pay** that ransom? **The real kidnapper is very obviously Satan!** So what do you do?

Well, if it was my family that had been kidnapped, **I would never, under any circumstances, pay a ransom** to seek the release of my wife or my children, because **I would never pay Satan to spare the lives of my family!**

And if I was the one who had been kidnapped, **I would not want anyone**, not my wife or my children or any organization, **to pay a ransom to the kidnappers for my release! I don't ever beg Satan to spare my life!!! Never, not under any circumstances whatsoever!**

Now is that what you would do? Or **would you pay** the ransom money, saying "**after all it is only money**"?

The way the operating system in my mind works is very simple! My life and the lives of members of my family are in God's hands, not in Satan's hands! I believe the words of Jesus Christ. Pontius Pilate said to Jesus Christ: "don't You know that I have power to crucify You, and have power to release You" (John 19:10). In other words, Pontius Pilate had the same power that the kidnappers claim they have, the power to kill or to set free.

To this statement Jesus Christ replied:

Jesus answered, **Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above**: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. (John 19:11)

This principle is **always** true! No human being has the power over life and death if God in heaven does not permit it! The same point is made repeatedly in the Old Testament. Daniel's three friends understood this. And in the days of Moses God had said "vengeance belongs to Me" (Deuteronomy 32:35). After that God then said to Israel:

See now that I, *even* I, *am* he, and *there is* no god with me: **I kill, and I make alive**; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand. (Deuteronomy 32:39)

So if I myself were a kidnap victim, or if any member of my family were to be a kidnap victim, **I will not let Satan intimidate me!** My life, or the lives of my family members, are always in the hands of God, and never in the hands of some Satan-inspired kidnappers. **And if God allows me to be killed by some kidnapper** because a fear-instilling ransom wasn't paid, then I am prepared to die. **If God is not going to save my life from some perverted greedy kidnapper, then my life isn't really worth all that much anyway! I'd rather die than have someone pay Satan a ransom for me, to save my life.**

[**COMMENT:** This is not the same as paying a fine instead of spending time in jail. If we are thrown into

jail because of something we have done, and we could pay a fine instead of jail time, that is a different matter. I am talking about criminals threatening our lives, not about paying legally imposed fines.]

So that's the way the operating system in my mind works. It is based on the words of God and of Jesus Christ. **We need to make sure that Satan is never able to instill a spirit of fear in us.**

Now most people in the world would pay almost anything to have the lives of their family members spared! **Would you do that? Satan says you would!** That's exactly what Satan had said to God in Job 2:4, that you would pay whatever ransom is demanded for your life.

Now you might check where the operating system in your mind stands on questions like this. **Would you be motivated by "a spirit of fear"?** See 2 Timothy 1:7. Or would you be motivated by Romans 8:31?

What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? (Romans 8:31)

Understand that **it is pressure situations that will expose the operating system in our minds**. During the good times, the stress-free times, the two systems can appear to be identical, just like **the 10 virgins looked identical** as long as it was day; i.e. **as long as there was no stress**. But once things became stressful (i.e. it was dark and they needed to light their lamps), then there was a big difference between the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. (See Matthew 25:1-4.)

So to get back to our two points about repentance:

1) The requirement for repentance is an unconditional commitment to God.

2) The evidence of repentance is a new operating system in the mind.

The **one** must be there **before baptism**, and **the other** will only appear **after baptism**.

Now you are the only one who can know the level of your commitment to God. But when it comes to **a renewed mind**, this is something that **will very often also become apparent to other people**, at least to some degree. Other people will often see whether your mind sees life from the same perspective that they see it, whether or not you think just like they do.

So the question is:

Can **you** see that your mind functions differently from the way the minds of unrepentant people around you function? This is something that I myself can see all the time about my own mind, that there is a gulf between the way I think and the way people out in the world think. From my point of view, the reasoning of so many people out there and the way they think is just plain cockeyed!

Is that how you see the way people in the world use their minds? Or can you readily and easily identify with their goals and their purposes and their ways of reasoning, and their ways of justifying their own conduct? **How does your mind work?**

Are you able to lead your actions back to the foundation of John 15:13 or do your actions lead back to Job 2:4? Are you motivated by a spirit of fear which Satan instills in people, or are you motivated by a spirit of power which God imparts to repentant believers (see 2 Timothy 1:7)? What is it that motivates you?

The main key to identifying Satan's operating system is to **identify Satan's trademark**, which is **a spirit of fear**. As long as we have a spirit of fear, we still have the world's operating system controlling all the

activities in our minds. Satan instills this spirit of fear very early into very young children. And then Satan seeks to maintain that spirit of fear in the human mind for the rest of the person's life, to make that person his life-long slave (see Hebrews 2:15).

Every single irrational fear that a small child exhibits is a manifestation of a Satan-instilled spirit of fear!

Frequently parents actually help Satan to instill irrational fears in their children by the way parents deal with and respond to their children. **Children are not born with fears**; fears are instilled in their minds at some point after birth. And fears in the minds of small children are the evidence that Satan is **already** influencing their minds!

During the millennium small children will not have any fears at all! That's the whole point of a little child "leading" previously dangerous animals (see Isaiah 11:6)! Even today small children should no more have fears than puppies or baby lions or little kittens have fears. The fact that most small children do have fears, as opposed to baby animals not having fears, is evidence of a spirit of fear having **already** been instilled in the minds of those small children. Fear is not natural!

So if you have grown up in the Church of God:

While you may not have committed any major sins in your life, can you see that your mind is also influenced by that spirit of fear? Have you ever feared for your life? Even the apostles had a spirit of fear when they were on a boat during a storm (Matthew 8:24-25). Can you identify any fears you've had that are really irrational? If so, can you **now** understand that the operating system in your mind needs to be changed from a spirit of fear to a spirit of power?

If your mind has been renewed, it will be able to follow the logic presented by other renewed minds, when it comes to understanding the Scriptures. A sound explanation will make sense to you, though people in the world may view that same explanation as foolishness, as Paul implied in 1 Corinthians 2:14.

But the natural man receives not **the things of the Spirit of God**: for they **are foolishness unto him**: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Thus, when you hear the Scriptures explained correctly, you will be able to discern this; and when the Scriptures are misapplied you will also recognize this (if not perfectly every time, then certainly far, far more often than people in the world would identify wrong explanations).

It is basically like Jesus Christ said in Revelation 2:2. **You** have tested those who claim to represent the truth of God and **you** have found the false ones to be liars. The new operating system in your mind enables you to distinguish between true and false ministers.

Yes, true repentance **requires** us to turn away from breaking God's laws and turn towards obedience; true repentance **requires** us to count the cost of taking such a step; true repentance **requires** us to confess our sins and transgressions to God; true repentance **requires** us to contemplate the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf; and true repentance **requires** us to seek God's forgiveness for our sins.

But if you were baptized at some point in the past, you need to know mainly two things:

1) **Did you make an unconditional commitment** to from henceforth obey God in every way and to seek His will in every area of your life? And do you still abide by that commitment without having

modified any of the clauses in it?

2) In looking back to your life before you repented: **can you see that the way your mind now works has changed**? Can you see that the things that were of the greatest importance to you before repentance have become rather unimportant now (Philippians 3:8)? Can you see a gulf between the way your mind works, and the way the mind of the average person you happen to know in the world works? Can you see that the way you yourself used to reason a year ago (or five years ago or twenty years ago) **now seems strange to you**? Can you see that you now understand far more about life and about God's plan and God's will than was the case years ago?

If between you and God you can answer "yes" to these two questions, then you are repentant, and need not be concerned or worried about when you first submitted your life to God.

Rather, you can and you should focus on "hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown" (Revelation 3:11) and you should "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

So let's summarize this whole subject of repentance.

IN SUMMARY

1) In order for us to be able to repent, we first of all have to understand exactly what it is that God wants us to do. We have to understand what meaning the word "repent" is supposed to convey to us.

2) In the past 60 years multiple thousands of unrepentant people have been baptized by ministers in God's Church. This is a huge problem. They were "tares".

3) To understand what God is looking for when people repent, it is helpful to understand what God is **not** looking for. And what God is not looking for is mechanical, robotic obedience to all of his laws; i.e. God does NOT want the "just tell me what to do and I'll do it" attitude. That is in fact **a terrible attitude** for the simple reason that it shuts the mind out of the process of obedience.

4) Rather, God is looking for people who use their minds in a certain way, people who have accepted a certain way of thinking. Whereas the way the natural mind thinks is not the way God thinks (see Isaiah 55:8), the repentant mind is on the path of thinking the way God thinks. The repentant mind will easily identify with God's perspective on every issue.

5) The right actions and conduct will follow the right way of thinking. The right way of thinking must be the foundation for all of the right actions that will follow.

6) **A repentant person is someone whose mind has been renewed.** Repentance is both focused on and restricted to the way the mind works. All right conduct is only a consequence and not a cause of that right way of thinking. Actions don't feature directly in the process of repentance; they are only a consequence of the renewed mind. When actions precede the use of the mind, or even take place without any involvement of the mind, then obedience is either coincidental or else it is without convictions! And both of those conditions make obedience worthless. The mind must provide the foundation for all obedience to God.

7) If we use a computer analogy: In a computer we have a hard drive to store information, software to use and manipulate information, and an operating system (i.e. "OS") to determine **how** the software will

be used. In this analogy the human mind is like the hard drive, our actions, conduct and behavior are like the software, and **the way we use our minds** is like the operating system.

8) Now when they believe that they have come to the point of repentance, then many people throw some of the old software out of their minds; i.e. **they change some of their actions, conduct and behavior**. While that is fine, that in itself is not real repentance! Throwing out only the old software does not solve the real problem between God and man.

9) Real repentance requires every human being, from the "perfect and upright" man Job on down, to change the operating system in his mind. Jesus Christ is the only One who has ever had the right operating system in His mind from birth.

10) **The real problem** between us human beings and God is **not** our wrong actions! The real problem between God and us is the operating system that controls our minds! And it is impossible for people with the wrong operating system in their minds to please God (see Romans 8:8). Incidentally, the wrong operating system is also the cause for all the problems between and amongst people for the simple reason that selfishness is the foundation for that operating system.

11) Now before the new operating system can be installed in our minds, our minds first of all have to be reformatted, like reformatting a computer hard drive. It is only after the old operating system has been removed that the new operating system can be installed in our minds. These two operating systems cannot really co-exist, something that the Apostle Paul made quite clear in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. "... what fellowship ... what communion ... what concord ... what part ... what agreement" is there really between these two operating systems for the human mind? None!

12) Once the new operating system is installed in our minds, **the old software will only be able to run with severe conscience problems**. So if after baptism all the old software in our minds still runs just as smoothly as it always has, then this indicates that the new operating system was not really installed in our minds after baptism.

13) The way the conscience responds to running the old software in our minds is a major key in identifying whether or not a mind is repentant, whether or not that mind has been changed.

14) Now **if** the old operating system is **not** removed at the time of baptism which was based on supposed repentance, then two things happen. For one thing, **all the old software will still run smoothly and easily in our minds**, and secondly, **the new software** we are supposed to install in our minds at repentance **is going to be perceived as very stressful**. It will take real effort to make that new software run in our minds. So when people perceive the requirements of God’s way of life as stressful and difficult, then the new operating system has not yet been fully installed in their minds.

15) As an example: when someone comes into the Church but continues to engage in secret sins (e.g. adultery, etc.), then this is clear evidence that the new operating system was **never** installed in his mind. This in turn means that the person in fact **never** really repented when they came into the Church. There is no way that someone with the new operating system installed in his mind can possibly be involved in **an on-going adulterous affair**! Members and ministers who in the past did that had never really repented in the first place!

16) A telltale sign of the wrong operating system is that obedience to certain laws of God is in fact **reluctant or resentful obedience**, rather than joyful obedience. Ask yourself: are there any laws of God that you resent or that you would do away with if it was in your power to do so? Or do you unconditionally "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (see Revelation 14:4)?

17) Two NT Greek words were unfortunately both translated as "repent" by the translators. This error lies at the heart of much of the misunderstanding regarding true repentance.

18) The Greek word "**metamellomai**" expresses the very common human emotion of **being sorry for something**. This word in no way expresses the concept of real repentance! This word refers to a desirable emotion which can be expressed by both the wrong and the right operating system in the human mind. **For that reason it is impossible to identify true repentance by looking at the fruits of "metamellomai".**

19) The Greek word "**metanoeo**" refers to reformatting the human mind and then installing a completely new operating system. This is the only NT Greek word that correctly expresses the concept of what real repentance is all about! It does not refer to an emotion or a feeling. It refers to a new operating system for the human mind.

20) Both these Greek words involve the use of the mind. But "**metamellomai**" **refers to an emotion of regret** or feeling sorry, and this word sometimes leads to a person throwing out some of the old bad software (i.e. changing certain habits or behavior). With "**metanoeo**" such old bad software is also thrown out. But such throwing out is only a consequence of what this word really represents. This word **represents a reformatting of the mind** and then installing a new operating system, with the result that much of the old software simply won't run on the new system, at least not without major conscience difficulties. This word "metanoeo" refers to **embracing a new way of thinking**.

21) The major problem with translating "metamellomai" as "repent" is that this created **a completely wrong focus for the word "repent"**. It is unavoidable that the emotion of being sorry has to focus on some actions and activities. **In the absence of all actions and all activities it is pretty well impossible "to be sorry".** And mistranslating this Greek word as "repent" forced the focus of such repenting to be on actions, conduct and behavior. That was a diabolical deception!

22) The word "**metanoeo**" has nothing at all to do with any actions! It **focuses exclusively on the mind**! Actions are only a consequence of how the mind works, but actions are not the cause for the way the mind works. However, actions (i.e. wrong or bad ones) are always the cause for feeling sorry.

23) Throughout the Bible it is always the mind and how it works that is God's primary concern. That theme goes from before the flood with "**every imagination** of the thoughts of his heart" (Genesis 6:5), to God dealing with Israel in the wilderness with "o that there were such a heart in them" (Deuteronomy 5:29), to man's way of thinking not being like God's way of thinking (Isaiah 55:8), to the meaning of the Greek word "metanoeo" in the New Testament.

24) **One of the worst possible ways to distort the correct meaning** of the word "repent" is to say: "Have you repented **of your sins**?"! That statement single-handedly utterly obliterates the true meaning of the word "metanoeo"! That statement **forces** a person to focus on actions, on what they have done!

25) **The story of Job** makes absolutely clear that the word "repent" has nothing to do with wrong actions (i.e. with sins). Job did **not** have any sins to repent of (i.e. not before he "lost it" in Job 3:1)! That is what God pointed out to Satan! Job didn't have to change any of his actions or behavior. **Job had to change the way he used his mind**; he had to reject the operating system that had previously controlled his mind and then replace it with a new operating system.

26) The reciprocal question: "**What am I supposed to repent of?**" reinforces that wrong focus on outward actions and conduct. Both these questions express the emotion of "metamellomai", and NOT the meaning of "metanoeo".

27) Put another way: Repentance is **how** we use our minds; it is **not** about **what** we do or don't do. What we do or don't do is only a consequence of how we use our minds.

28) As already stated, Job didn't have any sins in his life. Yes, I am aware of Romans 3:10, where Paul said that "there is none righteous, no, not one", and where you may perhaps freely extrapolate that statement to apply to Job? Paul was in fact freely quoting a statement that appears in two of David's psalms. In Psalm 14:3, and also in Psalm 53:1, David wrote that "there is none that does good, no, not one". However, the God who never lies said very plainly to Satan regarding Job that "there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and hates evil" (Job 1:8).

In Romans 3:10 Paul was speaking about the present, not the past. He wasn't talking about **a unique individual named Job**. Note that when God said that there was no one like Job on the earth, God was saying that Job was unique in his character and in his way of implementing the laws of God in his life. Not even Satan was able to point to any specific sins in Job's life.

29) The problem Job had was that his mind was still being controlled by the wrong selfish operating system. That wrong operating system was evidenced by **the spirit of fear** that had secretly controlled Job's mind all along.

For the thing **which I greatly feared** is come upon me, and that **which I was afraid of** is come unto me. (Job 3:25)

It had been a wrong irrational fear that had motivated Job. And so Job needed to reformat the hard drive of his mind, and then install a completely new operating system, one that is based on a spirit of power.

30) Now **many people who have grown up in the Church** are in the **same position that Job was in**, though not as perfectly as Job. They have grown up with the right understanding and the right teachings. And they don't really have major sins to put out of their lives. The main thing they have to do at repentance is to change the operating system in their minds, just like Job had to do. They too need to reject the spirit of fear which controls this world. The spirit of fear is a terrible, horrible thing, which makes it impossible for God to work with a mind that has a spirit of fear. It must be rooted out!

31) The best biblical explanation of "repent" is Job 42:5-6. **First** a person's **eyes** must be **opened** to grasping God's way of thinking (verse 5), **and then** the person can make the active deliberate decision to **change the way he uses his mind**, i.e. he repents (verse 6). God's part in this process is that He opens the eyes. When a person says "**I repent**" the person is saying "**I have consciously changed my way of thinking**".

32) **Even God Himself has repeatedly repented** (Genesis 6:6). When we understand that this word "repent" really has nothing to do with sins, that it refers exclusively to changing one's thinking, then it makes perfect sense! Based on the things that have happened **God has frequently changed His mind**, i.e. He has frequently "repented".

Genesis 6:6 is just one single example. Every time God has modified His plan or else has modified His instructions to mankind, that is always the result of God "repenting", of changing something He had previously intended to do. Don't for a moment think that God's existence is some kind of robotic existence, in which everything is pre-determined well in advance, because that is simply not the case!

33) When circumstances change then it is always a good thing "to repent" in order to take those changed circumstances into account. **Without repentance**, i.e. without a change in thinking, **there can be no progress**! Every time we learn something new that causes us to modify or add to our previous understanding, we are in fact "repenting"; i.e. we are changing to thinking differently about something. It

is a huge mistake for us to mentally equate the word "repent" with words like "remorse", because those are two completely different things.

34) **Don't attach some mysterious religious meaning to this word "repent"!** For us human beings "repent" simply means to change **the way** our minds work. For God "repent" means to change the thoughts regarding what or how or when God had intended to do something. But God never changes the way He thinks! God's way of thinking is perfect and immutable, and God's way of thinking is the new operating system that we are required to install in our minds when we come to repentance. Basically the word "repent" means the same thing whether it is applied to God or to man.

35) The statement "to repent of your sins" is not biblical! It is never used in the Bible! It was introduced by way of worldly non-Church-of-God preachers, who wanted to pressure people to comply with their particular religious ideas. From the 1950's - 70's we even had some of those types of preachers in the Church. So-called "powerful preaching" is invariably focused on "repent **of your sins**"! It is hard to wax eloquent without some sins to attack.

This type of preaching **effectively derails a correct understanding of real repentance**, because it invariably focuses on "specific actions", diverting the focus away from changing the operating system in the mind, irrespective of whether a person has many sins, few sins or no sins (apart from Job I don't think there has ever been anyone without sins). **With repentance sins are not the issue!** The issue is the wrong selfish way the mind operates, and all sins are only a consequence of that wrong operating system that controls the mind.

36) The statement "I have sinned" can be made by both the right operating system and the wrong operating system. In plain language: **it is quite possible for unrepentant people to say the words "I have sinned"**. By themselves those words don't prove anything! Saul and David both said these words. In fact, Saul said these words repeatedly (1 Samuel 15:24; 1 Samuel 15:30 and 1 Samuel 26:21). David said these words in 2 Samuel 12:13. But when Saul said these words it didn't really mean anything because Saul never changed his selfish way of thinking. When David said these words they expressed genuine repentance (i.e. a genuine change in the way he used his mind) because David's mind operated on God's way of thinking.

37) **The right words** people may say **have no merit of and by themselves**. Those right words only have a value when they are the product of the right operating system. But when the wrong operating system in the mind motivates people to say the right words, then before God those right words are worthless.

38) To make this plain: **the difference between King Saul and King David** was not that one man's sins were greater than the other man's sins. The difference between these two kings was **the way their minds functioned**; their thinking was the product of two completely different operating systems. Nothing that is produced by the wrong operating system ever has any value before God! The attitude must first be right and acceptable to God before any obedience will have any merit.

39) When the Bible tells us that God "gives" or "grants" repentance to people, it means that **God gives people access** to a new operating system for their minds. God "granting" repentance really refers to what Job said in Job 42:5, i.e. "now my eye sees You". God provides the access, but **we have to do the installing ourselves**. It is up to us ourselves to "reformat" our minds at the time of repentance; i.e. it is up to us to change the way we use our minds.

For example, our own old **selfish operating system** spontaneously focuses on seeing "**motes**" in other people's eyes. **The operating system God makes available** to us has a strong leaning towards seeing "**the beam**" in our own eyes. These two different perspectives are the product of two totally different

operating systems. What God's Spirit does is give us the ability to see the beam in our own eyes; but God's Spirit does NOT install that perspective into our minds. Installing that particular perspective is something we have to do ourselves.

40) **Now consider this point very carefully!**

When God has opened a mind to spiritual understanding, then God has in effect presented that mind with a choice! For all practical purposes that is the same choice that God set before Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19. To make this very plain: when in this New Testament age a person's mind has been opened to understanding the truth of God, then God says to that person:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that you may live.

When a person whose mind has been opened by God makes the wrong choice, meaning that person chooses not to install God's operating system in his mind, then that has serious consequences! Such a person is not by any means "off the hook" simply because he chose to never repent at any time!

I say this because in my recent article on "The Unpardonable Sin" I examined Mr. Armstrong's article on that subject. In that article Mr. Armstrong was concerned about one particular person who had left the Church, and Mr. Armstrong wanted to reassure himself that this person would still have a chance in the second resurrection, because **that person had supposedly never repented**. To assert that the individual Mr. Armstrong had in mind had never repented, Mr. Armstrong wrote:

"Then it came to mind, they didn't remember ever hearing him expressing any disgust with his own self." (Mr. Armstrong's article "The Unpardonable Sin")

But Mr. Armstrong's reasoning in this instance was flawed on two counts!

When God grants someone a real opportunity to be in the first resurrection, then the person becomes responsible for that opportunity, **irrespective of whether they actually ever repent or not**! Did you know that?

So for one thing, Mr. Armstrong's idea that real repentance requires people to express disgust with themselves is flawed. **Expressing disgust with one's own self is not repentance**; it is only in certain situations a consequence of repentance. But don't ever get the idea that the more disgust you express with your own self, the more repentant you supposedly are, because that is simply not the case! **Hypocrites can also express disgust with themselves**, without ever changing!

And if a person is really so disgusted with himself, then he needs to go ahead and change, so that he can stop being disgusted with himself! Now in our contact with God (i.e. in prayer) we should certainly acknowledge our sins and frailty and weaknesses and shortcomings, etc. But **that is not something we should be doing in front of other people**, as Mr. Armstrong's statement wrongly implied. Things done in front of other people are designed to have a certain effect; they are designed to impress someone.

Secondly, **in certain circumstances even unrepentant people** (i.e. people who have never changed the operating system in their minds) **are accountable, and in danger of losing out**. This is what Jesus Christ explained in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13.

Briefly, there are four groups of people in that parable: 1) those **by the wayside**, 2) those **on stony places**, 3) those **among thorns**, and 4) those **on good ground**.

Now the only ones in that parable that are completely "off the hook" are those "by the wayside", because they never get past the stage of being clueless! That represents the overwhelming majority of all human beings since the flood. But the other three groups are all accountable, and **all of them have at some point come into the Church**. But **two of those groups come into the Church without ever repenting**, i.e. those on stony ground and those among thorns.

Those on **stony ground** and those **among thorns** become a part of the Church, but they **never reformat the hard drives in their minds**, and they never get away from their old operating system. **But they are accountable!** They in effect started out on the right track. They in effect "put their hands to the plough but **then looked back**" (see Luke 9:62). This is serious! And it involves people you and I have known! We need to face the truth!

The **soil environment** for these three groups (stony, among thorns, and good ground) represents **the operating system** in their minds! We ourselves have to provide "good ground" for the seeds that God sows. If the ground in our minds is stony or thorny, then that is our own doing! We are the cause and not the victims of such circumstances.

So stony ground and thorny ground represent the unchanged old operating system in a person's mind. Good ground represents the willingness to reformat our minds and to then willingly install God's operating system into our minds.

In plain language: those on stony ground and those among thorns came into the Church but never repented! But they are accountable for whatever knowledge they acquired. By no means are people in these two categories automatically "off the hook"! God is not playing games with people!

When God throws out the seeds, then the only ones who are "off the hook" are those who never respond! Those by the wayside never responded to God in any way. But once people start to respond to God, then they no longer have the option to say "not now, Lord"! You can't respond partway to God and then withdraw without dire consequences!

That is the lesson of **the people who lived before the flood** ... the access they had to God made them accountable for how they responded to God. People who are "on stony ground" and "among thorns" are in the same position as were all people before the flood ... they are accountable! And there is no second resurrection for the people who lived before the flood.

Responding for a time before withdrawing, or responding partway makes you accountable! If people respond to God for a time and then withdraw, it means that **their character is weak**! It means that they are not willing to pay the price for what they have started to understand! That is like putting our hands on the plough and then wanting to turn back. And weak character is a huge problem before God. That's what is the problem with "the fearful and the unbelieving" in Revelation 21:8; they are people of weak character, even if they don't actively commit sins.

So when people who have started in some way to respond to God, and who have come to understand certain things then choose to never install God's operating system in their minds, then they are just as accountable as those people who do install God's operating system. **Accountability depends on opportunities granted, not on how we respond to those opportunities.** Again, that is the lesson of the people before the flood.

41) Now the vast majority of human beings after the flood have always been "by the wayside" and even further away than that from the field where the seeds are scattered. So the vast majority of human beings since the flood are "off the hook" and thus eligible for coming up in the second resurrection. But there are also unrepentant people who chose to never install God's way of thinking in their minds,

something that is a reflection of their own particular character. And such people are accountable for the choices they have made.

42) All of us in God's Church have already had our eyes opened by God. For us God has already fulfilled Job 42:5. So it is up to us to reject our old selfish way of thinking, then to reformat our minds, and then to install God's way of thinking. And that's what we did when we came to the point where we repented, even if back then you would not have expressed it in these words.

43) There are two things which help you to know with certainty that you have indeed repented (i.e. changed the way your mind works). The first point is only something you yourself can know. When you were baptized did you make an unconditional commitment to God, that you would always seek to implement all of His laws in your own life? Were you committed to "follow the Lamb where ever He may choose to lead you" (Revelation 14:4), even if that leading was in directions that you might not like to go? Is your commitment unconditional? Does God always come first in your life or only sometimes?

The second point involves how you think, how your mind works. Are you someone who sees other people's motes, or do you clearly see your own beam? Do you generally have a spirit of fear, or do you have a spirit of power (2 Timothy 1:7)? Which of these two spirits represents the way you live your life from day to day?

On any issue do you see God's perspective or do you readily see Satan's perspective? Do you understand what God is trying to achieve in your life and why God has opened your mind at this time? Do you understand things that others in the world around you don't understand? In whatever circumstances arise, do you identify with God's point of view or do you identify with the world's (i.e. Satan's) point of view? Just how does your mind work? Can you discern any evidence that the way you use your mind **now** is different from the way you used to use your mind before you were baptized many years ago, even if you are someone who grew up in the Church?

You should be able to answer both of these questions in the affirmative. And then you need never doubt your own repentance and conversion. You can know with absolute certainty that you have indeed repented.

WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO REPENT?

Now let's consider another point.

It is a fact that the repentant and the unrepentant alike both still commit sins. So being repentant doesn't eliminate all sinning. And thus the question is: **why** does God want us to repent **before** He starts to work with us? **Exactly what** is God hoping to achieve by commanding us to repent? Couldn't God just start working with us before we even repent, and then **gradually lead us** to the point where we will reject our old way of thinking in favor of accepting God's way of using our minds?

What is the real importance of making repentance **a requirement** for God to start working with us, knowing that we will at times still sin after repenting?

Here is God's purpose for this command.

In Genesis 1:26 God had said: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness ...". The expression "after Our likeness" involves two things:

1) It involves giving man **the spirit in man**, which enables human beings to think and plan ahead and reason on the God-level, compared to animals which cannot do these things. It empowers human beings to have a mind like God has a mind.

2) But the expression "after Our likeness" involves something else in addition to this. Not only had God given human beings a mind, but **God originally also, on a trial basis, installed HIS operating system in their minds**. He installed His way of thinking in the minds of Adam and Eve, but without them having God's Holy Spirit. Rather, God provided a way for them to have access to the Holy Spirit, i.e. by way of "the tree of life", if they were prepared to put out the effort to utilize that access.

Now in some regards Adam and Eve were somewhat like children growing up in the Church of God today, with one difference. As our children are growing up in God's Church they have access to understanding God's way of thinking, God's operating system for the mind. But our children have also since early childhood already been exposed to the world's operating system, as evidenced by, amongst other things, irrational fears (of the dark, of being unpopular, etc.) which they have developed. So our children always face a contest between those two different ways of thinking.

This ties in with what Paul explained to the Corinthians. In trying to encourage church members with unconverted spouses to stay with their unconverted spouses rather than seeking a divorce, Paul said the following about the children of such marriages:

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: **else were your children unclean; but now are they holy**. (1 Corinthians 7:14)

[COMMENT: The Greek word translated "holy" is the adjective "hagios", and the Greek word translated "sanctified" is the verb "hagiazo", which is derived from the word "hagios". For all practical purposes we can view the words "holy" and "sanctified" as interchangeable in this context.]

The point Paul is making is that one believing parent in a family in effect enables both the unbelieving spouse and also the children to have access to God's way of thinking, **if they choose to avail themselves of that access**! That is the point of these family members being "sanctified" or "holy". They have the opportunity to understand God's way of thinking at least to some small degree, if they are willing to put forth the required effort to achieve this.

Anyway, Adam and Eve were somewhat like that, except that Adam and Eve had not yet ever been exposed to Satan's operating system. In this regard Adam and Eve were different from our children.

For Adam and Eve **that installation** of God's operating system in their minds **was conditional** on them **wanting** that operating system, that way of using the minds God had given them. So when Adam and Eve rejected God's way of thinking, then they lost "the trial version" of God's operating system for their minds. And then God drove them out of the garden in Eden and cut off access to the tree of life (see Genesis 3:22-24). They had voluntarily accepted a different operating system, which had in effect become **the default operating system** for all human beings from then onwards.

The purpose of first repenting before God will work with a person is to get the person back to square one!

Fulfilling the requirement of repentance places an individual in the position in which Adam and Eve had been when God had first created them, before they were exposed to Satan's way of thinking, before they were exposed to the operating system in Satan's mind. **Real repentance places the repentant mind in the condition that God had originally selected for human beings**, in order for God to be able to teach and train and develop the minds in those human beings.

There is also a difference between the sins committed by a repentant mind, and the sins committed by an unrepentant mind.

In the unrepentant mind sins are an expression of a rebellious and defiant spirit, an expression of a self-centered way of thinking. That is what the old operating system does; it is focused on "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). When confronted with its sins, then the unrepentant mind will defend and justify itself and its actions. This is a mind that God cannot work with.

In the repentant mind sins are an expression of weakness at a time of temptation. In the repentant mind there is no spirit of rebellion and defiance towards God. There is no spirit of justifying self before God. The sins were due to weakness or impulsiveness or a lack of discernment. When confronted, then the repentant mind will confess and admit to having sinned. This is a mind that will readily respond to God's correction and change, and so this is a mind that God can still work with.

[**COMMENT:** Had Adam and Eve rejected Satan's temptations, thereby rejecting Satan's operating system for the mind, then the trial version of God's operating system for their minds would have been converted into the full version. Satan would have been permanently banished by God, without any future access to human beings. And God's operating system would have become the default operating system for all human beings at birth, like it will be during the millennium. And even as during the millennium there will be many people who will reject that "trial version" and who will consequently install the selfish operating system, so likewise in the time before the flood, there would have been those who would have rejected the trial version of God's operating system.

Those human beings before the flood would still have sinned at times. But their sins would have been of the same type as the sins committed by a repentant mind today. Their sins would not have been the expression of a rebellious, defiant spirit. Because they would readily respond to God, even after sinning through weakness, impulsiveness or a lack of discernment, therefore God would still have been able to work with those minds. It is always the operating system in the human mind that determines whether or not God can work with that mind. This is just something to consider.]

Real repentance re-establishes the state of mind that God had originally wanted to work with in training and teaching mankind.

Now the reason why God rejects working with a mind that runs the worldly operating system is as follows:

In very many things the worldly operating system for our minds can produce the same or at least similar results to those that will be produced by the godly operating system. That is, those results will at times appear to be the same or similar **in the short term**. This is like planets appearing to be the same as stars.

But in the long term the world's operating system (really Satan's operating system) will **always and without fail** create problems and troubles and pain and suffering!

The reason why the world's way of using the human mind always produces problems lies in **the inherent difference between God and Satan**. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), meaning that God's mind is focused first and foremost on the well-being of others; God's mind is an outgoing concern for others. That outgoing concern for the welfare of others is the foundation of God's operating system.

By contrast, Satan is lust and greed and coveting and "me first". And Satan's operating system for the

human mind is an expression of selfishness and greed and coveting. This means that **everything** that is produced by the world's operating system will sooner or later (and quite often it is much later!) have bad and evil and wicked and perverse and selfish consequences.

Our present world is a product of that operating system! And the problems that operating system has produced are monumental and horrendous! Everything we do has some undesirable "side effects". And that's not how God's way of using our minds works.

Everything we human beings have produced since Adam and Eve first sinned is bad! Many of the things that represent so-called "human progress" may appear to be good and wonderful ... until the bad and destructive and polluting consequences start to roll in.

Everything is bad!

That includes the ways we produce our foods and the ways we produce our clothes and our furniture. It includes the ways we produce electricity and the ways we produce fuels. It includes every form of manufacturing that has ever been produced by the human mind. It includes every single electrical appliance we have ever produced (yes, including computers!). It includes the way we mine our minerals. It includes all the cars and trains and planes we have ever produced. It includes all the medicines we have ever invented.

It includes every machine we have ever made. It includes the way we build our houses and the way we build our cities. It includes the way we use the electro-magnetic airwaves for radio and television and telephone communications. It includes every game and sport we have ever invented. It includes the ways we produce paper and plastics and all other synthetic materials. It includes the way we produce books and magazines. In short: it includes everything we human beings have done since we rejected God's way of using our minds. There is nothing whatsoever that God will want to preserve and carry over into the world God will rule. And so God will smash into smithereens every single thing man has ever produced with staggeringly huge hailstones (see Revelation 16:21).

And everything we human beings have done is a consequence of us using the wrong operating system for our minds. That wrong operating system is simply incapable of ever producing anything that will turn out to be "forever good". Any "good" that is produced by the wrong operating system is only very fleeting, before the negative and harmful consequences of that way of thinking start to kick in.

And that is why God requires us to change that operating system in our minds before God starts to lead us towards salvation. That wrong operating system inevitably produces pollution, corruption, perversion and destruction.

So, as far as leading people to salvation is concerned, God rejects outright working with a mind that has not yet rejected the wrong operating system for the mind. The wrong operating system will always produce problems, if not now then later. And those problems are inevitable because the foundation for that operating system is selfishness.

That operating system actually turns God's command "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39) around to claim that therefore God **commands** us to love ourselves, which is a rather twisted and perverse way of thinking. God didn't say "you shall love yourself as much as you love your neighbor"; God said it the other way around for good reason. It is Satan's operating system that seeks to turn that commandment around.

Everything Satan does becomes perverse and polluted. Satan, with his way of using his mind, is incapable of producing anything that is good, without some undesirable "side effects" always lurking

somewhere in the wings.

Well, now you understand what it means "to repent".

Frank W Nelte