

phil Howard

SARDIS, STANBERRY, AND STAGNATION

It is appropriate that the sleepy, stagnant town of Stanberry, Missouri has been the headquarters of the Sardis Church.

This summer we traveled the 700 miles to Stanberry. We found a sleepy, stagnant, dead church!

We had hopes of unearthing more remains of the Sardis Era and its original connection with the Adventist of the 1840's. After reading the AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG ^{we} also hoped to obtain copies he once wrote for the Bible Advocate, the magazine of ^{the} Sardis Church in the 1930's.

It was a Sunday morning when we pulled up in front of the headquarters church, a dull red, steepleless, brick building. The sign out front proclaimed: CHURCH OF GOD, SEVENTH-Day. We were awe-struck as we realized we were beholding the one-time Headquarters of the true CHURCH OF GOD, Sardis Era! "So this is where God's ministers met in the first decade of this century!" we thought as we walked up to the door.

We soon met the local pastor and were given a tour of the building. We were surprised to learn they have a small college in the side wing of the building. MIDWEST BIBLE COLLEGE was founded in 1940's ^{the late} with an enrollment of ^{under} 12 students. It has now grown to over ^{adown} 100!!!

We were then ^{shown} to the basement and shown the printing facilities. Founded before the turn of the century the printing department has grown very little.

The pastor was quite friendly and talkative. He informed us their membership was growing all the time despite the splits that sometimes occurred in the Church. We asked, "What splits?" He answered, "Oh, there's Dugger over in Jerusalem. And there's Armstrong on the radio!" (We then asked to see the magazine files.)

The Manager of the Bible Advocate gave us total access to the old files of their publications. We sat ourselves down for seven hours and read. Their copies went back to 1865, two years short of the issue we needed most!! Yet we were

able to obtain zeroxed copies of two front page articles written by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong for the BIBLE ADVOCATE in 1929 and 1932! They were entitled THESE TIMES AND THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST and PUTTING THE EVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT IN YOUR CHILD'S MIND (recently published in the Plain Truth).

We were startled to stumble across an article published in an 1865 issue of the HOPE OF ISRAEL (the Bible Advocate of that time) which revealed that God's Church ~~know~~ in those days knew the truth about being BORN AGAIN!!! They have since rejected that truth, and have refused to accept any new truth. Therefore they have ceased to grow and have become the stagnant dead church they are today! Yet, lamentably, one of their officials turned to me and regretfully mused, "Had we gone on radio, we would have grown big." This echoed the ironic warning given by a Stanberry minister in the Bible Advocate of 1964 (September 21; p. 6)

The tragedy is that while we bicker among ourselves, souls are being snatched away without salvation. What a price some of us will have to pay if we fail to do our part. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS MAY BE MORE APTLY APPLIED THAN SOME OF US REALIZE.

A shocking admission!

The forthcoming Correspondence Course Lesson (#52) will be about the Sardis Era!

Don't miss it!!

Mr. Robinson decided we wouldn't use it.