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Dear Brethren and Co-Workers in Christ,

For some twenty months, due to total heart failure in August, 1977, I was prevented from proclaiming Christ's Gospel in person in the far-flung nations around the world.

But God has been with me. There has been NO diminishing of the vital faculties, especially of mind. And while I was having, for the time, to defer the ORDEAL of physically demanding worldwide travel, I have been able to WRITE almost faster than you brethren can read, and to continue FULL LEADERSHIP of God's Work here on earth.

I want to mention a point we were discussing here in the hotel suite yesterday afternoon. I have not realized it before, probably you have not realized it. The United States is the only nation on earth that retires people at age 60 or 65. In the United States most have come to suppose that people naturally begin to lose their mental faculties even as early as 55.

WHY?

This general national assumption is NOT TRUE! Many large corporations have adopted a RETIREMENT POLICY that all employees, and even executives, must retire at age 65 -- and some at age 60. The same is true of school teachers. I even retired one man at age 55 on his urgent request, although in a manner that did not increase the Work's expenses, even though we had to hire another to take his place. He had worked for us for 25 years. I remember he wanted to travel -- not to other parts of the world, but to see other parts of the United States, as he phrased it, "before I have to meet my Maker." In other words, even at age 55 this man was THINKING, in his mind, that he was approaching "the age of death."

WHY do Americans think that way? Here in Japan a man of 65 is just coming into the age of the BEGINNING of wisdom! A man in his 80's is not regarded as "old" or "senile," but as more mature -- of higher stature -- as having a BETTER mind, of attaining to the "age of wisdom."

I remember one of my grandmothers, at age 55. In those days, when I was probably five or six years old, all women wore hats outside. Young women had rather decorative hats, with artificial roses, or objects of bright colors, and with a sophisticated STYLE. Hats were not intended to cover or keep the head warm -- but to be an added DECORATION. By 55 or maybe younger, all women wore "old ladies' bonnets." They were shaped like an old covered wagon and were always black, as were their clothes. They dressed in the style in which all "old women" dressed. By their dress, as well as their manner, they proclaimed loudly "I am OLD. I expect to die right away. My days of usefulness are over."

But times did change. Although I remember that both my grandmothers wore old ladies' bonnets, and dressed like old women, my mother did not. My mother was 95 1/2 when she died -- and right up to the day of her death, in her nineties, she dressed like a younger woman, or at least like a middle-aged woman. Many of our readers will remember her. And at age 95 she was still happy, jolly, and had a good sense of humor.

Somehow, between the generation of her mother, and her own generation, women had at last begun to dispose of the custom of wearing "old ladies' bonnets" and somber and unattractive clothes.

Back to what I started. There must have been 250 or 300 or more at the banquet last night. It was held in a large banquet room of the Imperial Hotel. This is a large hotel with several private dining rooms. Many of the eight Congressmen who call themselves my Japanese sons were there. They are members of the Diet -- the Japanese Congress or Parliament. The speakers' table seated at least a dozen. Some of them spoke briefly, and stood, one at a time, to be introduced. All others, including wives, were seated at many round tables -- ten or twelve seated at each table.

All who spoke were saying complimentary things about me. During the evening a few other members of the Japanese Diet said they wanted to be counted as one of my "Japanese sons," all of whom are important Diet members -- the number of my "Japanese sons" in the Diet is now TWELVE.

All speeches were translated. When a Japanese official spoke, he spoke, of course, in Japanese, but after every sentence the interpreter translated the sentence into English, and vice-versa. Of course, the whole thing was in my honor, so I was the chief speaker. Both Mr. Rader and Mr. Gotoh spoke briefly.

I had said earlier that I was not going to plan ahead what to say, or speak from any notes. I knew the living Christ would put into my mind what I should say -- and He did!

There were at least a half dozen ambassadors representing other nations present (with their wives). So, I knew that a number of different religions was represented.

Suppose you were to be asked to stand up and speak to some 300 highly distinguished people. Some believing the Buddhist, Shintoist, Islamic, or Taoist religions, not knowing anything about the true GOD. You knew that Jesus Christ wanted you to proclaim to them the Good News of the KINGDOM OF GOD, and you had to get this Gospel Message over to these important people. JUST HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT IT? If you had two or three days before-hand to think and plan what to say, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

I think all of you ought to KNOW a little about how Jesus Christ leads His chosen Apostle to do it.

I KNEW the living Christ would guide me. Like you, I am only human, but I TRUSTED the living Jesus. He DID put in my mind what to say.

Many of you may hear a tape recording of what I did say. But as I now remember it, I mentioned that I do have private meetings with many heads of nations -- that I talk with them about their problems, and world problems. That their problems are greater than any of them have the power to solve. I then said I had read an editorial in one of the world's leading news magazines, which said our "WORLD PROBLEMS AND EVILS are now so great it would seem that the world's ONLY HOPE lies in the intervention of a GREAT UNSEEN HAND FROM SOMEPLACE." In this manner, I brought to the attention of these many government officials of different religions the supreme GOD -- and then explained that this great "Unseen Hand" was the UNSEEN CREATOR, WHO MADE OF ONE BLOOD ALL OF THE NATIONS REPRESENTED IN THIS BANQUET.

I did not know until I stood up before the microphone that I would say that. But you see, Jesus Christ put words in my mouth that showed them I was speaking of the SUPREME CREATOR, regardless of their religion. Jesus gave me the words to show GOD'S POWER, without offense to any because of his religious belief.

I then said that many consider me an ambassador without portfolio (that is, no official political authority), but in fact, I told them, I was an official ambassador of the GREAT GOD who created us all. I brought to them, from Him, GOOD NEWS -- news of the world's ONLY HOPE -- that we are now in the very LAST DAYS of this present man-made civilization, with more problems and evils than mankind CAN SOLVE -- and that SOON NOW -- in OUR GENERATION -- God will INTERVENE, and set up the WORLD RULING KINGDOM OF GOD and that we shall then have world peace, happiness, JOY and economic ABUNDANCE for ALL in ALL NATIONS.

I said, "I don't ask you to BELIEVE what I say. We humans won't bring this about -- it will be DONE TO US -- and IN SPITE OF US -- whether we believe it or not -- whether we want it or not. I have just ANNOUNCED IT TO YOU, and it DEFINITELY SHALL HAPPEN!"

Thus, in few words, and, even waiting at every sentence for the interpreter to repeat it in the Japanese language, Jesus Christ, through me, DELIVERED THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM to some 300 of the leaders of Japan and several other nations!

I might mention, THIS is what the Attorney General's office in California is trying to call "siphoning off millions of dollars every year for my own use." In the past two years, we have not spent one tenth of one million dollars on this important Work of carrying the GOSPEL into nations worldwide. For the past ten years, this part of the Work has cost less than ONE million dollars a year -- whereas our budget calls for SEVERAL million dollars per year for SALARIES to ministers and the staff at Headquarters plus several million for radio, TV and printing.

I must break off now and hurry into a business suit -- for I am to have a meeting in less than two hours with Prime Minister Ohira. I have met and visited with every Japanese Prime Minister in the past ten years -- Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, Prime Minister Tanaka, Prime Minister Miki, and now Prime Minister Ohira. I have been highly honored in Japan. There's the

saying that a prophet is without honor in his own country. That's where the PERSECUTION comes from. But here, I am honored above any unofficial non- Japanese. And though the persecution comes in many forms at home, I am DEEPLY GRATEFUL that you Brethren and Co-Workers of God's Church have deep LOVE for me, and you have certainly proved that. I love and pray for you continually.

LATER: In flight back home, April 29.

I have now had private personal meetings with the last four Prime Ministers of Japan.

Perhaps the most important news that I can give you of this trip is that definite plans are now under way for me to make an official visit to COMMUNIST CHINA -- officially the Peoples' Republic of China -- in company with two or three of the highest members of the Japanese Diet. Two of the high-ranking members of Japan's law-making Diet are definitely working on arrangements. The trip will be made in our own G-II jet, and probably in August. Private meetings are being set up with the Communist Party Chairman and Prime Minister Hua Guofeng, and the Deputy Prime Minister Ding Xiaoping.

As you know, I have been waiting a long time for the HEAD of our Church, Jesus Christ, to open doors -- IF He wanted His Apostle to go to the LEADERS of China and the Soviet Union. Of course, I can't know yet what Christ may have in mind, but He is able to open doors wherever He wants me to go as His ambassador and Apostle.

Plans are now being made for a visit with the government heads and many other leaders in a country I have never yet visited -- Tunisia, on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, east of Egypt. (I already have had a personal meeting with President Sadat of Egypt.)

Before leaving Japan on this present trip, I had further meetings with a few other Japanese leaders.

This has certainly been a very successful trip. We are now on the descent for a refueling at Cold Bay, Alaska -- the furthestmost western tip of Alaska, where the Aleutian Islands virtually join up with Alaska at its farthest western tip.

I close asking you to continue your earnest and fervent prayers for me and the Work.

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong