

Mr. Henson,

11/4/2014

When I originally heard that UCG, and later COGWA had set up a Doctrinal Committee I had mixed feelings about this committee and its functions. Although I thought it was a powerful gesture to show that we as a church were not afraid to take input and examine our teachings, at the same time I am not one to be open minded to new truths. I strongly believe that a divine miracle took place when so many restored truths were revealed to Mr. Armstrong in such a short period of time. I strongly feel that we should "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them" and that we should "earnestly contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered unto the saints". And so for myself after 40 years in the church of God, to think that the church needed to approve a doctrine that was contrary to what I had been originally taught seemed quite remote.

And so the question arises, why am I now submitting a doctrinal paper to the committee to change one of those teachings? I can honestly say that as a baptized member of the church for over 20 years, as an Ambassador College Graduate, as one who's attendance and service has been surpassed by few, I can honestly say in all my years, I cannot recall a single sermon, a single lecture or a single article that has explained specifically why the ministry can make such imperative decisions over a members life without having to give an explanation to anyone. Sure, I had heard several "one line" dogmatic statements about how the most important doctrine is church government and how the ministry is the entire makeup of church in Mat 18:17, but the actual explanation and proof was never given. The biblical justification of this practice of binding and loosening in concealment has always been of a great mystery to me but I had assumed that there was some reason for it.

And even though I had spoken to several ordained members of the church prior to writing my paper (and received no legitimate arguments to the contrary), I admit there was still a certain amount of doubt lingering. I considered that surely this system, that has accommodated so many evils to take place, must have some biblical merit.

However after reading your very selective and incomplete response, I am appealing your decision for the following reasons:

#1 I strongly question whether you actually read my paper in its entirety. In numerous occasions you continually defend the authority of ordained ministry to bind and loosen and to judicate over matters of controversy that take place in the church. Nowhere in my paper have I even remotely contested this fact. To the contrary I assert this in several places. I mentioned that the elders had the authority to bind and loosen and this authority was being transferred to the disciples and to the leaders of the church. And yet throughout your response you spend nearly a third of the paper defending and arguing a position that I did not ever contest- but in fact acknowledged it openly several times.

Did you get my paper mixed up with someone else's? Or maybe you don't understand the concept of open trials? Here in the United States and in almost every single democratic nation on the earth they conduct open trials to which, in most circumstances, any member of the public can observe. And even though anyone can attend, they have no authority over the proceedings. Neither the judge, nor the jury, nor any officer of the court has to consult with or seek the approval of some visitor who happens to be present. As a public trial, it does not mean that every detail is broad casted over the air, or that it is mandatory that every case is open or public, but that an option remains for anyone to observe. The

founding fathers made it clear in the 6th amendment that they were committed to open trials in order to keep the courts honest, a characteristic that has routinely alluded the church. Open and recorded trials are a characteristic of almost every free country on the earth while “Secret trials have been a characteristic of almost every dictatorship of the modern era”(Wikipedia, [Secret trials](#)).

However to be clear, I am not using the example of Civil courts as proof to support my argument but only to illustrate how one works. I do not want you to spend half of your next paper focusing on how this is biblically irrelevant while not addressing the scriptural arguments that I make.

#2 I was unaware that using a Trinitarian, Sunday keeping, Protestant authored commentary was a legitimate proof of one of the churches doctrinal positions. If I had thought using a protestant commentary was pertinent to the discussion, I too would have of quoted from Adam Clarke’s commentary on Mat 18:17:

Tell it unto the Church - Lay the whole matter before the congregation of Christian believers, in that place of which he is a member

Or I would have quoted the Bridgeway bible Commentary on Mat 18:17:

If this also fails, the entire community of believers should appeal to the offender. Should there still be no change, believers should treat the offender as if no longer part of their fellowship;

Or I would have quoted Peter Pett’s Commentary on Mat 18:17:

But if the charge is proved and the matter is serious, and the disciple refuses to listen, then the next step is to bring the matter before the whole ‘congregation’, the gathering of all believing disciples

Or I would have quoted the The Expositor's Greek Testament Commentary on Mat 18:17:

speak to the “Church”—the brotherhood of believers in the Christ.

My point here is not to engage in a contest, as if he who quotes the most Commentaries wins, but only to show that the commentaries characteristically disagree with one another and that they can’t be used as an authority. It is fine to use a commentary to illustrate a concept that you have already established, but you haven’t done that.

#3 You bear the burden of proof. The Church of God can point to multiple occasions where we believe the translators are in error. And that is fine. Overall we point to a core group of translations and manuscripts we have used as a standard. But there are times in certain passages where we believe they lack clarity and we believe the translator needs to be corrected. However in these cases we bear the burden of proof! We have to explain specifically why the translator is in error and why our position is correct- in detail. We dissect the Greek or Hebrew. We explain how the same Greek word is translated in other passages. We show other examples of how this different translation fits better with other passages that it may have previously contradicted. We illustrate it with historical data or historical customs. We quote other less known translators that agree with us. All because we bear the burden of proof.

And so in this situation where you are arguing that the translators are wrong for using the word church and should have actually used the word ministry, and you can find no translation that agrees with you, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you are wrong, but only that **you bear the burden of proof**. Show your

proof! Simply stating that your interpreted context is grounds for overriding the Greek is far from proof. If this precedent of allowing an individual's interpretive context to rewrite the Bible was allowed to stand then there is no reason why we shouldn't allow Martin Luther's corrections to Romans 3:28 stand as well.

#4 Although you spent significant time explaining away my illustrative examples, **you never addressed my core argument**. Quite often when we are giving a sermon or writing an article we will present a problem or a question. We will then scripturally solve that problem with a core argument, primarily through using God's word. And then we will give supportive examples of how this method has worked in the past or how God's people have practiced this method **as an illustration**. When I wrote this article I was hesitant to use supportive examples for fear that you would ignore my core argument and spend all your time poking holes at selected supportive examples. And that is exactly what you did.

I fully agree that the story of Ananias and Sapphira alone isn't iron clad proof that Peter formally constructed a public trial setting prior to questioning them. However this is an example where the leadership deliberated over a case, the outcome (through some unknown means) was made known to all, and there is no recorded attempt by those leaders to prevent that knowledge from being known to all.

I fully agree that the situation in I Corinthians alone isn't iron clad proof that Paul always wrote letters explaining every decision to the entire congregation. However this is an example where the Leadership deliberated over a case, the outcome was made known to all, and there is no recorded admonition to conceal the matter.

I fully agree that the story of King Solomon and the two harlots alone isn't iron clad proof that courts of Israel always operated openly. However this is an example where the Leadership deliberated over a case, the outcome (through some unknown means) was made known to all, and there is no recorded attempt by those leaders to prevent that knowledge from being known to all.

I fully agree that the situation of the Pharisees violating their own rules of having trials during daylight and publicly in the trial of Christ is not proof alone, as if we need to follow their rules. However it confirms my other statements that the Jewish courts and the Sanhedrin operated in public- a court system they patterned after the Mosaic Law.

I fully agree that in 1 Timothy 5:20 where Paul tells Timothy "Those who sin, rebuke before all, so the rest also may fear" does not give a lot of background information about when and under which circumstances we are to rebuke such a one publicly. However this is an example where the Leadership was directed to judge a man publicly and the outcome was to be made known to all.

I will agree that anyone of these examples of and by themselves are not conclusive. However when we compile them together we can see that there is more than enough adequate examples showing where this principle can be supported by scripture. Where are your examples supporting secret trials?

And so my key argument that still remains unanswered is this: Why would Christ throughout the entire chapter of Matthew 18 direct his entire dialog directly to the disciples and the leadership, continually reusing the word you (humin G5213 – 7 times), and then change his focus to the church (ekklēsia) if he was still talking to the same group of people? And why would Matthew use the word ekklēsia to refer

solely to the leadership, when nowhere in the entire New Testament does any writer use *ekklēsia* to refer to the leadership or ministry? Please answer these questions.

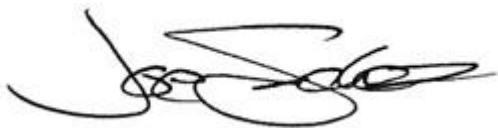
Over all I have been sorely disappointed with the lack of intellectual honesty that was displayed in your response. You have consistently argued against positions I did not take. You have made key statements that you did not explain. You have positioned yourself behind commentaries that do not agree with one another. You failed to respond to my key argument, the Greek in Mat 18:17, with anything other than an inconclusive one line statement.

Gentleman, this system that the Church of God has used for over 60 years, where in the leadership of the church has been able to either exonerate or condemn members of the Church in secret has accommodated an untold amount of evil and has systematically dissolved trust within the membership. Although currently I do not hold you directly responsible for those acts, by giving a biased response to protect this broken and unbiblical system, **you can most certainly** become responsible for it- something I am sure you do not want to do.

In the book *The Family of Adoption* by Joyce Maguire Pavao, she makes a very clear distinction between **privacy** and **secrecy**. "Secrecy is when things about you are kept from you. Privacy is when **you choose to whom you want to tell things about yourself**". When an member of the church is being accused of something that they clearly contest and want their case to be heard openly, don't deceive yourselves in to believing that denying them of an open and transparent system of binding and loosening is done to protect their privacy. This is not privacy, this is secrecy.

In your reply I ask that you respond to my specific points so we can come to an agreeable solution. If there are any of these points that you would discuss with me directly feel free to call me on my cell at (209) 890-6362.

Thank you for your service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Sanchez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Joe Sanchez