

PASTOR'S REPORT

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WATERING DOWN--OR BUILDING SOLIDLY UP?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

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Very shortly after my original marriage in 1917, an angel appeared to my wife in a dream. He descended from the sky, put his arms about both of us, said God was calling me soon to a most important commission. At the time I was embarrassed, suggested she tell it to the preacher at the church on the corner of the block (Chicago), and erased it from my mind.

Nine years later, about September, 1927, God did call me in a manner most disturbing. You read many times of the dual challenges--from my wife taking up with religious "fanaticism"--Sabbath keeping, and a sister-in-law challenging me on the doctrine of evolution.

You've heard, or read, the story of the intensive almost night-and-day study which led to PROOF of the existence of God and the AUTHORITY of the Bible--God sweeping my mind clean of every other doctrine and belief--revealing to me HIS WORD exactly AS IS--no watering down.

I know of no other man who was ever brought to GOD'S TRUTH in that manner.

This led in seven years to the founding of the CHURCH OF GOD at Eugene, Oregon, which in due time became the Worldwide Church of God.

The living Jesus Christ founded the one true Church of God, A.D. 31. The same living Jesus Christ started the Philadelphia era of God's Church through me, as His chosen Apostle, August, 1933.

January 1934, He started me on radio, and February 1 The PLAIN TRUTH made a super-humble bow.

Fellow Ministers and wives, the LIVING CHRIST raised up this era of His Church through me. HE heads it--leads it! Through me, directly or indirectly you came into His Church, and into the knowledge He first revealed to me.

But the most terrible thing that ever happened to me was during the recent years when I was away from Pasadena up to 300 of the 365 days in the year, and my son assumed a full and complete authority never given to him, and encouraged WATERING DOWN God's TRUTH and God's COMMANDS! For the past year now Jesus Christ, through me, has been SETTING HIS CHURCH BACK ON THE TRACK!

But that job is far from complete! I quote from a letter from a member:

He says, "How come nobody preaches about third tithe anymore?... There were things being said by ministers to plant doubts in my mind about it."

Fellow Ministers, I say to you by Christ's authority that for one claiming to be a minister of Jesus Christ and receiving a salary as a minister of, and representative of this Church, to water down or make less binding the teachings and doctrines Jesus Christ put in this Church through me, is taking money (salary) under false pretenses. It is SERIOUS and a SERIOUS SIN. God will call everyone who does that to account.

Compare this to a captain in the army. He is in a comparatively low authority, but he is over first and second lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, etc. Suppose an army captain begins to water down or change the military rules. Suppose he tells those under him, "You don't need to obey this or that order--unless you want to." Such a captain would be court-martialed and PUT OUT with DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE!

Yet ministers who ought to know better have said to those under them, "You don't need to tithe if you don't want to."

I know that the large majority of you ministers are faithful in preaching the doctrines the Living Christ has put into His Church through me. Yet under my son's assuming more authority than had been given him, there was a great letdown and dereliction of duty creeping in through a portion of the ministry. In the army, during wartime, such dereliction of duty might just rid the guilty officer by a firing squad. HOW MUCH MORE SERIOUS IS WATERING DOWN OF DOCTRINES AND THE FAITH IN GOD'S WORK?

This letter from a lay member continues: "When I was (in Ambassador College) there were things being said by teachers and ministers to plant doubts in my mind."

There has been entirely too much of this "planting doubts" in the minds of Church members. Jesus Christ is CHALLENGING ME to CHALLENGE YOU on this question, and to say that THERE IS AUTHORITY in God's Church--it is the one and only place on earth where THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered. Jesus Christ holds ME accountable for how I administer HIS GOVERNMENT! If a minister plants doubts in the minds of his congregation, remember "He that doubteth is damned." Jesus said that for one to deliberately lead even one of "these little ones" astray, it would be better if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he was drowned in the ocean.

This is a SERIOUS MATTER WITH GOD!

In comparatively recent years a "doctrinal committee" raised itself up at Pasadena. But I soon learned that these "scholars" were not searching for new and additional TRUTHS. They were trying to destroy or water down truths we already had. I have dissolved that "committee".

This letter continues: "I don't have to tell you that man's desires are carnal and that Satan's pulls are always in a manner away from the Truth. I'd sure like to find some excuse to spend that third tithe money some other way. And it sure is easy to do that when God's ministers aren't constantly proclaiming God's commands, and aren't powerfully preaching His ways, expounding His laws! Exhorting the brethren!! Exposing their sins!!!

"And what happened to sermons on birthdays being wrong, New Year's celebrations being wrong, Valentine's Day being wrong? We need someone to speak out solidly and loudly and firmly, not saying... 'you do whatever you want.' But saying, 'God condemns those who follow their own ways and Satan's ways. He refuses to bless them and He curses them'-- and then giving them scriptures.

"I pray often that you will once again stomp and speak thunderingly, and pound your fists until you drive it into peoples' minds what is right and what is wrong, and get rid of this wishy-washy preaching of ministers under you! Let's not be so timid.... We need to shake people up! Respectfully, " (SIGNED).

But now back to where I started. I think that most of us tend to lose sight of what God has done in raising up this Philadelphia era of the true Church of God.

In my forthcoming book, A VOICE CRIES OUT, I state that, of all the world's many religions and the more than 250 Protestant denominations, NOT ONE, except the original small persecuted Church of God knows WHO and WHAT God is: NOT ONE knows WHAT and WHY man is; NOT ONE knows the true Gospel Message God sent to mankind by Jesus Christ, etc., etc.

I ask, in this book, HOW would a Buddhist in Thailand ever come to the TRUTH? He has known nothing since birth but Buddhism. How would a Moslem, living right here where I am writing this--in Tunis, Tunisia--ever come to God's real TRUTH??

How DID those who wrote the Bible--the very WORD OF GOD--come to know God's TRUTH? God had to perform a miracle in the beginning to reveal His TRUTH TO Moses by the incident of the burning bush. God had to speak to Moses direct, to give him the knowledge he wrote in the Bible.

How did the Apostle Paul come to know God's precious TRUTH, distinct from the Judaism he had been born to and raised in?

HOW--in the U.S., or elsewhere in today's world--could YOU have come to know such precious TRUTH, born and raised completely surrounded and engulfed by either Roman Catholic or Protestant-brand "Christianity?"

More to the point, HOW DID YOU come into this precious knowledge?

GOD PERFORMED A MIRACLE--that's how!

As I wrote at the beginning of this Pastor's Report, the Living Jesus Christ CALLED ME. He used a method such as NONE of you had to go through. He completely UPSET me! He made me see that just about ALL that I had been taught about religion was WRONG. I was WRONG about

the immortal soul, about heaven and hell, about the LAW OF GOD, about the real history of GOD'S CHURCH--and of ancient Israel before it. Christmas, New Year's, Easter--all these I had to UNlearn. It was a SHATTERING EXPERIENCE! My mind was SWEPT CLEAN of false beliefs. My mind was open to God's TRUTH.

YOU, dear Ministers and wives, did not have to go through what God put me through. I learned TRUTH a doctrine at a time. Through me it was handed to all of you "on a platter"--all together.

Now if you don't understand and believe that, I wonder what you are doing in Christ's ministry.

The Living CHRIST put HIS TRUTH into God's Church through me.

You have of your own will been drawn into this Church by the Living Christ--to HELP me in proclaiming this GOOD NEWS to the world. IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK IN THE WORLD--ESPECIALLY AT THIS CRISIS TIME JUST BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST TO SET UP THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

It is far more important than being a captain in the army in time of WAR! If you did not agree with the military regulations and orders, and openly proclaimed your dissidence to those under you, you would be court-martialed and probably shot! Yet disagreement and contrary teaching of those under you in GOD'S CHURCH is, in God's eyes, FAR MORE SERIOUS!

Now I am not, of course, going to order any firing squads. But the LEAST you can do, if you cannot wholeheartedly accept and loyally teach the truths Jesus Christ put into His Church through His chosen Apostle, is to resign and LEAVE THE CHURCH!

God commands in His Word that we all "SPEAK THE SAME THING." That "same thing" He put into His Church through His Apostle. If you can't agree on any point, you may bring your disagreement privately to your superior, or directly to me--but to teach disagreement to the children of GOD is the height of disloyalty!

For a year now, God has been SETTING HIS CHURCH BACK ON HIS TRACK! That action continues!

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(Editor's Note: This material was called in from Paris by Mr. Armstrong so that it could appear in this Pastor's Report.)

The Church is not a physical corporation or a physical organization, but rather a spiritual organization. It is highly organized. Being a member of God's Church is not being a member of a California Corporation, even though we are, for legal reasons, a California Corporation.

Eph. 1:4-5; Eph. 2:19-22; Eph. 4:11-16 (especially v. 16, "fitly joined together").

John 15:1-4--Separated branches are not "joined together."

John 15:5-7--Separated branches are not getting nourishment from the vine.

I Cor. 1:10--We must all speak the same thing.

I Cor. 1:11-13--If we don't speak the same thing, we are like the Corinthians following separate groups.

The Church is the body of Christ. If we are all cut up as separate members, how can we be a whole body, as the body of Christ is pictured?

I Cor. 12:4-6--There is only ONE Church. There are many functions within that one Church, but we must all speak the same thing to be the body of Christ.

How do we speak the same thing? By God's Government which is from the top down.

I Cor. 1:10--Re-emphasis; we must all speak the same thing.

Rom. 16:17-18--We are to mark those that cause division.

II Thess. 3:6,14--Withdraw from those of contrary beliefs and behavior.

Broken branches wither and die. We must stay together in order to be part of God's Church!

FROM PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Since Dr. Meredith and most of the PAD team have been away on Pentecost trips to various churches in the U.S., there is no letter for this issue of the Pastor's Report. Dr. Meredith will be writing again for the next issue.

PUBLISHING SERVICES UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that the new introductory version of the Plain Truth is now ready for distribution. This introductory PT is part of our planned program of readership follow-up service worked out by circulation manager, Boyd Leeson, and Richard Rice's Mail Processing team. We will be mailing this new PT to all our brand new readers to introduce them to us as an organization and hopefully answer some of their questions about what's behind the Plain Truth.

Another plus for this introductory PT is that we shall be mailing it to our new readers much closer to when they request a subscription. We hope to cut the lead time down (before we mail it out to a new reader) from 4-6 weeks to 7-10 days.

One last bit of good news is that the new 16-page Newsstand PT is pulling in an initial response that is as good as the old 32-page Newsstand PT, and at a little more than half the cost of the old one.

--Roger Lippross