

THE CHURCH OF GOD, INTERNATIONAL

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GARNER TED ARMSTRONG  
PRESIDENT

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Dear Friends and Fellow Laborers:

Greetings again from Tyler! I'm sending this special first class letter as a result of a recent flurry of unfounded rumors which were widely circulated in the media.

Many of you may have heard, by now, that some alleged attempt was made by my father or myself to effect a "reconciliation," or heard rumors that I was "going back" into the old organization.

All of these rumors are totally unfounded and without basis in fact.

Let me give you a chronological series of events exactly as they happened, so you will be armed with the real truth.

At approximately 12:35 a.m., Monday, February 23, my wife and I were awakened by a long distance telephone call, after having been asleep for about two hours. On the line was Mr. Dick Lloyd, staff writer for the Pasadena Star News, with whom I have had a number of conversations over the past several years.

Mr. Lloyd asked me whether any attempts had been made on the part of my father, Stanley Rader or anyone else in the organization to contact me. He quoted Stanley Rader as having said that such contact had, in fact, been made.

I told Mr. Lloyd that this was utterly untrue, and that I had heard absolutely nothing.

I explained how, in late 1978, I had written my father a number of times. In early '79 I wrote another letter or two, and finally had written my father in the spring of 1980, upon the event of the baptism of my two younger sons, David and Matthew, in the hopes that knowledge of his two grandsons' repentance and baptism just prior to Passover would somehow touch his heart, and perhaps he would respond.

I never received any response or acknowledgement from my father from any of my letters. I explained how, in late 1978, on at least two or three different occasions I had obtained his secret telephone number from close personal friends, and attempted to call him. Each time, the telephone would be placed on the desk blotter, and the woman who answered the phone simply walk away from it, and leave it off the hook. When I would call back, the line would be busy, and after hours of trying, I would always hear a recording that this number is "no longer in service."

As I explained all this to Dick Lloyd, I am sure he was convinced I was telling him the truth, and that I had heard nothing from my father or any other person associated with him making any attempts at "reconciliation."

Totally coincidentally from this conversation, I had been contacted by NBC, channel 4 in Los Angeles a couple of days earlier. At first, they were going to send a two or three man camera crew to Tyler to

obtain an interview with me for a five-part series they were doing on "the electronic church." They had already interviewed Dr. Jerry Falwell, and Dr. Robert Schuler, among others. On Friday, they called to ask if I could, instead, take a quick trip to Los Angeles, and be interviewed in their own studios to save them a couple or three days of time. I consented, and NBC paid for my air travel to Los Angeles and back to Tyler.

I was met at the Los Angeles airport and taken directly to NBC studios in Burbank, where I remained for some hours. Naturally, I wanted to visit with my two sisters and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Vern R. Mattson, Mrs. Beverly Gott, and my other sister-in-law and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. David Antion. We went to dinner that night, and the next morning an article appeared on the front page of the Pasadena Star News which gave rise to speculation that I might be "coming back" into my father's organization.

Absolutely nothing I said to the reporter from the Star News could have been so construed.

Let me quote to you from that article, the text of which could not have been understood as indicating I was entertaining the idea of "coming back" into my father's organization.

"And there is more than just reconciliation involving him, he (GTA) said 'I've got a tremendous commitment to thousands of lives in the Church of God, International,' he said.

"Any reconciliation would have to include all those who have joined with him, and would require a change of name to recognize the total reconciliation.

"Armstrong (GTA) said he didn't know what to make of the speculation, considering it inappropriate to deal in 'clandestine' overtures.

"If it is to be done,' he said, 'it should be done honestly and with good faith and good will.

'It could be that they are testing the waters in their own camp,' he said, 'to see what would be the reaction of the ultra right-wing camp.'"

At the end of the somewhat lengthy article, I was quoted as having said "The members have always been my only concern," he said, admitting he has been in contact with some of the lay membership. "I know there is a significant percentage of the members who have never bought the propaganda the leadership had presented."

"He questioned, however, whether there is anything to return to. 'If it means returning to political in-fighting, intrigue and fear and wrestling with an unmanageable budget, I can't do that.'"

On the afternoon following the appearance of that article, I spoke at some length with Mr. Dick Lloyd again, and also with the reporter from the Los Angeles Times.

Arriving back here in Tyler, my entire day, Thursday, February 26, was taken up with talking to the media.

I talked to the local Tyler newspaper, a newspaper from Longview, Texas, a leading Dallas newspaper, and was on a radio talk show from San Antonio. UPI called me, and I spoke to them for some time over the telephone, and a representative of the Associated Press came to Tyler with a camera man, and spent over an hour with me.

All of these calls were initiated by the media; I initiated none of them.

On that same day, in an article published here in Tyler, it was revealed that Stanley Rader, "treasurer of the Worldwide Church of God" was retiring from the "position" on March 1, and, according to the article, "will be given a \$250,000 bonus as a reward for his service, Church founder Herbert W. Armstrong said Wednesday."

Only days before this article appeared, members of the Worldwide Church of God had received a letter from my father urging them to "sacrifice" for the work, "as never before."

In all of my interviews, none of which were initiated by myself, I repeatedly emphasized the same theme; that I am completely mystified by all the rumors -- I did not start them, I have received absolutely no contact from my father or anyone representing my father, and remain absolutely committed to the task to which I have set my hand, and in which all of you have been participating -- that of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, as a warning and a witness to this world!

I want it made very clear that not once have I ever asked to "go back." I did attempt on many occasions to reach my father in the hopes that at the very least a father-son relationship could be re-established.

I have always felt it is terribly embarrassing, given the fact that both my father and I are ordained ministers, that we represent church organizations, and that one of the hallmarks of the church is to "turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children" that there should exist such a completely unnecessary, contrived, artificial barrier over blatantly false charges between a father and son!

As I have repeated for nearly three years, I simply did not do what they charged me with -- my father was totally misled and deceived by his so-called "advisors" around him.

However, when I never received any answers to my letters, and when I was repeatedly rebuffed, when I would attempt to communicate with him, I finally quit trying in the spring of 1980.

Naturally, I do not wish to subject myself to further rebuffs, and so have left the initiative where it appropriately belongs -- solely the responsibility of my father.

To all of you who are standing shoulder to shoulder with us here in Tyler in this growing work of God, I wanted to make all of these details plain.

Almost instantly, a wave of doubt and confusion flooded throughout the country, and many of our members and supporters began to assume some clandestine "negotiations" were underway between my father and myself. Some even went so far as to wonder whether I would "abandon" them, leaping back into that other organization.

As I have said before, so say I again -- NEVER!

When I undertook to make a "new beginning" in radio and television down here in Texas in 1978, I did so with the firmest of convictions and determination to continue pursuing what I regard as a divine calling from Almighty God. It is my earnest hope, of course, that my father will someday contact me, and that at the very least we could re-establish a warm and convivial father-son relationship, at least as a family. My own two sisters, whom I love very much, and had an opportunity to visit just last week, I am sure wish for the same reconciliation, for they, too, have been completely cut off from him.

However, this purely family reconciliation must be viewed as totally separate from any supposed organizational or institutional reconciliation.

For the past nearly three years, I have been repeatedly vilified, condemned, defamed, and my reputation virtually destroyed by an outpouring of propaganda and false charges from my father's organization.

I firmly believe in forgiveness. I believe with all my heart that we must never forget we have been "purged from our old sins," and we who have been forgiven, must be instantly eager to forgive. That is the very essence of Christianity. Still, when thousands of loved ones are living in deception -- when countless false charges have been made, and are a matter of historical record, I believe that in connection with forgiveness, there must be concerted action on the part of those

who have spread such misinformation to right the wrongs, and to repair and restore not only my own reputation which they have virtually destroyed among their own membership, but the reputations of dozens of the ministry, and countless hundreds of the lay membership who were harshly excommunicated, sometimes with absolutely no cause.

Certainly, it is not wrong to pray for that!

I wanted to take this time to explain fully, because I know from a number of telephone calls we have received that a certain amount of apprehension was created among our own supporters as a result of this unexplained flurry of rumors within my father's organization.

Every word I have written to you in this letter is the absolute truth as the Eternal Creator God knows it -- doubts and false rumors to the contrary.

Meanwhile, we are still hard at work! Shortly after writing this letter to you, we will be driving down to San Antonio for a much-publicized personal appearance campaign on Sabbath, February 28.

The following Sabbath and Sunday my wife and I are scheduled to be with our brethren in the Albuquerque region, visiting with the brethren on the Sabbath, and conducting a personal appearance campaign on Sunday, March 8.

Before we know it, another Passover will be here. Incidentally, I hope you will want to hear Mr. Dart's especially instructive and inspiring sermon on that subject! Also, if some of you would like information about the Passover, we have perhaps another two or three tapes on the same subject, or related ones.

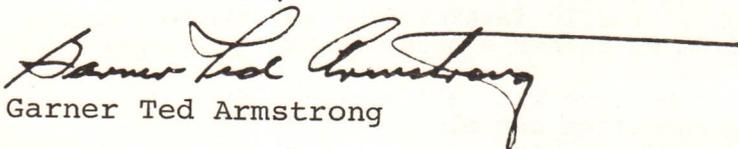
Finally, in closing, let me say that I am very happy to announce that, according to my best estimates, I believe the printers will have "Peter's Story" in finished form, and ready for shipping, by about the first week of May! A couple of articles in the recent newspaper will explain this, and you can get more details there.

I am very eager to see "Peter's Story" in print, at last, after laboring over it for approximately three years! The book went through three extensive re-writes, and I have received many enthusiastic responses as a result of excerpts published in Twentieth Century WATCH.

I hope all of you will want a copy -- information on how and where to order it are contained in the upcoming edition of International News.

That's about it for now, thank you very much for your continued loyal and faithful support -- we really feel that this new effort in television is exactly what God wanted, and the initial response from viewers is most encouraging.

In Jesus' name,

  
Garner Ted Armstrong

GTA:gb