

Church of God (Seventh Day)

GENERAL CONFERENCE OFFICES

P. O. BOX 33677 - DENVER, COLORADO 80233 - PHONE (303) 452-7973

Re: The Herbert W. Armstrong Association with the Church of God (Seventh Day)

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong began his search for "truth" (in earnest) back in the Fall of 1926 after his wife, Loma, had embraced the seventh-day Sabbath message as the result of the witness of a Church of God woman.

Mr. Armstrong to that time had considered his wife's acceptance of the Sabbath as an indication of "religious fanaticism." So he set out to prove her wrong. In the spring of 1927, Mr. Armstrong accepted his wife's views as correct.

It was about that time that Mr. Armstrong entered into the Church of God fellowship. According to Mr. Armstrong, he felt that the Church of God in Oregon embraced the truth and the testimony of Jesus, but it was a fruitless work. So he has contended that he and Mrs. Armstrong maintained "a detached fellowship."

That "detached fellowship" did not prevent Mr. Armstrong from accepting a ministerial license from the Oregon Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day). The Oregon Conference was an affiliate of the organization which at that time was headquartered in Stanberry, Missouri. The ministerial document was issued in about 1931. Back in those days state conferences were empowered by the General Conference to grant ministerial licenses, with the General Conference granting credentials. The General Conference was composed of state conferences, each of which was an association of congregations. The state conferences were totally dependent on the General Conference offices for their authority.

[Some folks have inquired of the Armstrongs' membership status. The Church of God did not ever issue ministerial documentation to non-members.]

In 1933 the Church of God (Seventh Day) suffered a severe schism, dividing right down the middle. The half that severed (both in members and ministers) established their headquarters in Salem, West Virginia. This new organization was headed by Andrew N. Dugger, who had served as President of the old conference from 1914 to 1928 and as editor of the Bible Advocate from 1914 to 1932. The two divisions reunited in 1949, establishing new headquarters in Denver, Colorado. A small number of dissidents remained separate from the reorganized body, and kept a skeletal work in Salem.

Mr. Armstrong gravitated toward the Salem movement. He had aligned himself with A. N. Dugger, thus following Elder Dugger in that association.

By 1934, Mr. Armstrong had accepted appointment as one of "the seventy," a group of ministers and church leaders who were charged with "the message for the last days." (Note: The Salem organization was built on the premise that it re-established scriptural organization: a board

of twelve set the spiritual tone of the Church; the body of the seventy was to be the "elite" of the ministerial staff; the "seven" were charged with the financial oversight of the operation.) Mr. Armstrong was granted ministerial credentials at that time.

It was also about this time that Mr. Armstrong began a radiobroadcast ministry which he identified as "The Radio Church of God," and which he later contended to be independent of the Salem body's support or endorsement. Interestingly enough, the Salem body was publishing his reports and articles at the time, so apparently they did not share his understanding. He was carrying the highest documentation that the Church bestows.

During the ensuing months and years, Mr. Armstrong began to take an outspoken view on his understanding of British Israelism and the Hebrew feasts. The brethren encouraged him to present to the ministerial body as a whole his views on those subjects, rather than to continue preaching and promoting most forcefully his personal position.

It was at Detroit, Michigan that Mr. Armstrong's material on the Hebrew festivals was presented. The ministerial body gave full treatment to the positions of Mr. Armstrong and a majority rejected the doctrine as unscriptural. But Mr. Armstrong was most insistent and continued to present his viewpoints in an antagonistic manner.

So, in 1938 the Salem organization revoked Mr. Armstrong's credentials. Official records show the doctrinal dispute to be the reason for the severance.

As an addendum to this letter we'd like to offer a summary of copies of letters on file at the General Conference offices regarding Mr. Armstrong's affiliation with the Salem movement successive to the 1933 division.

The first of these letters is a form letter sent to all those men who were requested to participate in the highest ministry of the Church in those days (to whom credentials were issued). In this letter which Mr. Armstrong signed and therefore indicated his support, the Salem organization required each minister's allegiance to "the Constitution of the Church of God, with world headquarters at Jerusalem, Palestine," and current offices in Salem, West Virginia. In that form-notice is included the following: "Will you please record this my acceptance, and have credentials issued to me, according to my ministry in the body?"

Sincerely,

Herbert W. Armstrong

1142 Hall St., Salem, Oregon."

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A second letter was a confirmation from Mr. Armstrong dated January 29, 1934 and sent from Eugene, Oregon, in which Mr. Armstrong indicated his willingness to embrace the work of the Salem organization and in which he accepts appointment to "the ministry of one of the seventy, which you can submit to the Twelve [the Twelve Apostles]."

A third letter from Mr. Armstrong dated August 15, 1934 briefly states: "I feel that my views and my stand, and what I preach, are in harmony and accord with all these "40 points" [to wit, the "40 points of doctrine as outlined in the Constitution of the Church of God (Salem, West Virginia)]."

A fourth letter over the signature of C. O. Dodd, then General Secretary of the Salem body, acknowledges the appointment of credentials to Mr. Armstrong.

The last two pages of material that have been made available to our files from the Salem body deals with early reports from The Bible Advocate and Gospel Herald which at the time was the official publication of the Salem body. These reports detail Mr. Armstrong's work in the Salem affiliation from March, 1936 to July 1937. And the latter of these two pages dates ministerial minutes that account of Mr. Armstrong's dissociation from the ministerial body, along with the grounds for that dissociation.

The Church of God (Salem) was organized in 1934. The first two days were devoted to the general conference to grant membership and to the general conference granting credentials. The first conference was held at the conference, each of which was an affiliate of regional. The state conferences were held in accordance with the general conference officers for their authority.

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Mr. Armstrong graduated from the University of Oregon. He had aligned himself with A. W. Burgess, who following later began in that association.