

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Church of God—How did it come to the U.S.A. and to the Philippines and now called "Church of God, The Eternal"?

The Scripture says, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

There are two things to consider in this verse. First, Jesus Christ built the church, and this church was built in Jerusalem, Palestine in 31 A.D. (Acts 1:3-4; 2; 8:1), and second *the church was to continue unto the end* (Matt. 28:19-20). The words: "And the gates of hell, shall not prevail against it," means death or destruction shall not triumph over it. The word "hell" in the KJV means the grave where the dead were buried. The RSV renders it: "And the powers of death shall not prevail against it." The church built by Jesus shall not die. It will not be totally stamped out. Jesus assured, "I am with you always, even unto the end" (Matt. 28:20).

To find out how the church Jesus built continued after the apostles unto the end, and how the church came to the U.S.A. and to the Philippines, we have to look at history in the Bible and through secular histories.

Bible History

In Acts 8:1, 4, 15-16, 26-40, we quote:

. . . And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. . . . Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy [Spirit]: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise,

and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

This shows the church, immediately after it was built by Jesus suffered persecution and the brethren were scattered. Everywhere they were, they preached the Word of God; to the Gentiles in Ethiopia (Africa), and the Romans (Acts 10 and 11). In Acts 11:21 we quote: "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Revelation chapter 12 reveals the presence of the church in the last days. It is symbolized by a woman to be persecuted in the future, the great tribulation of God's people. Revelation 12:17 says, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

In Revelation 6:9-11, we read: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were

given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they [were], should be fulfilled."

There was a past tribulation in the so-called dark ages against the true people of God. Another tribulation is to come before Christ's Second Coming—*proof that the church Jesus built will continue unto the end*. There will be a church that will be ready for the marriage of the Lamb, Revelation 19:6–9, we quote: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed [are] they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

The church historian Jones tells us, "As a result of the evangelization of the Alpine regions during the late middle ages there arose numerous ministers and faithful congregations around 1000 A.D. One of these men was Peter de Bruys who preached the gospel of the Kingdom in the south of France (*Jones' Church History*, chapter 4, section 3). There were many groups opposed to the Roman Catholic church at that time. Among these groups were the true followers of Christ, found among the various groups of Waldenses. The Passaginians, another group, appear to have adhered to the true Bible teaching.

In 1315 A.D., the truth of God was spread to England by a German Waldensian preacher, Walter Lollard. It took deep root for a while until the Protestant Reformation.

Comba's History, pages 10–11 says (in 1404), ". . . there have always been [those] who walked faithfully in the path of righteousness. Their number has been at times reduced to a few, but has never been altogether lost . . . *For if the Church of God was founded, it was in order that it might remain until the end of time*" (emphasis mine).

The Church in England and America

From England the church spread to America when in 1664 Stephen Mumford came to Newport, Rhode Island and raised up a small church from Baptist converts. Over a period of time, other churches were established but eventually most of the congregations joined themselves to the Seventh Day Baptists. Several congregations refused to join this movement because of the false doctrines of the trinity and the immortality of the soul.

As history says, many things happened to the true Church of God in America. *There was always a remnant* to continue the true name and true faith. History further says, ". . . although this falling away, prophesied by Paul in I Timothy 4:1-3, which was to take place in the latter times did much damage to the cause of truth, yet the work of the Lord continued to go forward. Strong men filled with the blessed Holy Spirit were not deceived. They went steadily on undaunted, carrying the true name and the true faith . . ." (emphasis mine), from *A History of the True Church*, by A.N. Dugger and C.O. Dodd, pp. 295-296.

"The church [of God] paper launched at Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1861, *The Remnant of Israel*, was later moved to Marion, Iowa, and still later to Stanberry, Missouri, and a State Conference was organized in various states with presidents and vice-presidents, with a similar organization that was formed in October 1860, at Battle Creek, Michigan. . ."

". . . And for a period of 72 years from 1861 to 1933 the church continued to send forth the true doctrine . . ." (*A History of the True Church*, by Dugger & Dodd, p. 297).

In November 4, 1933, a reorganization was made and the place chosen was Salem, West Virginia. The reorganization resulted in the choosing of twelve men by drawing lots (Acts 1:26) to head the organization of the church and seventy were chosen, among which was Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong; then seven men chosen to be placed over the business affairs of the church (*A History of the True Church*, by Dugger & Dodd, pp. 302-305).

In the course of time, in 1938, a Filipino convert of the Church of God (7th Day) became a minister in the U.S.A. and was sent by the Church to the Philippines. His name was Elder Potenciano Cariño of San Manuel, Pangasinan. He immediately began his work in the Philippines and from 1938 to 1950 had many converts in Northern Luzon, Manila, and in the Island of Mindanao. Many of his converts to the truth became ministers of the Church of God (7th Day) and joined themselves together to preach to Seventh Day Adventists congregations wherever they were. During the Second World War, many people in the Philippines were truly frightened and fearful for their lives, so that when a preacher of the Church of God (7th Day) came to them to preach salvation, the people readily accepted the truth.

The author of this article, who was a prospective member of the Seventh Day Adventists, with his wife, believed and were baptized in the Church of God (7th Day) on November 19 and 26, 1939, respectively. They were members of the Church of God (7th Day) for eighteen years. When the Church of God (7th Day) failed to continue growing in knowledge and in truth and refused to accept newly revealed truth in addition to what it had, her time was up. The more the Church of God (7th Day) wanted to unite with other Churches of God in America, the more divisions occurred. The result of the divisions were: the Denver, Colorado headquarters (formerly at Stanberry, Missouri); the Salem, West Virginia headquarters; the Caldwell, Idaho headquarters; the Meridian, Idaho headquarters;

the Jerusalem, Palestine headquarters; and the Assembly of Yahweh by C.O. Dodd and others. The Church of God in the Philippines was also divided: Some members followed the Denver, Colorado headquarters (formerly Stanberry); the Back to Salem headquarters; the Jerusalem, Palestine headquarters; the Caldwell, Idaho headquarters; the Meridian, Idaho headquarters; the Yahwehist; and other independent groups. The independents were the Church of God (EBP) in the Island of Mindanao under their leaders, Enrique Almera and Fidel Cambare (both deceased). Church of God (Sanctified) in Luzon and Mindanao Elder P. Cariño (deceased) affiliated with the Salem, West Virginia headquarters and the Church of God (7th Day) under Liberato Cabardo (deceased) affiliated with the Jerusalem, Palestine headquarters in the early 1950's.

The author disappeared among the Churches of God—but not from the truth—finding himself in the city of Baguio from 1953 to 1957, working at day time and studying at night in a non-sectarian Bible school, the Philippine Bible College, from which he obtained an "Associate of Theology" degree.

Back in the year 1950, while he was at the office of his pastor (P. Cariño) doing mimeographing work, he accidentally picked up the *Plain Truth* magazine (mimeographed then) from a file of old magazines in a shelf, usually used for blotting out excess ink in the mimeographed stencil. He got curious as he took a glance at the content of the *Plain Truth* and found a prophetic article in it. He asked Elder Cariño about the publisher of the magazine and the reply was, "Don't read that, you can use it to cleanse your stencil." He wanted to read the magazine and did not use it for blotting ink, but intended to keep it. However, when he went out for lunch and returned to work, he could not locate the *Plain Truth* anymore. His boss might have hidden it. Two years passed and at the time the divisions in the Church of God (7th Day) in the U.S.A. were happening, the news reaching members of the Church of God (7th Day) in the Philippines caused them much distress and unhappiness.

The author went to see Elder Cariño for counselling. Elder Cariño was out of town, and the author, to his delight found a copy of the *Plain Truth* on the top of Elder Cariño's desk. The magazine was printed in black and white. It was a fortunate and a happy day for him to be able to freely scan the pages of the *Plain Truth* and to get the address of the publisher. That was in November, 1952, when he subscribed to the magazine.

In January, 1953, the author received his first copy of the *Plain Truth*, with different booklets included.

He studied in earnest and compared the teachings of the Church of God (7th Day) with those of the Radio Church of God under the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, the publisher of the *Plain Truth*. After four years, and finding the Radio Church of God teaching more truth than the Church of God (7th Day), he made for the first time in his life

a major decision he never regretted to this day. He left the Church of God (7th Day) and affiliated with the Radio Church of God in 1957.

In January, 1958, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, the leader of the Radio Church of God, finally accepted him and his wife as bonafide members of the Radio Church of God.

The Radio Church of God had begun its "World Tomorrow" radio broadcast program in the Philippines in 1957 which resulted in many respondents in the Philippines writing to Pasadena, California headquarters of the Radio Church of God for free literature, as advertised in broadcasts. For this reason, the Radio Church of God appointed the author as its representative in the Philippines to take charge of the magazine and literature distribution.

In 1958 the Radio Church of God set up its first office in the Philippines and called it "Ambassador College Agency," in San Nicolas, Pangasinan, the hometown of the author. In 1962, the office was moved from Pangasinan to Makati, Metro Manila. From that time on the Radio Church of God started advertising in the most well-read local weekly magazine, *The Philippine Free Press*, up to 1970. The work of the Radio Church of God in the Philippines grew rapidly with hundreds of converts joining the membership. During the same period in the U.S.A. the Work grew by leaps and bounds and thousands were added to its membership.

The author was called to attend the Church Ministerial Conference in Pasadena, California, U.S.A., almost every year from 1961 to 1970 and was ordained a minister in 1963. He met and knew all the pioneers and high-ranking ministers: Messrs. Herbert W. Armstrong, Garner Ted Armstrong, Roderick Meredith, Raymond McNair, Raymond C. Cole, Herman Hoeh, Albert Portune, and many others.

The Radio Church of God was changed to Worldwide Church of God in 1968, because its work became world-wide. The church's forty years of existence, from 1934 to 1974 was its purest and manifested constancy in its teachings and doctrines. The gospel of the Kingdom was preached powerfully into all the world by its magazine, booklets, books, radio broadcasts, and telecasts. But in 1974 some foreboding changes in the doctrines of the church began. ~~Some of the top and most influential ministers at the headquarters succeeded in swaying Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong to changes they desired to implement in the established doctrines of the church. The liberals were able to compel Herbert W. Armstrong to change the day of observance of Pentecost from Monday to Sunday and the doctrine against divorce was also changed with other doctrines. Mr. Armstrong, who was forced to submit to the changes remarked, "If the doctrine against divorce and remarriage is changed, the Worldwide Church of God will no longer be the true Church of God."~~