

June 2014

Greetings Brethren!

What a marvelous opportunity it is again this year to keep Pentecost (Monday)—this glorious Holy Day that God has purposed to represent our involvement in the firstfruits harvest of His Family as Christ's helpmate. It is indeed a pleasure to address all of you again who are pictured in the meaning of Pentecost as Christ's firstfruits wife—those who have been given access to God's Holy Spirit in order to produce fruit fit for harvesting and set apart to put on the very mind of Jesus Christ in order to make yourselves ready to become Christ's New Covenant wife and helpmate.

Many of God's people in the past (as Mr. Armstrong feared) failed to see the vision of the God Family represented in Pentecost. Hopefully, this letter will show you how marriage and the production of children reveal the meaning of Pentecost. Mr. Cole taught that we must have a physical dimension to comprehend the spiritual dimension just as Mr. Armstrong taught. A family consists of a father (husband), mother (wife) and children produced through a husband/wife relationship. Individual family units are the building blocks of a kingdom. It comprises a king or ruler, subjects or citizens, laws that form a government, and a territory.

Jesus Christ came into Galilee announcing the most exciting good news ever. God's time had come for Christ to preach the family Kingdom of God, which will administer the government of God, depose Satan as god of this world, and bring peace to this earth. Christ's message was, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel"—turn from your former, human beliefs and believe the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

After proclaiming the good news of the family Kingdom of God, Christ suffered and died for God's future family. He was then resurrected as the first of the firstfruits to rise from the dead (Acts 26:23) and became the spiritual fulfillment of the wavesheaf offering pictured in Old Testament rituals by a symbolic ceremony during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, fifty days before the Feast of Firstfruits.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits [the first of the firstfruits] of your harvest unto the priests: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath [the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread] the priest shall wave it. . . . And ye shall count unto you from the morrow

after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven [weeks] shall be complete [Seven weeks from Sunday is Sunday.]: Even unto the morrow after the seventh [week] shall ye number fifty days (Leviticus 23:10–11, 15–16).

Counting to the end of Sunday, the morrow after the seventh week, completes the count of fifty days. Then Pentecost should be kept. God revealed a Monday Pentecost to Mr. Armstrong by allowing him to count exclusively away from Sunday. God also revealed originally to Mr. Armstrong that Pentecost can never fall on Sunday. That was the faith once delivered. Now God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [revealed knowledge]: because thou hast rejected knowledge [revealed knowledge], I will also reject thee" (Hosea 4:6).

God led His people when they walked with Him in revealed Truth. But when they rejected God by looking to men through the voice of human scholarship, He rejected them. God's instruction through Paul was:

For this cause also [because the Thessalonians loved divine revelation] thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men [scholars], but as it is in truth [revealed], the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe [which means continuing in the faith or doctrine once delivered] (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The word of God effectively worked in Mr. Armstrong to reveal to us that Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the first of the firstfruits ceremony—fifty days before Pentecost. But the entire spring harvest also reveals other firstfruits. "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are [or represent] the firstfruits unto the Lord" (Leviticus 23:17). The two loaves represent the fact that the called, begotten firstfruits of God had sin in their lives. They were carnal by nature, and their sins had to be repented of in order to be cleansed by Christ and to be acceptable to God the Father. The two loaves pictured the firstfruits of the first resurrection.

And the priest shall wave them [the sin and peace offerings] with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priests (verse 20).

Everyone called to be firstfruits throughout history are pictured by the two wave loaves baked with leaven, and offered on the day of Pentecost to be presented to and accepted by God. Fifty days after the wave sheaf (Christ) was offered, the wave loaves (the firstfruits) are then

offered to God. The Feast of Firstfruits is another name for the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. The Feast of Weeks looked forward to the arrival and receipt of God's Holy Spirit (compare Luke 24:49 with Acts 1:8; 2:4). The arrival of the promised Holy Spirit initiated a new beginning for the called of God. With the earnest of God's Holy Spirit, the called of God became the firstfruits of the plan of God (Romans 8:23). In fact, James specifically calls the first-called of God the begotten firstfruits.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth [via the Holy Spirit], that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [His new creation] (James 1:18).

The whole spring harvest is called a harvest of firstfruits. But what is the relationship between Christ and all human beings called to be firstfruits? It is a husband/wife relationship!

For I am jealous over you [God's called firstfruits] with godly jealousy: for I have espoused [betrothed] you to one husband [Jesus Christ—the first of the firstfruits—whose name is Jealous], that I may present you [the Church of the Firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)] as a chaste [pure, clean, righteous] virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Christ (the first of the firstfruits) will bear the title of Husband. The Church of the Firstborn (Christ's firstfruits bride) will bear the title of Wife. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [the first of the firstfruits]; afterward they that are Christ's [His firstfruits wife and helpmate] at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Indeed, Christ depicts the first of the firstfruits—the first sheaf, wavesheaf, of the spring harvest of barley in the days of ancient Israel. Paul confirmed this when he said:

For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to [fashioned like unto] the image [or character] of his Son [the Word personified], that he [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

Christ was the first begotten (Hebrews 1:6). However, it is imperative to remember that He is but the first of many brethren to be begotten and ultimately born into the God Family. He was the first of the firstfruit harvest of souls, but He was not separate. He, bearing the title of Husband, is a part of that first harvest. He is the first of the firstfruits—the wavesheaf which had to be waved and accepted of God. Christ has already been harvested to begin the God Family.

The spring harvest not only depicts Christ as the first of the firstfruits who has already been harvested, but it also depicts the Church of the Firstborn as a harvest of firstfruits to be born of God at the first resurrection (Romans 8:23; Matthew 9:37–38; 13:30, 39). The day of

Pentecost pictures the Church of the Firstborn being called and trained for the special mission of preparing for the time when God will open salvation to the world, when they will be kings and priests, servants and teachers, co-rulers and co-saviors with and under Christ their Husband.

The First of the Firstfruits, picturing the risen Christ bearing the role of Husband, was cut, prepared and waved before God on a Sunday following the weekly Sabbath within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Fifty days later, on the day of Pentecost, two loaves of bread baked with leaven—representing the Church of the Firstborn (the firstfruits) of the first resurrection and bearing the role of Christ's firstfruits wife—were offered. Understanding why God ordained marriage and instituted family life reveals the meaning of Pentecost.

### **Spiritual Conception and Birth**

First, let us review why God created humanity. God (consisting of two divine Personages) created a multitude of different living creatures after their own kind. God then made man after the God kind—in the likeness and image of God (Genesis 1:24–26). When properly comprehended, Genesis 1:26 reveals a great mystery of which this world has no understanding. God is reproducing Himself in a two-stage process through human beings. Man is first created in God's likeness—made in God's form out of the physical elements of the earth. In this physical form, by virtue of the human mind—imparted at conception—man is imbued or permeated with the potential to become God. The second stage of God's reproductive process is activated when a human mind is impregnated, by God's Spirit, with the mind of God. Through this second stage man can be transformed into the express image (character) of God as he yields to God's word which is spirit and life eternal.

Notice how the Apostle Paul amplifies this two-stage reproductive process:

There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies, and bodies terrestrial [earthly]: but the glory [splendor] of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . . it is sown in weakness [of physical elements in the form of God]; it is raised in power [composed of spirit in the image or character of God]: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . . And as we have borne the [physical] image of the earthy [mortal Adam], we shall also bear the [spiritual] image of the heavenly [the second Adam, Jesus Christ]. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the [family] kingdom of God; neither doth corruption [perishable mortal flesh] inherit incorruption [imperishable immortal spirit]. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [forever in the grave], but we shall all be changed [from mortal flesh in the likeness of God to immortal spirit in the image and



character of God]. . . . For this corruptible [a body subject to decay and sin] must put on incorruption [a body exempt from decay and sin], and this mortal [human flesh] must put on immortality [life everlasting] (1 Corinthians 15:40, 42–44, 49–51, 53).

Clearly, God formed humanity in His likeness out of physical matter. Through impregnation of the human spirit with the Spirit of God, man's mind can be led to develop the mind of God. Then, through a resurrection or change, physical humans may be transformed into immortal spirit beings in the image and character of God—transformed into the God KIND in order to enter God's Family. God is a Family composed of spirit, with holy, righteous character. Mr. Armstrong taught from his booklet, "Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?," that God is now a family of Persons, composed so far of only the TWO—God the Father and Christ the Son. But if the Holy Spirit of God dwells in someone, and he is being led by God's Spirit, then he is a begotten son of God (Romans 8:14). At the time of Christ's return to earth in supreme power and glory to set up the Kingdom of God, restoring the GOVERNMENT of God perverted by Lucifer, all beings filled and led by God's Spirit shall become born sons of God. The God FAMILY will then *rule* all nations with the government of God restored.

Christ became "the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). Through His resurrection Christ was changed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit. In His glorified spirit state, Christ became "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Like Christ, the firstfruits have the potential to be born again—through a change at the first resurrection—to immortal spirit life possessing the character of God.

Job posed the question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" He answered, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (Job 14:14–15). Mr. Armstrong stated:

Job knew he was merely the work of God's Hands! Merely a piece of divine workmanship in the Hands of the CREATOR! . . . And in calling us forth from the grave, in the resurrection, God is having a DESIRE to FINISH this WORK OF HIS HANDS!

Even the RESURRECTION, then, is a final completing of GOD'S CREATION ("Why Were You Born?," 1957, page 9).

The Apostle Paul wrote: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). But notice further: "Except a man be born of water [baptism] and of the Spirit [born again], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Mr. Armstrong confirmed this spiritual begettal and birth process very well on pages 33–34 of his booklet, "Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?,":

## The Spiritual Symbolism of Family Life

Understanding why God ordained marriage and instituted family life reveals the meaning of Pentecost and deepens our understanding of how God is reproducing Himself. What does being created in God's likeness and being born again into God's Family have to do with the institution of marriage? It has everything to do with it! It is the very reason for it! Quoting again from page 37 of the above-mentioned booklet, Mr. Armstrong said:

Were it not for *the very fact* that we were created in God's very likeness, with the very PURPOSE of *being born of God*—born into GOD'S OWN FAMILY—the marriage institution—giving us the experience of FAMILY LIFE—would never have been ordained! If we were mere animals, developed by evolution, marriage would never have existed!

Human MEN never did think out, devise, or institute the relationship of marriage, with family and home life. Marriage *was ordained by GOD*—not by man. It is governed by the LAWS of God—and man has no jurisdiction over it, in God's eyes.

God *IS* a *FAMILY*!

He bequeathed to humans *alone* HIS kind of life—FAMILY LIFE.

God's law ordained marriage and family life to humans alone. Why? Because physical marriage is the exact type of the spiritual reality. Physical marriage, reproduction and family life exactly typify spiritual marriage, reproduction and family life. Human life is begotten by a father through the mother. Spirit life is begotten by God the Father through the spiritual mother—the Church. When begotten by God the Father by receiving His Holy Spirit, we are put into the Church (God's Family Kingdom in embryo), which during this gestation period is our mother. The human embryo is protected inside the human mother and nourished through her (according to God's health laws). The spiritual embryo (the begotten individual) is protected inside the spiritual mother—the Church—and nourished through it as long as it does not go apostate.

At physical conception, the human spirit imparts the "earnest" of the power of the human mind. At spiritual conception, God's Spirit impregnates the human mind with the earnest of the mind and life of God. Just as animals, with pre-programmed instinct, cannot understand things on the human level, humans, without the Spirit of God, cannot understand things on the divine level (1 Corinthians 2:9–14).

Physical man has a mind like God's, but with limited creative capacity. He has a mind with the ability to develop a sense of moral and spiritual values. However, without the Spirit of God, man's values will be based on faulty human reasoning—a knowledge acquired from the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil—knowledge that leads to unhappiness, vanity, competition, lust, greed, selfishness, hostility, resentment, suffering and death.

Mr. Armstrong taught that man without God's Spirit is incomplete—he is not all there—he can only understand physical things. Just as the human child has to be taught and learn human knowledge through the human spirit, the called and begotten children of God have to be taught through the foolishness of preaching and learn the knowledge of God through the Holy Spirit.

It is the function of the CHURCH—as the spiritual MOTHER of Christians in it—to develop holy, righteous and perfect godly CHARACTER in those God has called—those God has added to the Church (Herbert W. Armstrong; "Mystery of the Ages," page 263).

Jesus Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren" that will be added to the God Family. It is through His marriage to the resurrected Church, as His wife, that Christ is going to produce billions of spiritual children—that He is going to offer the entire human family the opportunity to realize their potential to become God. But He has a time order. Unlike the promiscuous, those having frequent and diverse sexual relationships in Satan's world, our Husband deems that marriage first should come—then children.

... [T]he Kingdom of God is a FAMILY—with Father, Son, and His WIFE! Those in the true Church of God, now begotten as *heirs*, are already NOW *children* of God, not yet born, who call Him Father! But, *then* these begotten children of God will be BORN of God—still His children just as Christ is still His Son—then *divine*—but also then we (collectively) shall be Christ's WIFE.

And WHY? What then?

Then many children will be Spirit-born of that divine union—it will greatly enlarge the DIVINE FAMILY which is the Kingdom of God.

How?

During the thousand years beginning from the time of that marriage, God, through Christ and His divine Wife, will set Himself to SAVE THE WORLD! ("Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?," page 42).

God created and ordained marriage as a loving relationship between a man and a woman that would lead to the procreation, nurturing, and proper training of children. Christ is presently getting to know His wife. At the first resurrection (a better resurrection) He will marry His firstfruits bride. Then, through that marriage, Christ and His firstfruits wife will produce billions of children. God will use that Husband/Wife dominion, or government, to save the world.

Continuing on page 44 of the above-mentioned booklet:

One of the first things He [Christ] will do is to depose Satan (Rev. 20:1–3). There will be NO COMPETITION! Satan won't be around to compete! Man shall have *had* his allotted 6,000 years to *write the lesson* of rebellion against the Laws and government of GOD! Man has written that lesson, in human anguish and suffering, and in human blood! But man, to this day, refuses to *learn* or *heed* the lesson!

But, with Satan out of the way, with the glorified CHRIST ruling, with His glorious MARRIAGE to His Bride, the Spirit-born of God, that marriage will beget millions upon millions of children!

God is going to use the instrumentality of a Husband/Wife dominion, or government, to convert the world—to bring them into His Family. Undoubtedly, the most well-known and frequently-quoted verse in the Bible is John 3:16–17. Yet the totality of professing Christianity, including many of God's own now-apostate people, believe that God is presently engaged in a titanic battle with Satan and his demons to "save" the world. They fail to recognize the converted saints as co-heirs with Christ, who will enter God's future divine Family Kingdom.

For God [the First Personage of the Godhead] sent not his Son [the Word personified and the First of the Firstfruits] into the world [God's future family] to condemn the world; but that the world through Him [Christ and His divine wife] might be saved (John 3:17).

God is bringing about the fulfillment of John 3:16–17 in a time order—through a specific sequence of events—in successive stages. The church is a necessary instrumentality preparatory to bringing salvation to humanity. The Church (God's future divine Family Kingdom) must be perfected through spiritual growth.

The resurrected Christ was PERFECT—He was very God! But He did not grow up into perfection *after* He was resurrected. It was during His human lifetime, setting us the example, that He *was made perfect* as you read in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8–9.

Thus it is plain that we must develop spiritual character, growing to spiritual adulthood *during this life*—not after our resurrection in GLORY!

... Our *character* must be changed, and developed to spiritual adulthood *now*, during *this* life. . . .

But all who are then born of God will be born full adult spiritual beings! Yes, ready for the marriage to Christ! (Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1966, Lesson 16, pages 15–16)

THUS THE MARRIAGE OF THE CONVERTED CHURCH TO CHRIST WILL RESULT IN THE BEGETTAL AND BIRTH OF DIVINE CHILDREN—children who, during the thousand-year reign with Christ, are SPIRIT-born—and in all probability, untold millions of them! ("Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?," page 45)

The world at this time is denied access to God—they have been cut off to establish their own government-run society that will fail. God's firstfruits Church, with Christ as its cornerstone, has been called ahead of the time when salvation will be offered to the world—so that, through it, God can save the world. Again, Mr. Armstrong confirms this plan on pages 46–47 of "Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?"

How magnificent, beyond words to describe, is God's plan to save mankind. Pentecost pictures the hope of this world—God's future Family. Other than Christ and His helpmate, no other hope exists. Do we really see the world as God's future Family? Pentecost is all about marriage first, then children. Jesus Christ is going to marry the firstfruits as the instrumentality through which God is going to offer all mankind the opportunity to enter the God Family—to become God!

Let us [the Church of the Firstborn Saints] be glad and rejoice, and give honour [glory and praise] to him [God the Father, for His desire to have a family]: for the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] is come, and his wife hath made herself ready (Revelation 19:7).

Notice that the bride is—before marriage—called His wife. Why is that? Why not, "His bride has made herself ready?" What did Mr. Armstrong teach us in the past? The bride is, before marriage, called His wife—in the sense that it is Israel again, only this time converted, righteous and spiritual. The Word—the God of the Old Testament—who became Jesus Christ, will marry an Israel that is immortal, incorruptible and NOW born of the Spirit, not as carnal, human sinful flesh, as at Sinai. The Lamb is to be married to a new wife—the born-again Church—who is the bride now, God's Church of the Firstborn.

For what has the Church—Christ's future wife—made herself "ready"? To work as a co-heir, co-ruler and co-savior with Jesus Christ to bring about God's plan to offer all mankind the opportunity to realize their inherent potential to be transformed from human beings into God Beings. The world will come to God the Father through Christ and His Wife. They shall be their spiritual parents in that sense. Are you preparing for that responsibility? Are you overcoming Satan, self and society as did Christ? Have you come out of Babylon? Are you producing fruit fit for harvesting? Are you preparing to rear and train billions upon billions of spiritual children? That is why we are here in God's church today. We are God's future family—the Church of the Firstborn.

Year after year, Mr. Armstrong labored in sermons, articles and booklets, as Mr. Cole did in sermons and letters, to make the meaning of the day of Pentecost clear. The point Mr. Armstrong worked so hard to get us to understand is that God is not now calling the world. Out of Satan's world (Babylon), God has called His firstfruits—just a small group of people to be married to Christ, through whom He will ultimately save the world. It is a long-range prophecy that will come to pass.

But the saints of the most High [the Church of the Firstborn] shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. . . . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints [the firstfruits saints] of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions [physical kingdoms] shall serve and obey Him [better translated "It"] (Daniel 7:18, 27).

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection [Why? It is a better resurrection because it is an eternal marriage relationship or dominion with Jesus Christ.]: on such the second death has no power, but they [Christ's firstfruits Wife] shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him [Christ their Husband] a thousand years [and during the second judgment period] (Revelation 20:6).

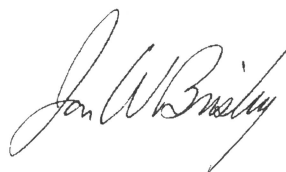
God is going to use that Husband/Wife dominion, or government, to convert the world into future God Beings—to make up His Family. Marriage *first, then* children! This is the meaning of Pentecost. This is the *core* of the God Family Kingdom. "Where there is no vision [of the divine God Family Plan], the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). The reality of the God Family cannot take place without Christ's Wife.

To all of you, we send our deepest (law-abiding) love and respect, with prayers for your strength and edification during this coming inspiring Day of Pentecost.

Striving to become His future helpmate,  
your servant in Christ,



Robert J. Litz



Jon W. Brisby