

PASTOR'S REPORT

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WATERING DOWN--OR BUILDING SOLIDLY UP?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Tunis, June 3, 1979

Very shortly after my original marriage in 1917, an angel appeared to my wife in a dream. He descended from the sky, put his arms about both of us, said God was calling me soon to a most important commission. At the time I was embarrassed, suggested she tell it to the preacher at the church on the corner of the block (Chicago), and erased it from my mind.

Nine years later, about September, 1927, God did call me in a manner most disturbing. You read many times of the dual challenges--from my wife taking up with religious "fanaticism"--Sabbath keeping, and a sister-in-law challenging me on the doctrine of evolution.

You've heard, or read, the story of the intensive almost night-and-day study which led to PROOF of the existence of God and the AUTHORITY of the Bible--God sweeping my mind clean of every other doctrine and belief--revealing to me HIS WORD exactly AS IS--no watering down.

I know of no other man who was ever brought to GOD'S TRUTH in that manner.

This led in seven years to the founding of the CHURCH OF GOD at Eugene, Oregon, which in due time became the Worldwide Church of God.

The living Jesus Christ founded the one true Church of God, A.D. 31. The same living Jesus Christ started the Philadelphia era of God's Church through me, as His chosen Apostle, August, 1933.

January 1934, He started me on radio, and February 1 The PLAIN TRUTH made a super-humble bow.

Fellow Ministers and wives, the LIVING CHRIST raised up this era of His Church through me. HE heads it--leads it! Through me, directly or indirectly you came into His Church, and into the knowledge He first revealed to me.

But the most terrible thing that ever happened to me was during the recent years when I was away from Pasadena up to 300 of the 365 days in the year, and my son assumed a full and complete authority never given to him, and encouraged WATERING DOWN God's TRUTH and God's COMMANDS! For the past year now Jesus Christ, through me, has been SETTING HIS CHURCH BACK ON THE TRACK!

But that job is far from complete! I quote from a letter from a member:

He says, "How come nobody preaches about third tithe anymore?... There were things being said by ministers to plant doubts in my mind about it."

Fellow Ministers, I say to you by Christ's authority that for one claiming to be a minister of Jesus Christ and receiving a salary as a minister of, and representative of this Church, to water down or make less binding the teachings and doctrines Jesus Christ put in this Church through me, is taking money (salary) under false pretenses. It is SERIOUS and a SERIOUS SIN. God will call everyone who does that to account.

Compare this to a captain in the army. He is in a comparatively low authority, but he is over first and second lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, etc. Suppose an army captain begins to water down or change the military rules. Suppose he tells those under him, "You don't need to obey this or that order--unless you want to." Such a captain would be court-martialed and PUT OUT with DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE!

Yet ministers who ought to know better have said to those under them, "You don't need to tithe if you don't want to."

I know that the large majority of you ministers are faithful in preaching the doctrines the living Christ has put into His Church through me. Yet under my son's assuming more authority than had been given him, there was a great letdown and dereliction of duty creeping in through a portion of the ministry. In the army, during wartime, such dereliction of duty might just rid the guilty officer by a firing squad. HOW MUCH MORE SERIOUS IS WATERING DOWN OF DOCTRINES AND THE FAITH IN GOD'S WORK?

This letter from a lay member continues: "When I was (in Ambassador College) there were things being said by teachers and ministers to plant doubts in my mind."

There has been entirely too much of this "planting doubts" in the minds of Church members. Jesus Christ is CHALLENGING ME to CHALLENGE YOU on this question, and to say that THERE IS AUTHORITY in God's Church--it is the one and only place on earth where THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered. Jesus Christ holds ME accountable for how I administer HIS GOVERNMENT! If a minister plants doubts in the minds of his congregation, remember "He that doubteth is damned." Jesus said that for one to deliberately lead even one of "these little ones" astray, it would be better if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he was drowned in the ocean.

This is a SERIOUS MATTER WITH GOD!

In comparatively recent years a "doctrinal committee" raised itself up at Pasadena. But I soon learned that these "scholars" were not searching for new and additional TRUTHS. They were trying to destroy or water down truths we already had. I have dissolved that "committee".

This letter continues: "I don't have to tell you that man's desires are carnal and that Satan's pulls are always in a manner away from the Truth. I'd sure like to find some excuse to spend that third tithe money some other way. And it sure is easy to do that when God's ministers aren't constantly proclaiming God's commands, and aren't powerfully preaching His ways, expounding His laws! Exhorting the brethren!! Exposing their sins!!!

"And what happened to sermons on birthdays being wrong, New Year's celebrations being wrong, Valentine's Day being wrong? We need someone to speak out solidly and loudly and firmly, not saying... 'you do whatever you want.' But saying, 'God condemns those who follow their own ways and Satan's ways. He refuses to bless them and He curses them'-- and then giving them scriptures.

"I pray often that you will once again stomp and speak thunderingly, and pound your fists until you drive it into peoples' minds what is right and what is wrong, and get rid of this wishy-washy preaching of ministers under you! Let's not be so timid.... We need to shake people up! Respectfully, " (SIGNED).

But now back to where I started. I think that most of us tend to lose sight of what God has done in raising up this Philadelphia era of the true Church of God.

In my forthcoming book, A VOICE CRIES OUT, I state that, of all the world's many religions and the more than 250 Protestant denominations, NOT ONE, except the original small persecuted Church of God knows WHO and WHAT God is: NOT ONE knows WHAT and WHY man is; NOT ONE knows the true Gospel Message God sent to mankind by Jesus Christ, etc., etc.

I ask, in this book, HOW would a Buddhist in Thailand ever come to the TRUTH? He has known nothing since birth but Buddhism. How would a Moslem, living right here where I am writing this--in Tunis, Tunisia--ever come to God's real TRUTH??

How DID those who wrote the Bible--the very WORD OF GOD--come to know God's TRUTH? God had to perform a miracle in the beginning to reveal His TRUTH TO Moses by the incident of the burning bush. God had to speak to Moses direct, to give him the knowledge he wrote in the Bible.

How did the Apostle Paul come to know God's precious TRUTH, distinct from the Judaism he had been born to and raised in?

HOW--in the U.S., or elsewhere in today's world--could YOU have come to know such precious TRUTH, born and raised completely surrounded and engulfed by either Roman Catholic or Protestant-brand "Christianity?"

More to the point, HOW DID YOU come into this precious knowledge?

GOD PERFORMED A MIRACLE--that's how!

As I wrote at the beginning of this Pastor's Report, the Living Jesus Christ CALLED ME. He used a method such as NONE of you had to go through. He completely UPSET me! He made me see that just about ALL that I had been taught about religion was WRONG. I was WRONG about

the immortal soul, about heaven and hell, about the LAW OF GOD, about the real history of GOD'S CHURCH--and of ancient Israel before it. Christmas, New Year's, Easter--all these I had to UNlearn. It was a SHATTERING EXPERIENCE! My mind was SWEEPED CLEAN of false beliefs. My mind was open to God's TRUTH.

YOU, dear Ministers and wives, did not have to go through what God put me through. I learned TRUTH a doctrine at a time. Through me it was handed to all of you "on a platter"--all together.

Now if you don't understand and believe that, I wonder what you are doing in Christ's ministry.

The Living CHRIST put HIS TRUTH into God's Church through me.

You have of your own will been drawn into this Church by the Living Christ--to HELP me in proclaiming this GOOD NEWS to the world. IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK IN THE WORLD--ESPECIALLY AT THIS CRISIS TIME JUST BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST TO SET UP THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

It is far more important than being a captain in the army in time of WAR! If you did not agree with the military regulations and orders, and openly proclaimed your dissidence to those under you, you would be court-martialed and probably shot! Yet disagreement and contrary teaching of those under you in GOD'S CHURCH is, in God's eyes, FAR MORE SERIOUS!

Now I am not, of course, going to order any firing squads. But the LEAST you can do, if you cannot wholeheartedly accept and loyally teach the truths Jesus Christ put into His Church through His chosen Apostle, is to resign and LEAVE THE CHURCH!

God commands in His Word that we all "SPEAK THE SAME THING." That "same thing" He put into His Church through His Apostle. If you can't agree on any point, you may bring your disagreement privately to your superior, or directly to me--but to teach disagreement to the children of GOD is the height of disloyalty!

For a year now, God has been SETTING HIS CHURCH BACK ON HIS TRACK! That action continues!

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(Editor's Note: This material was called in from Paris by Mr. Armstrong so that it could appear in this Pastor's Report.)

The Church is not a physical corporation or a physical organization, but rather a spiritual organization. It is highly organized. Being a member of God's Church is not being a member of a California Corporation, even though we are, for legal reasons, a California Corporation.

Eph. 1:4-5; Eph. 2:19-22; Eph. 4:11-16 (especially v. 16, "fitly joined together").

John 15:1-4--Separated branches are not "joined together."

John 15:5-7--Separated branches are not getting nourishment from the vine.

I Cor. 1:10--We must all speak the same thing.

I Cor. 1:11-13--If we don't speak the same thing, we are like the Corinthians following separate groups.

The Church is the body of Christ. If we are all cut up as separate members, how can we be a whole body, as the body of Christ is pictured?

I Cor. 12:4-6--There is only ONE Church. There are many functions within that one Church, but we must all speak the same thing to be the body of Christ.

How do we speak the same thing? By God's Government which is from the top down.

I Cor. 1:10--Re-emphasis; we must all speak the same thing.

Rom. 16:17-18--We are to mark those that cause division.

II Thess. 3:6,14--Withdraw from those of contrary beliefs and behavior.

Broken branches wither and die. We must stay together in order to be part of God's Church!

FROM PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Since Dr. Meredith and most of the PAD team have been away on Pentecost trips to various churches in the U.S., there is no letter for this issue of the Pastor's Report. Dr. Meredith will be writing again for the next issue.

PUBLISHING SERVICES UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that the new introductory version of the Plain Truth is now ready for distribution. This introductory PT is part of our planned program of readership follow-up service worked out by circulation manager, Boyd Leeson, and Richard Rice's Mail Processing team. We will be mailing this new PT to all our brand new readers to introduce them to us as an organization and hopefully answer some of their questions about what's behind the Plain Truth.

Another plus for this introductory PT is that we shall be mailing it to our new readers much closer to when they request a subscription. We hope to cut the lead time down (before we mail it out to a new reader) from 4-6 weeks to 7-10 days.

One last bit of good news is that the new 16-page Newsstand PT is pulling in an initial response that is as good as the old 32-page Newsstand PT, and at a little more than half the cost of the old one.

--Roger Lippross

PT EDITORIAL UPDATE

The June/July PT is now off the press and in the mails. I think it is quite substantial in terms of content and it should "hold" our readers for the two months it must cover. Present plans call for a second combined issue for October/November.

The latest Weekly Comments from the Caribbean indicate that PT circulation in that area has now reached almost 30,000! Year to date, 2,579 new subscribers have been added to the PT in the Caribbean.

Advance copies of the new introductory PT are now coming off the press. Each new subscriber will begin with this special edition of the PT. The second issue they receive will be the regular subscription issue. This issue will be used for some time--until it is obsolete. Then it will be replaced by a freshly edited and put-together edition. Each introductory issue will give the new reader a solid introduction to typical PT copy.

--Brian Knowles

PLEASE ANNOUNCE

Thanks for the tremendous response to the Festival Office's request for photographs and ideas for possible use in the 1979 editions of the Feast magazine! We have received slides and photographs plus letters from literally all corners of the U.S., not to mention several foreign countries, and we could use more.

Anyone having photographs or ideas to submit for consideration this year should, however, get them in the mail as soon as possible. Deadline for submissions will be June 18. The Festival magazine will pay \$35 for each photograph used. So, thanks again and "keep those cards and letters coming in, folks."

--Ken Tate, Festival Magazine Editor

Y.O.U. AND S.E.P. UPDATES

Things continue to roll along in the Y.O.U. area. Youth donations continue to increase, and we are now back to about two-thirds the income we were receiving before the January drop. If things continue the way they are going now, we should be back to near normal by the end of the summer.

Plans are currently in progress for the Y.O.U. program and a junior Y.O.U. program at the Feast of Tabernacles this year at all U.S. feast sites. The program should be better than ever this year. We are still hopeful of

having a National Track Meet this summer. We should have some final word on it within the next couple of weeks.

Thanks for all of your support for Y.O.U. during these past several months. Hopefully we have turned the corner and Y.O.U. activity will once again be on the increase. If any of you have any ideas, questions or suggestions for Y.O.U., we would appreciate hearing from you.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE S.E.P. OFFICE: To date, we have received 525 applications for campers, raising our percentage to 80% full for both sessions. Any youth still interested in attending S.E.P. should apply as soon as possible as we will continue to accept applications until we reach 100%.

Any correspondence regarding S.E.P. from this date forward should be directed to the S.E.P. office at Box 231, Orr, Minnesota, 55771. Phone: (218) 757-3211.

So far, we have been able to send 150 young people on the scholarship fund, and 50 on church assistance. Again, we deeply appreciate the generosity of those members who contributed to the scholarship fund to make this possible. Currently we have exhausted our scholarship monies, but if additional contributions are received, we will be able to send those applicants who are still on a wait status.

Many thanks to all of you for your assistance. We are all looking forward to an action-packed, fun-filled time, and plan on making S.E.P. 1979 a most memorable summer for all.

--Mike Blackwell

ON THE WORLD SCENE

STRAUSS EDGES CLOSER TO THE TOP: A very important realignment of political power is taking place in West Germany--the end of which, some months down the road, could possibly see Franz Josef Strauss becoming Chancellor of the Bundesrepublik, much to the consternation of many in the country.

The chain of events began on May 23 with the election of Karl Carstens as the Federal Republic's fifth president. Carstens succeeds the very popular Walter Scheel who chose not to run again. The reason Scheel did not run is that he could not possibly have won another term since the largely ceremonial office of the presidency is determined not by popular vote, but by the 518 members of the Bundestag along with 518 additional delegates for the ten German länder (states) plus West Berlin. Since the conservative CDU/CSU coalition has a majority in the state parliaments, there was no way for Scheel, a Free Democrat whose party is allied with the SPD (Schmidt's Socialists) on the federal level, to win.

Thus, West Germany now has a Christian Democratic President to go along with a Social Democratic Chancellor, somewhat of an unstable combination (though not as bad as the Brown-Curb tussle in Sacramento).

Carstens holds a Masters of Law degree from Yale, speaks perfect English and has had a long and distinguished career as a civil servant. The fact that he was forced (he claims) to take out Nazi Party membership in order to hold government office during that period, has not materially affected his service.

Carstens, however, does mark a change in political temperament in West Germany. According to Handelsblatt, Germany's "Wall Street Journal," "many think that with the entering into office of Karl Carstens there will be the beginning of a new era of conservatism, even of reaction, in the Federal Republic." Only time will tell, said Handelsblatt.

Close Friend of Strauss

The Stuttgarter Zeitung of May 25 said that "Karl Carstens personifies the trend toward conservatism as the only tenable unifying factor in the otherwise rather tense situation in the CDU/CSU."

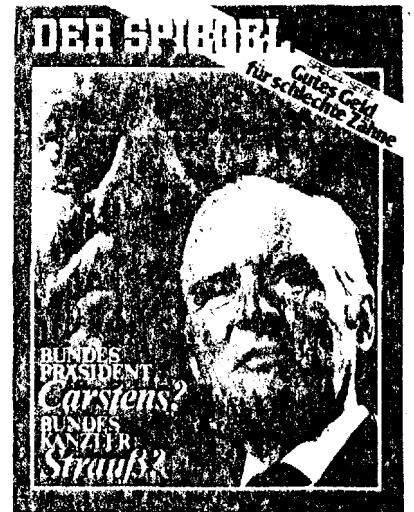
Much of this tension revolves around the political ambitions of Franz Josef Strauss, Minister President of Bavaria, and head of the Christian Socialist Union (CSU), Bavaria's sister party to the national Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

This tension is heating up. Carstens is a good friend of Strauss, as is Richard Stücklen, the new president of the Bundestag. Only twenty-four hours after the election of "his" candidate Carstens as Federal President, Strauss announced his candidacy as future chancellor on the combined CDU/CSU slate. (National elections are due to take place sometime in 1980.)

The Bavarian strongman, known as a "kingmaker" within the CDU/CSU, may not win the candidacy slot. The much larger CDU faction has announced it will support Ernst Albrecht as the CDU/CSU candidate. The feeling is that Strauss may insist that the entire coalition move more right-ward toward his liking in order to retain his support, and as a condition that he not pull the CSU out and "go national" as a fourth party.

The West German newsweekly der Spiegel is wary of every Strauss move, ever since Strauss, as Defense Minister, tried to block publication of a particular Spiegel issue in 1962 (the notorious "der Spiegel affair").

On the cover of its May 21 issue [reproduced here for your interest], the magazine features a brooding, leering Strauss looming in the background behind Carstens. The cover title is: "Federal President Carstens; Federal Chancellor Strauss?" In its cover story, der Spiegel says the following: "With Karl Carstens as president of the Federal Republic of Germany and Richard Stücklen as president of the Bundestag, two Strauss friends are moving up into the highest offices of the republic. The CDU has long since lost its faith in its [earlier] candidate for chancellor, Kohl. As the savior of the [CDU/CSU] union and challenger of the chancellor, Strauss is becoming more and more inevitable.



"Strauss calls the election of Carstens a 'good sign'--he hopes that the hour of the conservatives has come in Bonn. The advance of his favorites into the highest ranks could, so he figures, remove further the CDU's inhibitions, so that they will give the kingmaker himself a try in 1980--as chancellor candidate Franz Josef Strauss.

"To the main themes of the election campaign, nuclear energy, external and internal security, only he could present believable alternatives."

Rudolf Augstein, der Spiegel's editor, also wrote an accompanying piece to the Strauss story. He said: "Whoever loves Strauss, Bavaria, the country and Europe, can only wish that the Bavarian will run. The population of the Federal Republic has a right...to finally decide eye to eye between a liberal Germany and a Germany of prejudices. Either the world steers without him toward certain oblivion or he knows a recipe we can trust."

"The CDU has permitted him to waste it to such a degree, that it does not deserve anything else than to lowly petition him to be a gracious protector king according to the slogan: 'Oh, Lord, whose lot is as sweet as the one of the slave to whom you give orders?'"

--Gene H. Hogberg, News Bureau