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And NOW-- The PLAIN TRUTH Being Set Back on Track

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Fellow Ministers: Since last May I have been moving swiftly to set the Church of God back on the track as GOD'S CHURCH. I have set the radio and television programs back on GOD'S track. Secularism and the leaven of modern "intellectualism" and "PhDism" had turned Ambassador College into just another of this world's colleges. To set it back on the track I have had to start all over again, as in 1947, with one single undergraduate freshman class. I have put back in charge those who were taught God's REVEALED KNOWLEDGE under me in the earlier years. I hope that my personal very frequent taking of the forums will, within the year, set Ambassador College back on the track as GOD'S COLLEGE.

In all this, I deeply appreciate and am grateful from the heart, for the loyalty and the standing solidly behind me in this difficult task, of all you in the ministry.

But now, I am moving just as vigorously to set The PLAIN TRUTH back on the track.

I have just written a thirty-two page typed memorandum for The PLAIN TRUTH staff, titled "A PLAIN TRUTH DIRECTIVE." I am having a meeting with my PLAIN TRUTH staff Thursday. I give you here a synoptic extract from that directive:

A PLAIN TRUTH DIRECTIVE

At this point I consider it necessary to succinctly review the PURPOSE, policy and state of The PLAIN TRUTH, and its future.

God forcibly called me to His service in 1926, later to commit to me Christ's GREAT COMMISSION-- to announce over all the world the soon-coming KINGDOM OF GOD-- an entirely NEW civilization of GOD's making.

In 1927 God inspired me with the vision of publishing GOD'S magazine. Jesus had divine TRUTH by saying "Thy word [the Holy Bible] is TRUTH."

God had been opening my mind to understanding of His truth. I had been experienced in magazine and newspaper writing. God put it in my mind to publish HIS magazine, making His TRUTH-- the Bible-- PLAIN, CLEAR, UNDERSTANDABLE, INTEREST-GRIPPING, DYNAMIC.

In 1927 I had a commercial artist design a front cover for this magazine, to be called "The PLAIN TRUTH."

It was seven years before God opened the way to actually start producing it-- and even then as a virtual no-cost mimeographed "magazine."

Jesus Christ, living HEAD of God's Church, used me in raising up the present era of that Church-- the parent Church starting with nineteen members in August, 1933.

The Work of God-- the GREAT COMMISSION-- started as an infinitesimal operation-- a virtual mustard seed beginning-- as God starts activities through human instruments. But, also, like the proverbial mustard seed, it GREW-- at the unmatched rate of 30% a year over a 35-year span.

What Christ called me to-- what He started and has built through me-- is the WORK OF GOD-- not of MAN. It is not of this world. God called me out of this world-- and He has called others out of this world and its ways-- to assist me in HIS Work.

But, as God has prospered His Work, and it has grown to world-wide operations and in going TO this world, a multi-million-dollar organization, those who have been brought into the Work are prone to assume it to be just another of this WORLD'S organizations-- where the actuating attitude and motive is the "GET" way instead of God's "GIVE" way-- and where it is operated with the approach of this world's carnal and intellectual secular concepts.

That has happened to The PLAIN TRUTH.

I am deeply sad to say, the same spirit of carnal secular "intellectualism" that infiltrated God's College, has also infiltrated HIS MAGAZINE-- Christ's MESSAGE IN PRINT to a deceived world!

I now see articles on child rearing whose approach is the carnal psychology of Satan's "higher education," and slanted contrary to God's PLAIN teaching in His truth-- the Bible!

I see articles, and also booklets now being produced, with a Bibliography of source materials of up to sixteen secular "authorities."

Let me state my personal evaluation of the situation. I believe the managing editor to be sincere, loyal, desiring to do the right thing-- which is GOD'S and not his own thing. I believe he simply needs more cooperation and guidelines from me.

Therefore, I am here outlining some basics, policies, guidelines, and directives.

What I had in mind was articles dealing with the world conditions and human interest problems-- but always in the main content of the article, approaching that problem, and dealing with it, from the BIBLICAL revelation-- so that in fact it was actually making plain the TRUTH-- derived from revelation, not from science or secular scholarship of behavioral science and university-brand psychology.

Today we live in the Day of Man (enslaved invisibly by Satan) -- and a civilization which in fact is the world of human nature-- Satan's world! The PLAIN TRUTH was envisioned and brought into a publication which proclaims the WORLD TOMORROW-- an entirely different civilization-- GOD'S CIVILIZATION.

Now this is of SUPREME IMPORTANCE-- because The PLAIN TRUTH was founded under God's leading to be one of the two-- and perhaps even the number ONE medium for carrying out the GREAT COMMISSION. Some might think radio and television to be our number one means of proclaiming Christ's GOOD NEWS, but without THE WORD OF GOD IN PRINT, radio alone could never have built the Work-- and actual records now show that daily half-hour radio broadcasting has far outweighed television, though the latter, if properly used, may be very effective.

You know, I really died, just over a year ago-- though by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation they brought me back in thirty or forty-five seconds-- or perhaps one and one-half minutes. God brought me back from death because HIS CHURCH, HIS WORK, HIS COLLEGE, AND HIS PLAIN TRUTH had gone secular-- and God had been virtually booted out the window.

And now I must move swiftly and decisively to get The PLAIN TRUTH back on the track as GOD'S MAGAZINE! Utterly UNIQUE! Totally unlike this carnal world's magazines.

Now, back to the BASIC POLICY and PURPOSE of The PLAIN TRUTH. I have already stated it-- to make plain God's revealed TRUTH as it is in the Bible. To make the Bible interesting! To make it understandable! To make it COME ALIVE as a N O W Book!

What built the Church and the Work? The central hub of the Work was daily half-hour radio broadcasting working with The PLAIN TRUTH. The broadcasting, and later telecasting-- and even advertising space in mass-circulation magazines and newspapers, added subscribers to The PLAIN TRUTH. The PLAIN TRUTH was then used to open minds to revealed knowledge, informed of the KINGDOM OF GOD and by offering, with it, booklets, and the Correspondence Course.

This basic program was supplemented by monthly co-worker letters from me, semi-annual letters to P.T. subscribers, and a LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT ("LAD", later "PCD") along with a growing and dedicated ministry.

The whole concept of every branch of this Work was to GIVE God's truth to the world and to SERVE (GIVE TO) the brethren God continually added to His Church.

This plain, simple, direct program worked! I remember how Bill Tilden used to say, "Never change a winning game-- always change a losing game."

I am taking steps immediately to restore a qualified and experienced letter answering department, such as we used under Dr. Zimmerman and Wilbur Berg. I may have to find time (how, I do not know) to do new daily half-hour radio broadcasting.

We reach people ten times more effectively through the eye than through the ear. True, TV offers both, but TV in the past has not been comparatively productive-- partly due to the secular, documentary type programming. To use TV daily with blanket national coverage is immediately impossible.

We may use the most modern professional systems and innovative techniques, with the original "MAKE THE BIBLE PLAIN" concept in reading content.

The PLAIN TRUTH can, and must be made the NUMBER ONE MAGAZINE ON EARTH-- utterly unique-- no subscription price nor advertising revenue-- making the biblical message not only plain but dynamically interest-gripping, with a stronger public appeal than even Reader's Digest.

It must become the number ONE QUALITY magazine, as a vigorous, dynamic, interest-grabbing magazine that literally makes God's truth COME ALIVE!

When my mind was first opened to God's TRUTH, I found it the most interesting, absorbing thing that had ever entered my life. I could hardly tear myself away from the Bible. The things that fill most minds in this world became ridiculously unimportant and boring. That interest has never waned. We must allow that same intense interest into the mind and heart of the MILLIONS!

We have the MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE!

We have, if presented so, the most interesting and absorbing material for any magazine.

We must at once set it back on the track as GOD'S magazine, sparkling with His living TRUTH. We must find, somewhere in the Church of God, the writers who themselves FEEL and EXPERIENCE the fascinating, glorious LOVE of God's TRUTH, and who can make articles come alive with vigorous Holy Spirit INSPIRATION!

THINK ON THIS!

We are the only voice in the wilderness of today's evils, frustrations, discouragements, with the world's ONLY HOPE-- and it's one SURE HOPE of happiness, abundance, and eternal life!

We are going to develop the NEWSSTAND circulation into multiplied millions. But first, before I sell The PLAIN TRUTH to the newsstand audience, I must have a PRODUCT that will grab attention, arouse instant interest, create suspense, and the DESIRE FOR MORE--AND MORE--AND MORE OF THE SAME!

The GREAT COMMISSION is our uniqueness, our WONDERFUL CALLING that must pervade clearly every issue of The PLAIN TRUTH.

But of course, first, it must pervade our own lives, until we become HUMAN DYNAMOS for GOD'S TRUTH!

This ORGANIZED SPIRITUAL ORGANISM, the Worldwide Church of God, is not just another worldly, routine human occupation.

It is the CHURCH OF GOD, and we are in the WORK of GOD. And it should be the most intriguing, inspiring, zestful work being done by any humans.

WHAT A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE-- we can be the inspired instruments of the LIVING GOD giving His wonderful TRUTH to a dying world in its LAST DAYS!

I have omitted, above, the more detailed directives in my thirty-two page instruction to the PLAIN TRUTH staff. I ask all you ministers to pray fervently for this enterprise, as well as all the other facets of the Work, including that of your fellow ministers in their respective fields.

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EDITORIAL SERVICES-- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS Mr. Armstrong has decided not to go ahead with the planned biblical signature to the PT which was slated to begin with the December U.S. edition. We are now re-designing the December number in conformity to that decision. Mr. Armstrong intends to get back to the kind of PT he originally envisioned, and I will be participating with him and Mr. Rader in a discussion regarding the content of the magazine later this week. We will keep you informed of the developments in the Pastor's Report.

We will be reprinting all of Garner Ted Armstrong's booklets minus the byline, and with minor editings. Existing stock should not be used, and should be destroyed in accordance with Mr. Herbert Armstrong's wishes. (International areas please take note.) The new printings are being given top priority, since the material is urgently needed.

We have now prepared a sample PT for approval, yet to be printed, which will be sent out to "new adds" to the mailing list instead of the present six-month trial subscription. This should save considerable money and help weed out at an earlier stage those who are unlikely to become more involved with the Work.

The present PT newsstand program is continuing to prove successful. As a result of it, we are adding about 15,000 new people to the mailing list monthly. This is in the United States only. As of August 1978, worldwide circulation for the PT is 2,257,487. This includes the newsstand edition.

-- Brian Knowles, Editorial Services

PUBLISHING SERVICES UPDATE The Plain Truth newsstand program continues to expand. We now have one million magazines out on the racks each month, all of which are picked up by the public. Our worldwide circulation, including newsstands in all languages, is climbing steadily towards the three million mark. This is the figure Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has quoted in the past as being a working minimum. The Plain Truth has not been above three million since 1973. Increasing circulation is a positive step and we intend, with your support, not to drop below this figure again. Our plans call for an expansion of the newsstand program as funds allow.

We are also working on several new ways of increasing our Plain Truth circulation. Our emphasis will be on a quality Plain Truth list rather than just pure quantity. We have found in the past that merely having big circulation figures is not the answer. Tests have shown that vast numbers of our old Plain Truth subscribers were not reading or even looking at the magazine. Now we are directing our efforts to people who show some initial interest. Based on information now available to us, from outside professional contacts experienced in direct mail, this group is very large indeed. In other words, we sow the seed on fertile soil. As we learn, we are using resources much more wisely. We in Plain Truth Circulation feel that direct mail will prove to be one of our most selective and effective methods of eventually giving people our message.

--Roger Lippross, Publishing Services

ON THE WORLD SCENE

THE CAMP DAVID GAMBLE ON MIDEAST PEACE The three-nation Camp David summit starting today could prove to be a turning point in the intractable three-decades-long Middle East dispute. The stakes are high. The consequences of failure could be disastrous.

As some observers have speculated, failure at Camp David could result in a fifth Arab-Israeli war -- which would be recorded in history as having been precipitated by an ill-timed and ill-advised U.S. summit initiative!

The minimum goal of the summit is to get the two Middle East leaders -- President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel -- to begin talking once again in order to resume the negotiations which have been deadlocked since January. Virtually nothing has happened between the two nations in the ten months since Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem.

The summit is clearly a gamble. President Carter has taken on a grave responsibility, going beyond the role of mediator or "message carrier" and participating this time as a "full partner" in the discussions. Well aware of the crucial nature of the summit, Carter has turned over to Vice President Mondale the bulk of his presidential duties so he can devote his full time and energy to the conference. The President has a personal motive in the talks as well -- success as a "world statesman" is expected to shore up his plunging popularity in the polls!

Chances for full success in the crucial conference are admittedly slim. The prime issue of future control of Israeli-occupied Arab lands is a stubborn impasse which will prove hard to break. To break the logjam, Carter will have to persuade Sadat to make concessions Israel views as essential to its security -- concessions which would allow Israel to retain certain strategic territories in the interests of "secure borders." And he will have to persuade Begin that Israeli withdrawal from substantial portions of occupied Arab territory will be necessary if peace is ever to be achieved. Few Israelis, however, believe that giving up occupied lands can buy peace. Many Jews see the West Bank region as absolutely vital to Jewish security, as well as a territory to which Israel has an "historic right." Begin will thus be limited in his ability to compromise in this area.

Yet compromises, in Carter's words, "will be mandatory. Without them, no progress can be expected. Flexibility will be the essence of our hopes."

The news media are stressing that the summit will be a crucial test of Carter's diplomatic skill; whether he will be able to exert leverage without straining relations with either Israel or Egypt to the breaking point. If the past record of the President's statesmanship and "diplomatic skill" is any indication, we may as well prepare for the worst. The one U.S. "ace in the hole," however, could be a proposal by Carter to station American troops in the West Bank and Sinai regions as part of a peace settlement.

Most observers are hoping, at best, for a recommitment to continue the negotiations. The consequences of failure to achieve even this are viewed with fear in all quarters. There would be the possibility of renewed and escalating violence on the part of Palestinian groups; the possibility of a squeeze on oil supplies to the West (Saudi Arabia has hinted at the use of the "oil weapon"); the possibility of new Soviet incursions into the Arab world; and the most feared possibility of all -- another bloody Mideast conflagration, the most disastrous and destructive to date.

Much rides, therefore, on the outcome of the summit. Possibly the spectre of the dire consequences of failure could compel some modicum of success at Camp David. That is the hope; that is Carter's gamble. The next few days will tell whether his gamble was successful. The odds, however, are not good.

--Gene H. Hogberg, News Bureau

POSTSCRIPT to our two previous Pastor's Report accounts about the papal election, and Giovanni Cardinal Benelli in particular. Benelli, according to TIME magazine of September 4, 1978, was one of two pivotal personalities in promoting the candidacy of Albino Cardinal Luciani, now Pope John Paul I. Reported TIME: "At 57, Benelli proved too young to be Pope. Still, he seemed to be the leading Pope-maker of the 1978 conclave, and figures to be a prime contender at the next one."

--G.H.H.