

SHALL WE ALL LEAVE THE CHURCH OF GOD
AND JOIN "THE CHURCH OF PEOPLE"?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Some already have done that. Let's think about it for a moment.

I had a vivid example of this a couple of mornings ago, awakening from a dream. In the dream it seemed to be several years ago when the Church was smaller. There was a young man across the street who looked like a possible one of our leaders. He was about age 30, with outstanding personality and appearance, and was an articulate extrovert. Then two other young men of about 30, well dressed, of somewhat impressive appearance and manner, were seen walking over and talking to him. They took pains to avoid me, and I seemed to know they were opposed to me personally.

In the dream I determined to speak immediately with the man they were trying to influence adversely. I told him frankly I knew they were "lobbying" against the Church and against me.

"Yes," he replied, "but I have to tell you, Mr. Armstrong, I think these men have something worth listening to. They say you arrogate to yourself too much power. You make yourself the leader of the Church. They say the people ought to have all the 'say so.' The people ought to vote on who they want to be their leader, and on what they want to believe and accept as Church doctrine. That sounds like a good idea to me. I think we need more DEMOCRACY."

I awoke at that point, thinking about the dream which had stuck in my mind.

But before awakening, I remember I had said to this man in the dream, "Well, the REAL QUESTION is whether this is GOD'S Church, or the PEOPLE'S Church! If it is GOD'S Church, then GOD is running it, and revealing what we shall believe and teach. GOD has the 'say so.' God runs it through Jesus Christ, who is the HEAD of the Church. And Jesus Christ runs it through His chosen Apostle, whom HE, not men, chose, prepared, and now guides and leads. Those men are getting your eyes off of GOD--you are leaving GOD out of the picture--out of the Church. You are looking only at people!! If you want to put GOD out of His Church, then you will have to be excommunicated!"

I awakened considerably impressed with the dream. Was God revealing to me that TOO MANY within the Church membership are leaving GOD out of the picture?--in their own minds putting GOD out of the Church? Do they think that the kind of men the people would vote for ought to be made the LEADERS in the Church?--that the people should say to GOD, "This is OUR Church, God, we want you to GET OUT of the Church and leave us alone. WE will run this Church OUR way!"

I awakened impressed that TOO MANY of our people are LEAVING GOD AND CHRIST OUT OF HIS CHURCH, and trying to make it OUR Church--the church of the PEOPLE, and NOT The CHURCH OF GOD!

I could cite you any number of examples of where this actually has been done by leaders under me in the Church. This was done to justify watering down GOD'S TRUTH, and the true teaching and doctrine He had put in His Church through His chosen Apostle! That was done in Ambassador College, until it was no longer GOD'S College. They wanted a college approved by SATAN'S world--they called it "accreditation," although we had already had GOD'S accreditation--the HIGHEST accreditation. I had to start Ambassador College all over again, with one freshman class! Now, once again, we have GOD'S accreditation--but we don't want the anti-God accreditation of Satan's world!

I thought immediately of the time when God told His prophet, Samuel, to go to the house, or ranch, of Jesse. God had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be GOD'S chosen King over Israel. Jesse knew right away which son people would choose--his eldest son. He was stalwart, handsome, with a charming, outgoing extroverted personality, and articulate. He looked like a leader. But God said to Samuel, "No, he is not MY choice."

The second son was almost as handsome and had the appearance of a leader. God said, "NO!" The third and so on.

"Have you no more sons?" asked Samuel.

"Well, no--except only for a stripling of a youth who is out in the field shepherding sheep."

"Well bring him," said Samuel. In came the youth none of the people would have chosen, the lad David. "He is the one I have chosen," said God. "The ETERNAL seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the ETERNAL looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

Man does not see things the way God does. God says, "There is A WAY which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH"! (Prov. 14:12.)

As to how MAN looks at it--how MAN would choose, God says, "Lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

How did GOD prepare the one HE had chosen to lead YOU--His Church of our time? I had to learn and admit that what I believed was ALL WRONG! I had to give up MY ideas, beliefs, opinions, and ways. I had to allow God to sweep my mind clean, so HE could fill it with HIS Truth.

Now IF this truly IS the Church of GOD and not of THE PEOPLE--if GOD is not only very much IN the picture, but FIRST and AT THE HEAD of it, UPPERMOST in our minds--then H O W does GOD run or operate it? H O W did He raise up this generation or succession of it?--just as God ALWAYS has done when raising up anything through humans. How is that?

All of God's calling and election of humans in His great overall SPIRITUAL PURPOSE FOR MAN started with ONE MAN--Abraham. All the promises, both material and national, and spiritual, were made to and come to us through Abraham--promises passed on to Isaac and Jacob who, with Abraham, became "the fathers."

When God decided to call a certain group of humans to be His People --His Congregation or CHURCH of the OLD Testament--He chose to lead them ONE MAN, specially prepared and trained for the purpose--MOSES!

God freed the Israelite slaves--made them HIS NATION, His CONGREGATION or Old Testament Church. WHO really led them? GOD did! By supernatural miracles God took them across the Red Sea. But the people were led by God's chosen, MOSES! They did not SEE God--they only saw the leader GOD chose--Moses. GOD led them, through Moses.

They became organized. Some were put in positions over fifty people. Some over a hundred--some over a thousand. Among them were some who had been elevated quite high in the organization--"men of renown"--just as in the Worldwide Church of God today we have had men in comparatively high office--men of renown. I do not need to print their names--you know who they were.

But GOD SAYS: "Now Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram, and On,...rose up before Moses, with...two hundred and fifty princes of the Assembly (Church), famous in the congregation (Church), men of renown. And they gathered themselves together against Moses...and said..., Ye take too much upon you...wherefore then lift ye up yourself above the congregation (Church)...?" (Num. 16:3).

Now through Moses, God had given them important offices in the Old Testament Church--they were "men of renown." But they wanted more--they coveted Moses' seat! They wanted to be chief boss! They coveted more POWER!

In 1974 men of renown in reasonably high position in GOD'S CHURCH of our time, coveted MORE POWER and AUTHORITY. I quoted the above to them about Korah. IT MADE NO DIFFERENCE. They conspired to take over headship of the Church--to depose Christ's chosen Apostle. They had two men --Vice Presidents and of Evangelist rank, men in high position, men of renown--at Headquarters. They thought that with these high-up men at Headquarters they could pull a coup--a POLITICAL REVOLUTION--and the GOVERNMENT in the Church would cave in under their politically-conspired plot.

But they UNDERESTIMATED the REAL HEAD of the Church--Jesus Christ! They thought it was a church OF THE PEOPLE--not the Church OF GOD! GOD simply was not in the picture in their eyes!

Christ's Apostle did not cave in. These men WENT OUT--several of them formed what they called the "Associated Church," in or near Washington, D.C. But those so "associated" soon fell out among themselves. GOD WAS NOT IN THEIR PLOT TO TAKE OVER--NOR IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO BUILD A NEW CHURCH OF THEIR OWN when their attempted coup failed! It was the "work of covetous MEN." It fell flat on its face. It came to naught!

"EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEY LABOR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT"
(Ps. 127:1).

Later, other "men of renown" in God's Church could not see CHRIST in the Church--only THE PEOPLE! They were in very high positions in God's Church--but they wanted to make it MAN'S church. Their conspiracy was

far more subtle than that of 1974. They undertook to produce a "scholarly work" setting forth their own distortion and perversion of the doctrines GOD had put in His Church through His chosen Apostle. It was done secretly. Christ's Apostle was overseas most of the time, and it was carefully kept from him. It was handed out to all the ministers as the "official doctrines of the Church." There were at least six or seven in TOP offices next to Christ's Apostle in authority--men trusted and honored. But they were going to make it "THE CHURCH OF PEOPLE," instead of the CHURCH OF GOD. They could not see God nor Christ in their mental picture of God's Church. They were LIBERALS! They liberalized Ambassador College. They liberalized The PLAIN TRUTH magazine. They changed and liberalized Church doctrines and teachings and beliefs.

But God brought His chosen Apostle back from the jaws of DEATH--from complete heart failure. God, through His Apostle, PUT THOSE MEN OUT OF HIS CHURCH. Now churches or works OF THEIR OWN have been started. But they overlook one thing: "EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE THEY LABOR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT." God is NOT raising up and building a "house" based on resentment, bitterness and strife--on attempt to DESTROY what GOD has built and build something for SELF--on attempt to DESTROY the Worldwide Church of God by their false witness and false accusation of wrong-doing in God's Church, bringing about the massive lawsuit by America's largest state to try to take over and DESTROY the Church of the living GOD!--and to build for THEMSELVES by "siphoning off" to their own work the members of the Worldwide Church of GOD!

No, this, like several other little tiny offshoots of embittered, angered, revenge-seeking disfellowshipped former members, MUST COME TO NAUGHT! GOD is not building their houses!

So what, now, do we have? Look at them--all now coming DOWN--all coming to naught! They are THE WORKS OF EMBITTERED SELF-SEEKING MEN--ALL FALLING FLAT ON THEIR FACES!

The only good they accomplished was to attract out of GOD'S Church the few malcontents, disgruntled troublemakers. God's ministers report to me that now that those contentious, accusing, bickering troublemakers have left their local churches, THEY HAVE PEACE!

Of course a few well-meaning members were honestly deceived by these departed leaders. They have since had their eyes opened--they have realized their mistake, and have returned HOME into GOD'S Church.

Our GOD turns Satan's handiwork into blessings for HIS people.

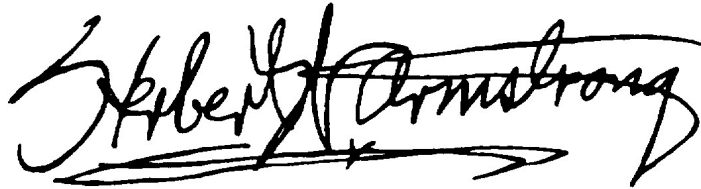
The living Jesus Christ raised up from death His Apostle, whom He has used to SET HIS CHURCH BACK ON THE TRACK OF GOD!

Peace has been restored. God's TRUTH has been restored--the liberalism swept out! There is peace, harmony and TEAMWORK solidly behind Christ and His chosen Apostle at Pasadena. There is now ONE GOAL in the Church--to COMPLETE the Work of God around the world, and to prepare GOD's people for Christ's soon coming! The Spirit of GOD vitalizes the Church, draws us closer to HIM and closer to ONE ANOTHER!

Now, after some twelve years of tearing down what Christ had built, once again new members are coming in--Church GROWTH is once again, during 1980, up to a 30% increase--as it was for 35 long years!

Today GOD ALMIGHTY, and the living JESUS CHRIST are very much IN THE PICTURE! It is truly the CHURCH OF GOD--not the "church of PEOPLE!"

Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches...without me ye can do NOTHING!" (John 15:5.)



FROM MINISTERIAL SERVICES

Mr. Armstrong Expresses Appreciation to Letter Writers

Recently some of the letter writers in the Personal Correspondence Department of the Mail Processing Center wrote Mr. Armstrong personally. He appreciated hearing from them and responded by writing them a letter. They are among the unsung who loyally labor along with the rest of us in helping hold up Mr. Armstrong's arms in fulfilling God's Great Commission to His Church. With Mr. Armstrong's permission, we wanted to share his letter to them with you and, perhaps, consider for a moment their valuable contribution to the Work in serving those who needed this "personal touch" in understanding God's way of life.

To Members of the
Mail Processing Center:

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! for the letters from you people. I appreciated them beyond words!

You people are a MOST IMPORTANT department of the Work of the living God. I could not possibly answer personally all the letters coming in to me from members, viewers, listeners and readers of our publications, books and booklets. Yet it is a vital function that they be intelligently answered. I THANK GOD that He has prepared for His Work a well-informed and competent staff for this important service.

From those of you who wrote, I was pleased to notice you show you are well informed in what to write, and you write in an excellent style--plain, simple, to-the-point, smooth-flowing, in plain and simple language understandable by even the partly educated. I'm glad you avoid "the language of scholarship" which requires an interpreter for average readers. You're doing an excellent job. Jesus Christ is pleased, and so am I.

Gratefully, in Jesus' name,
Herbert W. Armstrong

Mr. Attorney General of California:

You cannot shut these doors opened to me for world travel to proclaim the Gospel!

Appeared in the Los Angeles Times July 11, 1980

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO your office, Mr. Attorney General, I am under orders from a far higher authority—one who says you can't stop me!

To me, the Supreme Authority, the living Jesus Christ, says, "Go ye into all the world and proclaim my Gospel Message." He says He is the Supreme One who has opened before me the doors, and no man can shut!

Just how important is this to the Supreme Authority above all? For our time now—late in the 20th century—He says, "This Gospel of the Kingdom of God shall be preached in all the world for a witness, to all nations, and then shall the end [of this world's civilization] come."

No other is taking this Gospel Message of the imminent WORLD-RULING Kingdom of God into all the world. In 1,900 years that Message has not gone out to the whole world!

The Supreme Authority says you cannot shut the doors He has opened before me!

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S VIEW

Just how have you, Mr. Attorney General, viewed my Great Commission, going into all the world with that all-important announcement of the coming world-ruling GOVERNMENT?

Without checking in a peaceful manner to learn WHY I have been going into all the world, you listened to the dissident, expelled ex-members of the Worldwide Church of God. You assumed that these arduous missions worldwide were mere pleasure trips—"siphoning off millions of dollars every year to my own personal account." You accepted, without first checking, the testimony of expelled former members. Through your actions, severe and irreparable damage was done to the Work of the living GOD!

In the first place, had you checked, you would have found that these globe-girding travels obeying the Great Commission from Christ, were allocated the smallest amount on the Worldwide Church of God annual



HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

budget—less than \$1 million per year! Yet it was necessary that I take along with me a team required for holding many series of public meetings before large audiences on various continents of the earth.

Opening the door to such public meetings were invitations for private audiences with many heads of state—kings, emperors, presidents, prime ministers. I have been given highest honors by the governments of foreign nations.

I have been the first—and so far as I know only—religious leader from the world of Christianity to be invited as the honored guest of the Communist People's Republic of China, to speak to large audiences this Message from the Supreme "Unseen Strong Hand from Somewhere" at the Chinese capital. My party and I were the honored guests of that largest-population nation on earth.

The Higher Authority I serve has said that in so doing, I or any others serving Him, would suffer the indignities of severe persecution—even from the high sources of this world. Jesus Christ said that if they had persecuted Him they would persecute us who follow and obey Him.

Not realizing what you were doing, you have allowed yourself to be snared into this major-scale persecution of the entire Church of God—and, as a test case, your start on a campaign to take over, own, control and manage the affairs of ALL CHURCHES!

I know that IN IGNORANCE you have done this. You allowed yourself to be misled by ex-members. Had you come to us in peace, seeking the background of the Worldwide Church of God and its world-girding operations, we would have given you the fullest cooperation and told you the PLAIN TRUTH.

We have so cooperated with every other government agency that has sought the true facts.

Forces of the Roman government persecuted Jesus Christ—finally put Him to death to pay for your sins, Mr. Attorney General, and mine. You have allowed yourself to be snared into fighting against this Higher Authority! I shall do as the Head of the Church admonishes: "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." I shall pray for your enlightenment, and that you may be forgiven by the Higher Power! I would like to take you with me into the soon-coming Kingdom of God!

WE ARE NON-PROSELYTING

We do not compete with other churches. We do not seek their members nor solicit any MEMBERS DIRECTLY. God adds such members as He calls and who come voluntarily.

We have, as we so well know, been grievously misunderstood. But we welcome with thanks to Almighty God the present legal backing of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States, the Lutheran Church in America, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Synagogue Council of America, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, National Association of Evangelicals, and Northern California Ecumenical Council. By them we are supported by 83 MILLION AMERICANS!

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG
Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

For more information, write The Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, Calif., 91123, or call toll-free, (800) 423-4444. In California call collect (213) 577-5225. If you have some questions for the attorney general of the state of California, write to him, The Hon. George Deukmejian, California Attorney General, 555 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, Calif., 95814.