

January 15, 2016

Dear Brethren and Friends,

It has been understood for a long time that the best-selling book in the world is the Holy Bible. Wikipedia states that "The Bible is the best-selling book of all-time, with Guinness World Records estimating that over 5 billion copies have been sold." It is an enormous number of sales but most people don't seem to understand much about it at all.

Since the New Testament was written, much apostolic understanding and teaching have been lost. Syncretism crept into the early Church as it incorporated and accommodated pagan beliefs in order to increase Church membership. Over the last several decades, the Church of God has quoted the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard who wrote that "millions of people through the centuries have little by little cheated God out of Christianity. The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist."

Many books have been written about the Church that Jesus founded, including "A History of the True Religion" by Dugger and Dodd and "The Incredible History of God's True Church" by Ivor C. Fletcher. These show that the true Church of God existed through the centuries but was small as Jesus had said that it would be (compare Luke 12:32), and there is no doubt that it lost a lot of understanding down through the last two thousand years.

God used many in the Old and New Testaments to further His Work at that time, and in our booklet "The Authority of the Bible," on pages 85 and 86, we explain that Old Testament authors included Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Ezra, Nehemiah and the prophets who wrote the books that claim their authorship. We also state: "The New Testament Scriptures are, for the most part, written by those persons named as the authors. The only book that does not mention an author is the book of Hebrews, but it is widely believed that the Apostle Paul wrote this book as well. This was at least the undisputed conclusion in the past until the modern phenomenon of 'Bible criticism' began to sometimes question this understanding."

We continue to say on page 87: "The Bible is a unique book! Nothing can remotely compare with it! It SPEAKS with authority to us! GOD tells us what we need to know to inherit ETERNAL LIFE! He tells us what will happen to this world. He tells us what our human potential is—why we were born; AND He tells us how we must live to reach our potential... In living by every word of it, great treasures beyond your wildest imagination will be waiting for you!"

The Bible is the instruction manual for all members of the true Church of God, and in the late 1920's and early 1930's Herbert W Armstrong was called by God and founded the Radio Church of God. Much understanding was restored to the Church through this man who died on January 16th 1986—30 years ago. Since that time, as all in the Church of God know, tremendous changes have taken place but those faithful members who had learned the truth stayed with the Way of Life even though the majority of members went back into mainstream Christianity or forsook, altogether, any form of religion.

As time goes by, many from the past are forgotten. They may have been pioneers, inventors or scientists, but today's society is so self-obsessed that only the latest fashion, fad or gadget seems to really interest so many. However, Mr Armstrong was used by God to bring understanding to the Church of God, which is the greatest gift that the world could have at this time, although they don't realise it. If it hadn't been Mr Armstrong God had used, He would have used someone else to do the job; however, it was Mr Armstrong whom He used and we should all be grateful that God used such a man.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt, the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke His disciples (Luke 19:39). But we read in the following verse that Jesus answered: "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." At that time, and now, the message of the Kingdom of God must be preached and Mr Armstrong did just that for over 50 years. We read in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 that Paul planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase. Therefore, all the glory goes to God but He does use human beings to plant and water in order to give the increase, and Mr Armstrong was one of those used mightily in His service.

During his life, and particularly since his death, Mr Armstrong has been almost deified by some and been accused and vilified remorselessly by others. With some, there never seems to be the balanced way—that of realizing that he was a man subject to mistakes and sins like every other person who has ever lived (except Christ, of course). There are those who erroneously think that when he died on January 16th 1986, nothing can be changed after that date, in spite of the admonition to "grow

in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..." (2 Peter 3:18). On the other side of the coin, there are those who think it is fair game to change anything they see fit to, hence the acceptance of mainstream theology in our former association, the Worldwide Church of God.

We make our stance quite clear in our Statement of Beliefs when we state:

"The major doctrines of the Church are those, which were taught by Herbert W. Armstrong, derived from the Biblical teachings as followed by God's faithful servants, and originally established by Jesus Christ through the founding of His Church in the time of His chosen early apostles. Since we are to increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are committed to review and alter any of our teachings, if and when proven to be wrong by the Bible."

The fruits of Mr Armstrong's life show someone dedicated to the Way of God and the ability to get that message across to millions of people through his writings, personal appearances and radio and television programmes.

The Master Plan of God was understood and the Bible became a source of real understanding by divine revelation, as the fruits of Mr Armstrong's life proved. We should not forget the huge amount of work that he put into his calling and the understanding that God revealed to his mind.

In our weekly Update number 573 dated 18th January 2013, Evangelist Norbert Link wrote an editorial entitled, "Herbert Armstrong and His Legacy," in which he made these comments:

"Rather, he was an 'apostle'—one who 'was sent' to preach powerfully 'this gospel of the kingdom' 'in all the world as a witness to all the nations' (Matthew 24:14). He did not speak or write with godly infallibility, and he was willing to change when proven wrong, but he restored—as no other individual during his lifetime—fundamental truths and biblical values to the Church of God."

Mr Link also gave a sermonette entitled, "The Real Herbert Armstrong," dated 1st May 2014, which is available on request on CD.

Today, many may not even have heard of Mr Armstrong but during his lifetime he was known by millions upon millions of people, including many kings, princes and other royalty around the world, as well as many political leaders of his time.

He has now been dead 30 years and is awaiting, with all of those who have died in Christ, the resurrection to spiritual life in the God Family for eternity. That same opportunity is open to all who are called and chosen at this time and have been and will be baptized into the Body of Christ as long as they remain faithful and true to their calling until Christ returns to this earth to set up the Kingdom of God—or their death, should that occur first. Mr Armstrong was used mightily by God in the 20th century, and all of us in the Church of God should appreciate his part in the Way of Life that we now lead today.

In conclusion, let us read the following comments from Mr. Link's Editorial of January 18, 2013:

"The Work which God began in these end times through Herbert Armstrong must be continued by God's true servants... Mr. Armstrong is dead, but Christ is very much alive (compare Isaiah 63:16)... the truth that was revealed continues to be taught and grows among those who are faithful to the Head of the Body—Jesus Christ!"

With Christian love.



Brian Gale
(United Kingdom)