

You Are NOT an "Armstrongite"

Some of our members need to learn to what Church they belong!

by Richard D. Armstrong

DO YOU know what Church you belong to? When your friends ask you, "What is your church? What denomination do you belong to?"—what is your answer? Do you tell them you are an "Armstrongite?"—or a member of the "Armstrong Movement"—the man that preaches over the radio on the World Tomorrow program?

JUST WHAT DO YOU TELL THEM?

First, let's look at the meaning of the word "church."

As it was originally used, the word "church" meant a *group of people*, no more, no less. It did not mean a holy group or a Christian group—merely a *group of people*. That is the meaning of the original Greek word, *ekklesia*.

If you call yourself solely "a follower of Herbert W. Armstrong" or any other man, then you are *not* a follower of Christ—hence not a Christian! The word *Christian* implies one who is a *follower* of Jesus Christ, who patterns his life after the life Christ led, who believes His teachings and follows His precepts.

As popularly applied, the word "church" is taken to mean a group of people bound together by a common creed or religious belief. There are many different churches of this world, each with its own name, each with the name of the particular person, creed or custom it follows.

What, then, is *our* creed and whom do we follow? Whose group are we and *to whom do we belong?*

Is Christ Divided?

Notice I Corinthians 1:12-13 where Paul says, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Herbert W. Armstrong crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Armstrong?

We are not to follow *men*, but we must follow Christ even as He followed the Father.

The true and correct name for the church (group of people) that is God's, that belongs to him—keeps his commands—is "The CHURCH OF GOD." Its members pattern their lives after His Son who lived perfectly. It is GOD'S group, or GOD'S Church! This name implies that we have given ourselves to God—recognize Him as the *supreme*

authority on this earth at the present time and have come to be able to be chastized by him, to accept correction and reproof where we are wrong and follow God's true WAY!

Every *other* Church does what it feels is right. Or follows what some human being (or board of men) has set down as his precept of what is right by his own private interpretation of the Bible.

Let us look now at Isaiah 55. Beginning with the sixth verse, we read: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man *his thoughts*; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Notice that we must *forsake* OUR ways and turn to the ways of GOD. Thus we KNOW HIM IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS (1 John 2:4, 6). So God's true church is a church or group of scattered individuals who recognize God as RULER—as the SUPREME AUTHORITY REIGNING ON EARTH AT THE PRESENT TIME—recognizing that it is God who is working out His PURPOSE here below!

True Church Receives Correction

Notice Hebrews 12:5-13. We find here that everyone who is a true child of God is being chastened—rebuked by God. That means that he is having to be shown where he is wrong and is willing to admit it and do what is right—go the other way, as God commands!

Notice what it says in the eighth verse: "But if ye be without chastisement, wherof all are partakers, then are ye BASTARDS, and NOT sons." Read it! Now we know that we are the children of God if He chastens us and is our constant guide in life, not just an empty belief that we think about a few hours a day or a week!

In II Peter 3:18 we find another sign of God's true church. True Christians are those who *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here is another way of knowing which is GOD'S true church. It is NOT a stagnant group, but a group that *grows* *spiritually* in GRACE and KNOWLEDGE.

A third means by which we know that we are God's True Church is the way we recognize the *authority* of the

Bible. Look at II Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God [God's own way of speaking to us directly], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Brethren, *there* is the sign of those who are God's true people! Those who are overcoming, being chastened, recognize God as Supreme Authority, and know that the Bible is his inspired Word whereby He corrects us.

There is only one church or group of people on this earth that is doing this! If these things are true of you, then you are a member of GOD'S CHURCH—a Christian—and should call yourself such, NOT an "Armstrongite," or a follower of any other human being.

NOW, if you are being led by God, chastened and rebuked by Him, daily acknowledging where you are wrong and turning from YOUR ways, and learning and living HIS ways, YOU ARE A MEMBER OF GOD'S TRUE CHURCH and not an "Armstrongite" or a member of "the Armstrong Movement." You should boldly tell people to whom you belong. Notice Paul's teaching in Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the CHURCH OF GOD, which he hath PURCHASED with his own blood!" We *belong* to God! You are a member of the Church of God!

The NAME of the Church

The Bible gives us the true NAME of the Church in *twelve* different places. Twelve is God's COMPLETE number.

In five passages where the true NAME of the Church appears, the entire Body of Christ—the Church as a whole—is indicated. Thus, when speaking of the entire Church, including all its individual members on earth, the name is "The CHURCH OF GOD."

1) Acts 20:28, the admonition to elders to "feed The CHURCH OF GOD."

2) I Cor. 10:32: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to The CHURCH OF GOD."

3) I Cor. 11:22: "... or despise ye THE CHURCH OF GOD, and shame them that have not?"

4) Gal. 1:13: Paul writes, "I persecuted THE CHURCH OF GOD."

5) I Cor. 15:9, "I persecuted the

CHURCH OF GOD."

Where one specific local congregation is mentioned, it is called "The CHURCH OF GOD," often in connection with the PLACE of location.

6) I Cor. 1:2: "The CHURCH OF GOD, which is at Corinth."

7) II Cor. 1:1: "The CHURCH OF GOD, which is at Corinth."

8) Speaking of a local elder of a local church: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of THE CHURCH OF GOD?"

9) Here the name applies to the *building*, or *house* of meeting. I Tim. 3:15: "... that thou mayest know how thou ought to behave thyself in the *house* of God, which is THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD." Here it is the Church of *the Living God*.

And, finally, in speaking of the local church congregations collectively, not as one general body so much as all the single organized local churches collectively, the Bible name is THE CHURCHES OF GOD.

10) I Cor. 11:16: "... we have no such custom, neither THE CHURCHES OF GOD."

11) I Thes. 2:14: "For ye, brethren, became followers of THE CHURCHES OF GOD which IN JUDAEA are in Christ Jesus."

12) II Thes. 1:4: "So that we ourselves glory in you in THE CHURCHES OF GOD."

Our members should realize that there are *several* religious denominations who claim the name "Church of God." We should bear in mind that *all* sects of this world have *some* truth, though mixed with error. Several have found the truth about the true NAME, and use it. As long as God allows this, we can have *nothing* to do with it.

It is *because* of this fact, and BECAUSE it is Scriptural to include with the name the designation of PLACE, such as "The Church of God at Corinth," that we incorporated under the name "RADIO CHURCH OF GOD." The broadcast started in 1934 as "The Radio Church of God." By the time we were forced to incorporate in order to be subject to the powers of human government as the Bible instructs us to be, this name had become nationally known. Because others already were incorporated in the state as "The Church of God," we were not allowed to incorporate under that name alone. Since the radio work was the main function of the church—and at the time it was, primarily, a church over the radio, rather than in any one or several church buildings—and since it was entirely Scriptural, we incorporated under the name "RADIO CHURCH OF GOD." We may, someday, be able to alter this to "The Churches of God."

But, regardless of technical names of

the incorporated work, the name of the CHURCH to which you belong—that general body of all the individuals in the world who collectively form the true Body of Christ—IS THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Tell your friends and acquaintances the TRUTH—*do not be ashamed of God's*. Tell them you are a member of *God's Church!* You may say that Herbert W. Armstrong is your pastor, but NEVER say you are his follower. You must follow CHRIST, even as HE followed the Father!

Finally, when anyone asks you what Church you belong to, tell them "THE CHURCH OF GOD." The world-wide evangelistic *work* of the Church is incorporated under the legal name "RADIO CHURCH OF GOD"—but the TRUE CHURCH is *not* merely a legally incorporated society, but a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM entirely separate from human political jurisdiction or control. It is GOD'S Church, ruled by GOD'S GOVERNMENT, as God Himself governs through those of His choosing. Although our world-wide activity in carrying out Christ's Great Commission must conform to legal requirements of organized human government of THIS WORLD, and, therefore, is legally named for purposes of dealing with men's political power the "RADIO CHURCH OF GOD," that great over-all SPIRITUAL ORGANISM which is God's true Church on earth, SEPARATE from this world though *in* it, is named THE CHURCH OF GOD. That is the Church to which we belong!

Judging and Discipline

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practical *experience* in administering and obeying God's government now.

The scope of God's judgment includes physical as well as spiritual matters. It is designed to promote and preserve harmony and righteousness among God's people, and to prepare us by experience to become kings and priests in the kingdom of God.

The Reward

Up until recently most of us didn't fully understand the necessity of purging the evil out of God's church. We thought that perhaps God would take care of it without us doing anything. And it *seemed* like it would be showing more love if we just tried to tolerate evildoers in our midst and hoped for the best.

But can we show more love than God? Are our ideas wiser than God's plan? The answer is obviously "no."

In his early ministry among God's people, Mr. Armstrong found by hard experience that if sinners are not *put out* of God's church as Christ command-

ed, a little leaven does leaven the whole lump. Sin spreads like wildfire if it is tolerated. We *must obey* Jesus' command to disfellowship those who persist in an outright violation of God's law after they have been warned.

False teachers must be "marked" and refused further admittance and association in God's church. This is the command of Almighty God. People who rely on human reason may think this is a lack of love. But this is God's way—and God *is* love.

Each of you brethren will have a part in carrying out God's judgment and discipline in the church as He directs. You must be very careful to do it *God's way*. Be sure to follow all the steps Jesus gave when you warn a brother of a sin he is committing.

Church discipline must be exercised in LOVE. In any such matter, always try to *help* the other party—not injure him. Ask God to give you *wisdom* and to help you do everything His way.

Study carefully all the scriptures in this article. Realize that you have *no excuse* for continually criticizing or "picking at" anyone in God's church. You are only to go to them in love and point out their mistake if they are literally and definitely *breaking God's law*.

In material disputes, you are to go directly to God's ministers instead of a worldly court. If you love God, this will always be to *your best interests*. This is God's way—God's *command*.

In all cases, remember that the final *responsibility* for all decisions rests with God's ministers whom He has called. Christ has promised to "be with" and guide them in every judgment. The judgment is of *God*. It will be "bound" in heaven.

You may be tempted to criticize or disagree with some decision that God's ministers will bind. *Be very careful* lest you let this turn you against God. You may not understand all the facts. But God's called ministers probably do and they are responsible to Him—not some human—for their actions in directing His church.

It is human nature to disagree with God. When the children of Israel rejected Samuel as their judge and leader (I Sam. 8:1-9), God told Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but *they have rejected ME*, that I should not reign over them." Be fearful lest you reject God by rebelling against His called servants.

God holds His ministers responsible for teaching you His word, and for directing His church and carrying out *church discipline*. By following *God's way* of church discipline and judgment, the church of God may go forward in peace and love—and will be purged of all sin to be presented "holy and without blemish" to Christ at His coming.