

April 2017

Dear Brethren:

It has already been six months since publishing the last installment of the story of Mr. Armstrong's life and work. Recall that in the October 2016 issue, we covered the history of the building of the Ambassador Auditorium beginning in 1972, the change in the church doctrine on divorce and remarriage in 1974, the establishment of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation in 1975, and Mr. Armstrong's second marriage in April 1977. In this eleventh chapter of that saga, we come to the events of the late 1970s, some of the most troubling events for the Worldwide Church of God to date.

The question has been asked, "Is it really a good idea to be revealing all of the embarrassing details of things that happened in our parent church, especially since they do not all show Mr. Armstrong in a favorable light?" That is a very good question. In answer, remember that there is a reason that Church of God, The Eternal became a remnant body in 1975, during the very time that Mr. Armstrong was still alive and leading the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). If things were not truly wrong at that time, then we had no justification to separate. If the WCG was only "a little bit wrong," but not *seriously* wrong, then our very premise is one of rebellion against God's anointed. If that is not true, then we had better have a good explanation for why we exist separately.

Mr. Raymond Cole had *no choice* but to become separate, because he was *forced out* of the WCG for refusal to accept *and teach* a Sunday Pentecost and the "new revelation" on divorce and remarriage. We believe these were abominations in God's sight. Mr. Cole still respected Mr. Armstrong personally and *never* engaged in any disrespectful personal criticism of his beloved mentor, even until his own dying day. Would Mr. Cole have written the detailed history that is being given to you now? Perhaps not, but he did indeed write to the church with a direct rebuttal to statements of Mr. Armstrong, when he, writing to the whole church, listed Raymond Cole's name among the rebels in two 1979 issues of *The Worldwide News*. Mr. Cole was accused of departing in order to start his own group (you can find that rebuttal in Mr. Cole's September 1979 *Monthly Letter*, available online, entitled, *Answers to Accusations in Articles From the Worldwide News*). Mr. Cole tried very hard not to use Mr. Armstrong's name directly in his rebuttal when he could avoid it, out of respect, but he was indeed providing a very *direct rebuttal* to being lumped in with Garner Ted Armstrong and all of the other ministers who had separated because they had no love for the revealed Truth.

Remember also that the reason this story is being summarized now is that many today do not even know anything about that history. The adult members of God's church of that era are quickly disappearing. So then, would it not be better to just "let sleeping dogs lie"? Why dredge up the ugly past? Our purpose is not to dredge up negative things about God's chosen servant. But the fact is, all of this history is well documented. Anyone who chooses to can find it easily from old writings, especially on the Internet. There are many slanderous writings available as well, attempting to refute that Herbert Armstrong was ever a true messenger of God. If you only read what others have written, you might well conclude that the entire enterprise called the Worldwide Church of God was just one elaborate sham. We cannot combat that false narrative by pretending that Mr. Armstrong made no mistakes. The only way truly to confirm that his work was one sponsored by God is to show that true history *in proper context*. We would lose all credibility if we sought to claim things that *did happen* never really happened. So what you are receiving is an honest telling of the history, but for the purpose of showing that everything that transpired was prophesied to occur, and allowed specifically by God to test His people. We will always respect Mr. Armstrong, because he was the man through whom we all learned that glorious plan of salvation. No one else revealed it in our age. But the very man through whom we learned that Truth likewise went astray in his old age, and that is a fact we cannot and should not ignore.

If you will look back on all of the installments you have received in this saga to date, you will note that the majority of points are being reported in Herbert Armstrong's very own words! We are not using the speculations or assertions of other men. We are letting Mr. Armstrong tell the story himself, as much as possible. Again, all of this material is publically available, and more easily retrievable than at any time in history. Too many have sought to use that history to condemn and ridicule. We intend to tell *the other side of the story*, to confirm that Herbert Armstrong was indeed the instrument of God. But we are the only ones who are also showing that the doctrine he gave us was of God, and that doctrine had more value than anything else that ever came out of the Worldwide Church of God. If we do not tell that story, who else will? Therefore, on with the saga!

A Near-Death Experience

In August 1977, four months after his new marriage, Mr. Armstrong suffered a serious health episode which nearly ended his life. Here is how he described the event to the church leadership seven months later:

First, I want to say a few words about my illness. Last August I was scripturally dead. The doctor called it heart failure. . . . But the nurse who was in charge has told me that she came in and saw that my face was ashen white, and immediately she took my pulse and there wasn't any.

So the blood was not circulating, not to show even one point on the blood-pressure instrument.

So then they started working over me, and I think Ted anointed me. My wife's sister was there. . . . She and the nurse used mouth resuscitation and heart massage until they got me breathing.

The nurse's estimate from the time she had noticed this until I began taking the first breath was at least thirty seconds. She said it was a minute and a half, though, that it was touch and go, because I'd lapse back and quit breathing. And after about a minute and a half I was breathing enough on my own, and I've continued all right since, and I hope the rest of the life that God wants for me on earth (Excerpts from *Address to the 1978 Ministerial Conference*, March 1978).

Mr. Armstrong would refer back to this near-death event many times in subsequent years, viewing it as a turning point in God's work through him. Treating it as *a wake-up call*, his physical recovery seemed to coincide with a drive to initiate a spiritual recovery for the entire church. Putting up with liberal elements within the church leadership that had been slowly but persistently watering down doctrines was finally becoming *too much*.

The Systematic Theological Project (STP)

We have already documented the disagreements that existed between Mr. Armstrong and his son concerning doctrines of the church and his son's personal behavior. After suspending Garner Ted Armstrong in 1971 but then reinstating him into the church in 1972 and further elevating him to Vice President at the same moment, the hope was that father and son would be able to work together cooperatively thereafter. But the same old differences about church doctrine and administration persisted, and it all finally came to a head in early 1978.

There was much written by Mr. Armstrong and others at the time these volatile events were unfolding. Rather than reciting some of the more emotional statements recorded at the time, the following excerpt from June 1985—just months before Mr. Armstrong's death—would seem to document how he viewed those 1978 events after eight years of reflection:

It had become custom to hold an annual ministerial conference of ministers at Pasadena headquarters. In the 1974 to 1977 conferences, these meetings had been marred by controversies over doctrinal issues.

Just before the January, 1978, conference I was determined to prevent doctrinal controversy. I was also due to leave on another 'round-the-world trip.

I had decided to postpone the trip until after the conference in order to keep controversy out of the conference. But the one to be left in charge in my absence urged me to remain for the opening morning session, so that I could open the conference, and keep my departure at 12 noon, and he gave me his word no doctrines would be discussed in the conference, only administrative matters.

I agreed to this. I opened the conference, left immediately for the airport and had lunch on the plane. I was going first to Japan, then across the north pole to Europe, and into western Africa before returning to Pasadena.

I had not gotten very far out over the Pacific Ocean that afternoon, until in the afternoon session of the conference a voluminous printed work called "Systematic Theology Project," or "STP" for short, was distributed to the ministry with specific instructions that this was a definite outline of basic Church doctrines, and no minister was to preach anything contrary to this treatise.

I knew absolutely nothing of this STP, or that it had been in preparation. It had been carefully concealed from me. It was a flagrant violation of the promise made to induce me to leave so this doctrinal change in Church teaching could be given to all ministers without my knowledge. I knew nothing of this STP, in spite of claims made by others, until a copy was brought to me by some loyal ministers in late April or early May of 1978 when I then notified every minister in the world to return his copy immediately and ignore all its liberal doctrines and teachings.

It has come to my attention that some of the liberals, no longer members of God's Church, have claimed that I did know of this infamous STP project. That is positively NOT TRUE. A few papers on one or two subjects, which were not liberal, had been brought to me in Tucson, Ariz., but no clear mention was made of the preparations under way for producing this STP project. None of the liberalized teachings in the STP were shown to me or approved by me at any time.

Some of these liberal ministers who worked on and produced the STP and the one who was in charge of executive administration in my absence were disfellowshipped and others left the Church (*The Worldwide News—Special Edition*, June 24, 1985).

Garner Ted Armstrong Expelled

The "one who was in charge of executive administration," and finally expelled by Mr. Armstrong in 1978, was none other than Garner Ted Armstrong, his beloved son. No matter how many sacrifices (compromises) had been made to try to keep father and son together, in

the end, the stark difference in approach to both doctrine and administration made mutual cooperation impossible. Garner Ted Armstrong immediately set up a new church organization to compete with his father, and although it never even remotely succeeded on the scale of his father's work, it did become a persistent thorn in his side, as members of the Worldwide Church of God now had "an alternative" place to fellowship with an "Armstrong figurehead," if they ever became disgruntled with any aspect of the parent organization. There was never to be a public reconciliation between father and son.

Contraction of Ambassador College

After so many years of growth and expansion, the tumultuous 1970s likewise took its toll upon Ambassador College. In 1974 the Bricket Wood campus in England had been closed, followed three years later by the Big Sandy campus in 1977. As Chancellor of Ambassador College, Garner Ted Armstrong had worked very hard to secure accreditation for the four-year liberal arts program. Mr. Armstrong later condemned this pursuit as a symptom of the liberalizing ills within the ministry:

It was then that the matter of obtaining accreditation from the organized accreditation societies of secular education became a problem. The liberals at Pasadena wanted accreditation. They did not want to be accredited as a Bible college, but as a full competing college or university. As such the college would fall under the rules of the secular accrediting society, which would more or less determine policy and curricula.

Finally this effort on the part of the liberals increased the enrollment of the college from the approximate 500 limit that I had set to about 1,400 and going up. It was no longer God's college. I had realized the danger of a student body in excess of 500 students, in residence on campus, and had set that as a definite college policy. But during those years when I was absent from Pasadena headquarters most of the time, changes were being gradually made in college policies as well as Church doctrines (*The Worldwide News—Special Edition*, June 24, 1985).

Therefore, with the ouster of Garner Ted Armstrong in 1978, the one remaining campus of Ambassador College in Pasadena would be closed temporarily, and then reopened with a renewed mission and spiritual emphasis. Mr. Armstrong wanted immediately to expunge the administrative philosophy of his son from that most-beloved institution:

From its founding I had made the slogan of the college, "Recapture True Values." The college started with the highest moral and spiritual values. It was

God's college. A high moral and spiritual conduct had been vigorously taught and maintained. There was much teaching against "necking," and any sort of lovemaking among students. "Going steady" toward marriage was forbidden until the end of the first semester of the senior year. Smoking and the use of drugs were positively prohibited.

But as the liberal element gained control of the campus administration during those years of my long absences from Pasadena, the high standard of student conduct was more and more liberalized through lack of discipline or enforcement. The college was coming to be more like other college campuses.

At this juncture let me jump ahead of the sequence of events a bit to say that, after sufficient recovery from my heart failure in August of 1977, I found it necessary in 1978 to close the college at Pasadena completely (the colleges in Bricket Wood, England, and at Big Sandy had then already been closed) and to start Ambassador College in Pasadena all over again with one freshman class only, except for a few in proper attitude and character who were retained to allow them to complete their studies until graduation (*The Worldwide News—Special Edition*, June 24, 1985).

This aggressive revamping of Ambassador College would become one of the strongest proofs of Mr. Armstrong's intent to fight back against the liberalism that he felt had permeated the church for so many years.

Legal Attack Against the WCG

In the aftermath of the separation of father and son, early 1979 brought on a legal challenge to the Worldwide Church of God that threatened the very existence of the organization. Much has been written about this aggressive action of the State of California to take control of the church, but again, let Mr. Armstrong relate his personal view of these events:

At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles that fall, 1978, at a Festival held by one of these split-off liberals and a few who followed, in their own Feast of Tabernacles, a conspiracy was hatched to attack and destroy the Church by the legal process of a class action lawsuit. Some six or seven liberals, former members, signed the suit against the Church. This resulted in an ex parte order by a judge. Secretly without prior notice, deputies on order of the Attorney General's office swooped down on the Church on the morning of Jan. 3, 1979. The ex parte order had been signed by a judge late the day before.

A very severe struggle for the existence and life of the Church ensued. Some months later the State dropped the case, and still later an appellate court

judge issued a declaration from the bench that the lawsuit was groundless and should never have been filed. Even to this day some newspaper comments mention the false charges accusing me of misuse of millions of dollars of Church funds, but they never mention our vindication of these false charges (*The Worldwide News—Special Edition*, June 24, 1985).

Stanley Rader Takes Center Stage

The individual who rose to public prominence to help defend the WCG against this legal attack was none other than Stanley Rader, Treasurer and Chief Counsel for the church. It was he who became the face of the church through all of the ensuing legal proceedings, as well as in addressing church members and students at Ambassador College to provide updates through all of the months of contention. Mr. Armstrong himself had fled to his home in Tucson, Arizona, to avoid the personal reach of officials of the State of California, who were seeking to subpoena him. He would not return to his home on the grounds of the California campus until the lawsuit was resolved in the church's favor in early 1981. (The author happened to have been present as a student of Ambassador College in Pasadena during this very time, and is speaking from firsthand knowledge.) Stanley Rader was hailed as a hero, further cementing loyalty from Mr. Armstrong against Mr. Rader's detractors. Although Mr. Rader had only chosen to become baptized as a member in 1975 (some twenty years after his first exposure to the church), Mr. Armstrong further ordained him as a minister of the church—and at the very highest level, as an Evangelist—on September 27, 1979, in the midst of his aggressive legal defense of the church. Here is a succinct summary of Mr. Rader's background, from the church announcement of his ordination to the ministry:

PASADENA — Before the 1979 Feast of Tabernacles, Worldwide Church of God Pastor General Hebert W. Armstrong ordained three men to the rank of evangelist Sept. 27 at his home in Tucson, Ariz. . . .

Stanley Rader, 49, was appointed one of eight members of the Worldwide Church of God board of directors by Mr. Armstrong in January and is also the Church treasurer and general counsel to Mr. Armstrong. His first contact with the Church came when Mr. Armstrong hired him as a tax advisor to the Work in 1956.

In 1962 Mr. Rader graduated from the University of Southern California's Law School with the highest grade average in its history. He served on USC's faculty until 1965, during which time he also taught accounting at Ambassador College.

A personal aide and traveling companion to Mr. Armstrong since 1968, Mr. Rader has been responsible for setting up many of Mr. Armstrong's

meetings with heads of state and leaders of the educational and business community around the world. Most recently Mr. Rader spent two months making arrangements for Mr. Armstrong's visit with leaders of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Rader, who was baptized by Mr. Armstrong in Hong Kong in 1975, is also the executive vice president of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, the humanitarian arm of the Church that promotes Mr. Armstrong's trips abroad, and through which they are conducted (*The Worldwide News*, October 29, 1979).

So, a man who *seemed* to have no personal conviction in the *religious teachings* of Herbert Armstrong during his first twenty years of association with the church finally becomes baptized in 1975, and then, contrary to all of Mr. Armstrong's previous policies against ordaining "a novice" to the ministry (1 Timothy 3:6), Stanley Rader is ordained within four years, not to an introductory level of the ministry, but to the very highest rank.

Was Mr. Rader truly devoted to his new role as a spiritual shepherd of God's flock? Another long-time teaching of Mr. Armstrong was that true ministers never retire from serving God's people. Yet, after Mr. Rader's successful legal defense of the church, he retired from both his organizational and ecclesiastical responsibilities in 1981, never apparently serving the church publically again. Furthermore, Mr. Armstrong revealed that it had been Mr. Rader's intention to resign from his executive service to the church just prior to the actions of the State of California in early 1979. He stayed on only to see the church through the difficult legal battle:

Mr. Rader had expressed a desire to retire from his official Church executive position prior to the Jan. 3, 1979, state invasion. He and I had agreed to his retirement from this executive position very shortly before Jan. 3, 1979, to take effect very soon after the beginning of the year in 1979. When the State attack was launched Jan. 3, it became necessary for him to stay on. . . .

I feel the Church would be derelict in its appreciation if it does not make suitable acknowledgment of such service, rendered two years after Mr. Rader had planned to retire from active executive duty.

For the past five months or so he has said publically, in the public press, and before our own congregations, that it is his desire to return to private law practice, and has made public statements of intent to resign as treasurer and board member of the Church by July 1. Now he has asked that this date be moved up to March 1.

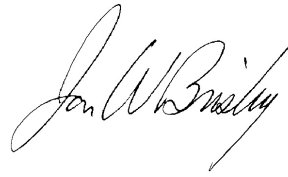
To show our appreciation, it is my judgment as Pastor General of this Church, that we should express our gratitude and heartfelt appreciation by a special bonus of \$250,000, net to him (*The Worldwide News*, March 6, 1981).

In today's figures, that bonus would be worth well over \$600,000, and was on top of his very lucrative, contracted salary. It was quite a retirement gift for a newly-ordained "spiritual shepherd" of God's church.

In the next installment, we will summarize key events in the 1980s, up through the death of Mr. Armstrong in 1986.

May God help each one of you to maintain confidence in His divine work in our time, and to hold firm to those doctrines that define the very purpose and hope for our future.

Yours with deep and abiding love in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Jon W. Brisby