

History of the *Fair Chance* Doctrine

By C.M. White
Version 2.9



“... our loved ones who have died unsaved in all probability did not die LOST! In all probability they were not called, during this age. But their call is coming later! They shall be resurrected back to life, and given their **fair chance!**” (Herbert W Armstrong, *Predestination – Does the Bible Teach It?* page 21. [emphasis mine])

Contents

Introductory Remarks	4
A Fair Chance – Not Universalism	5
Key Proponents of the Fair Chance doctrine.....	8
Dunbar Isidore Heath (1816-1888)	8
Henry Dunn (1801-1878)	9
George Stetson (1814-1879)	10
George Storrs (1796-1879)	11
Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916).....	14
Other Advocates of a Fair Chance	18
Church of God Belief	20
Chart: Fair Chance Doctrinal flow	25
Conclusions.....	26
Appendix. Extracts from Future Probation in Christian Belief	28
Appendix. Review of Henry Dunn’s <i>The Kingdom of God; or, What is the Gospel?</i>	32
Appendix. Doctrinal Outlines - Eternal Judgment.....	33
Partial Listing of old Worldwide Church of God articles on the subject	36
Suggested Reading	36
References	36

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.originofnations.org

www.friendsofsabbath.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

Our purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God’s message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

Authored by Craig Martin White.

Copyright © Craig Martin White, GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is promoted through History Research Foundation (USA), History Research Projects (Australia) and Friends of the Sabbath (Australia)

www.friendsofsabbath.org

No part of this work may be edited. It may be freely shared as part of research, projects or for educational purposes as long as quotes are properly cited.

All graphics are taken from the internet where they were made freely available.

Related reading

- *Church of God & Sabbatarian Timelines* by C. White
- *Herbert W Armstrong. Man of God* by C. White (refer especially to the *Chart Summarising the Development of WCG Doctrines & Titles*)
- *Historic Church of God Fundamentals of Belief. Tracking the Development of Core Doctrines* by C. White
- *The Doctrinal Heritage of the Church of God in the Nineteenth Century* by C. White

Articles in this series:

- *Do Church Eras Exist?*
- *History of the Fair Chance Doctrine*
- *History of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God*
- *History of the Place of Safety Doctrine in the Church of God*
- *History of the Plain Truth magazine*
- *History of the World Tomorrow Broadcast*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Ministerial Conferences*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Foreign Works*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Publications*
- *How the Israel Identity truth entered the Church of God*
- *Notes on the Third Resurrection Doctrine in the Church of God*

Introductory Remarks

In this article we will explore the historical development of the doctrine that most of mankind has never been called to salvation and that their first opportunity will be during the Last Great Day or Great White Throne Judgment.

You will notice that this article does not provide arguments to prove the doctrine nor articulate a detailed discussion. Rather, the purpose is to provide information on the historical development of this doctrine in the nineteenth century which influenced the Church of God. The Church has often leveraged off the indepth research of others by carefully sifting, assembling and then the subsequent presentation of the particular truth to the Church of God.

There have been, and still are of course, specialists out there who have done amazing research on the tribes of Israel, typology, Bible history, archaeology, linguistics, structure of the Bible etc etc. It takes humility to openly state that we use their research, lexicons, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias to assist us with our studies and doctrinal development.

It is just the way God works and as knowledge increases due to these specialists in the last days (Dan 12:4), so should ours. A growing awareness and research among scholars of God's Law, the Melchizedek Priesthood, binitarianism or two powers in heaven, chiasms and such like should pique our interest in these subjects.

For those from a Church of God background, we would notice the basic similarity between this doctrine as taught by those we will meet herein and that which was taught by Herbert W Armstrong and the old Worldwide Church of God for many decades.

A select listing of old Worldwide Church of God articles on the subject has been provided at the rear of this article. Refer to the **Appendix. Doctrinal Outlines – Eternal Judgment** produced by that Church.

This writer's original research in the 1970s on Herbert Armstrong as a 'sifter' of knowledge was expanded upon over the following years and finally typed up into several papers in the late 1990s and made available on his website. Then these were combined as a single paper about him as a divinely inspired sifter which was subsequently upgraded into the article *Herbert W Armstrong - man of God*.

Then portions of that article were extracted, and additional information added to form the paper *The Doctrinal Heritage of the Church of God in the Nineteenth Century*.

In turn, this article in hand is extracted information from the aforementioned paper and added in is additional research.

In similitude to the chapter *History of the Born Again Doctrine* in the article *The Born Again Doctrine in the Light of History and Biblical Salvation Principles*, this author delves into the historic background on the development and restoration of the truth of a *fair chance* of salvation for all.

A Fair Chance – Not Universalism

Sometimes critics of certain Church of God groups condemn them for teaching universal salvation. This is not true. Instead, the Church teaches universal *opportunity* for all and that we are of the opinion that probably the vast majority of mankind will choose the path of life, once they have their eyes opened to His way of life during the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:5, 11-12) – that is the second resurrection period.

However, for centuries Christianity has struggled with the concept of a chance of salvation for those who never heard the Gospel or called by God during their lives (ie their eyes were not opened to the truth of God). As a result, many Christians adopted universalism (in its many forms) while others believed such individuals would be judged according to their conscience and how they acted accordingly regardless of their beliefs or religion. Still others believed in a future probation known also as the *age to come* doctrine and we will meet them in this article (a *fair chance* or *future probation* is sometimes termed *age to come*. Note that the Millennial period is also taught as the *age to come* – as these two doctrines overlap).¹

To understand the other point of view and to be able to counter-argue, one must examine those views. There is a saying that unless you know the opposing argument you don't really know your own. I agree. It is important to understand the opposing view for the following reasons:

1. Get to know their arguments
2. Find weaknesses and gaps in your own that can be fixed
3. Be able to counter-argue
4. Have the ability to really prove the Truth
5. Learn the skill of critique and review

Hence, I have read works opposed to my own beliefs for the above purpose. Including a range of books and articles against the 'British-Israel' or 'lost' tribes doctrine and this has helped me to further strengthen my view. That way I am strengthened and more grounded. I was simply brought up to critique and test views by Mum. Especially the media that she was suspicious of.

In 2019 a protestant universalist (Dr Robin Parry) attempted to 'prove' that the Bible teaches the concept of universalism.

It is obvious that universalists shrink from the old teachings about eternal torment in hell (and rightfully so); they notice certain Scriptures where God desires that all repent and be in His eternal Kingdom; and cannot fathom why there is no fair chance for all humanity to be offered salvation. As such they seek to find answers for the following questions:

1. Does Satan win after all because most won't make it?
2. Is God fair when most of mankind has never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ?
3. Do most of mankind just remain in the grave and only a lucky few who heard the message and are converted make it into the Kingdom (as the Christadelphians teach)?
4. Does God provide salvation based on one's conscience if one has not heard the Gospel as many protestants teach?

¹ William Barclay in *The Daily Bible Study. The Letters of James and Peter* wrote the following concerning IPet 4:6 "In some ways this is one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible, for, if our explanation is anywhere near the truth, it gives a breath-taking glimpse of a gospel of a second chance." This demonstrates yet another example of theologians struggling with what happens to those that are not called or in full understanding of the Truth.

We, in the Church of God teach that there is a universal *opportunity* for salvation, and we hope/think most will eventually 'make it.' We see that the Scriptures are clear that some will lose out, unfortunately. So, there is no universal salvation per se for everyone. Incredibly, some universalists even think that Satan and the demons will eventually be saved!

Anyway, what came out of this is that the scholar mentioned the following:

- Many of the early Church 'fathers' were universalist – to which I would retort that they were also struggling with the concept per the above questions and as such, adopted universalism in error
- There were different 'species' of universalism he stated - I wonder if it included a similar view to that which the Church of God and Russellites teach?
- Since the 1980s, more and more scholars have come to see how there is no eternal torture in hell. He did state that some teach annihilation nowadays, though he doesn't. The Church of God (and others) teach the annihilation of the wicked
- Talked about the concept of *apokatastasis* = restoration. While we believe that the restoration of all things begin with the Millennium, some go further for it to mean restoration of everyone to God via universalism. To me, this aspect of restoration when viewed alongside other scriptures, means that only those that willingly repent and build His character are restored into a relationship with Him
- Humans are images of God and the whole message of the Bible is that we are to become the complete image of Him. He subscribes to the doctrine that human destiny is to become 'gods' – ie the doctrine of theosis/glorification/deification. He even quoted the famous statement by Athanasius "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." Becoming gods is human destiny Dr Parry exclaimed. I have written an article about how the Eastern Churches taught this centuries ago and still do, though in a lesser form
- He also (like some scholars) stated that there are 3 stages to salvation: past, present, future. This what the Church of God (and others) have taught
- We have to reflect on what judgment is (ie he inferred it is not always condemnation but can also mean assessment)
- Eternal fire = fire of the 'age to come'
- Eternal life = life everlasting in the 'age to come'

Note that many protestant scholars have written about the above and more, it is just that this has not seeped down into the average protestant church or their ministers' doctrinal understanding and consequently their sermons, books and articles.

It would be interesting to find out if some of the Sabbatarian churches over the centuries taught universal salvation and if any taught something approximating what HWA revealed, that is a *fair chance* for all.

Wikipedia summarises the future probation discussion:

"Future probation is a point of view within Christian teaching dealing with the fate of the dead in the afterlife. It might also be described as the belief concerning individual eschatology. The general scope of the subject encompasses many variants that range from the Catholic doctrine of invincible ignorance through Mormon practices of postmortem baptism.

It is unique to Christian and Jewish belief and can be viewed as a way of extending salvation to all people without being dogmatically universalist.

The subject attained great prominence in the second half of the 19th century and has continued into recent times. Prior to 1800, the teaching is difficult to distinguish from universalism as many of the questions involved were framed by different cultural, prophetic and ecclesiastical issues." ("Future Probation," *Wikipedia*)

Bjorgvin Snorrason in *The Origin, Development, and History of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church from the 1840s to 1889* (2010), provides some background:

"Somewhat in common with postmillennialism, most of the believers in the —Age-to-Come- teaching held that the Second Advent would usher in a millennial kingdom **during which probation would continue** and the nations would be converted under the reign of Christ and the saints, and during which the Jews would play a leading role. By contrast the Adventists taught, following William Miller (1782-1849), that by the Second Advent, the fate of every human being would be decided, and the kingdom established at that time by Christ would include only his immortalized saints." (pp. 106-07)

"Second Advent would precede the millennium; but like postmillennialists, they believed that during the millennium, under the reign of Christ and the saints, probation would continue until all the nations would be converted." (p. 109)

"Their burden was that **man's opportunity for salvation continues on during the age to come' (that is, during the millennium)** a belief which earned them the name, 'The Age-to-Come Party.'" (p. 110, quoting Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, p. 16.) [emphasis mine]

The Russellites and Jehovah Witnesses as well as the Church of God have been the greatest proponents of this doctrine in the twentieth and twenty-first century, though there are some differences in the understanding of when this opportunity will be offered. The former believe it will be during the Millennium while the Church of God believes it will occur after the Millennium at the second resurrection during the Great White Throne Judgement period.

Key Proponents of the Fair Chance doctrine

It is not generally known that a number of scholars during the nineteenth century favourably proposed a future *fair chance* – for all and sundry to be offered salvation. These men are discussed below.

Dunbar Isidore Heath (1816-1888)

Heath was not the average preacher or Bible student – his distinguished background included being a Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge and he became world renowned for his Egyptological expertise having translated papyri at the British Museum.

However, he fell out of favour with the religious authorities and was prosecuted for heresy⁵ for publishing a work that proclaimed a concept of salvation for the saints and another for the rest of mankind later on during the reign of the Messiah on earth (the Millennium). So, in effect Heath taught that there were two periods of restitution and salvation on earth² similar to, but not exactly the same as that taught later by the Church of God.



Dunbar Heath

This concept was laid out in his book *The Future Human Kingdom of Christ* (1852). An extract from his book is provided below:

“Countless will be the multitudes of the saved in the restitution of all things. Glorious will be the renewed earth. Its untempted inhabitants will not be miserable. The will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But countless also will be the conditions of the individuals who will go up in those days to keep the feast of tabernacles, -- as they are now. Untempted, saved from the Devil, but much differing, everyone's repentance will have been taken at exactly what it weighed. True repentance will, through Christ's merits, have saved the greatest sinner from the eternal companionship of the Devil, he will receive his penny for his one hour -- his salvation; he will not be in hell, but (Isaiah 60:14) as one of those who erst afflicted Christ's true holy Church shall he come bending unto her, and as one who erst despised her shall he bow himself down at the sole of her feet, and shall call her the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (*The Future Kingdom of Christ*, chapter 2)

² “C. T. Russell and George Storrs were influenced by his writings and published four extracts from the latter volume as articles in *Zion's Watch Tower*. His *Tracts for Thoughtful Christians* (1866) addresses the themes of hell, eternal punishment, and predestination. His ideas on two types of salvation and the times of restitution were of particular interest to Russell.” (G. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah Witnesses*, p. 45).

Henry Dunn (1801-1878)

Dunn was a very religious man and devoted his life to studying the Scriptures and even published his own periodical, *The Interpreter* (1860-61). His illustrious career included his position as secretary to the British and Foreign School Society and he was very much involved with the history of public education in England.

During his studies, he expressed appreciation to *The Future Kingdom of Christ: Or Man's Heaven to be this Earth* by Dunbar Heath and advocated similar views (the **Appendix. Review of Henry Dunn's The Kingdom of God; or, What is the Gospel?** provides further information). This book led him to write *Destiny of the Human Race*. George Storrs and Charles Taze Russell were appreciative for this book's influence on their development of the doctrine of two periods of salvation - one for the few now (the saints) and another at the return of Christ during His 1,000-year reign on earth (the times of restitution).³

He wondered about the Millennium and what would occur during that period. His conclusion was that millions would be resurrected during that period and be taught God's way by the saints and thereby have their first opportunity of salvation - a subject more and more scholars were eager to explore.

"It is impossible to conceive that, dealing with them thus the Lord could regard them as eternally lost, hour by hour, dropping at once into the grave and into the bottomless pit. Yet this must be the conclusion if we are to accept the popular interpretation of such texts as "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." For these people, although in a certain sense familiar with Christ, were yet not believers on Him.

The explanation is to be found, and found only, in the declaration that they were not weeds to be destroyed, but a harvest to be reaped (Matt. ix. 37); that they did not perceive, and could not comprehend the nature of the kingdom, because they had not been born again; that they were not included in those 'first-fruits' of which James speaks; that they belonged to that later ingathering which is one day to complete the Redeemer's triumph." (*The Kingdom of God. Or, What is the Gospel?* p. 33)

Dunn even wrote articles for George Storrs' periodical, *The Bible Examiner*, indicating how these formative ideas were flowing between key thinkers, producing interesting outcomes that would influence the Church of God.

Charles Taze Russell (founder of the Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, becoming known as the Bible Students by the early twentieth century and later as Jehovah's Witnesses), also published articles by Dunn (extracts from *The Study of the Bible*) in his *Zion's Watchtower* and acknowledged the influence of Dunn and Storrs on his theological development:

"Bros. George Storrs, Henry Dunn and others were preaching and writing of 'the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets' (Acts 3:21) and that 'In the ages to come, God would show the exceeding riches of his grace.' (Ephesians 2:7)" (Charles Taze Russell, Supplement to *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, 1 July, 1879, p. 2)

Jacob Blain (1818-1906)

Blain, a Baptist clergyman, acknowledged Dunn's influence and subsequently authored *Hope for Our Race* (1871). Following are extracts from this book:

³ He also wrote other indepth works such as *The Study of the Bible* (1871).

“What thoughtful person, acquainted with the history of our world, can avoid feeling sorrowful when he knows that more than two-thirds of mankind have never heard the glad tidings of a Saviour, that “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty?” We should also consider the fact that a large majority in Christendom come into the world with minds so weak and thoughtless, with passions so strong, and are surrounded with temptations so numerous and powerful, that the Gospel has little or no effect on them ; and that more than one-half, in almost every age, live and die under erroneous teaching as to the way of salvation.” (*Hope for Our Race*, p. 6)

“At Christ's coming, and after the first resurrection, all who have died impenitent will be raised, and in due time Christ will be made known to them by the elect Church. Light being given, the mass, it is hoped, will repent and accept Christ, and so be saved; but with the lesser salvation they will not reign with Christ, or be of the bride, but be the “nations outside of the new Jerusalem” (Rev. xxi. 22–26). The chief difference between this view and some others is, that all the risen impenitent dead will share in the blessing, as well as those living when it begins.” (ibid, p. 10)

“The reader should keep in mind that the first great point is to prove that the mass of our race will finally be saved ...” (p. 15)

“When will Christians learn that Old Testament prophecies are worth something to us?” (ibid, p. 38)

“They (the Restorationists), on the contrary, without denying that the eternal punishment of the irreclaimably wicked may involve their utter destruction, think they see in Scripture intimations of a world-wide restitution, embracing all who have not deliberately rejected the offers of the Gospel. They hold a special salvation for those who are here by the grace of God united to Christ,-for these, they say, are the elect of God, appointed to REIGN on “the new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness;” but they maintain in connection therewith, a deliverance after death from the “captivity” of Satan, for myriads, who, in the better world, are to be under the Redeemer, governed and taught by the chosen “kings and priests.”” (ibid, p. 51)

Blain also wrote *The Wicked Not Immortal (185?)*; and *Death not life: or, the theological hell and endless misery disproved, and the doctrine of destruction established, by a collection and explanation of all passages on future punishment. Also metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the wicked exploded (1853)* in addition to other writings disproving the immortal soul doctrine. This latter publication was advertised in the Church of God's *Hope of Israel* periodical in the 1860s.⁴

George Stetson (1814-1879)

Stetson was a physician, school-teacher and minister. He joined the Adventist Christian Church and worked closely with Jonas Wendell (whom is mentioned further along in this article).

He also became associated with Charles Taze Russell (having met him in 1872), George Storrs and Henry Grew⁵ and it is likely that it is he who influenced Russell to adopt Arianism.

⁴ Though he was not Church of God, they promoted his works due to similarity in doctrine on this issue. He was not an Adventist per se (B. Schulz, *A Separate Identity*, p. 135, 153), but held similar views.

⁵ “The doctrines of Stetson’s church in Pittsburgh included the millennial rule of Christ, death as sleep until the resurrection, a second opportunity for those who are unavoidably ignorant of the gospel, and death as extinction for the wicked. These were not compulsory tests of faith, but it was expected that members would regard the Bible as the supreme standard of authority and that they be recognizable by their good character.” (G. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah Witnesses*, p. 128). By “second opportunity” he should have written “first opportunity.”

Russell mentioned him in his *Zion's Watchtower* and even delivered the sermon at Stetson's funeral.

Both he and Wendell wrote articles for *The Herald of Life and the Coming Kingdom*, published by George Storrs.

George Storrs (1796-1879)

Storrs⁶ was one of the leading lights of the Second Advent movement⁷ but never went along with the visions of Hiram Edson or Ellen G White. However, many of his major doctrinal positions found their way into Russell's Bible Students movement and other Sunday Adventist groups.

It should be noted that he did not consider himself an Adventist since their emergence in 1844 (B. Schulz, *A Separate Identity*, p. 136). He was anti-clerical and did not even provide a legal name for his congregation in Philadelphia, preferring the non-official naming or categorisation of *Church of God* (B. Schulz, *A Separate Identity*, p. 125). Later, Russell's Bible Students unofficially also called themselves *Church of God*.

It not well known that he believed in British-Israelism, but the various Second Adventists and successors, in the main, were not interested in the concept. However, if Storrs recommended a book or concept, he was so well-esteemed, people would follow up and read the book, if possible. It is very likely that he had some influence upon Church of God people in addition to the British-Israel doctrine, as they read books on this subject as a result of his recommendation. Why would they not read other materials he recommended, such as on the *fair chance*?

"Early in 1850 "a friend recently from England" gave Storrs a copy of John Wilson's *Our Israelitish Origin: Lectures on Ancient Israel, and the Israelitish Origin of the Modern Nations of Europe*, first published in 1840 and newly reissued in 1850. Storrs was impressed and introduced the matter to his readers in the March issue. Later that year he republished the book. The premise was that the Lost Tribes of Israel were the founding race of most European nations, particularly of the English. Others from the Literalist community would take up the belief. John Henry Paton, sometime associate of Russell and Barbour, would find the idea attractive, entering into a correspondence with Andrew Jukes whose brand of Universalism and restitution appealed to him. Jukes views are found in his *Second Death and the Restitution of all Things*. Jukes and others saw England as the "land of Ephraim" and America as "the land of Manasseh."" (B. Schulz, *A Separate Identity*, p. 125)⁸

Storrs further wrote the following in an article "God's Promise and Oath to Abraham":

- "1. God has promised, and confirmed it with an oath, that in Abraham and his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
2. This promise and oath is to be understood in the literal sense of the words in which it is made.

Russell also wrote for *The Restitution* (1870-1926) which was a sort of successor periodical to Benjamin Wilson's. Replete throughout its pages over the years were terms such as Church of God, Age to Come, One Faith, Abrahamic Faith (*Charles Taze Russell and The Restitution*, <https://truthhistory.blogspot.com/2012/03/charles-taze-russell-and-restitution.html>).

⁶ A good article on Storrs is available online at <http://watchtowerdocuments.org/george-storrs-enigmatic-and-ambivalent-polarizer-of-adventism/#comment-1940>

⁷ M McCook, *Aliens in the World: Sectarians, Secularism and the Second Great Awakening* (PhD thesis).

⁸ For instance, Joseph Marsh (of the Christian Connection) published the *Advent Harbinger*. In the 29 June and 6 July 1850 editions he published an article by Storrs which contained extracts from Wilson's book.

Note also: "Thus, Millerism helped set the stage for the introduction of Anglo-Israelism into the United States. That would explain how George Storrs, a former Millerite, came to recommend *Our Israelitish Origins*. It may also be one reason why the book sold well in this country" (R. Orr, *Anglo-Israelism and The United States & Britain in Prophecy*, pp. 41-2).

3. This promise and oath is not yet fulfilled in its fullness.
4. Therefore, there is to be an age, or 'ages to come,' in which fulfillment will be perfectly accomplished." (*The Herald of Life and the Coming Kingdom*, 26 April 1871).

Above, we met Henry Grew and his doctrine of two salvations: one for the Church in this age; and a future millennial salvation for all those not called in this life with these people being instructed in God's way by the Church. Although he was accused of being a universalist, he countered by explaining that he was not, but rather there would be universal opportunity for salvation.⁹ Grew also taught that man is mortal, not immortal.

Storrs accidentally stumbled across a tract by Grew on a train in 1837 which convicted him to search the Scriptures to ascertain whether man had an immortal soul or not. And whether the grave was the hell referred therein. While Grew believed that the wicked would be resurrected to judgment, apparently Storrs was later of the view that they would not be resurrected and simply disintegrate in the grave (groups such as the Christadelphians hold that view to this day).¹⁰

So convicted was he of this new understanding he had of human mortality that he commenced a periodical *The Bible Examiner* (1843-79) which was read by many Millerites and Second Adventists. Its motto was "No Immortality, or Endless Life Except through Jesus Christ Alone."

He published a book *Six Sermons on the inquiry Is there Immortality in Sin and Suffering?* in 1842 which was republished in England in 1843. It found favour among many leading theologians.

William Miller opposed Storrs on the immortality doctrine, favouring instead the mainstream Protestant and Catholic view on the immortality of the soul and eternal punishment in hell.¹¹

Because of Storrs' influence, most of the Millerite groups came to accept that man is mortal and does not burn forever in hell (this includes the Seventh-day Adventists and the various Sunday Adventist groups).¹²

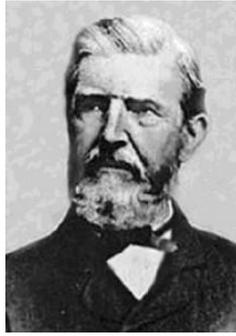
However, in terms of the nature of God, he seemed to have held to a semi-Arian position, apparently believing that Christ was God alongside of the Father.

⁹ Some distorted Storrs' view on the subject, causing friction with Second Adventists (Schulz, *A Separate Identity*, pp. 135-36).

¹⁰ "He held that the doctrines of an immortal immaterial soul and the destiny of eternal hell for the wicked were unacceptable. Those who died in ignorance would be restored to life at the Second Coming, to be given a second [he should have written "first chance"] opportunity to accept Christ's ransom sacrifice. In his later years, after 1870, Storrs concluded that there were two classes of people who died in ignorance: those who had conclusively rejected the gospel and those who had merely failed to hear it. Only the former would be resurrected. He also taught that the Lord's Evening Meal was to be celebrated on Nisan 14." (G. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah Witnesses*, p. 128).

¹¹ The Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge his importance to their history: "George Storrs did not accept the Sabbath or the sanctuary messages; why then is he featured among the pioneers? The focus of truth is not so much on the man as on the message. The doctrine of the state of the dead and the non-immortality of the soul is a foundational doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist message and movement. Storrs introduced this Bible truth to the Adventist pioneers." ("In this issue," *Lest We Forget*, 1991, vol 1, no 4, p. 1).

¹² "It is well known that Charles Taze Russell came to this understanding in the 1870s under the influence of George Storrs's publications and especially the sermons of Jonas Wendell, an Advent Christian (not a SDA) preacher who was a remnant of the Millerite movement. On this see Frederic Zydek, *Charles Taze Russell: His Life and Times. The Man, the Millennium, and the Message* (2d ed.; N.p.: Winthrop, 2010), 28-29, 33, 42) ... As early as 1842, Storrs' conditionalist ideas were accepted by Calvin French, a Baptist minister who also joined the Millerites ... This mention of Fitch, one of the top Millerites, is fitting inasmuch as he became Storrs' first ministerial convert to the doctrine of conditional immortality within the Adventist ranks, while the other movement leaders strongly rejected it." (W. Paroschi, "Death as Sleep: The (Mis)use of a Biblical Metaphor," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 28/1 (2017), pp 26, 28, 29). In *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, Knight reveals that the Sabbatarian Adventist conditional immortality doctrine derived from George Storrs and the Christian Connexion (p. 73).



George Storrs

Once again, George Storrs had many insights. He wrote:

“It is indeed true that ruling also is included in Christ’s judging the world, yet it will be perfected by reward and punishment.” (*Bible Examiner*, December 1855)

“The penalty of the divine law is literal *death*, or cessation of conscious being ... if the impenitent and unbelieving are raised to life at all, it must be a *mortal* and not an *immortal* life. ... Numerous divine testimonies ... teach a universal judgment both of a *judicial* and *executive* character: passages which declare facts relative to the judgment of the wicked, which necessarily imply life and its functions, ... many who will be made alive by ‘a resurrection [to] condemnation,’ will be still *mortal* and liable to a *second death*. ... The sacred Scriptures distinctly teach that some will be made alive by a resurrection, in a ‘mortal’ state.” (*Bible Examiner*, February 1856)

Again, it was Storrs that widened this view of salvation being offered to all of mankind (yet without adopting the universalist teaching). To him, God would reasonably provide for mankind’s redemption and a *fair chance* for everyone.

Note the following quotes from Storrs:

“The next age of Messiah’s personal reign of one thousand years, will open with a resurrection of all the sleeping saints who have suffered with or for Christ in this or the previous ages: such ‘shall reign with him.’ ... These having suffered with Christ, and overcome the seductions to abandon His cause, will ‘together be made perfect’ in body and mind ... That there will be more than two classes of men on the earth at the opening of the next age, or at the second advent of Christ, to me is clear ... there is yet a ... class of men at the second advent of Christ, who ‘have not heard God’s fame, neither have seen his glory,’ etc. ... This class constitutes by far the largest part of the inhabitants of the earth ... will be the subjects of trial under Messiah’s personal reign.” (*The Bible Examiner*, January 1877)

“The penalty of the divine law is literal *death*, or cessation of conscious being ... if the impenitent and unbelieving are raised to life at all, it must be a *mortal* and not an *immortal* life. ... Numerous divine testimonies ... teach a universal judgment both of a *judicial* and *executive* character: passages which declare facts relative to the judgment of the wicked, which necessarily imply life and its functions, ... many who will be made alive by ‘a resurrection [to] condemnation,’ will be still *mortal* and liable to a *second death*. ... The sacred Scriptures distinctly teach that some will be made alive by a resurrection, in a ‘mortal’ state.” (*Bible Examiner*, February, 1856)

“However, in 1871, Storrs made another change in his position in this regard. While still believing that the incorrigibly wicked dead would never be resurrected, but would remain dead forever, his position was that the vast majority of mankind would all receive a resurrection (during the “ages to come” after the 1,000 year reign of Christ ended). Here they would have a full and fair opportunity to know and accept God’s “Plan of the Ages.” He doubted not that the vast majority of them would do so.” (<http://watchtowerdocuments.org/george-storrs-enigmatic-and-ambivalent-polarizer-of-adventism/>)

Storrs decided to revive the aforementioned *The Bible Examiner* periodical in 1871 (which was discontinued in 1863). In it he taught that God’s plan extended to the entire human race and not just those that have been offered salvation in the Christian era. To him, the Abrahamic promise would be offered to all mankind during the Kingdom of God on earth period.

Charles Russell contacted him in 1871 and was heavily influenced by him.

Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916)

In certain ways Russell was a true heir of the Millerite movement, given his beliefs and doctrinal roots.¹³ Note also that the various Second Adventist leaders from the 1840s and 1850s did not form part of or get involved with the visions and consequent doctrinal views of Ellen G White (such as the Millennium being spent in heaven or that the Christ began to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary from 1844 and such like).

It was in 1879 that he began publishing *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Two years later he formally founded the Bible Students which became known organisationally as Zion Watch Tower Society in 1881. His followers called him “the Laodicean Messenger” to the seventh epoch of the church (*The Laodicean Messenger, being the Memoirs of the Life, Works and Character of That Faithful and Wise Servant of the Most High God*, pp. 122, 153). Many Jehovah Witnesses and the original Russellite groups still espouse church eras in one form or another. Take for example Redeker’s *The Seven Churches of Revelation*.

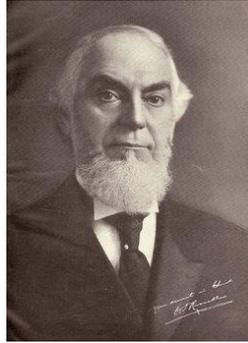
Their great “mystery” doctrine was that God raised up the Church through Christ – and it is the Church that will help to save mankind during the Millennium (*Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*, p. 1995)

Later, in 1917, Rutherford took over the movement and changed many of its doctrines and the faithful formed their own groups which are extant to this day. The organisation changed its name to Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1931. However, it still adheres to Russell’s *fair chance* doctrine.

Russell and others believed in a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth. He and his followers believed that prior to the Millennium Christ would return invisibly (a *parousia* or presence) at first; and then visibly at the commencement of the Millennium (ie a two-part return).

The “bride” or Church must make itself ready for this event and its members would rule with Christ throughout His reign, he taught.

¹³ However, he was not a member of the Second Adventist movement as such (*Adventism*, <https://truthhistory.blogspot.com/2012/02/>)



Charles Taze Russell

He held to many truths but, alas, also some rather odd ideas. Amongst the truths he held to were:

- held to the name Church of God (unofficially, but used throughout)
- held Passover on 14 Nisan
- baptism by immersion
- Anti-Trinitarianism (though an Arian form)
- Christians are born again in the resurrection
- anointing for healing
- man is mortal and the unrepentant will be annihilated
- Christendom is the great Whore with many daughters
- Gospel of the future Kingdom of God
- second advent and 1,000 year reign of the Messiah
- the vast majority of mankind are not called to salvation at this time, but will be resurrected during the Millennium to be offered their first chance of salvation

Russell believed that this was indeed "the day of salvation" for Christians (forming the little flock and the Bride of Christ). Yet a further day of salvation awaited all of those that were not cognisant of God's way. This "day" would be during the Millennium when "the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

According to Russell, all of mankind would be enlightened to God's way during this period and only after that would they be placed on trial and appear before the judgement. Mankind would be raised to life in a general resurrection during the Millennium and be given a chance of salvation – after all, they must be judged according to knowledge and behaviour, not according to ignorance or conscience as some falsely teach.¹⁴

¹⁴ The Seventh-day Adventists struggled with the same questions: When the protestant missionaries were encountering those that never heard of Jesus or the Gospel, it was clear to them that "many millions had died before having the opportunity to hear of Jesus. Had they all gone to hell? Were some of them saved, and if so how?" (p. 51)

"Wesley ... strongly believed in going out in mission to the heathen, but this did not mean the heathen were outside the possibility of salvation simply because they were heathen." (p. 53)

Ellen G White wrote that "Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required." [footnote 10: "White, *Desire of Ages*, 638"] (p. 54).

"She even goes so far as to state that these "heathen" re actually worshipping "God ignorantly." She is also clear that they "will not perish" which is a reference to an eternal state not their temporal life on earth." (p. 59)

"... even though all have a chance to make a decision to follow God, even if they do not explicitly know it, Ellen White is adamant that God's people must go out in mission." (p. 71) ("A Fresh Look at Ellen G. White's Statements Within Their Original Context on the Heathen Being Saved," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, vol 29, Nos 1&2, 2018, pp. 50-72 by A Tompkins. Refer also to his article "Statements of Ellen G. White concerning the heathen's destiny reveal four intertwined themes", *Perspective Digest*, Vol 27, Issue 1, 1 Jan, 2022.

It is likely that Russell learned of this *fair chance* for humanity doctrine from George Storrs and there are hints of this belief sometimes in Sabbatarian history.

In *A Separate Identity: Organizational Identity Among Readers of Zion's Watch Tower: 1870-1887* (Vol 1), B.W. Schulz demonstrates how some distorted Storrs' *fair chance* doctrine.¹⁵ Storrs

"... had been for decades an Age-to-Come advocate. He called himself a "firm believer in an age to come, of probation to some of our race" after Christ's return, dating that belief to March 1844 ...

Storrs ... rejected probationism [preferring future probation], the teaching that one's life is a period of testing and one's only chance to find God's approval. Influence by Henry Dunn and secondarily by Dunbar Isidore Heath, he saw probationism as unscriptural. He wasn't alone in questioning probation doctrine. It was debated in the theological press, many pointing out that "probation" wasn't a scriptural term and certainly not a Bible doctrine."

"Stated fairly, opponents had a much more difficult time refuting Storrs and others advocating a full and fair chance to hear the gospel in the resurrection ..." (p. 135)

"Jacob Blain, a Baptist clergyman, circulated back numbers of *Bible Examiner*, some *Bible Examiner* tracts, and his own *New Light: A New Theory as to the Destiny of our Race*, as held by Henry Dunn and many in England." (p. 135)

"The Russells [ie the Russellites] and their associates relied heavily on Storrs ... Russell saw Storrs as a spiritual mentor and a man of faith." (p. 136)

Concerning the 100 years referred to in Is. 65:20, Russell's belief was outlined in his work *Divine Plan of the Ages*:

"Dimensions of the Incense Altar = 100
The only piece of furniture not used in that calculation, is the incense altar. Taking the incense altar by itself, we find that the top and the bottom, add up to 4 cubits. Any two verticals add up to 4 cubits. **4 x 25 = 100 cubits or the 100 years of Isaiah 65:20.**

The 4 verticals are 2 cubits apiece.
The top is 4 cubits as is the bottom.
Two verticals of one face = 4 cu.
4 sides of top = 4 cu
4 sides of bottom = 4 cu
4 x 25 = 100 years
This is the 100 years of **Isaiah 65:20** ...

"The Brazen Altar = 1000

¹⁵ It is interesting the extent of belief and discussion on the *fair chance* doctrine during the latter half of the nineteenth century. An example of the debate at that time is "Future Probation" by Gail Hamilton in *The North American Review*, Feb 1887, pp. 129-140. SDA pioneer, Joseph Harvey Waggoner condemned a literal 1,000 year Millennium on earth and also future probation in his book *Refutation of the Doctrine Called The Age to Come*. Discussion still continues, though at a lower level, for example *Grace Beyond the Grave. Is Salvation Possible in the Afterlife?* by Stephen Jonathan.

If we take the top and the bottom of the brazen altar, the dimensions add up to 40 cubits, **40 x 25 = 1000 yrs.**

Looking at these numbers, we can see that the eventual restitution of all mankind, is being shown in the dimensions of the tabernacle furniture, when its looked at together, Acts 3:19

We find represented in the tabernacle furniture, the 2500 Jubilee cycle, pointing to the restitution of all things, the 1000 year day in which mankind will be restored, and the fact that all will have at least 100 yrs to hear and to accept the kingdom.” [emphasis mine]

They teach that this 100-year period which is taken from Isaiah 65:20, is a “Kingdom Picture.”

The *Amplified Bible* reads this way:

“There shall no more be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who dies prematurely; for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner who dies when only a hundred years old shall be thought only a child, cut off because he is accursed.”

Today the Jehovah Witnesses (in part, successors to Russell) teach that all those that did not have their eyes opened to the truth or who died in ignorance and are not resurrected to eternal life at Christ’s coming - will be resurrected to mortal life. They teach these billions who were alive since Adam and Eve will receive their first chance of salvation.

To them this shows the possibility that people will be given 100 years to truly change their ways and conform to God’s arrangement; if they do not, they will be cut off – this would occur during the Millennium, rather than after it, according to their theological understanding.

So, Russellites believe that everyone who ever lived will be resurrected to life and be given the opportunity to learn about God and his plan of salvation. Of further interest is their belief that the resurrection work is a process that may take hundreds of years during the 1,000 years of Christ. A time of opportunity for both the good and evil to be instructed in God’s ways (ie those not called in this life) – in other words a rehabilitative work. This is, of course, different from the views of Universalism, which claim all will be reconciled to God regardless, including Satan. But what the Russelites believe is that all will be given the opportunity for salvation, though the scriptures are clear, some will fail and fall away.

They further believe that Jesus Christ’s stated words in John 6:44-45 as well as the scriptures in Isaiah 2:3 and 11:9 prove that all of mankind has yet to be offered salvation.

The “exception,” in their belief system, will be those who were begotten by God’s Holy Spirit because Jesus stated that there is no forgiveness for those who sin against the Holy Spirit. That is not to say this is just any sin, because we are all creatures of habit; but most likely refers to those who eventually deny that Jesus is the Christ, the same Spirit that revealed it to them and enlightened them to this regard – this is their strongly held belief and similar to Church of God belief.

Other Advocates of a Fair Chance

Another early work advocating a *fair chance* in one form or another (without being universalist) is *The Intermediate State between Death and Judgment* by Herbert Luckock (1896).

Of further interest, Second Advent scholars including Isaac Wellcome and Clarkson Goud, were well aware of a plan that God had in mind for the human race. In their 1867 book *The Plan of Redemption* they attempted to expound upon this.

Following are several other advocates for *fair chance*.

Explanation by Charles Ryba:

“As a background to this pointed millennial proposal there was also a higher-level theological discussion which widely debated the virtues of future probation. *The Rainbow, a Journal of Prophecy* published by William Leask in England, began entertaining this view during the 1870s. Evangelical theologians Hermann Cremer, Isaac Dorner, along with F. W. Farrar, Edward White, C. A. Row, G. G. Stokes, and L. C. Baker were a few prominent people who promoted this view. The *Homiletic Review* published a debate on the topic in book form titled *Future Probation* published by Nisbett. Professors at Andover stirred up controversy among American churches with their essays published as *The New Orthodoxy*. The 2004 Ph.D. dissertation of Sharon Taylor, *That Obnoxious Dogma: Future Probation and the Struggle to Construct an American Congregationalist Identity*, provides a valuable historical background. Of the few people outside the immediate controversy, she highlighted the prominence of C. T. Russell on the American Adventist scene (see pages 72-74).” (“The Midnight Cry,” *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*, p. 14)

Arlen F Rankin:

“There was a hermeneutical and therefore theological watershed which became apparent and separative in the thirty years between 1850 and 1880 within the Millerite movement. Doctrinal forces were stirring both within and around the Millerite camp. The early thinkers and writers of the Church of God were at the core of the discussions in those years. The advancement of the age-to-come doctrine as well as the earlier literalist teachings promoted the millennial restoration of the literal nation of Israel and with it the concept of a probation of living mortals and the progression of “the times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

Julia Neuffer writes about the “Age-to-Come Controversy”:

Where did the age-to-come doctrine of the 1850s come from? Possibly it stemmed chiefly from the British Literalist publications that had been circulated among the Millerites. However, the name seems to have come from the title of the 1850 editorials and the 1851 book by Joseph Marsh. Certainly, his paper *The Advent Harbinger* (Rochester, NY), became the sounding board for the doctrine, although other individuals had taught it before him. (2)”

[footnote 2: Julia Neuffer, “The Gathering of Israel: A Historical Study of Early Writings.” The entire text of her study can be viewed at <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/gather.html>]

(*A Watershed Doctrine for the Age to Come Believers and the Millerites*, pp. 1-2)

The followers of C.T. Russell see a resurrection to mortality of all those “who have never heard” to an “opportunity” or “fair chance” for hearing, acceptance and reconciliation, and some among them believe in an ultimate and universal salvation for all. The Church of God generally believes that those who have never heard will remain among “the rest of the dead” to be raised in the final judgment to receive an *appropriate* judgment at the hands of a *righteous* God.” (ibid, p. 3)

Charles Grandison Finney:

“The main difference between the premillennial and the postmillennial positions was the question of whether the return of Christ would be spiritual or physical. Even so, according to both theories, there would be a probationary period for sinners after Christ's return, regardless of whether the Second Advent was spiritual or literal. For example, the great evangelist Charles Grandison Finney, a postmillennialist, believed that God was too benevolent to destroy all sinners without a continuing probationary period during which the greater part of mankind would ultimately be saved. In debate with the Millerite preacher, Charles Fitch, at Oberlin College in September of 1843, Finney argued that God would never have created the earth in the first place if more evil than good should result in the majority of the human race being lost. The benevolence of God, he stated, proved by His actions in the past, was entirely against the ending of the probationary existence of the world in 1843 or 1844.(8)”

[the footnote 8 reads “*Report of a Discussion on the Second Advent Near by Rev. Chas. Fitch, Rev. Henry Cowles, Rev. Asa Mahan, &c. Lately Held at Oberlin (Cleveland, 1843), 11-12.*”] (N. Gordon Thomas, “The Millerite Movement in Ohio,” *Ohio History Journal*, vol 81, Spring 1972, no. 2, pp. 97-98)

Allen Hudson:

“Parallel with the early stages of this movement in point of time were the Restorationists, who separated from the Universalists in 1830 on the issue of retribution in the Messianic Age.^{23,24} They saw and held, as did C. T. Russell, that since “what a man soweth, that shall he reap,” the period of probation which is the purpose of the coming Millennial Age must include, not only the full opportunity for repentance and reformation unhindered by Satanic influence which will then be the rule, but also natural and equitable retribution for the deeds of evil done in this life. Because character is formed by deeds, the transforming of bad or partially bad character in that day must involve stress and hardship, and men who are truly repentant will realize the inevitability as well as the justice of what in one place the Scripture calls “stripes” as an element in their progress towards sinless perfection.(24) This group continued at least until the early years of the present century, but does not seem to have produced any outstanding figure whose name has survived.” (*Future Probation in Christian Belief*, p. 43)

He lists a number of theologians who believed in a *fair chance* and though most did not believe it would occur during the Messianic Age, at least they were aware of a future chance of salvation of mankind. Their idea of a *fair chance* was in some sort of intermediate state between death and resurrection. In fact, Hudson shows how this doctrine may be traced down the centuries in one form or another.

You can read some interesting extracts from his booklet in the **Appendix. Extracts from Future Probation in Christian Belief.**

James M Stephenson:

He published a book *God's Plan of Salvation* around 1877. On pages 70-71, 268-72 he hints strongly at a “fair chance” for all peoples. There is more about him later on in this paper.

Church of God Belief

It should be recognised that this idea (or similar) was also finding its way among the Church of God people. Recall that earlier we met Jacob Blain who promoted the *fair chance* doctrine and whose works were advertised in the Church of God's publication, *The Hope of Israel*, in the 1860s. Notice the following:

“Church of God (Seventh-day). Adventist group that traces its origin back to the original sabbatarian Adventist movement. After H.S. Case and C.P. Russell came into conflict with **Ellen G. White** in Jackson, Michigan, in 1853, they began publishing the *Messenger of Truth* and two years later formed an alliance with J.M. Stephenson and D.P. Hall in Wisconsin **who were advocating the belief that during the millennium individuals would have a second chance to accept Christ**” (*Historical Dictionary of Seventh-Day Adventists: Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements*, p. 63). [emphasis mine] [by “second chance” they should have stated “first chance” and this demonstrates how the doctrine is often misunderstood by others and sometimes even confused with universalism]¹⁶

Also, about this time, some Sabbatarian Adventists (many whom became Seventh-day Adventists and others became Church of God) taught the *fair chance* (“age to come” or “future probation”) doctrine:

“J.M. Stephenson and D.P. Hall were two of the first converts of J.H. Waggoner in Wisconsin [apparently this was in the 1850s]. For some years they were prominent ministers, though they never abandoned but sometimes hid their belief in that doctrine of probation for sinners after the Second Coming called the “age-to-come,” which was held by some Adventists, then quite a party.” (AW Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 229)¹⁷

¹⁶ According to Lawrence Onsager writing in the *Adventist Heritage* (vol 11, no 1): “Unfortunately, Mellberg became involved with the age-to-come controversy advocated by J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall, two Adventist ministers in Wisconsin, and did not follow through with his work among the Norwegians. The believers of **the age-to-come were a minority group of defectors from Seventh-day Adventism who held that probation would continue after the Second Advent and sinners would receive a second chance.** In 1855 Stephenson and Hall joined the Messenger party, another group of dissidents led by H. S. Case and C. P. Russell and named for their paper, the *Messenger of Truth* ... J. M. Stephenson and D. P., Hall, mentioned previously, held meetings in the neighborhood and visited the church members at their homes advocating their age-to-come theories.” (p. 35) [emphasis mine]

“However, age-to-come Adventists did remain a factor in Jefferson County. In 1890 they had a group of thirty-six meeting in a rented hall. At that time, the Oakland church was the only Seventh-day Adventist church in the county and had a membership of thirty-eight.” (p. 36)

¹⁷ Bull and Lockart writing in *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh day Adventism and the American Dream* note similarly (p. 200). Also, the *Ellen G White Writings* website provides their perspective: “Concurrent with the Messenger party in Michigan, another dissident group was developing in Wisconsin under the leadership of J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall, former ministers of the Millerite Movement. These two men had revived a doctrinal position held by some Millerites that Christ, at His second advent, would reign for a thousand years on earth, during which time probation would continue while the Jews played a leading role in the conversion of the nations.

Because James White would not print their views in the church paper, Stephenson and Hall allied themselves with the Michigan-based Messenger party in October, 1854—a great disappointment for James because he thought he had their confidence. In November 1855, at the first conference held in Battle Creek, Michigan after the move from Rochester, New York, Mrs. White had a vision that encouraged those who were troubled by the Age-to-Come group led by Stephenson and Hall. In that vision she revealed how these two men had earlier been convinced of the integrity of her visions, but on further examination they discovered that their Age-to-Come theology did not agree with certain visions.”

(<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/656.2211#2214>)

There is also a hint of this belief in Gilbert Cranmer's address delivered to the sabbatarian Church conference 13 June 1863 and published as "Synopsis of a Discourse," *The Hope of Israel*, 10 August 1863:

"The gospel is simply good news of the appearing and kingdom of Jesus. This has to be preached to "every nation, kindred, tongue and people." (Rev. 14: 6) ...

"Miller however proclaimed one untruth. He taught that the judgment would sit in 1844. That the day of judgment was one day of 24 hour, and that the righteous and wicked were to be judged together. And there are those still who claim that the judgment upon the righteous commenced on the 10th day of the 7th month 1844. They claim two days of judgement. This is not true, as **there is but one day of judgement spoken of in the Bible. That day of judgment will continue one thousand years.** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Rev. 20:4.

"When the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" ...

"The saints are to sit in judgment upon wicked men and angels. But father Miller did not understand this. The judgement did not sit in 1844." (p.3) [emphasis mine]

Another whom deserves a mention is BF Snook whom, along with William Brinkerhoff left the SDAs in 1866 and joined with the remnants of the Church of God. However, he later left them and joined with the Universalists (*Captain of the Host*, p. 209). Presumably he held to that position prior to leaving and attempted to spread his beliefs within the Church of God leading to debate and deeper thinking. Probably the acceptance of the *fair chance* doctrine by some and later by HWA. (NB: the universalists are a group that some confuse with the *fair chance* doctrine.)¹⁸



Gilbert Cranmer

Of further interest is how many of these early Adventists and Sabbatarians were part of the *Christian Connection* grouping (outlined in the article *The Doctrinal Heritage of the Church of God in the Nineteenth Century*). *The Connection* was "a hotbed" for universalism (*Captains of the Host*, p. 51) and thus also other similar thinking about what will happen to those who never had a chance of salvation.

¹⁸ Others also subscribed to the "age to come" doctrine: "A final interesting comment by Brinkerhoff is his reference to a conference in western New York in the early history of Adventists, where the Whites attended. There Mrs. White had visions against certain positions the Whites opposed, but that Brinkerhoff said were correct. This must have reference to the 1848 conference at Volney, New York and William E. Arnold, who held to a yearly Passover observance and **the Age-to-Come doctrine.**" (R Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, Chapter 6) [emphasis mine] Whether this was the millennial belief or the *fair chance* doctrine is unknown at this time.

I have before me a letter by Alex Dugger (brother to the famous Andrew Dugger¹⁹) to 'Brother Ballinger' written in 1947. Alex Dugger was responding to Ballinger's letter and attached a copy of an 1899 letter from Owen Crozier²⁰ to Andrew Ferguson Dugger (father of the aforementioned Duggers). The letter from Crozier in effect was condemning of Ellen G White's 'shut door' doctrine wherein he listed five defects in this doctrine, but it is the fourth point that intrigues me for he states:

"There is Scripture proof that there will be pardon and salvation under the reign of Christ - - for the left of the nations, after the second coming. This, chiefly, brought me out of the shut-door."

He is referring to the millennial prophecy contained within Matthew 24:32-46 (though, of course, this passage also has personal lessons).

So, what he appears to be saying is that there is yet a future period of opportunity for salvation during the Millennium; this offer is rejected by those to Christ's left (ie the goats). It would be an interesting exercise to trace the origin for this belief of his.

In addition, there may have also been something approximating this belief among the German Seventh Day Baptists. Though they did not believe in universal salvation (*History of all the Religious Denominations of the United States*, p. 114),

"The idea of a universal restoration did exist among some in the early days, and it is to be attributed to attempts to explain the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle in the Corinthians, and the twentieth chapter of the Revelations, and reconcile some other parts of the Scriptures. It, however, is never taught as a doctrine, but is always approached with the greatest caution and delicacy, by their pastor in private conversations with the members, who desire to be instructed upon this subject; and who invariably admonishes them to be diligent in making their calling and election sure; **to be prepared for the first resurrection and not to depend on a second.**" (p. 115) [emphasis mine]

So, the belief that mankind is not lost but most will yet be given a *fair chance* of salvation, was being explored by Sabbatarians and the Church of God folk even in those days.

Later, Herbert W Armstrong picked up on this belief and this first appeared in the article "How God Works in saving a single soul!" *Good News*, April 1939, p. 8:

"What a wonderful truth is brought out by this mighty little drama from God's Word. Not all are called, during this age.
"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."
(ICor 1:23).
None CAN repent and be converted, unless God GRANTS repentance unto life. See Acts 11:18 and 5:31.
And again. Not ALL ministers and evangelists are really called of God! And our tithe should work where GOD works!"

Here we see early evidence for Mr Armstrong believing that most are not called in this life but will be offered salvation in a future resurrection. It seems that he grew to understand this around 1938 or so.

¹⁹ It is claimed that Andrew Dugger believed that during the Millennium, all those that were not called during this age, will be offered salvation. This is plausible but needs confirmation.

²⁰ Crozier was renowned for the article "The Sanctuary. Part One of Four. The Law of Moses," *Day-Star, Extra*, 7 February 1846.

Prof Tabor alerted Dr James Phillip Arnold to this information from the *Good News* who let me know (mid-2024).

Mr Armstrong wrote this statement in a box at the top of the article:

“Have You ever stopped to investigate just HOW God works, in bringing a single sinner to repentance and conversion? Here is a REAL DRAMA, from the bible, revealing one definite experience of soul-saving. This article was written, with editing, interpolations, and some altering by the editor, by D. M. PANTON.”

I quickly had a look at Panton’s beliefs and what I could read by him. It could be the original article by him was contained in the *Dawn* periodical (which they emphasise has not relationship to Charles Russell’s works with a similar title).²¹

It seems that Mr Armstrong merely found the concepts of the original article inspiring and added his bit at the end to tie in to his belief that only few are called in this life. I haven’t seen anything yet to suggest that he adopted this belief prior to 1938/39. Prior to this find, the earliest evidence that HWA had adopted the ‘fair chance’ doctrine was in his 1943 article “Predestination. Does the Bible teach it?” *Plain Truth*, Nov-Dec 1943, pp. 8-12. Although his early belief seems to indicate that this would occur during the Millennium rather than during the Last Great Day – the latter understanding came later, apparently by the late 1940s or early 1950s.²²

It is amazing that after having this article and edition of the *Good News* for decades, I had only read the article on church government and not this one! And there it was all this time, a small statement by HWA filling in a gap in our knowledge of the historical development of this doctrine! Further information [here](#).

In the Predestination article he wrote the following of the separation of the sheep and goats parable:

“Notice, all those called and saved prior to Christ’s second appearing on earth had been SEPARATED from the unsaved before Christ stood upon earth-while still in the clouds of the air -- before He sat upon the throne of His glory! The SEPARATION going on after He sits upon that throne ruling over THE NATIONS, therefore, is a different, and succeeding separation!

Here are earth’s nations – earth’s mortals--all nation’s! And now begins a process of SEPARATION. It is according to the decisions they make, and the actions they take. Those who turn to a life of RIGHTEOUSNESS are set on the RIGHT hand. They are converted-given IMMORTALITY-because Christ says to them: “Inherit the Kingdom!”- and mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit that Kingdom! (I Cor. 15:50). Those who do evil then receive the full penalty of the law-DEATH! They are sentenced to depart into the lake of fire! Certainly this passage pictures nothing but a process of salvation going on, after Christ’s return. **DURING His millennial “Sabbath Day.”**

That is the great “FALL Harvest of Souls! ...

But, if one has been truly called of God, convicted by God’s Spirit, his mind opened to the precious spiritual knowledge of the Truth, then if that man sins wil-fully, deliberately, intentionally, without resistance - THAT MAN IS THROUGH! He has had his chance! He shall have no other, **during the coming millennium!**

²¹ See <https://schoettlepublishing.com/collections/d-m-panton>

²² This article was reprinted under the same title (and it seems almost the exact same wording) as a booklet in 1957 and again in 1973.

... our loved ones who have died unsaved in all probability did not die LOST! In all probability they were not called, during this age. But their call is coming later! They shall be resurrected back to life, and given their **fair chance!**" (pp.10-11)

"Let us make our calling and final election sure. Let us not grieve over departed loved ones who probably were not called, in this life. God is able to raise them up again. **They will come up in the Great White Throne Judgment.** And in that judgment, the book of life shall be opened, and many shall then find it." (p. 12) [emphasis mine]

The above seems to show that Herbert Armstrong believed that the period of *fair chance* for all would occur during the Millennium, rather than after it much like the Russellites and Jehovah's Witnesses; yet he also says that those not now called will arise in the Great White Throne Judgment. Perhaps he did not edit it properly from an earlier draft that contained his original stance on the subject? It is hard to ascertain at this time.

He even calls it *fair chance* as did many of the authors referred to previously. In addition, he uses the word *chance* on a number of occasions throughout the article.



Herbert W Armstrong

Here is one tidbit of historic information that is helpful in attempting to track the development of this doctrine:

"The Conns and Bobbie Fisher cite a 1940s incident that they vividly recall. **Mr. Armstrong had at first thought that all of the dead would be resurrected during the Millennium.** A woman named Belle Rogers set Armstrong straight when she pointed out the scripture in Revelation 20 about the resurrection after the Millennium." (Richard C Nickels, 'Appendix C. Herbert W. Armstrong: 1892-1986' in *Early Writings of Herbert W. Armstrong, Giving & Sharing*, 1996, p. 237) [emphasis mine]

Given the above, it is not *completely* clear as to what Mr Armstrong taught when he was initially observing the Holy Days – it may have been that he taught that the 100 year period was during the Millennium – a period during which all that ever lived would be given their first chance of salvation; or that it was the final 100 years of the Millennium; or that people would live for 100 years. Further investigation is needed to clarify this; but I did read something about him believing that this opportunity for salvation would be during the Millennium in the 1970s, prior to receiving the above information from Richard Nickels.

It is doubtful that Herbert Armstrong was familiar with any of the above men, with the exception of Charles Taze Russell. Mr Armstrong certainly took this understanding to another level and after careful

sifting and reflection, purified and deepened the doctrinal understanding that others had commenced research on.²³

Below is a chart which demonstrates how the *fair chance* doctrine found its way into the Sabbatarian Church of God.

Chart: Fair Chance Doctrinal flow

Initial Organisation or person	Organisation or person influenced	Subsequent person or organisation influenced	Herbert W Armstrong
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Grew • Dunbar Heath • Joseph Marsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Dunn • George Storrs • George Stetson • Charles Taze Russell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gilbert Cranmer? and some within the Church of God • Jacob Blain 	Studied the available materials of Russell and JWs etc

²³ Compare for example:

“And then what shall happen during the thousand-year reign from then on? ... Here are the earth’s nations—earth’s mortals—all nations! And now begins a process of SEPARATION. It is according to the decisions they make, and the actions they take. Those who turn to a life of RIGHTEOUSNESS are set on the RIGHT hand. They are converted—given IMMORTALITY.” (*Predestination. Does the Bible teach it?* p. 11)

“During Christ’s millennial reign they will return from the realms of the enemy and will ultimately, if obedient, see the promise fulfilled. At the end of Christ’s reign after successfully passing the final judgment test, these will attain to their justification to the right to life from Jehovah God.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 282)

Conclusions

Drawing upon the research of others, the Church of God has leveraged off them and improved upon them. After all, we do not have the resources or membership numbers to enable us to produce many scholars.

Certainly, since the 1800s some protestant scholars began to teach a *fair chance* for all humanity – this restoration would occur during the Millennium. Charles Taze Russell and his followers (the Russellites) took up that view as did the Jehovah Witnesses. Herbert Armstrong, however, taught a *fair chance* would occur during the Great White Throne Judgment period, after the Millennium. The only other one that taught that prior to Mr Armstrong arose on the scene, as far as I know, was George Storrs.

Herbert Armstrong was divinely led to study the works of specialists as well as other religious writers such as Charles Taze Russell and to bring before the Church of God truths such as the *fair chance* doctrine which had been forgotten and neglected by the Church to a large degree. It may have been swirling around the edges of the Church of God (seventh day) and further investigation is required to prove or disprove this point.

He read the works of Bullinger, Darby, Scofield, Hislop and in his *Autobiography* (vol. 1) he wrote

“I spent a solid SIX MONTHS of virtual night-and-day, seven-day-a-week STUDY and research, in a determined effort to find just the opposite.

I searched IN VAIN for any authority in the Bible to establish SUNDAY as the day for Christian worship. I even studied Greek sufficiently to run down every possible questionable text in the original Greek.

I studied the Commentaries. I studied the Lexicons and "*Robertson's Grammar of the Greek New Testament*". Then I studied HISTORY. I delved into encyclopedias -- the "*Britannica*", the "*Americana*", and several religious encyclopedias. I searched the "*Jewish Encyclopedia*", and the "*Catholic Encyclopedia*". I read Gibbon's "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*", especially his chapter 15 dealing with the religious history of the first four hundred years after Christ. And one of the most convincing evidences against Sunday was in the history of how and when it began." (p. 275)

Let us accept that from the Church of God (seventh day) and associated groups, Herbert W Armstrong learned fundamental doctrines such as the 7th day Sabbath and basic Christian living principles (repentance, faith, fruits of the spirit, beatitudes etc). In addition, he learned from them the following truths:

- Annihilation of the wicked
- Basic Christian living
- Church eras
- Clean & unclean meats
- Divorce & Remarriage
- Gospel of the Kingdom of God
- Healing
- Holy spirit is a force, not a personage
- Law of God and Ten Commandments
- Laying on of hands
- Man does not have an immortal soul
- Millennium on earth

- New birth culminates in the resurrection (during the 1920s and 1930s the Church of God generally taught this)
- Passover on 14 Abib
- Seven resurrections of the Roman Empire
- The Christian reward is not heaven
- Tithing
- Water baptism
- Wed Crucifixion-Sat Resurrection

Not all of the above were officially listed doctrines or captured in their Fundamentals of Belief, but were taught and written about since the 19th century.

Herbert Armstrong was aware of so much going around and what was being taught. And what was neglected and lost to the Church.

One such truth was that most now living have never had a *fair chance* of salvation – that their opportunity is still future. And that will be during the Great White Throne Judgment period after the Millennium. This doctrine was taught, at least to some degree, by others and was likely lurking around the outskirts of the Church of God at that time. Many Churches of God continue to teach a *fair chance* to this day.

We can be thankful that HWA and the evangelists taught us so much. Even though others here and there had bits and pieces of these truths scattered about, it seems many more are coming around to accept some of these doctrines and I wonder where this will lead?

Appendix. Extracts from *Future Probation in Christian Belief*

This booklet was written by a Russellite, Allen Hudson (Bible Fellowship Union, 1975).

In it, he articulates the general belief of the Russellites on *fair chance*.

“Such high destiny demands prior training—a time of instruction and probation followed by final judgment as to fitness or unfitness, worthiness or unworthiness. That judgment cannot be passed on any man until he first has had full and abundant opportunity to learn of the Divine design, to appreciate its implications, to accept it for himself and by means of the transforming power of God to divest himself of all that is antagonistic to that purpose and so attain the moral stature which enables him to take his rightful place in Divine creation. Not until every man, woman and child of every generation back to the beginning has enjoyed such an opportunity and made his or her eternal decision for good or evil, for Christ or against him, will the great Day of Judgment come to an end and the human race enter its perpetual inheritance. And be it noted that the Last Judgment of Scripture is not confined to a moment, the moment in which sentence is passed; it covers a period, a period which includes the process of investigating and of distinguishing between right and wrong and of separating the two. Furthermore the purport and intent of the Day of Judgment is not for the condemnation and destruction of sinners without opportunity for conversion.”

“The whole Biblical presentation of the reign of Christ and the Church over the world prior to the culmination of all things in eternity has no meaning—and no conceivable purpose—unless that reign is for the conversion of the nations; the Bible is positive that in fact this is so. If the Millennial reign of Christ and the Day of Judgment are regarded as running in parallel, so to speak, over the same period of time, as being to a great extent synonymous terms, then a number of apparently contradictory Scriptural themes and statements are harmonized and a foundation laid for an understanding of the Divine purpose which will satisfy every instinct both of justice and love.”

“But what of those who have never heard, or whose capacity for hearing is so impaired that they cannot respond to the Divine invitation, and so, unwittingly and through no fault of their own, live life through and pass into death without even hearing, or at least without having ability to understand, the significance of the only Name given under heaven whereby men can be saved? What has God provided for them?”

“In the final stage of mankind’s probationary experience before the ages of eternity begin, there comes a broadcast invitation “the Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come . . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely’ ” (Rev. 22:17). That expression “whosoever will” is a travesty if it does not imply that every man has by that time attained sufficient of knowledge and opportunity to realize what the invitation involves and is sufficiently free from the external power and influence of evil and of the Devil to have ability to accept it.”

“Of this second half of the twentieth century in which we live, there are the teeming millions of China, over a quarter of the entire world population, practically entirely without knowledge of the Name; India, Russia, Africa, the Arab world, the greater part of whose peoples know nothing of the Name; in this materialistic irreligious Western world of ours how many of the contemporary generations have ever heard of Christ except perhaps as a character in some film or musical feature in which none of the vital attributes of the real Christ are displayed.”

“Of three and a half thousand millions now living, over two thousand millions will never hear the Name in this life, and will inevitably die without having made that decision and profession which is the essential condition for entry into eternal life. What is the Divine purpose for these, and others like them of past generations, all creatures of God’s hands, to whom He has given life and endowed with such marvelous potentialities? ... Is it possible that the Day of Grace in which repentance and conversion and reconciliation with God is possible, ends, not at the close of the individual’s life on earth, but at the bar of the final Day of Judgment, by which time the individual will have had a further span of experience under conditions which ensure that he receives the knowledge and opportunity which he only partially had, or perhaps never had, during his first earthly life? It has been pointed out by many soundly-informed preachers and writers that the eternal destiny of the individual is determined, not at death, but at the Day of Judgment; this involves an intermediate period during which repentance and conversion must still be possible.”

“... the Messianic Age is the period during which the “residue of men” are to have the opportunity of “calling upon the name of the Lord.” The judgment of that “Day of Judgment” is to include the opportunity of repentance and conversion as well as the final separation into what Malachi, the last of the prophets, speaking of this same time, defines as “discerning between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal. 3:18).”

In Chapter 5, titled “Gallery of Witnesses,” Hudson discusses and quotes a number of nineteenth theologians and Bible students who believed that most of mankind’s calling to salvation is yet future – during the reign of the Messiah upon the earth.

“Archdeacon R. H. Charles ... “The theology of the New Testament with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God.” he says in *“Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments,”* “demands some form of future probation”; there are those who “simply cannot relegate it to the region of God’s uncovenanted mercies, seeing that it affects so deeply the character of God himself”(4)”

“Dr. Samuel Cox, c. 1870-1890, Baptist Minister and onetime Editor of the *“Expositor,”* ... wrote ... “It seems hard and unjust,” he says, “that a man’s salvation, a man’s life, should hang on the age into which he is born; that the sinners of Sodom, for example, should have had a worse chance than the greater sinners of Capernaum. There are thousands and tens of thousands in this Christian land today, who have never had a fair chance of being quickened into life. Conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, inheriting defects of will and taints of blood, cradled in ignorance and vice, they have hardly heard the name of Christ save as a word to curse by ... “For the great mass of our fellowmen, we may hope and believe that those who have had no chance of salvation here will have one there; that those who have had a poor chance will get a better one; that those who have had a good chance and lost it will get a new but a severer chance, and even as they suffer the inevitable results of their folly and sin will feel the hands that reach through darkness, moulding men.”(6)”

“By far the most notable protagonist for this conviction at the turn of the century was Charles T. Russell, of New York City Temple and founder of the Bible Student movement. Of Congregational origin but strongly imbued with Adventist expectations it was inevitable that he should bring the then current Congregational leaning towards future probation into focus with Adventist views regarding the nature and purpose of the Second Advent and in consequence he was one of the first, with his Anglican contemporary Dr. C. A. Row, of St. Paul’s Cathedral, to perceive clearly that the Messianic reign of Christ over the earth commencing with the Second Advent is in fact the era of future probation for the entire race of mankind.”

“Dr. C. A. Row, Prebendary of St. Paul’s Cathedral circa. 1870-1900, raised the same question in his book *“Future Retribution.”* “How then stands the case with the overwhelming majority of mankind,

who have lived and died in the condition in which they were born and educated, and who never heard of Jesus Christ, his Gospel, or his Father as revealed in him?" ... The righteous Judge of all the earth will condemn no man for not having accepted a gospel of which he has either never heard, or of which he has heard only an imperfect version. Will then this overwhelming majority of mankind be simply annihilated? It is difficult to believe that they will be so in face of the reiterated declarations both of the Gospel and the Epistle that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, and of our Lord's declaration, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' ... What then, I ask, is there in Scripture which implies that for the persons above referred to probation will not be continued during the whole period of Christ's Messianic reign?"(8)"

"Dr. F. W. Farrar, chaplain to Queen Victoria, and Dean of Canterbury, held the same belief. Whilst declaring his inability to accept the Universalist position, his heart was large enough to wish that all men might ultimately be saved, but his understanding of Scripture told him that salvation depends upon conversion and faith, as witness this quotation from *"Mercy and Judgment"*; "I cannot but fear, from one or two passages of Scripture, and from the general teaching of the Church, and from certain facts of human experience, that some souls may be ultimately lost; that they will not be admitted into the vision and Sabbath of God. I trust that by God's mercy, and through Christ's redemption, the majority of mankind will ultimately be saved."

"Farrar's early mentor was Rev. Prof. E. H. Plumptre, Dean of Wells and Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Kings College, London. Plumptre, in his studies of life after death, was more cautious than Farrar, but that his thinking ran along similar lines is evidenced by his comment on Matt. 12:32 in Ellicott's Commentary. "Our Lord's words, it may be noted, clearly imply that some sins wait for their full forgiveness, the entire canceling of the past, till the time of that 'age to come' which shall witness the great and final Advent."

"Prof. J. Alexander Findlay of Didsbury College, Manchester, a few years ago, on the question of "fixity after death," asked the question, "Can Christ reach men from the other side [of death]?" "Easter Sunday," he said, "says 'yes.' Surely it is a minimizing of the Cross to suggest that it only concerns men in this life; it must have a meaning for all men and personal spirits in all worlds where they can be found . . ."

"One of the most cogent and thought provoking presentations of the case on record is that which formed the subject of a sermon by Dr. Samuel Vranken Holmes, Minister of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A., in March 1907. Dr. Holmes' words were so well chosen and expressive that the full account, as published in the *"Buffalo Express"* of March 15th, 1907, is reproduced here... But one must be blind indeed to movements in the modern religious world who is not aware that a great change has come over the minds of thinking people in regard to this matter. For a mighty and evergrowing doubt has arisen within a generation as to the irrevocability of destiny at death."

In chapter 7 he wraps up his arguments.

"It has to be accepted that the majority of these resurrected ones will have never heard of Christ in the former life, or at any rate only have received a grossly distorted conception of his Person and message and of the purposes of God. Hence the inception of the Millennium and the, probably, progressive, appearance upon earth of generation after generation from the past, will involve a colossal work of evangelism such as the world has never before seen."

"Of the many pen-pictures of that coming Age which have been drawn perhaps none is so appealing and eloquent as a passage in C. T. Russell's *"Divine Plan of the Ages."* Written in the late nineteenth century, its structure might be considered a little "flowery" by this present more matter-of-fact

generation, but a few minutes spent in accustoming one's self to its atmosphere may well result in imparting some small share of the peace and content which will undoubtedly fill every human mind in that blessed day.

"It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow, that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be, and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.

"And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was 'made to be inhabited' by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but 'the earth shall yield her increase.' 'The desert shall blossom as the rose.' Nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in him."(7)"

Unfortunately, "Following the completion of the New Testament, the deaths of the Apostles and the passing of the first few generations of the Church, accepted belief in future probation began to be formalized into doctrine first by Clement of Alexandria about A.D. 200 and his successor Origen in 220, followed by Diodorus of Tarsus in 380. Under the influence of Origen, one of the most celebrated of early theologians, the doctrine as handed down from the Apostolic Church was developed into Universalism, i.e., the belief that all men, without exception, will ultimately be saved after undergoing appropriate remedial processes which lead them finally to conversion."

Others, though not understanding the future probation on earth, nevertheless most are now yet to be called to salvation and offered a *fair chance* in another way:

"Contemporary with these activities in America there was an impressive gallery of eminent British ministers and theologians making known their convictions. These were mainly churchmen; quite understandably therefore they referred the time and place of the probationary process, not to the Messianic Age following the pre-millennial Advent, which was not a church doctrine, but to the "intermediate state," the place of departed souls between death and the last Judgment. The fundamental principle was preserved; probation persists after death and until the judgment; whether that period be one of life in an "intermediate state" or life in the Messianic Age makes no difference to that. Of a considerable number of names some that stand out are Dr. F. W. Farrar of Westminster Abbey (1878), Prebendary C. A. Row of St. Pauls (1880), Dr. R. P. Downes, Methodist theologian (1907), Dr. Paterson Smyth, Dublin (1914), and Dr. R. H. Charles, Westminster Abbey (1920)."

Appendix. Review of Henry Dunn's *The Kingdom of God; or, What is the Gospel?* *The Spectator*, 9 January, 1869

"Everlasting Punishment.—*The Kingdom of God; or, What is the Gospel*. By Henry Dunn. (Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.) *The Word! or, Universal Redemption and Salvation*. By George Mann de la Voye. (Whittaker, Trillbner.) *Can it be True? An Inquiry as to the Endlessness of Future Punishment*. By William Miall. (Elliot Stock.)

—We have classed these three works together, as treating with something like an agreement of feeling, though with very different methods, a subject of immense difficulty, the spiritual destinies of the human race and of individual men. Mr. Miall, in grappling with his subject, shows a simplicity of purpose and a courage which are worthy of all praise. His pamphlet divides itself into two parts, the general argument, and the argument from Scripture. In the first, he presses the adherents of the popular doctrine very hard. A man who believes that nine-tenths of mankind will go into endless torments must be a madman if he begets children, and inconceivably hard of heart if he can enjoy a single hour of peace. The argument from Scripture seems to us less forcible. Mr. Miall fails, we think, to apprehend the meaning which is to be assigned to the word *aie.010*; It is a quite insufficient handling of the difficulty to say that it signifies incessancy or continuance, without regard to the time of continuance. It is better to remove the idea of time altogether, to interpret it by what is surely the cardinal passage on the subject ...; so that "eternal life" signifies, to quote Mr. Miall's own words, "the highest style of life possible to be predicated of even God Himself." If this be so, it is quite needless for him to concede that "to understand literally is impossible." Mr. Miall begins by quoting certain passages from orthodox divines; horrible as they are, it is satisfactory to see that there is an advance from President Edwards, who states the physical torment most uncompromisingly, to Dr. Pusey, who dwells wholly on the moral aspects of suffering.

We doubt whether any modern divine preaching to educated persons dare say that hell means actual fire, burning its victims for ever. We have no wish to speak unkindly of Mr.,—or perhaps we should say Professor,—Do la Voye's book. We shall simply acknowledge ourselves as probably unworthy, and certainly unable to comprehend it. Such questions as "Why was not Satan punished with instant annihilation?" "Why was a fratricide the firstborn child of Eve?" "Why should not incarnated angels and metempsychosed spirits have been our forefathers?" "Wherefore three Almighty Gods?" are a few of the questions which the author asks and answers with apparent confidence. A mere mortal critic can only look on with respectful astonishment.

Mr. Dunn's book contains a theory of redemption ably conceived and carefully studied. He distinguishes between what he calls "the Gospel of the Church" and "the Gospel of the Kingdom," the latter being in his view the larger and nobler. He takes the kingdom to be the reign of the Saints with Christ. The Saints are the Elect, but the elect he takes to be not those saved from the ruin to which the multitude is doomed, but those chosen to a higher destiny and more perfect life for the ultimate benefit of the multitude. He seems disposed to admit in a modified sense the theory of destruction as opposed to torment, in which the popular theology is showing a tendency to seek a refuge from its own intolerable hardness. This destruction is supposed to come on to those who are obstinately impenitent; thus the difficulty presented by the fact of a free will which even infinite love cannot control is supposed to be met. Mr. Dunn's book is certainly worth study."

Appendix. Doctrinal Outlines - Eternal Judgment

Worldwide Church of God (1987)

I. Introduction

- A. One of the most astounding truths revealed in the Bible is that God is not trying to save all the world now!
- B. And yet, conversely, another one of the most encouraging and positive Bible truths is that all mankind shall have a chance for salvation.
- C. How can both these teachings be true? If God is not trying to save the world now, how can all humanity have a chance for salvation? The answer to the seeming dilemma is in the Bible doctrine of eternal judgment.
- D. What about all the billions of people who lived from Adam till now, who never knew of the name of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12)? Are they lost forever — doomed to die with no hope for eternal life? What about the idolaters and heathen throughout history?
- E. And what about even much-loved members of your own family — now deceased without knowing Jesus Christ, perhaps, or alive but not now religiously minded? What about them?

II. The Basic Doctrine

- A. You need to know and be able to explain how you know what good things are in store for all these people. This information will help you to explain the doctrine of eternal judgment.
- B. The judgment period for a person is the time of his calling, until death or change into a spirit-composed member of God's family. It is during this time that a person's life is continually being judged against the biblical standard of righteousness.
- C. For different groups of people, this judgment will occur at different times — either now (as in the case of God's Church), during the Millennium or after the Millennium in the Great White Throne Judgment.

III. The Usual Teachings of This World

- A. The teachings of the churches of this world are far afield from the clear revelation of the Bible. Most churches do not even understand that all people are not being called to salvation now, let alone understand the connection between the time of one's calling and his period of judgment.
- B. The churches usually view the judgment merely as the time of passing of a sentence upon a person. Many people probably picture a courtroom, complete with a fatherly but somewhat stern God in a black robe behind a large desk, faced by fearful, once-living sinners waiting to see if they will go "up" or "down." But such a picture is in no way that presented by the Bible!

IV. The Bible Teaching

- A. The astounding, central truth essential to understanding this topic is that God is not trying to save all the world now. Satan is said to be deceiving the whole world (Revelation 12:9). If the whole world is deceived, how can it be in the process of being saved?
- B. From the days of Adam and his eviction from the Garden of Eden, through the days when Moses told the children of Israel that "the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:2-4), it has been obvious that God is not, now saving the whole world.
- C. Paul said, "God hath concluded them all [humanity] in unbelief, that he might [eventually, but not now] have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32, Authorized Version).
- D. No wonder Satan is called the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4, AV) and God's way is called the way only "few" now take (Matthew 7:14). No wonder Paul called the vast majority of humanity "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:11-12).

- E. But why? Why has God chosen not to save all people? The answer, simply, is that for God to fulfill His master plan of building righteous, holy character in humans and then to put those humans into His powerful, universe-ruling Family, He must first allow humans to learn that they need God. People will learn that crime against God's law doesn't pay — that life without God leads to war, misery, unhappiness and destruction.
- F. Therefore most, but not all, of humanity are being left to themselves now.
- G. Some are being called by God now to preach His message as a witness to the world (not to proselyte or convert the world — Matthew 24:14) and to learn God's way, so they may teach the masses when God finally does call the rest of the human race and open their minds (Revelation 5:10).
 - 1. Two key scriptures in this regard are II Corinthians 6:2 and I Peter 4:17.
 - 2. II Corinthians 6:2 is misleading in some translations, which read that God has succored us in "the" day of salvation. But this verse, both in the original Greek and in the Old Testament verse from which it is quoted, does not contain the definite article, but reads that now is a day of salvation." Obviously, if now is a day of salvation, then there must be other times when God has dealt or will deal with people.
 - 3. Peter 4:17 makes the point that now is only a time of salvation more clear, showing for whom now is the time for salvation: "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God."
- H. Notice that a judgment is now on the house of God — the Church of God — but not upon others.
 - 1. And clearly this judgment is not a mere sentencing, but a process of evaluation made by God as He watches over our growth through a period of time.
 - 2. Of course, ultimately, judgment includes God's final decision about our spiritual state, and even the reward if we qualify or the sentence to death if we don't, but to call eternal judgment merely the single moment of decision for God is mistaken.
- I. But if now is not the only time when God will call humanity — that is, subject mankind to spiritual judgment for their works, while they know God's law then when are the other times?
 - 1. The first period of judgment, when most will be deceived and only a few will be called, is now (I Peter 4:17).
 - a. This era ends with the return of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom, and the resurrection to eternal life of all who were called and qualified from Adam's time till then.
 - b. As Revelation 20:5 says, "This is the first resurrection." It is the time of redemption of the few "called" (Romans 8:28) who form the "firstfruits" (not the whole spiritual harvest — James 1:18, Revelation 14:14) of God's master plan.
 - 2. The second time of judgment is during the Millennium the 1,000 after immediately after Jesus' return to set up His Kingdom.
 - a. One clear theme running throughout the Bible is that during the Millennium all then alive will know the truth of God (Isaiah 11:9, Jeremiah 31:34, Joel 2:32).
 - b. This millennial period of judgment differs from the world now in that all people then alive will have a chance for salvation.
 - c. But, still, those who lived and died from Adam till Jesus Christ's return and the first resurrection will not yet have had a chance. Their chance will come, however.
 - d. It is spoken of in Revelation 20:11, which describes the Great White Throne Judgment. This is the time of the second resurrection, when the dead from

- all time, small and great, will be raised to another physical existence, except this time with a difference.
- e. This time the "books" (the Bible) are opened to their understanding (verse 12), and they live out a full life span with the chance to know God and the truth of salvation.
 - f. This is the time when all the humans who have not had a chance will be given one. This is the time of judgment for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, as Jesus revealed (Matthew 11:22, 10:15).
 - g. It is spoken of in plain terms by the prophet Ezekiel: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up... I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live" (Ezekiel 37:12, 14).
3. Now God's merciful, fair plan will be complete. All will have had a chance for salvation, a period of living during which the truth of God will be open to their minds, and they will be judged according to it — their judgment period.
 4. For the Church that period is now. In the Millennium all those then alive will have their chance. Finally, during the Great White Throne Judgment all the former dead who didn't have a chance before will get their opportunity. No one will get a "second chance," but will get one full opportunity for salvation.

V. Key Verses

Here are some main scriptures relating to eternal judgment:

- A. Mark 4:11-12 and John 6:44 show that God is not trying to save all the world now.
- B. II Corinthians 6:2 explains that now is not the only day of salvation.
- C. I Peter 4:17 shows that judgment is a process of time while one is under review by God, and that judgment is now on the Church.
- D. Revelation 20:1-12 describes the various resurrections that delineate the various judgment periods.
- E. Isaiah 11:9 and Jeremiah 31:34 say that all people will know God in the Millennium.
- F. Ezekiel 37:12-14 illustrates how the former dead will be raised and given the truth of God during the Great White Throne Judgment.

VI. Conclusion

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none show God's boundless fairness any more than the truth about judgment. All people everywhere will receive an equal chance at salvation, and at a time in which their own chance of success will be great indeed.

Truly, our loving God is not a respecter of persons, but fair to all humanity!

[NB: notice the number of times the word *fair* and *fairness* are used above]

Partial Listing of old Worldwide Church of God articles on the *fair chance* doctrine

Armstrong, H W (1985)	"Mystery of the Kingdom," (chapter 7) <i>Mystery of the Ages</i> . Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA.
Armstrong, H W (1976)	<i>Pagan Holidays - or God's Holy Days – Which?</i> (chapter 4). Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA.
Aust, J W (1983)	"What the Last Great Day Means for You", <i>Good News</i> , Oct-Nov, pp. 25-27.
Dorothy, C V (1976) Briggs, L C	"Does the Bible Teach Universal Salvation?" <i>Good News</i> , Dec, pp. 10-12.
Good News Staff (1965)	"Q: how can earth hold all those people?" <i>Good News</i> , Sept.
Good News Staff (1976)	"Q: explain the great white throne of judgement," <i>Good News</i> , June.
Halford, J (1982)	"The Last Great Day – Not an End, But a Beginning!", <i>Good News</i> , Sept, pp. 33-35.
McNair, R F (1974)	"The Second Resurrection," <i>Good News</i> , April.
McNair, R F (1976)	"God does desire the Salvation of All," <i>Good News</i> , Dec, p. 11.
McNair, R F (1981)	"Coming – God's Great White Throne Judgement," <i>Good News</i> , Sept.
Schroeder, J (1975)	"The Last Great Day", <i>Good News</i> , Sept, pp. 8-13.
Schroeder, J (1979)	"Everyone is Important!", <i>Good News</i> , Sept-Oct, pp. 21-22.
Sedliacik, R H (1983)	"Mini Study: The Last Great Day Completes God's Master Plan", <i>Good News</i> , Oct-Nov, pp. 23-24.
Steep, C D (1985)	"The Last Day, That Great Day", <i>Good News</i> , Sept, pp. 29-31.
Worldwide Church of God (1987)	<i>Doctrinal Outlines – Eternal Judgment</i> . Pasadena, CA.

Suggested Reading

Barbour, N H (1877)	<i>Three Worlds and the Harvest of this World</i> . Rochester, NY.
Blain, J (1871)	<i>Hope for Our Race; or, God's Government Vindicated</i> . Paternoster Row, London.
Dunn, H (1868)	<i>The Kingdom of God. Or, What is the Gospel?</i> Simpkin, Marshall & Co, London.
Dunn, H (1871)	<i>The Study of the Bible</i> . G.P. Putman & Sons, New York.
Dunn, H (1872)	<i>The Destiny of the Human Race</i> . Simpkin, Marshall & Co, London.
Dunn, H (1875)	<i>The Limitations of Christian Responsibility</i> . Simpkin, Marshall & Co, London.
Heath, I D (1852)	<i>Future Kingdom of Christ: Or Man's Heaven to be this Earth</i> . J.W. Parker, London.
Luckock, H M (1896)	<i>The Intermediate State Between Death and Judgment</i> . Longmans, Green & Co, London.
Wellcome, I C (1867) Goud, C	<i>The Plan of Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ Carefully Examined and Argued</i> . A.C.P. Society, Boston, MA.

References

Adventist Pioneer Library (1991)	"In this issue," <i>Lest We Forget</i> , Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 1.
Armstrong, H W (1939)	"How God Works in saving a single soul!" <i>Good News</i> , April 1939, p. 8.
Armstrong, H W (1943)	"Predestination. Does the Bible teach it?" <i>Plain Truth</i> , Nov-Dec, pp. 8-12.
Armstrong, H W (1973)	<i>Predestination. Does the Bible teach it?</i> Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA.
Armstrong, H W (1973)	<i>The Autobiography of Herbert W Armstrong</i> . (Vol. 1). Ambassador College Press, Pasadena, CA.
Barclay, W (1976)	<i>The Daily Bible Study. The Letters of James and Peter</i> . St Andrew Press, Wells, UK (2nd Revised edition).

Bible Educational Institute (1923)	<i>The Laodicean Messenger, being the Memoirs of the Life, Works and Character of That Faithful and Wise Servant of the Most High God.</i> Bible Students Book Store, Chicago, IL.
Blain, J (1871)	<i>Hope for our Race; or, God's Government Vindicated.</i> Paternoster Row, London.
Bull, M (2007) Lockhart, K	<i>Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream.</i> Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.
Chryssides, G D (2008)	<i>Historical Dictionary of Jehovah Witnesses.</i> The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD.
Cranmer, G (1863)	"Synopsis of a Discourse," <i>The Hope of Israel</i> , 10 Aug, p. 3.
Crozier, O R L (1899)	<i>Letter to AF Dugger</i> , 20 Feb.
Dugger, A F (1947)	<i>Letter to Brother Ballinger</i> , 20 Feb.
Dunn, H (1871)	<i>The Study of the Bible.</i> G. P. Putman & Sons, New York, NY.
Dunn, H (1872)	<i>The Kingdom of God. Or, What is the Gospel?</i> Simpkin, Marshall & Co, London.
Ellen G White Writings website	https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/656.2211#2214
Hamilton, G (1887)	"Future Probation," <i>The North American Review</i> , Vol. 144, No. 363 (Feb), pp. 129-140.
Heath, I D (1852)	<i>The Future Kingdom of Christ: Or Man's Heaven to be this Earth.</i> J.W. Parker & Son, London.
Hudson, A (1975)	<i>Future Probation in Christian Belief.</i> Bible Fellowship Union., UK.
Jonathan, S (2014)	<i>Grace Beyond the Grave. Is Salvation Possible in the Afterlife?</i> Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
Knight, G R (2000)	<i>A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs.</i> Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD.
Kurian, G T (2016)	"Russell, Charles Taze," <i>Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States.</i> Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Lanfield, MD.
Land, G (2005)	<i>Historical Dictionary of Seventh-day Adventists.</i> The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD.
McCook, M (2005)	<i>Aliens in the World: Sectarians, Secularism and the Second Great Awakening.</i> A Dissertation submitted to the Department of History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Florida State University.
N N (1869)	"Review of Henry Dunn's <i>The Kingdom of God; or, What is the Gospel?</i> " <i>The Spectator</i> , 9 Jan.
N N (1943).	<i>Let God Be True.</i> Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Pittsburgh, PA.
N N (2024)	D. M. Panton https://schoettlepublishing.com/collections/d-m-panton
Neuffer, J (ND)	<i>A historical review of early non-Sabbatarian Adventists' dispute over Israel in prophecy (1844-1850).</i> Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, available at https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/adventist-heritage/gathering-israel-historical-study-early-writings-pp-74-76
Nickels, R C (1973, 1999)	<i>History of the Seventh Day Church of God (vol. 1).</i> Giving & Sharing, St. Charles, MO.
Nickels, R C (1996)	'Appendix C. Herbert W. Armstrong: 1892-1986' in <i>Early Writings of Herbert W. Armstrong.</i> Giving & Sharing, St. Charles, MO.
Onsager, L W (1986)	"Pilgrims in a Strange Land," <i>Adventist Heritage</i> , Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 33-39.
Orr, R (2013)	<i>Anglo-Israelism and The United States & Britain in Prophecy</i> , GCI, USA.
Paroschi, W (2017)	"Death as Sleep: The (Mis)use of a Biblical Metaphor," <i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i> . Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 26-44.
Rawe, R M	<i>George Storrs: Enigmatic and Ambivalent Polarizer of Adventism.</i> http://watchtowerdocuments.org/george-storrs-enigmatic-and-ambivalent-polarizer-of-adventism/#comment-1940 (edited by B Anderson).
Russell, C T (1879)	Supplement to <i>Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence</i> , 1 July, p. 2.
Ryba, C (2006)	"The Midnight Cry," <i>The Herald of Christ's Kingdom</i> (Special Bible Student's History Issue), pp. 9-15.
Schulz, B W (2014)	<i>A Separate Identity: Organizational Identity Among Readers of Zion's Watch Tower: 1870-1887.</i> Lulu Press, Morrisville, NC.

Snorrason, B M H (2010)	<i>The Origin, Development, and History of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church from the 1840s to 1889</i> (2010). Dissertations. Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dissertations/144/
Spalding, W (1949)	<i>Captains of the Host</i> . Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, DC.
Stephenson, J M (c1877)	<i>God's Plan of Salvation</i> . Thomas Wilson, Chicago, IL.
Storrs, G (1855)	<i>Bible Examiner</i> , Dec.
Storrs, G (1856)	<i>Bible Examiner</i> , Feb.
Storrs, G (1871)	"God's Promise and Oath to Abraham," <i>The Herald of Life and the Coming Kingdom</i> , April 26.
Storrs, G (1877)	<i>The Bible Examiner</i> , Jan.
Thomas, N G (1972)	"The Millerite Movement in Ohio," <i>Ohio History Journal</i> , Vol. 81, Spring, No. 2, pp. 95-107.
Tompkins, A (2018)	"A Fresh Look at Ellen G. White's Statements Within Their Original Context on the Heathen Being Saved," <i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i> , Vol. 29, Nos 1 & 2, pp. 50-72.
Tompkins, A (2022)	"Statements of Ellen G. White concerning the heathen's destiny reveal four intertwined theme,s," <i>Perspective Digest</i> , Vol. 27, Issue 1, 1 Jan.
Waggoner, J H (1872)	<i>Refutation of the Doctrine Called The Age to Come</i> . Steam Press, Battle Creek, MI.
Watch Tower History Blog (2012)	<i>Adventism</i> , https://truthhistory.blogspot.com/2012/02/ , 21 Feb.
Watch Tower History Blog (2012)	<i>Charles Taze Russell and The Restitution</i> , https://truthhistory.blogspot.com/2012/03/charles-taze-russell-and-restitution.html , 13 March.
Wellcome, I C (1867) Goud, C	<i>The Plan of Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ Carefully Examined and Argued</i> . A.C.P. Society, Boston, MA.
Wikipedia (2018)	"Future Probation," <i>Wikipedia</i> 25 Dec.
Winebrenner, J (1848)	<i>History of all the Religious Denominations of the United States</i> . John Winebrenner, Harrisburg, PA.

History of the *Fair Chance* Doctrine

By Craig M White

History Research Projects
GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001
www.friendsofsabbath.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

