

GOD'S OWN CHURCH IN PARIS

*Here is a brief report describing the BIRTH of God's first
Church in modern times in the land of the Reubenites.*

by Dibar K. Apartian

"A new church in PARIS, FRANCE —that's *big* news," Mr. Armstrong said thoughtfully, with great satisfaction.

"Yes," I answered, "it's big news indeed."

For years, we had been waiting for this important day — at times even wondering if God would ever *open the door*. And now, finally, we were given the green light.

Right up to the time to leave, Mr. Armstrong wanted to make the trip himself to Paris to inaugurate, in person, the *very first* CHURCH OF GOD in modern times in France. But his numerous pressing responsibilities at Headquarters prevented him from doing so.

"I will at least write them a personal letter," he told me the day before my departure for Paris. "I want you to translate it — and read it to them when you get there."

Actually it was not an ordinary letter Mr. Armstrong gave me; it was a short *epistle* — an inspired message which may well be read and remembered through the Millennium. Here is what Mr. Armstrong wrote:

November 24, 1966

To Our New Brethren Assembled
in Paris, France:

This day on which you are meeting — the first service of God's own Church in modern times in the beautiful land of Israel's firstborn, REUBEN — will go down in history.

The *very first* Church of God of modern times in FRANCE — in the great world capital, PARIS! A NEW Church of God, born this day! Today's world takes no notice of you. But this present evil world is now toppling to oblivion! Very soon, out of its ashes of decadence, corruption and rebellion against its Maker, will rise the wonderful NEW, happy, peaceful, God-ruled WORLD TOMORROW! And

then the world will hear of this very meeting you are attending today!

I have longed to fly to Paris to be with you on this historic occasion. Since pressure of responsibilities at God's present earthly Headquarters prevents, I send you warmest GREETINGS and love, in the name of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has called you to be saints in Him — sending this GREETING by our beloved brother in Christ and fellow servant, M. Dibar Apartian, whom the living Christ has appointed as the leader of His Work among His people descended from Reuben.

As begotten children of the living Creator GOD, you have been called to become His HEIRS — to be BORN into His living Family, the Kingdom of God — to inherit all that the Great God has created in all the vast universe. As of now you are little children in Christ, needing to GROW UP spiritually to the full stature of the living Christ. Rejoice in your trials of faith, for God's judgment has begun with us in His Church, that we overcome our own natures, the oppositions and temptations of this world, and the deceptions of Satan, GROWING in grace and the knowledge of our living Saviour, Jesus Christ. He will never leave nor forsake you. Set your affections on HIM and the things He has in store for you. Our prayers are with you.

With love, in Jesus' name,
(signed) Herbert W. Armstrong

Equipped with this inspired epistle, I was on my way to Paris, France.

Satan Tried to Intervene

Time: 10:45 p.m. Weather: cold and rainy. Location: Paris, France.

As the big Pan American Jet Clipper landed at Orly Airport, I was somewhat concerned as to just *how many* people would show up for this very first church service in the French capital. Five? ten? twenty? — or would there really be about *fifty* as we had anticipated? There was no way of telling because France is a *predominately* Catholic country where even those on the verge of conversion may *panic* the

last minute, and fail to show up for such a meeting for fear of being persecuted by their friends or relatives.

What would happen, I wondered, if only a handful of people showed up? That was an alarming thought!

"Have you been to Paris before?" the cab driver asked me as we drove from the airfield to my hotel over the skiddy French roads.

"Yes," I said, "I used to live here before."

There was a sharp squeaking of the brakes; the cab driver had made a sudden stop because a little French *Renault* car was jamming the traffic.

"Ah, these street walkers," he interjected with indignation. "They aren't concerned with anyone else but themselves. They keep driving around the block and would stop right in the middle of the street if that's where they find a customer!"

Street walkers? How can they be called by that name when they no longer "walked" but "drove," I wondered? The cab driver displayed a whimsical smile: What was wrong with me, anyway? Was I not aware that we were now living in a *mechanized* age? . . .

I was up very early the Sabbath morning, partly because I had been unable to sleep much of the night — due to the nine-hour time difference between Pasadena and Paris — and partly because I was much too excited to sleep. Besides, Messrs. Bourdin and Wilkins, flying from Geneva, were scheduled to meet me that morning at my hotel.

About an hour before their arrival the phone suddenly rang: "Geneva is

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morning after the catastrophe we learned that another storm had passed over Martinique and finally turned out to sea.

"As these prophesied events came to pass, I exhorted the members of the congregation to unite under Christ in order to receive protection from the calamities to come. The members are obedient, they trust God and His promises and we are all very much encouraged.

"On the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, few were present because of the bad weather. We had services each evening. By the last day the weather was favorable and the entire congregation was present: 47 adults, 65 children. We had a very good Feast, and there was joy on every face."

Next Time

Although we are very few among the millions of the world, it is very

encouraging to know that so many thousands have been called out of the world into this little flock of God. Let us so dedicate our lives to this end-time Work that through God's Power this Commission to the Church will be effectively fulfilled! Then the *historic* fulfillment of the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles will soon be a reality for the whole world.

Be sure to read Mr. Apartian's stirring report of the new church started in Paris, France — news of other new churches and Bible studies that have been started in the last month or so, will be included in next month's installment of the Church of God News along with a thorough report from Mr. Gerald Waterhouse who has been touring the churches in the United States with films and sermons illustrating the worldwide Work of God.

God's Own Church in Paris

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calling Mr. Apartian," the switchboard operator announced. "Are you Mr. Apartian?"

"Yes," I answered with some misgivings. It was Mrs. Wilkins who, at the other end of the line, informed me that the plane her husband and Mr. Bourdin was scheduled to take for Paris was having "technical difficulties." In all probability, she added, they may be late in getting to Paris on time for the opening of the church . . .

I should have known that Satan would try to interfere with our plans in an effort to prevent the opening of God's Church in Paris. Nevertheless, try as he may, Satan *cannot* stop God's Work. He can only go as far as God allows him to go. With or without the arrival of our representatives from Geneva, the meeting would open — and it did.

A Tremendous Attendance

At 1 p.m. the people began to arrive. In the midst of all the excitement and friendly handshaking, I did not realize that we were heading toward a *record-breaking* attendance. At the most we had expected fifty-five people; the

room itself — a very comfortable one with wall-to-wall carpeting — had a maximum capacity of seventy-five. However, by the time Messrs. Bourdin and Wilkins arrived, not only were the seventy-five chairs in the room filled, but fifteen additional chairs had been ordered and placed in the room as well as in the adjacent hall.

"I can't tell for sure just how many people we actually have," said one of the church members whom I had asked to help people find their seats. "All of our ninety chairs are already occupied and some late arrivers are standing up in the hall."

So *over* NINETY people were present. But where did they all come from? How did we get ninety when — at the most — only fifty-five were expected? The reason was heart-warming and most encouraging. We had never thought that some brethren from *Belgium*, as well as some living about a hundred miles south of Paris would make an effort to attend the church.

"I wouldn't have missed this opportunity for anything in my life," an old woman told me, after having travelled all night to get there. One or two others

had never even been to Paris before, and would never have ventured such a journey had it not been for the opening of God's Church.

And so it was that the *first* church of God in modern times *opened* in Paris with an attendance of *over ninety people* — and that included *only eight* children.

Our prayers had been truly *answered* by the Almighty God.

Remember Them in Your Prayers

What was the sermon about? What did I preach?

What would any minister of God preach after witnessing God's tremendous blessing on this Paris Church? Who could have remained unmoved after reading Mr. Armstrong's most *inspiring* EPISTLE? I explained *WHY* we were there, what the Church is, what is its mission, its goal, its task — and the collective job we all have to do before God's Kingdom is established on earth.

In conclusion, I reminded them of Mr. Armstrong's encouraging words: "Today's world takes no notice of you. But this present evil world is now toppling to oblivion! Very soon, out of its ashes of decadence, corruption and rebellion against its Maker, will rise the wonderful *NEW*, happy, peaceful God-ruled *WORLD TOMORROW!* And *then* the world will hear of this very meeting you are attending today! . . ."

The French people — the *descendants of Israel's firstborn*, Reuben, now have their very first *CHURCH OF GOD* in Paris. For the time being, Sabbath services will be held twice a month pastored by Messrs. Bourdin and Wilkins. In all probability, other churches will be opened in France before the time of our collective flight, but much depends upon *YOUR ardent and heartfelt* PRAYERS. God's people in France need an extra measure of protection against persecution. They also need more material prosperity, easier means of transportation, more private halls to assemble in — and more shepherds.

Be sure to remember these things in your prayers. Be sure to remember the very first *CHURCH OF GOD* in Paris, the great capital of France!