

Did Herbert Armstrong *Originally* Observe Pentecost on Sivan 6?

In the early years of his ministry, and the beginning of the Radio Church of God, Herbert Armstrong observed Pentecost on the same day as modern rabbinic Judaism – that is, from 1934, when he first began observing the annual holy days, until at least 1936 three years. Here are the documented facts.

Was Herbert W. Armstrong right, originally, but then fell into error? And why did he change the date for Pentecost again in 1974, but not return to the Sivan 6 date? Here's the fascinating, mind-boggling story!

William F. Dankenbring

When did Herbert W. Armstrong and his wife originally observe Pentecost?

Believe it or not, the answer is *Sivan 6* – the same date as the modern Jews!

This fact ignites like an EXPLODING BOMB before all those groups and people who claim that Pentecost should be observed on a Monday every year because “that’s the original TRUTH God revealed AT THE BEGINNING of the Work, and CANNOT BE CHANGED!”

If indeed the ORIGINAL teaching of Herbert Armstrong should be followed, as the proper date for Pentecost, then HISTORY PROVES it should be kept on Sivan 6!

Here’s the mind-boggling true history of the modern day observance of Pentecost and Herbert W. Armstrong’s original teachings on the subject!

Revelation in Oregon

This fact is documented by Raymond C. Cole, former evangelist of the Worldwide Church of God, and son of the Coles who were old time Church members in Oregon. Raymond Cole, who left Worldwide in the early 1970's to form a different Church, called Church of God, The Eternal, gave a sermon and mentioned this amazing fact, on Pentecost (as he kept it), May 19, 1975, at Florence, Oregon. His sermon became the basis of an article written by Richard C. Nickels.

Richard Nickels was a member of the Worldwide Church of God, who left with

Raymond Cole when he bolted in the 70's. Nickels became a member of Raymond Cole's church, but left it later. A student of church history, he has written an interesting book called *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*. In an article on Pentecost put together by Nickels, based on Raymond Cole's sermon, Nickels wrote:

"There were several years in which Mr. Armstrong was following the rabbinic custom of Sivan 6, which meant that it could fall at various times, Sunday, Monday, Wednesday or Friday. Now it did so happen that Sivan 6 fell on a Sunday on one or two years during the time when Mr. Armstrong accepted the modern Jewish rabbinical date for Pentecost. This is what confuses some

"Converted and called in 1927, Mr. Armstrong was ordained to the ministry in 1931. He began keeping the holy days with others in 1934. Truth was revealed to him, as he had said, one doctrine at a time. *A calendar was published in 1937 showing Pentecost corresponding to the JEWISH DATE OF SIVAN 6. But it must have been that very year that Monday observance was begun.* For a diary of an early church member, Mrs. Lorinda (Stoneberg) Le Bleu (baptized in 1936 by Mr. Armstrong), shows that she did keep Pentecost on a Monday in the year 1937, 1940, 1941 and following. . . ."

Nickels/Cole point out that in 1939 the Jewish date for Pentecost and the Monday date calculated using the Sadducean method were five days apart, and that in 1939 Mrs. Le Bleu's diary shows a meeting on Monday, May 29, indicating that by that year Herbert Armstrong had definitely switched to a Monday Pentecost. Cole continues:

"1939 is a key year. The Jewish Pentecost and the true [sic] Pentecost were five days apart. Mrs. Le Bleu's diary records a meeting on Monday, May 29, 1939 at Wilma Christenson's home. Definite proof that at least by 1939, Mr. Armstrong had been shown the validity [sic] of a Monday Pentecost rather than the commonly accepted Jewish Sivan 6-7. *According to the diary, 1937 was the first 'Monday' year.*

"That leaves the years 1934, 1935, and 1936 under the Sivan 6 observance. According to the table . . . 1934 was the only year in which Sivan 6 fell on a Sunday. In 1935 the Jews' Pentecost fell on a Friday, and in 1936 it fell on a Wednesday.

The Switch to "Monday"

"According to an article published in early 1940, 'How to Figure Passover,' Mr. Armstrong had printed a calendar in 1937 showing the Holy Day dates for several years in advance. June 12, 1940 was the date projected in the 1937 calendar as Pentecost. This was Sivan 6 of that year, which fell on a Wednesday. The 1940 article corrected [sic] the date to Monday, June 17. Mrs. Le Bleu's diary records that the Eugene church observed Pentecost of 1940 on Monday, June 17 at Hendricks Park, with about fifty members present" (emphasis mine).

It should be very clear from this passage that originally Herbert and Loma D. Armstrong observed Pentecost WITH THE JEWS, ON SIVAN 6! There is no question

about it. But apparently, the last time they observed Pentecost on this date was 1936, after which they changed to a Monday Pentecost. For several years, after studying the holy days, Herbert Armstrong was originally convinced of the correctness of the Jewish date! Why did he change by 1937? Why was 1936 evidently the last time he observed Pentecost on the right day?

No one really knows, but several possibilities suggest themselves. We know that SIN cuts us off from God, and causes Him to punish us. The prophet Isaiah declared, "But your iniquities have SEPARATED you from your God; your SINS have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isa.59:2). It was about this same time that Herbert Armstrong began thinking that World War II would end in Armageddon, and that Mussolini was the "Beast" of Revelation and the final "head" of the resurrected "Roman Empire." His prophetic preachings of this time, until the end of World War II, were way off base, showing that God had allowed him to stumble into error and confusion. It was also about this time that serious personal problems and even incest occurred in his marriage, according to several reports and admissions, documented in a book by former elder David Robinson of the Worldwide Church of God, John Trechak, and Garner Ted Armstrong. All the evidence points to the conclusion that during those years, to use Mr. Armstrong's own words, he was "very far from God."

The Sadducees

Somehow, also, about 1936-37 Herbert Armstrong became convinced that the Sadducees, who do not even believe in a resurrection, in angels or spirits, or an afterlife (Acts 23:8), were correct in counting Pentecost from the weekly Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread. Personal study showed him that the priestly Sadducees had observed a Sunday Pentecost. "At this point," says the Worldwide Church of God "Pentecost Study Material," published in 1974, "he discarded the Jewish practice and established Monday as the proper day."

Did he? Was Monday the proper day? Or did he make a mistake, big time, and go off into ERROR at that time?

Herbert Armstrong followed the Sadducees in counting from the weekly Sabbath, but he concluded they were wrong in the method of counting they used – so in counting "from" the day after the sabbath, which he assumed to be Sunday, he began his count with Monday! Interestingly, Jesus Christ said of these same Sadducees, when they argued with Him, trying to confound Him with a trick question, "YOU ARE MISTAKEN [marginal reading, "DECEIVED"], *NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES nor the power of God*" (Matt.22:29).

Should the Church of God follow the Sadducees in this matter? They were DECEIVED and did NOT understand the Scriptures! So said your Messiah and coming King! Will you BELIEVE HIM?

Why did Herbert Armstrong change the date for celebrating Pentecost in 1937?

Obviously, Herbert Armstrong himself by doing this admitted God had not revealed to Him ALL TRUTH back when the Church began in 1934! He changed the date to a *Monday* in 1937, and then changed it to a *Sunday* in 1974! How confusing!

From One Ditch to Another Ditch – The 1974 Debacle

What happened in 1974?

In 1974, new research and information was doggedly brought to Herbert Armstrong's attention by evangelist Raymond F. McNair, information and research done by former pastor Ernest Martin. This information related to the "process of counting." The question it discussed is "HOW do we count Pentecost – with 'inclusive' counting or 'exclusive' counting?" The church had been following "exclusive" counting, so when they counted from "Sunday," during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they began with "Monday" as the first day of the 50-day count, thus ending up on a "Monday"! They excluded "Sunday," since it seemed to Herbert Armstrong that when you count "FROM" a day, you begin the count with the NEXT day! "Inclusive" counting meant that you would begin the count with the very day itself that you count "from."

The Church undertook a comprehensive study into this question, and Herbert Armstrong became convinced, after talking with a translator of the American Revised Bible, and a Jewish scholar, and friend of his, that indeed he himself had been misinformed and mistaken all those years. For 35 years, then, he had led the Church into ERROR, and had "counted" Pentecost WRONG, thereby celebrating the WRONG DAY! The evidence showed that the Jews historically and in Biblical times, and the Bible itself, use INCLUSIVE COUNTING!

But NOTICE! The whole question was "how to count." So in 1974, *no attempt* was made to question which "SABBATH" you were to count FROM – the weekly Sabbath, or the first annual HOLY DAY Sabbath – the day after the First Day of Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

Mrs. Ravid's Shocking Statement

In fact, when the research was being done in 1974, according to the voluminous (77 pages plus) "Pentecost Study Material" published by the Worldwide Church of God, a strange thing happened. Herbert Armstrong telephoned Mrs. Ravid, the wife of the Israeli Ambassador, long distance in Israel, and asked her how the Jews count. She taught Hebrew at Hebrew University. She read the Hebrew of Leviticus 23:15 and said that Shavuot (Pentecost) would be counted beginning with Sunday, that Sunday is the day number one in the count to 50.

The "Pentecost Study Paper" continues:

“A few hours later, a slightly horrified Mrs. Ravid called Mr. Armstrong to explain that she had made a TERRIBLE MISTAKE! Thinking perhaps she had found evidence for exclusive counting after all, we awaited her explanation, hearts pounding. ‘I don’t understand how I could have missed it,’ she said apologetically; *‘Shavuot is NOT COUNTED FROM THE WEEKLY SABBATH, IT MUST BE COUNTED FROM NISAN 15 (the first high day of Unleavened Bread)’*” (emphasis mine).

Thus the truth about Pentecost was once again presented to the Church, through Mrs. Ravid, in 1974! Unfortunately, the question of WHEN to count FROM was not even under consideration at that time! The question of what day to count *from* was *not the real issue* of the great Pentecost debate and controversy which swirled around the Church in 1974. Her emphatic words fell on deaf ears. Rather, the only real issue in 1974 was the issue of *how to count!*

The Worldwide Church of God believed, at that time, that the Jewish practice that Pentecost was to be counted from the annual Sabbath was wrong, and that the Sadducean method of counting from the weekly Sabbath was to be followed. Therefore, poor Mrs. Ravid’s comments fell on deaf ears. Nobody paid any attention to her. Instead, everybody breathed a massive sigh of relief since at least she did corroborate the “inclusive” counting method!

Nevertheless, the truth is plain. Pentecost should be observed on the same day the Jews observe it – Sivan 6 – just as Herbert Armstrong ORIGINALLY kept it! Despite all the arguments to the contrary, the truth will win out. Error cannot and will not prevail forever. Jesus Christ said, “You shall know the TRUTH, and the *truth shall make you FREE*” (John 8:32).

What’s Wrong with a SUNDAY Pentecost?

The church as a whole, then, in 1974, switched from a Monday to a Sunday Pentecost – counting from the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Both count from the same date, but end up on two different days! Go figure! They jumped from one ditch to the opposite ditch!

But the Sunday Pentecost date is like leaping from the frying pan into the FIRE! History shows us that the SUNDAY Pentecost is PAGAN in origin!

The apostate Roman Catholic Church changed the celebration of the Passover, replacing it with Easter Sunday, thus celebrating the ancient pagan festival of the sex goddess Ishtar, or “Easter.” They then corrupted Pentecost, and put it on a Sunday, 50 days following Easter, calling it “Whitsunday”!

In the spring, about a month after the festival of Easter, the pagans celebrated another festival, called the festival of Floralia, in honor of Flora, the goddess of spring and flowers! Writes Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization*, Volume 3, “Caesar and

Christ”: “April alone had six festivals, culminating in the Floralia; the Feast of Flora, goddess of flowers and spring, continued for six days of bibulous and promiscuous revelry” (p.65). The *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons* states, “Flora herself was known as *meretrix* = WHORE, but the lasciviousness was probably intended to promote fecundity . . .” (p.119, Manfred Lurker, 1987).

The cult of Flora was introduced in ancient Rome during the age of Romulus. She was also worshiped as a goddess of love, like Venus. The name "Flora" means "The Flourishing One," and is merely another form of that ancient deity Semiramis, who herself was the goddess of love, fecundity, and spring. Flora, “the Flourishing One,” the “WHORE,” can be none other than a Roman version of Semiramis, the Babylonian queen and goddess of fecundity!

In volume 4 of his epic work, “The Age of Faith,” Will Durant explains what happened to the Festival of Flora, as with so many other pagan festivals. Notice!

“Paganism survived in the moral sense, as a joyous indulgence of natural appetites; as a religion it remained only in the FORM OF ANCIENT RITES AND CUSTOMS CONDONED, OR ACCEPTED AND TRANSFORMED, BY AN OFTEN INDULGENT CHURCH. An intimate and trustful worship of saints replaced the cult of the pagan gods, and satisfied the congenial polytheism of simple but poetic minds. Statues of Isis and Horus were RENAMED MARY AND JESUS; the Roman Lupercalia and the feast of the purification of Isis became the Feast of the Nativity; the Saturnalia were replaced by CHRISTMAS celebrations, **THE FLORALIA BY PENTECOST**, an ancient festival of the dead by All Souls' Day, the resurrection of Attis by the resurrection of Christ. PAGAN ALTARS were dedicated to Christian heroes; incense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments, hymns, which had pleased the people in older cults, were domesticated and cleansed in the ritual of the Church . . .” (p.75).

The Roman Catholic Church thus “baptized” the pagan Floralia, called it “Pentecost,” a Biblical-sounding name, and observed it seven weeks after Easter Sunday! They REJECTED God’s annual HOLY Day of Shavuot/Pentecost, which occurs 50 days after PASSOVER, and replaced it with the PAGAN Feast of Floralia, changing its NAME, and counting it as fifty days after EASTER!

God condemns pagan worship and idolatry. He thunders to His People, “COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, lest you share in her SINS, and lest you receive of her PLAGUES!” (Rev.18:4, NKJV).

It’s Time to REPENT, NOW!

Those who observe a Sunday or a Monday Pentecost, are following ancient PAGANISM! It is time for ALL God’s people to WAKE UP, and REPENT, and TRULY get “back to the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, cries out, “*IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME,*

TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN!” (MARK 7:7).

This means *the modern Jews who follow the rulings of the ancient Pharisees, are CORRECT!*

The Sadducees, who disappeared from history after 70 A.D., were in ERROR, not knowing the Word of God (Matt.22:28). Christ said they did NOT KNOW the Scriptures! (same verse).

This means that ALL those remnant churches who follow their reckoning and keep Pentecost on a Sunday or Monday every year STUMBLE IN GROSS SPIRITUAL DARKNESS!

The apostle Paul WARNS about those in this END TIME who will be DECEIVED by “the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, and LYING wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, BECAUSE THEY REFUSED TO LOVE THE TRUTH and so be saved” (II Thess.2:9-10, NRSV).

Do you “love the truth” over all else?

Years ago, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in the December 1976 *Good News*, magazine:

“Wouldn’t it be all right to compromise, ‘just a little,’ on some ‘unimportant minor point’?” He continued, “Nevertheless, if we begin to compromise with God’s TRUTH, even in the smallest, slightest manner, we have allowed Satan to get a foot into the door of the Church, and soon he will push open the door (he is stronger than we) AND TAKE OVER THE WHOLE CHURCH.”

Mr. Armstrong added,

“A little leaven leavens the WHOLE LUMP! I have been charged with the commission of KEEPING GOD’S WORD. Keeping it inviolate – NO COMPROMISE! I have never compromised with God’s TRUTH – regardless of the cost or the circumstances. I never shall!”

LOOK at the remnant churches of God, today! They have been COMPROMISED! They have been infiltrated by the DEVIL and his deceived henchmen and erring, sinning ministers!

They refuse to repent, and they call me a “FALSE PROPHET”! For 19 years I have been thundering the incredible TRUTH about Pentecost to them, but I might just as well have been shouting in the mouth of a gale force wind.

Remember, true Christians and followers of Christ are those who “KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev.14:12). If you keep Pentecost on the *wrong day* then you are BREAKING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD and TRAMPLING all over His Holy Day!

