

March 2007

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THE 1969 CALENDAR LETTER BY KENNETH C HERRMANN

In the 1950's and 1960's Mr. Kenneth C. Herrmann was considered the calendar expert in the Church of God and in Ambassador College. In 1969 Mr. Herrmann wrote a letter in response to genuine questions about the Jewish calendar from a member of the Church. The actual questions have been lost, but a copy of Mr. Herrmann's letter in reply to the questions was preserved by Mr. John Ritenbaugh of the Church of the Great God; and a few years ago during his sermons in defence of the Jewish calendar Mr. Ritenbaugh made copies of this letter available to various people in the Church of the Great God, stating that he believed that God had wanted him to preserve a copy of this letter. That I believe is certainly true!

I have a photocopy of this letter. The letter is three pages long, with a short concluding paragraph at the top of page four. Below is a copy of the unaltered text of the entire letter, with the spelling, capitalization and underlining as in the original. I have just removed the recipient's name to preserve his anonymity. The letter in my possession is in fact an unsigned copy, indicating that, in addition to a signed copy being sent to the recipient, unsigned photocopies of this letter were made available to various ministers to help them answer "difficult calendar questions" from members.

After presenting the entire letter I will then make some comments about this letter.

START OF LETTER

March 20, 1969

Mr.

P.O. Box 1501

San Pedro, California 90733

Dear Mr. :

The problem of producing a calendar from astronomical observation is not at all a simple one. Mr. Albert brought in your letter and we discussed a number of the variables that enter in. It is easy to look at a table and conclude that maybe God's Church is keeping holy days several days late. But consider the basis of timekeeping. When would you begin a day? At sunrise, noon, midnight, sunset, 6 p.m. when the sun is due west? Or 6 a.m. when the sun is due east?

Revelation is needed. We need an Oracle from God to keep time His way. What advantage has the Jew? Much in every way Romans 3.

Let's continue with the problem. When would you begin the week? With which day? It would have to be revealed. No? When would you begin the month? With full moon or new moon? With the sunset (or 6 p.m.) that preceded the molad (the conjunction or the astronomer's new moon) or with the sunset that followed it? Man can observe but he is going to need revelation to carry out timekeeping God's Way.

Search out the problem further. When would you begin the year? With the spring equinox? With the summer solstice? With the fall equinox? With the winter solstice? Or with the new moon preceding (or

following) which of the above four? Or would you allow the Passover to "wander 40 days in the wilderness" of the other days of the year as is the present rule?

Now another problem. The tropical year, (the year of the return of the seasons) is a fairly stable quantity though it changes slowly with time. The average synodic month (from new moon to new moon) is also a fairly stable quantity though it also changes slowly over the centuries. But this 29.53059 average synodic month is an average. "The length of the synodic month may vary by as much as thirteen hours, chiefly because of the eccentricity of the orbit and the consequent nonuniformity of motion." Even the more stable sidereal month (the period of revolution with regard to the stars) "may vary by as much as seven hours." Both quotes from Introduction to Astronomy by Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, page 120, a Prentice Hall book.

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Before we come to the answer let's expand the problem a bit further. Knowing now that the average synodic month is 29.53059 and that each synodic month has a different length, how many days are you going to put in each month? The present series of 30, 29, 30, 29, 30, 29, 30 for the first seven months of the Sacred calendar would obviously be at times just a bit out of step with astronomical observance.

And the insertion of a 13th month is another problem. Would any two church members agree as to when to add a thirteenth month, how many days it should have, whether to insert this extra month just before Nisan or the twelve other possible places? Do you see the problem? At present extra months are inserted seven times in nineteen years; they are inserted just before Nisan; they always have 29 days (and then the 30th day is added to the previous month) and when Passover would have stepped one day beyond its 40-day revealed limit, there was a postponement of that intercalary month. Not only that intercalary month but the whole sequence was moved one year later in the 19-year pattern. And that change was made, not by the Church of God but by a duly constituted Sanhedrin. And the Church of God followed. The Catholic Church did not. Nor do Jehovah's Witnesses, nor do dozens of "splinter groups" each with its own way of calculating. "What advantage hath the Jew?"

More problems. The day comes to us from the east. It sweeps across the earth at a thousand-mile-an-hour speed in the equatorial regions. It begins at that International Date Line and sweeps all the way around and ends once more there, Jerusalem being rather central. A day thus begins 24 hours earlier for an individual on an island on one side of the Date Line that (sic) it does for the observer on the east of that line.

More problems. The month sweeps across the earth from west to east, opposite to the direction that the day moves. The eclipse path from west to east demonstrates this, a solar eclipse being the very moment of astronomical new moon. Thus if each man were to depend upon local observation, the Californian would note his new moon earlier in the calendar day and even earlier on his calendar than the man in India. The man in India would begin and end his day earlier but note the new moon a day later on his count of days.

The conclusion is inescapable, there is no way to avoid it. If man is to have any calendar at all it must come from Authority. Apart from Authority on the Calendar and Sabbath every man would go his own way, and the Calendar that had been intended to give unity to mankind would disintegrate into thousands of conflicting designs.

The principle is clear. Now all that remains is the question of why the new moon dates on God's Sacred Calendar will at times follow a day or two after the astronomical new moons. The question of whether God's Church might just be keeping God's Holy days a day or two days or a month late is just not a proper question. God's Church follows the Oracle that God guides the Jews to preserve.

[end of page 2, start page 3]

Why are the dates of the new moon later on the calendar? I've photostated a few pages from an authoritative source, The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar by Arthur Spier and it gives the rules for delaying the 1st of Tishri. If the 1st of Tishri is delayed, all the new moons through that year are likewise delayed.

Why does God insist that the new moons of His Calendar be delayed? So that certain festivals do not fall on certain days of the week. The fact that He does so is certain because that is the way the Sacred Calendar is given to us. Why it does? It is not really necessary for us to know ahead of time. I know He has good reasons. You might consider that in the year of the Crucifixion, Passover had to be on Wednesday (observed Tuesday night by Christ and the Disciples) in order that there be three days and three nights by the end of the weekly Sabbath. And in order that the Messiah be cut off in the "midst of the week" on a Wednesday. Hindsight explains this occurrence.

An Oracle is a God-given communication. It has God to back it up. Thus if God's Church is following that Oracle faithfully it is completely impossible that we would be wrong on any of these dates for the Holy Days. That one basic fact every Church member must know and trust. We lay members merely take instructions in the Hebrew Scriptures (an Oracle) and the Sacred calendar (an Oracle), and check whether this Church is following faithfully. Pentecost's date depends upon a revealed Sabbath.

A few more final thoughts. The beginning of the month depends upon the observer's ability to see that first crescent (also called the new moon) in the west after sunset. But that ability to see will vary with the clarity of the atmosphere in his region, with the observer's keenness of eyesight, with the latitude of the observer, with the hemisphere he lives in, and with the time of year (these last factors because of the angle the new moon makes with the horizon and the sun).

The Sacred Calendar today is a mathematical sequence of months and years. In the time of Christ the knowledge of its patterns was not given to the laymen of the congregation. Observation and mathematics were combined and the new moons were announced one at a time. The scattering of the Jewish people and the rise of Christianity led God to have the Jewish leaders make a strictly mathematical formula public, yet the authority remained in their hands. When there was need to adjust the calendar it was done by a duly-constituted Sanhedrin. We only copy the Sacred Calendar as a scribe would make a copy of the Bible, fearing to change a letter of (sic) punctuation mark.

The final two pages I've photostated for you show that the length of year and month used for the calendar were a bit longer than the gradually changing heavens. And that the Jewish leaders are well aware of it. It is not in any way our appointed job to "steady the ark" for them. "Hands off" is the only rule to follow.

[end of page 3, start page 4]

We are coming to the end of 6000 years. Whether God will take the Master Clock of the heavens and make a few adjustments of His own remains to be seen. The sacred Calendar as it is today could go on for many years without any adjustments. It is an Oracle and a very dependable one.

Sincerely yours

Kenneth C. Herrmann

Registrar

KCH/ba

Enclosures

END OF LETTER

That's the letter that was written in 1969. So what does it tell you? I'll tell you what it tells me.

THAT LETTER IS THE MOST DISGUSTING PIECE OF HYPOCRISY THAT I HAVE EVER SEEN IN THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE PAST 40 YEARS!

It is hard to describe the instant feelings of anger and indignation that arise whenever I pick up that letter to have another look at it! The hypocrisy in that letter is just so despicable that it is hard to not react emotionally towards that letter.

Do you really understand what Mr. Herrmann actually did in that letter?

This is the man who in 1953 had written an article for the March 1953 Good News Magazine, entitled "GOD'S SACRED CALENDAR". That same article, with some very minor changes, was rerun in the February 1957 Good News Magazine under the title "WHICH IS THE CALENDAR CHRIST USED?".

In those articles Mr. Herrmann explained VERY CLEARLY that God's calendar is VERY SIMPLE to understand. He explained that:

- 1) The "DAY" starts and ends at sunset.
- 2) The "WEEK" starts and ends at sunset on Saturday evening, at the end of the Sabbath.
- 3) The "MONTH" starts with the sunset after each "new moon".
- 4) The Hebrew word for "month" is the same as for "new moon".
- 5) The "YEAR" starts in the spring, not in the middle of winter, as in the Roman calendar.

And that is really ALL the information someone needs to establish a calendar that is correct and acceptable before God!

In those articles Mr. Herrmann had used Leviticus 23:27-32 to show that days begin at sunset. He had used Exodus 12:2 to show that the year must begin in the spring and not in the winter. He had used Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31 to show that months must start with the new moons. He had used Genesis 1:14 to show that we are to use the movements of (the earth around) the sun and the moon to establish a correct calendar, that the calendar must have a consistent relationship to these movements.

THAT'S WHAT MR. HERRMANN EXPLAINED IN 1953 AND IN 1957!

So what has he done in this letter of March 20, 1969? Has he asked some sincere questions, to which the answers are uncertain?

OF COURSE NOT!

Does he himself know the answers to ALL of the questions he has raised?

YES, CERTAINLY HE KNOWS ALL OF THOSE ANSWERS!

So WHY has he raised all these questions in this 1969 letter?

HIS EXPLICIT PURPOSE WAS TO CONFUSE THE CHURCH MEMBER!

But WHY did he have this purpose of wanting to confuse this church member?

MR. HERRMANN HAD COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE JEWISH CALENDAR REGULARLY VIOLATES THE VERY RULES HE HIMSELF HAD LISTED IN HIS EARLIER ARTICLES! THIS INFORMATION HE WANTED TO HIDE AND TO DEFEND!

Listen!

When people try to make a simple matter seem very complicated and involved, what are they doing?

They are being hypocritical!

When people call things to which they themselves know the correct answers "problems", what are they doing?

They are being hypocritical!

When people deliberately hide the answers they have from you, what are they doing?

They are being hypocritical!

When people DELIBERATELY avoid the very Scriptures they themselves have used in the past to support their answers, what are they doing?

They are being hypocritical!

When people answer a question they don't really want to give you the true and correct answer for with "that is just not a proper question", what are they doing?

They are being hypocritical!

When people tell us in a calendar context that it is not our job "to steady the ark", what are they doing?

They are trying to pressure us to refrain from examining the true facts for ourselves!

What was Jesus Christ's main indictment against the Pharisees?

It was that they were hypocrites! See Matthew 23!

And what is the main indictment against the calendar of the Pharisees today?

It is hypocritical and contemptuous of the real new moons and the actual seasons!

While there can always be an excuse for ignorance, there is NEVER an excuse for hypocrisy! Hypocrisy is devious and deceptive; it is fake! And when church leaders answer genuine questions hypocritically, then they are being devious and deceptive! That's just the way it is!

When the man, who earlier told us that a day starts at sunset, that a week starts with the sunset at the end of the Sabbath, that a month starts with the sunset after each new moon, and that a year starts with the first new moon in the spring, now suddenly provides 8 OPTIONS for when to start the day, 4 OPTIONS for when to start the month, and 12 OPTIONS for when to start the year WHAT IS HE DOING?

He is trying his best to confuse the issue! He simply does not want you to quote his earlier answers back to him! No, he doesn't want those answers because they expose the glaring problems with the present Jewish calendar.

The length of a month and the length of a year have got nothing to do with "start every month with the sunset after the new moon, and start each year with the first new moon in the spring". Where to add a 13th month takes care of itself, based on the number of new moons between two successive spring equinoxes.

All of Mr. Herrmann's so-called "problems" aren't really problems at all – and he himself knew that very well!

Where his 1953 and his 1957 articles had each contained a dozen Scriptures to support his points, this letter doesn't contain any Scriptures, other than a brief reference to Romans 3. The defence of the Jewish calendar had become A TOTALLY SECULAR ARGUMENT, devoid of any scriptural support. Romans 3:1-2 has no application of any kind to the calendar. Appeals to these two verses represent gross misrepresentations of what Paul had in mind.

Furthermore, the Jews themselves are very open in acknowledging that "the calendar" is not, and never has been, a part of "the oracles" they have preserved! It is only Church of God people, desperate for any means to justify using the Jewish calendar, that have, without any proof or justification, simply asserted that "the calendar is a part of the oracles preserved by the Jews". But that is simply not true!

For a further discussion of this 1969 calendar letter see also the articles "When God Stopped Blessing the Church" and "A Response to the Calendar Articles Written by Kenneth Herrmann in the 1950's", both of which are located in the Calendar Articles directory.

Notice also that, whatever the original questions were (and implied is that they questioned the correctness of the Jewish calendar), Mr. Herrmann was very careful to completely avoid actually answering the questions. He simply threw up a host of smokescreens to imply that the answers would be much too complex and too involved, for anyone to possibly arrive at the correct answers. And he never answered the original questions.

You now have access to the exact text of the 1969 calendar letter. It laid the groundwork for all future attempts to defend the Jewish calendar. Mr. Kenneth Herrmann understood very clearly that any appeals to the real facts would be a fatal error! Therefore he very meticulously turned the whole calendar question into a Romans 3 issue. Romans 3 is the last defence for the Jewish calendar. Just accept the Jewish calendar on faith and don't even try to look at the facts.

Frank W. Nelte