

# ***I Confess Wrong - Can You?***

**Herbert W Armstrong**

**Worldwide News, 13 July 1981**

PERHAPS THE HARDEST thing for any person to do is admit it when he is *wrong*. It is human to err. All make mistakes. Even more, ALL HAVE SINNED — and SIN is much worse than making a mistake.

God says, "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Sin is consciously, knowingly, transgressing God's law. A mistake is not necessarily a sin.

Yet, even of Christians, God says, "If we [we spirit-led Christians] *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (*I* John 1:9).

The 10th verse says if we Christians say we have (not did have before conversion, but have now) no sin, we are *wrong*. But even an unintended error or mistaken statement should be acknowledged and be corrected.

It seems almost no one will *confess* it when he sins, let alone repent and turn away from continuing in the particular sin. Even admitting an error or an unintended *wrong* goes against human nature. Yet a child of God must do it.

True repentance is confessing to SINS — not justifying them, but admitting them, having enough godly sorrow over them to TURN FROM THEM and overcome them.

Usually an initial repentance takes one through an internal struggle of mind. The SELF doesn't want to admit *wrong*, let alone deliberate and intended SIN.

*I* know the struggle *I* had to go through in the spring of 1927. Yet it is something like going into the ocean at a beach or a swimming pool when the water is cold. One hates to plunge in, but once in, it isn't so bad and may even be enjoyable.

When God brought me to repentance, it was like that. *I* say to others, "Come on in — the water's fine!" It has never been so hard, since, to admit *wrong*, or *confess* even sins to God. *I* have had to admit error more than once.

For 40 years *I* had led God's Church into the error of observing the day of Pentecost on a Monday. In this one, ONLY, of all God's Sabbaths, he tells us to COUNT in order to determine ourselves which is the right day. In all others, God tells us which is the right day.

Back in 1927 *I* had to COUNT to determine which day was the Feast of Firstfruits. The Bible said count FROM the morrow after the Sabbath — count FROM a Sunday 50 days. *I* did. *I* counted correctly. *I* did not make a mistake in that, let alone committing an intentional and knowing SIN. The King James version said count 50 days FROM a Sunday. At that time *I* had checked every translation then published of the Bible. All used the word FROM. One day FROM Sunday is Monday. Fifty days FROM Sunday is Monday.

But finally, after 40 years, God showed me that EVERY TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH had mistranslated that word. *I* talked to two members of the translating committee of the Revised Standard translation. After some discussion, they both admitted an erroneous translation.

Actually it was the Hebrew-English scholars who translated the Bible who made the mistake. But, on learning it *I* corrected it and the whole Church has accepted the correction.

When *I* find *I* have sinned, *I* *confess* that to GOD, not to people. But when there comes to my attention an unintended error — a mistake — which has involved people, then *I* must admit that error and correct it before the people involved.

That has happened in the case of my disfellowshipment letter to my son, Garner Ted Armstrong.

*Can you* imagine my mental anguish and turmoil at the moment? Disfellowshipping one's own son is a MOST SERIOUS responsibility and sore trial.

*I* had prayed desperately. *I* had decided to give him "one more chance," rose up early in the morning and written a last desperate letter hoping to avoid disfellowshipment.

But then *I* realized my first duty, even above that to my son whom *I* love, was to the Church and to Jesus Christ.

Much as I love my son, I love Jesus Christ and God's Work more. I tore up the letter.

Hurriedly I wrote another, the one of disfellowshipment. In it I wrote, "In spite of your continual disagreement with the way the living Jesus Christ has been building and conducting God's Work through His chosen apostle, I have at all times done my best to hold up and protect your name."

That summarized in one overall short sentence the real cause of disfellowshipment.

Then I added four specific of-the-moment incidents, which at the last moment decided me.

"1) You have disobeyed my directive by going to Orr, Minnesota." Our summer camp was there. My statement was true and correct. I had forbidden him to go.

Since, I have learned that two of his young sons were there, and he is now saying he and his wife went there to see their sons.

As I now remember, I did not realize his sons were there. Had he told me and asked to see them, I'm sure I would have said go.

"2) Contacting members *you* were forbidden to contact." This he had done. It was NOT a false charge.

"3) Contacted the United States Postal authorities in the unethical and unscrupulous effort to intercept corporate mail and thus divert corporate funds illegally into your private, personal hands ..."

I wrote this on information given me. It WAS A TOTAL MISUNDERSTANDING ON MY PART. I want now to retract that though I believed at the time it was true.

My son says he was only trying to receive his own personal and private mail, and I believe him in that. In the emotion of the moment I wrote that as it had been reported to me.

LET ME SAY HERE WITH EMPHASIS, I AM ABSOLUTELY AND POSITIVELY SURE MY SON WAS NOT TRYING TO OBTAIN MONEY FALSELY!

He would never do that. He did not covet more money. Every time I gave him a raise in salary, he would say, "Oh Dad, I didn't need that."

Though I was led at the moment to believe that statement No. 3, I know now it was not true, and I apologize.

"and 4) Finally giving the Los Angeles Times (and perhaps other media) distorted and false accusations against your father, God's apostle."

My son justified this later, saying the Times contacted him, not he them.

Newspapers have tried to contact me, and I reply, "No comment," or refuse to talk.

When he responded and talked to them for a story hostile to God's Church, he did tend to "cause divisions and offenses" against the Church.

Yes, it is truly terribly hard for one to admit he has been *wrong*. I am sorry to say my son is still in great and widespread disagreement with me, as I am in agreement with Christ.

I do think that my son thinks he is right — does not see where he is *wrong*. I pray for him daily that God will cause him to "come to himself," as President Woodrow Wilson wrote in a book, and realize his disagreement and see in his own mind where he is *wrong*.