

THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD VS. THE CHURCH OF GOD (7th Day)

To Whom It May Concern:

Since the early 1960s we have often been asked, mostly through letters, what we know about Herbert W. Armstrong, whether he has ever been a member of the Church of God (7th Day), and if so, why is he not with this church today, was he disfellowshipped or did he leave of his own accord, and if so why; can one rely on his autobiography, and what do you think of his present work, his attitudes, and teachings?

Our first knowledge of him was in late 1931 or early 1932 while I was office editor of the Bible Advocate, which was then published at Stanberry, Missouri. At that time he and Robert Taylor were publishing the Messenger of Truth, in Oregon, in which appeared articles written by both of these men. One of the articles which interested me very much was on the "secret rapture" fallacy, written by Herbert Armstrong, which I in turn reprinted in the Bible Advocate. I believe some of his writings had appeared in the Bible Advocate previously, and perhaps several later.

As for Herbert's origins in religious matters, as far as his associations with the Church of God (7th Day) is concerned, I have to rely on his Autobiography, on his Co-Workers Letters, and what he told me personally, of what had transpired before I carried on a fairly heavy correspondence with him.

In the summer or fall of 1926, Loma Armstrong became acquainted with Ora Runcorn, a member of the Church of God (7th Day), who gave Loma a Bible study on the Sabbath question. Loma rejoiced in this newfound truth, and rushed to tell Herbert about it. To him that was the worst news he had ever heard. He became very much upset, and considered divorcing her (he told me in later years), but that seemed too drastic, so he decided to study and prove to his companion from the Bible that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. After studying intensively for six months, he became convinced that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, together with the annual Sabbaths, must be observed.

After his conversion, Armstrong naturally began seeking for the true Church. He checked out the Seventh-day Adventists, the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Church of God (7th Day). Although the latter-mentioned church was the smallest group, it had more Bible truths than any other. So he began to fellowship with the scattered few members in Oregon. It was in 1927 that he was baptised, but I do not recall his ever telling me that he was baptised by a Baptist minister, instead of minister of the Church of God (7th Day), until I read it in one of his writings. It appears that he decided to be baptised by a minister who would not make him join that denomination.

The Oregon Brethren urged him from time to time to preach to them, but becoming a preacher was the very last thing he ever wanted to be, he said. However, in 1928 he preached his first sermon, and many more sermons followed at the Church of God meetings for several years. In 1931 he was ordained to the ministry, and in 1932 he received his Ministerial License Certificate from the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, signed by O. J. Runcorn as President, and Mrs. I. E. Curtis as Secretary.

The headquarters of the General Conference of the Church of God (7th Day) had been at Stanberry, Missouri, since the late 1880s. In the fall of 1933 there was a division in the Church of God organization, one group retaining Stanberry, Missouri as headquarters, and the other established its headquarters at Salem, West Virginia. This newly formed group instituted what was termed Apostolic form of organization, with the Twelve, the Seven, and the Seventy. My name appeared in the list of the Twelve, and Herbert's in the list of the Seventy.

As mentioned before, Herbert and I commenced corresponding with each other from late in 1931 or early in 1932, which we kept up until the fall of 1945. Much of our correspondence during 1934 was concerning his stand as to when to baptise new converts, and the other concerning his understanding about the law of the clean and unclean foods. He wanted us to know how he stands on these matters before accepting his position on the Seventy, since he was considering on working with the Salem group. So, in the fall of 1934 he received his credentials from the Salem branch of the Church of God. As mentioned previously, I was then a member of the executive board of the church, which decided on who was eligible for those papers.

It was our privilege to meet the Armstrongs for the first time in person, in the month of June, 1935, at an all-day fellowship meeting in their church at Eugene, Oregon. We heard him speak to that gathering on that Sabbath day, and I was well impressed with his message and with the type of his delivery. Following that, we continued our gospel ministry in the Pacific Northwest, and in the month of July we also attended the Oregon Church of God campmeeting which was held at Jefferson. Brother Armstrong, as he was then called, participated in the campmeeting services, and so did we. We became quite well acquainted with the entire Armstrong family, and for ten or more years were considered very close friends, and shared many of our problems, as well as blessings, in the gospel ministry, both in and outside of church organization.

It was in the fall of 1937 when Elder Armstrong's credentials were revoked by the Salem Church of God organization. The reason given by the Board of Twelve for this action was because he taught and kept the annual Feast days. But the real reason seems to have been because of his uncooperative attitude. One writer, in his published book, says that Armstrong was asked to surrender his credentials to A. N. Dugger, and that Dugger at that time was president of the Salem Church of God. That is not true. Dugger never was president of the Salem branch. I was on the Board of Twelve when Armstrong was issued ministerial credentials in 1934, and also when his credentials were revoked in 1937. May state that I personally did not participate in the revoking procedures.

Following this incident of revoking Armstrong's credentials, he and I remained close friends, although not in full agreement on several points of doctrine, yet we had many things in common and worked together. Without going into details why, at this time, I will state that about eight or nine months later I submitted my ministerial credentials to the Salem Church of God organization, 1938. Sister Kiesz and I assisted in the Feast of Tabernacles at Eugene, Oregon, in 1941, and again in 1944, and the last one I attended by myself at Belknap Springs, sixty miles east of Eugene, 1945. We lived in Canon City, Colorado, most of the time from 1940 to 1950. It was during part of January and part of February, 1945, that Herbert held us a fairly successful evangelistic campaign in Canon City.

It is a mistake for anyone to state, as was done by Marion J. McNair in his book, that Armstrong continued as an unofficial organization, between 1937 and 1946, until he incorporated as the Radio Church of God. Actually, he organized the Churches of God in Oregon shortly after his credentials were revoked. In the month of July, 1940, ministerial credentials were issued to me--John Kiesz--signed by the following Board Members: 1. Herbert W. Armstrong, 2. Jeremiah M. Day, 3. Claud V. Ellis, 4. John Davison, 5. D. T. Henion, 6. O. J. Runcorn, 7. F. W. Beard.

Lest anyone concludes that I have ill feelings, or malicious designs against Herbert Armstrong, let it be said that I would not in the past, nor now, have had anything to say or write about the man and his work, were it not for the information that has been requested from time to time. It is true that it hurt me personally when he dropped me as a "hot potato" during or after the 1945 Feast of Tabernacles meeting, after enjoying good fellowship for ten years. One question, among others, I have been asked is: "Why did Mr. Armstrong drop you?" Well, in "telling it like it is," it was because I believed in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is true that Herbert was not always able to work harmoniously with other ministers. Perhaps it was not his fault alone. He had a feeling, evidently, that some folks were always undermining him, and trying to destroy his work. In time, I observed that he possessed (and probably still does) a "persecution complex." Not long before he decided to drop me, he told me at his Eugene, Oregon office, that he will start a college and train his own men for the ministry, so they will all speak the same thing, and his problems in that area will be over. I did not say it then, but felt sure that his proposed course would work nicely for a while--until some of these men would think for themselves, and then trouble would start in his own organization. I did not think then, however, that it would take so many years until his movement would be fractured.

Another area in which folks have concerned themselves with, is his Autobiography. I have been asked: "Do you believe everything written in the biography is true?" Since he reported in his Autobiography, in the August, 1962, issue of the Plain Truth, the three and a half weeks meetings he held for us in Canon City, Colorado, during part of January and February, 1945, and since about half of his report was either distorted or false, I have to question his other reports too. For instance, he wrote in his Autobiography about his trying in the early 1930s to work with men like Taylor, Oberg, Ray, and Daily, and how all of them worked against him. I did not get personally acquainted with Taylor, but I did with the rest of them. I did not find them as bad as he pictured them. I'd say that not everything published in the Autobiography is reliable.

I used to consider Herbert a humble man, but when he began to write that for 1800 or 1900 years the true gospel was not being preached until he (Armstrong) began his work, I had to change my mind about his modesty. To me, such an attitude is too presumptuous. Our heavenly Father has always had a true and faithful people in every age, or else he would not have fed and nourished them in the wilderness for 1260 years (Rev.12:6,14). He has also indicated from time to time that the Almighty chose him as a special Apostle, and that what he has been preaching and publishing has been revealed to him directly by Jesus Christ, whereas the fact is that what truths he has been preaching he originally learned from the Church of God (7th Day). We must admit, however, that he has been teaching additional concepts which are not scriptural truths.

I remember the time when Herbert wrote and taught strongly against church organization as it was generally carried on, but later he became so strongly organized that he became to his followers what the Pope of Rome is to the Catholic Church. Many of his followers have come to believe that he is God's prophet, and these actually fear him. We have heard some of his people say, after they were shown some of the discrepancies, "Well, if Mr. Armstrong says it then it is so."

When one claims that he has been ordained of God, Baptised by Jesus Christ, and has consistently, for many years, been preaching the one true gospel of the Kingdom of God, and dared to tell in specific, point-by-point, and in detailed order, the events that are to occur, the real meaning of the mysterious books of prophecy, and that his work is the only genuine work which is carrying out Jesus' very commission--he ought not have preached and published contradictory messages, nor should he have made predictions which never came to pass, nor ever will.

We admit that all prophetic students can make mistakes, and have made mistakes, in interpreting Bible prophecies. But the way Herbert Armstrong and some of his fellow-writers have written articles in the Plain Truth, and in the Good News, and in his Letters to Co-Workers, stating that no one but he and his group understand these things, and that for over 1800 years the true gospel was not preached until he started to do so, and if he is God's true prophet for these times, he should

never have made such predictions as have miserably failed, as will be shown below, for the Almighty Himself knows everything and makes no mistakes. He does not reveal things to His servants which never come to pass.

It has been stated at times in the Plain Truth that whatever article he was then considering, that he had taught certain things as far back as 28 years ago, when no one would believe him, and that those predictions have now come to pass, or are now coming to pass. But he usually does not tell you of the miscalculations or misinterpretations he then published and preached. I wish to point out a few of those here. The first one goes back to 1935. In the July issue of that year of the mimeographed Plain Truth, in big headlines on the front page, he wrote:

"Mussolini goes to WAR. Even as you read this, he is marching to Armageddon!"

"We learn that the 'beast' symbolizes a revival of the ancient Roman Empire, by a federation of ten nations within its territory."

"Verse 41--'He shall enter also into the Glorious Land--Palestine! Great Britain controls Palestine, so that will involve him with war with Great Britain, and then it will be difficult indeed for the United States to keep out! When Mussolini takes PALESTINE, then the nations will be plunged into the great, last and final WORLD WAR."

"When Mussolini takes Palestine, he not only will force England in, but then Russia and Turkey will enter the war, for they are allied together for the express purpose of REGAINING PALESTINE, at any cost!"

"Mussolini is starting a war that shall end AT AMMAGEDDON! It is the START of the final World WAR! It is NOW STARTING! Do you really REALIZE IT? It is STARTING NOW!"

The Plain Truth (also mimeographed), Vol. V, No. 2, Published by Herbert W. Armstrong, at Eugene, Oregon, APRIL-MAY, 1940, had this headline;

DEMOCRACY DOOMED! THE FACTS, Today!

"Verse 45--Mussolini shall establish his palace, as capital of the revived Roman Empire, at JERUSALEM! Zech.14:2 says the city shall be taken! 'Yet he shall come to his end, and NONE shall help him!'"

"Democracy went, yesterday, in England! Today England is a DICTATORSHIP, as absolutely as that of Adolph Hitler or Benito Mussolini. The king is still there, as always. He will remain on his throne over the British Commonwealth of Nations until Jesus Christ comes and removes that very throne to Jerusalem! But Winston Churchill rules England as absolutely as Hitler does Germany! The government of Churchill OWNS England--OWNS every man, woman and child--has absolute power over every person, every dollar, every resource. Yesterday we heard over short-wave broadcast from London these ominous words:

"Men will work when and where, and for what pay, the government will direct."

"And WHEN the United States gets into the war--as we are CERTAIN to do sooner or later--THE SAME THING WILL HAPPEN HERE! . . ."

"This is acknowledged by all who KNOW. As now in England, the President will become Dictator absolute and not only soldier, but factory worker, farmers, every dollar of our money and wealth--all will be CONSCRIPTED! And it is THEN,

according to the Bible prophecies, the Great Tribulation shall come, and the MARK of the Beast will be enforced! THE TIME IS AT HAND. IT IS time for us to AWAKE!

". . . Armageddon, we believe, must be at least three or four years away. . ."

The NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1940, Plain Truth Magazine had an article entitled:
Turkey Wiped out by Britain

"For, make no mistake about it, Palestine and Egypt are to be captured by the Roman Axis powers!"

Later, in the Plain Truth, 1943, he wrote:

"The Axis armies meantime shall have poured into Palestine. Hitler and the False Prophet shall set up the tabernacle and the palace there (Dan.11:41,45)--move their headquarters there. . ."

Much more could have been quoted from his writings over the years, but this shows how miserably some of his predictions have failed.

Mussolini marched into Ithiopia and conquered the country, but lost it again in 1941. He did not march to Armageddon, neither did he enter Palestine, nor did he establish his headquarters there. Mussolini has been dead for many years and Armageddon is still future. Remember, in 1940: he thought it was three or four years away.

The President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, did not become absolute Dictator, as Armstrong declared he would to the extent that every dollar of our money and wealth would be conscripted. Neither did the Great Tribulation and the enforcement of the Mark of the Beast come then.

Turkey was not wiped out by Britain. Palestine and Egypt were not captured by the Roman Axis powers. Hitler and the False Prophet did not set up the tabernacle and the palace in Jerusalem.

Just as sure as he failed in some of his former predictions, just so sure will he fail in some more of his current predictions. He says that the United States, England and Canada will be taken into captivity by the Germans. If this were true then these could not be present in the Battle of Armageddon in the Near East, to oppose Russia and her hordes. But the lion (England) and the young Lions (her offspring) will be present to fight against Russia, according to Ezekiel 38:10-13.

The Plain Truth, Vol. 13, June 1948, contained a lead article on "Jews Are a Nation Again! Prophecy Fulfilled?" Notice that he left the heading with a question mark. He stated in that article that instead of being a nation at all, it is a colossal illusion. It was further stated that the return of the Jews to Palestine was not the prophesied exodus, but a man-made blundering and CONFUSION.

Even as late as May 1965 (The Plain Truth) printed this: "Yes, Jesus Christ was able to look down into the future and accurately predict that the Jewish people would be scattered throughout the world, and that the old city of Jerusalem would remain trodden down under the heel of the Gentiles until the 'times of the Gentiles' were fulfilled. Many prophecies show that the 'times of the Gentiles' have not yet ended. The greatest proof that the 'times of the Gentiles' have not yet ended is the simple fact that the Gentile Arabs are still in possession of the old city of Jerusalem. They will remain in control of this city until the Second Coming of Christ, at which time He will deliver Jerusalem, the Jews and all Israel from Gentile domination."

As known from his previous teachings; namely, that the Jews are not fulfilling prophecy, but all Israel will at the Second Advent he had to change his ideas, as reflected in his PERSONAL from the Editor, in The Plain Truth, June, 1967.

JEW'S TAKE JERUSALEM

"What is the real significance? The Israelis won a flash war--a blitzkrieg, Israeli style! The news reporters do not know what it means.

"But you can know!"

"For this is one of the major fulfillments of Biblical prophecy!"

"There will be a Jewish Temple built in Jerusalem, with animal sacrifices once again being offered, probably within about four and one half years. It is going to take some time to build such a Temple. And I don't see how they are going to have another month to spare--in taking over the 'old city' now in Arab hands--if they are going to have the Temple built by the time indicated by prophecy.

Now to the Plain Truth, March 1968: "Watch Jerusalem! Watch Israel!"

"The recent Israeli victory gave them complete control of the city of Jerusalem--including the original site of Solomon's Temple. The stage is now set for the construction of the 'Temple' prophesied in II Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 11:1,2."

Referring again to his prophecy concerning Turkey, in the November-December issue of the Plain Truth, he maintained that the Edomites (descendants of Esau) are identified with the Turkish nation today, and that the prophecy of Obadiah is about Turkey.

This is a bad perversion of the facts. It is the Arab world of today who are the descendants of Esau (Gen.36:8,9; Deut.2:1-5; Obad.). They are Semites. This is not true of the Turks, for they are descendants of a Mongolian race of peoples. Every history student should know that the Seljuk Turks from Turkestan (the Steppes of Asia) settled in Asia Minor during the eleventh Century, and that the Ottoman Turks from Asia later settled among the Seljuks. They were largely Moslem in religion, but blended with the various strains of people who had lived there. In 1453 they caused the fall of Constantinople. There is plenty of evidence that the present race of Arabs are referred to in Obadiah and in Ezekiel 35. The casting of lots for the possession of Jerusalem (Joel 3:3, Obad.11) was carried out under former President Harry Truman's administration. It is not Turkey but the Arabs who are fighting Jacob today. How could anyone overlook what is actually happening in the Near East?

So, on and on. One writer claims that some sixty prophecies failed. Now all of the references to false predictions must be measured and weighed in the light of the Holy Scriptures; namely, if a prophet speaks in the name of the Eternal, if the thing does not come to pass, it is what the LORD did not speak. So it seems only fair to conclude that Herbert Armstrong is a self-proclaimed prophet.

Not only has Armstrong seriously misinterpreted some of the prophecies, but there are also **discrepancies** in his doctrinal teachings and practices.

Armstrong is off with his interpretation as to the time when one is born again. He teaches that one is born again when he is resurrected or translated at the second coming of the Messiah. According to our Savior's warning, it will be too late then. I suggest that you order our tract on "The New Birth."

He teaches that Melchisedec is or was the Son of God, whereas the Bible states that Jesus is "another priest" made after the "order of Melchisecec." See Hebrews 7:11-17.

In Bible Story, Vol. III, p. 32, you read that the Scapegoat, as pictured in Leviticus 16th chapter, represented the Devil. Every Bible student knows, however that the Son of God is the Sin-bearer or the Scapegoat (Isa.53:10-12; 1 Pet.2:24):

He uses fermented wine in place of grape juice at the Lord's Supper. But the fruit of the vine has gone through a process of fermentation or corruption by the time it is fermented wine. Our Savior's blood saw no corruption, so the corrupted wine cannot symbolize his uncorrupted blood.

He teaches, like the "Oneness" people, that the Jehovah or Yahvah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. With several exceptions, the YHVH of the Old Testament is the Father who created everything through His Son, however. Write for a compilation of the "Christological Controversy," which deals with this matter.

He teaches that the earth was created long--perhaps billions of years--before man, whereas the inspired Word says that "in six days the LORD made (not remade) heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. . ."

He opposes the moving of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the saints, or in the services, and has even contended that those who claim that they have been baptised with the Holy Spirit, have really been deceived by the Devil.

I well remember the time when Herbert apparently was as much against worldly pleasures as I was: such as attendance at the movies, dancing, drinking, card-playing, and the wearing of excessive jewelry. At one time he told me that his people need my type of preaching, but now all these things are permitted in his groups. One cannot be spiritual and worldly at the same time (1 John 2:15-17).

Another question often asked is: "Brother Kiesz, what do you think will be the outcome of the Worldwide Church of God?" This has been questioned especially since the recent fractures in what some have termed the "Armstrong Empire." I have no answer for this, except that I know that quite a number of splinter groups have been formed (perhaps about thirty), while some have joined the Church of God (7th Day).

Many of those who have been associated with the Worldwide Church of God have become completely disillusioned, are bewildered, not knowing which way to turn. Some, however, have turned. Some have given up completely, some are very bitter, some have given up even some of the basic truths of the Word, some have gone back into Sunday-keeping, and some have turned extremely in the opposite direction of what they had been taught. For example: Armstrong taught his people to pay three tithes, and some now teach that no tithes need to be paid at all. It is sad, indeed, to realize the confusion and trauma some are experiencing.

There are some deserved commendations for Herbert Armstrong after all. He has been a hard worker in the gospel field, and has been the means of bringing many thousands into the light of the Sabbath and other basic truths. Originally, he sacrificed much, that I personally know of, in order to spread the Good News as he understood it. I believe in giving credit where credit is due.

I knew him as a humble man. But things have changed over the years. He grew too big for his own or anyone else's good, as far as spirituality is concerned. The majority of his adherents have been thoroughly brain-washed, and there is nothing anyone can do for them anymore, as far as directing them into the right channels is concerned. His claiming that the Church of God (7th Day) is "the dead Sardis church," has affected many thousands, so that their prejudices keep them from investigating what the disclaimed church is really like. So, with all the apparent good that has been accomplished, much harm has also been done. The final judgment remains with the Creator.