

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD
WORLD HEADQUARTERS
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG
PRESIDENT and PASTOR

April 25, 1972

Dear Brethren in God's Church:

I have just returned from a most eventful and successful six weeks' trip (which I had expected to last only three weeks) to find that rumors have reached the press concerning the absence of my son, Garner Ted Armstrong, with many false rumors and baseless conjectures. Also many letters from you Co-Workers asking for an explanation.

I hope you will realize that this is the most difficult and painful announcement that I have ever had to make in a Co-Worker letter.

Last autumn I was dismayed to learn that my son had been so overcome with personal, emotional problems, that it led to conduct inconsistent with the high standard of the Work of the Church of God and the scriptural qualifications for a minister of Jesus Christ, and rendered him incapable of carrying on the duties of a minister, and of his responsibilities of Executive Vice President.

The Board of Directors of Worldwide Church of God, and the Board of Trustees of Ambassador College, grieved as we were, had no choice but to remove Garner Ted Armstrong from his office and his responsibilities. Mr. Albert J. Portune was made ACTING Executive Vice President of both corporations, and Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong was granted a leave of absence, hoping that full repentance and overcoming of his personal, emotional problems would allow reinstatement without a long delay, and for the protection of the Work, no public announcement was made.

For some weeks my son was isolated in Texas, Colorado, and Idaho. It was reported to me that he was deeply discouraged, wondering if God had utterly rejected him, and whether forgiveness and being received back was impossible.

On hearing this, I wrote my son letters to encourage him, reminding him that God does always forgive upon repentance -- encouraging him to look forward and to the future of God's Work.

Although this is a very personal and intimate matter, because of published rumors or conjectures of personal conflict between us, and also of unfair treatment against Garner Ted, I will quote from one of those letters, as well as a letter from him, to give insight into the true situation.

On October 18th last, I wrote: "My Very Dear Son Ted: I have longed to come to you -- to be with you In this very sore trial -- to HELP. Ted, God knows the extenuating circumstances, and I know He is very mindful of them, in full compassion, understanding and mercy -- for He loves you even more than I, a mortal, can. So please let me remind you of what you already know -- and think on these things -- that God knows that we are dust -- He knows our human weaknesses -- He does not deal with us according to our sins as we really deserve -- but, as the heavens are high above the earth, SO GREAT is His mercy and forgiveness toward us. (Psalm 103; 11-18.) He gave His only begotten Son that you shall not perish, but have everlasting life in His Kingdom. We will be there together! Ted, I am interceding for you on my knees, fervently, many times a day. I know you are having to fight a pull in the other way, but our God is far stronger, and He will deliver you from this sore trial, and let His face shine upon you, restoring to you the JOY of His salvation -- and even more than in the past, He will use you! Look FORWARD, not backward. How wonderful may be our labors together in finishing the great Work of God! Go to your knees -- repent! You will win out! With all my love, in Jesus' name.

There were other letters. Later Ted wrote me:

"To my Dearest Father: THANK YOU, Dad, for being the most completely understanding, patient, considerate, forgiving father on earth, and for the letters you have sent me; the gentleness and consideration you have shown me, who deserves nothing but death, of and by myself. Your letters have helped me, Dad, more than you can know. I have read them over many times, and have tried, though I know only imperfectly, to use them as a daily guide for thought and action.

"I guess no one can ever know how deeply I was bitten; afflicted of the devil through all my wretchedness of these past few months -- or just how subtly and cleverly Satan sought to destroy God's Work through me. I think you do know, as perhaps no one else does, with the exception of Shirl (Mrs. GTA), who is here with me now, as I write. I have no excuses. I sinned mightily against God, against His Church and His Apostle; against the wife God gave me in my youth; against all my closest friends.

"Your reaction has been that of a deeply hurt, concerned, loving and forgiving father -- who would have been very justified in reacting in wrath, anger, and every normal emotion. I know God was working in and through you, and I have been able to have the only bright spots of HOPE for forgiveness and HOPE for God's own grace by telling myself that if YOU, God's Apostle and His servant in this end-time age, can still feel there is some glimmer of hope for me, then it is as if GOD HIMSELF is telling me the same thing. The hopelessness that I have felt from time to time, and the temptation to get into a 'what's the use' attitude has been dispelled to a great extent because of that realization. I was wildly searching about, in my attempts at self-justification, for the faults and problems of others, true to human form, to take the spotlight of guilt away from myself. It amazes me that I could have acted that way, Dad; me, Garner Ted Armstrong, who has preached over and over again in piercing clarity about all the vagaries and deceit in human nature; who has been able, with God's Holy Spirit, to graphically describe the very course my own rotten nature so recently took. It also proves to me that I alone would not have reacted that way; that I was being heavily influenced, even though I did deny it to myself, and to others, at the time. I have acted like a mindless criminal; like an enraged beast; like someone bent on destruction, and on hurting, and tearing down. I can't understand it myself, and yet I do understand in part, just WHO (Satan) was influencing me, and why. David said, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted,' and I can say the same thing, Dad. I must confess I rebelled at first, when meeting you at Penticton ... (where I stopped him from further preaching). I had kidded myself (with help, no doubt, from evil influence -- Satan) that I could put everything away from myself, and that things would work out in the long run -- yet, in my deepest feelings, I was clinging to a false and inordinate hope. You knew it, even though I denied it to myself.

"I'm asking, though I know I don't deserve it, for forgiveness for EVERYTHING, Dad, from the sins to the way I reacted to you, to the fact that (forgive me!) I even rebelled AFTER being sent away, and drew back into black and depressed attitudes. Is there any need for me to tell you how deeply terrified I am when I think of the endless, horrible DAMAGE and DESTRUCTION I almost wrought? I refer to scandal, the newspapers, the hate books and our persecutors, to peoples' lives in the Church, as well as to my own family, my own sons (who) need the example of an upstanding, converted, spirit-filled father.

"I know how horribly I acted, now -- and it both frightens me terribly, as well as makes me so ashamed I wonder if I can ever look those who know about it in the eyes again. I have had to fight my thoughts, and continually ask God to miraculously take thoughts away from me. Shirl and I have talked for hours about every aspect of the situation -- and she knows my problems. She is an amazing woman, Dad. She wants to HELP me get over EVERY last part of my problems. She talks calmly, understandingly.

"I ask you to forgive me, too, for the terrible pressures and pain I have put upon you in your 80th year, and with the huge loads you must carry, and enormous responsibilities. I who should have been foremost in HELPING you, and in HOLDING UP YOUR HANDS, have had to be the worst agony, the most hideous problem to you of all. Human forgiveness could never overlook that, Dad -- that's another proof that God is using you, and that HE gives you your attitudes, and the forgiveness you have already held out to me.

"I hope God will continue to deal with me, and that He has not cast me away from His presence; that I can yet, somehow, find space for forgiveness for all that I am. With deepest love and respect, your son, Ted."

I sincerely hope these personal letters, intimate and private as they were, make very plain the way my son and I really feel toward each other -- and how painful and difficult it has been for me and our Boards to have found it necessary to take the disciplinary action we did. But in my office within the Church of God, I cannot be a respecter of persons, even though Ted is my very deeply loved son. The ministry of this Church must at all times be held above reproach.

The Boards and I did, as a result of this letter, receive him back. But subsequent events, attitude and conduct, to our great dismay, demonstrated to the Board members, ministers, and myself that the process of repentance was not yet complete. Even as John the Baptist had required the evidence of fruits to prove repentance and its permanency, so we were obliged -- to uphold the integrity of this Work in God's sight -- to require. And we so advised the entire membership of the Worldwide Church of God. These Board members, ministers and I have worked endlessly to help him. But we had to come to realize, as did my son also, that he must take a considerable period of time to regain his spiritual strength and stability, before he can

even contemplate the resumption of his heavy responsibilities, or duties in preaching and broadcasting.

We know that God is still on his throne -- that the living Christ is the real Head of this Work -- that He is still at the helm, guiding, leading, inspiring, and blessing His Work through the Body of Christ, His Church. This is the Work of God -- not of Herbert W. Armstrong or Garner Ted Armstrong, or any MAN. The membership worldwide is praying for the complete, permanent repentance of Garner Ted Armstrong.

Co-Workers and Brethren, I hope you can realize how painful it has been for me to bare this before you.

God spared not His Son Jesus Christ, but sacrificed Him for the salvation of the world. I love my son Ted very deeply, too -- and the more so, through this terrible trauma. I hope with all my heart that soon we may know by the fruits that he has been restored by the power of God to full and permanent repentance. I am in close contact with him. I feel he is making good progress now. But God does not compromise and we in His Work cannot.

Co-Workers and Brethren, I want you to realize that when in this Ministry we preach of RIGHTEOUSNESS, we mean it, even though it involves such disciplinary action right at the very top of the Ministry. No matter how difficult this trauma has been on all of us, especially me as Ted's father, we do not, and have not, ever knowingly compromised with the Word of God.

I want you to know that you may have full confidence in the integrity of the leadership, which the living Christ Himself has chosen and set in office under Him. Satan has planned this as his Master Stroke to try to DESTROY the Work of the living God. He has not succeeded.

I repeat -- OUR GOD IS ON HIS THRONE! He is still at the helm, guiding, leading, inspiring, and BLESSING His Work! This Work does not depend on any man, but on GOD. Now, more than ever, we must be of ONE MIND -- ONE HEART -- that of GOD -- in LOVE and in FAITH, and with His inspiration, leap to the task still before us with renewed vigor and energy. We need to have our hearts in GOD'S Work, and get on with GETTING THE JOB DONE!

God bless you all,

With sincerest love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong