

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 3 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be May/June 2000

Do We Need Religious Teachers?

by Pam Dewey & Norman Edwards

But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ” (Matt 23:8-10).

At first consideration, it seems that the above verse says that we should not have any religious teachers—and that we are violating the first commandment if we do. Strong words. Yet there are many New Testament passages that state that Christ places “teachers” in the church (Acts 13:1; 1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; Titus 2:3; Heb 5:12). The problem is fairly easily understood when we see that the word for teacher used in Matthew 23:10 is a

different Greek word (Strong’s #2519, *kathegetes*) than the one used for the teachers we should have (Strong’s #1320, *didaskalos*). The King James translation is better. It says “Neither be ye called **masters**”. In simple terms, Christ told us not to have “rabbis” and “master teachers”, but later said He would give us “helping teachers”.

The system of Rabbis developed after Judah went into captivity—when there was no longer a temple or priesthood to regularly teach the Scriptures. The main Rabbis would undertake to instruct a small group of students. The group would usually be small—a dozen or so, and the Rabbi was, for all intents and

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The 40-page Eternal Judgment appendices are included with this issue, as is the latest issue of Shelter in the Word.

Biblical Elders Needed for Healings?

by John Leitch

It is alarming to see so many people with health problems in congregations of God these days. In the New Testament they also had problems, but unlike today, there were many miraculous healings. Today there seem to be very few searching for the answers to the question, “Why are there few healings?” Either, as God’s people, we are not holding up our part or God has forgotten His promise. I think any reasonable person knows at what end the trouble lies.

I see four main reasons (there could be more) that govern healing in the Bible:

1. Faith

“Daughter your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your affliction” (Mark 5:34).

Christ told a blind man “Go your way, your faith has made you well” (Mark 10:52).

2. God’s will

The leper said “Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Christ said, “I am willing” (Matt. 8:2-3).

Paul was made weak by the will of God. Whether it was a medical condition or a person tormenting Paul making him weak doesn’t matter. It was still the will of God.

3. Confessing and overcoming sin through prayer

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

Would it be reasonable to ask God to cure your lung cancer while you continue to smoke and have no intention of quitting?

4. Elders praying

Elders of the church can pray over the afflicted one and anoint him with

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Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#48-53



The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series

April 30, 2000

One of the guests today joined us for the fourth time, and we had another repeat customer as well. We were later joined by a couple, making a total of four guests. It is a greater challenge when people return for the third or fourth time, since it means we have to have fresh material handy. It is easy to present the same things week after week when there are different people every time, but this development is both a compliment (they like the studies so much that they make a point to come back), but also a challenge (having several potential study topics in one's notebook in order to keep the studies fresh).

This week I took my notes from personal study regarding the Pharisees and Sadducees. The main idea was to show that they were masters of propaganda, and to discuss some of the techniques they used. Jesus warns us to "let no man deceive you", so it's incumbent upon us to understand Satan's devices. We spent close to an hour on this subject and did not exhaust it.

One of the men requested prayer for an illness, which I am passing on to everyone. He understands that God is the healer.

The gentleman who joined us today for the fourth time is also in need of prayer and support. Let me state up front that he has not asked for any financial help and in fact one week refused help that I offered. He is not a truck driver, but works as a mover, which means he travels with moving vans and helps load and unload. The fact that he has been in our truck stop four out of the last six weeks leads me to believe that he is having some difficulty in finding work.

Early in the study he mentioned that he faced a week of trials and wonders if God is punishing him for some reason, which I suppose is a somewhat natural reaction. In reality, I doubt that he believes it, since at one point in the study he mentioned how sometimes when he prays while going through trials, a thought will pop into his head along the lines of "I love you and I died for you. I will take care of you," and then he feels at peace.

At any rate, I ask that everyone hold up this very sincere and knowledgeable Bible student before God, first, to give him the strength to bear the burden he carries, and secondly to open his mind to come to know God better. He is about as sincere and open in seeking God as anyone I have seen, and at the same time has a deep inner strength and integrity.

May 7, 2000

We had one trucker today from Wyoming, who is somewhat new to

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Servants' News is one of many ministries of the spiritual Church of God. We believe that the Bible contains the foundation of knowledge about our Creator and that He is actively working through people today. Our focus is to help and teach Sabbath-keeping brethren who believe Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has nothing to sell and has no financial ties with other groups, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS tax exempt status, but church groups are exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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News from Local Congregations



This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. Servants' News does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

Sabbath Campers Fellowship Aug 18-19

Everyone is invited to the Sabbath Campers fellowship at Hickory Lake Campground, 11433 S Beardslee Rd in Perry, Michigan, August 18-20. The cost is \$16 per night for a campsite with electricity and water (a dump-station is available for RVs). Day use of the camp is \$2 per adult and \$1 per child. Services will be at 11 a.m. on the Sabbath, followed by a potluck meal at 2:30 p.m. The topics of the message and discussion will be: *Why Are Believers Scattered?* and *Finding Other Believers Near You*, moderated by Norman Edwards. An evening sing-along is also planned.

The park has a playground, volleyball, basketball and a field for other sports. The lake accommodates swimmers and small boats. Fire pits and wood are available. Take exit 106 from the I-69 freeway, going south toward Perry on M-52. Turn right at the next stop-light onto Lansing Rd. Go 2½ miles to Bath Rd. Turn right to go under the freeway; turn right on the next road (Beardslee Rd) and go less than half a mile and the campground will be on your right. You may contact the campground at 517-625-3113, or the hosts, Al and Jeanne Raines, at 810-724-6066.

The Learning Process of Hearing God

A number of books and articles have been written about paraphysical experiences of hearing God's voice in our times. Some describe the events in great detail—some are comparable to those recorded in the Scriptures. Yet, there are few writings anywhere that provide any

insight for discerning what is of God.

The trend in churches is to go for two extremes. On one hand there are those who deny any paraphysical event of God in our times. On the other hand there are the Charismatics who accept anything paraphysical as being of God.

The humble attitude of one of Christ's Apostles has always impressed me. After having had a personal and close relationship with Christ and seeing many miraculous paraphysical events, he still accepted corrections by the Apostle Paul. In our times it is hard to imagine a preacher, evangelist or minister accepting a public correction from another "lower ranking" servant. The Apostle Peter did.

The following are topics of discernment covered in our introductory literature: **1)** The present practice of some Charismatics, **2)** The learning process of hearing God, **3)** How God communicates and the Temple, **4)** Three basics of Christ's teachings, **5)** Community of the Heavenly Father and His Son, **6)** The preacher and the pastor in God's congregation, and **7)** Why few Bible intellectuals hear God.

For free courses and literature, contact John Purvins: Christ's Standards publications, PO Box 1, Little Chute, WI 54140; Tel: 920-733-5271; Fax 920-788-29391 e-mail:

JPurvins@churchcounsel.com

Walkerton, Indiana Service

All brethren are invited to fellowship with us at the Community Building at Walkerton, Indiana every other Sabbath at 11:30 (Indiana time). Recently, we have listened to Ron Dart tapes.

Send Us Your News!

Believe it or not, publication editors are not people who automatically "know what's going on". The only way we know about significant events is by somebody telling us, by reading a publication or by asking various groups what they are planning. We simply do not have time to contact numerous groups before each issue to get their current news. We receive a lot of publications, but cannot read all of them. Many groups do not have a publication.

The most effective way for us to provide timely news is for you to send an announcement 2 to 3 months before a special event takes place, or send a report a week or so after it occurs. Thank you very much for your help. ☐

Also, Vance Stinson. Of special interest are the videos on the Creation by Carl Baugh, Phd. We will show other videos on the Creation in the future. Come join us for some good hymn singing and some great food.

— Ronald E. Fry: 6899 E St Rd 16, Monticello, IN 47960; 219-278-7231 (after 6 P.M.); e-mail: hifry@monti.net

Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups

I personally have known of many people who have used the Bible Sabbath Association's *Directory of Sabbath-observing Groups* to find a place to fellowship and learn. Some found nothing worthwhile, but others believed that God used it to help them find a fellowship. The Bible Sabbath Association does not have a doctrinal agenda, other than the Sabbath, so all groups are treated on an equal basis.

You can find instructions and a fill-in the blanks form at the following web sites:

<http://www.biblesabbath.org/directory/inputinstructions.html>

<http://www.biblesabbath.org/directory/directoryinputform.html>

The easiest way for BSA is to use the Excel version of the form and send the file back to them. However, anyone without Internet access may request a form from: Rich & Shirley Nickels: Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718; Tel: 307-686-5191; Fax: 413- 228-0483; e-mail: giveshare@vcn.net

— Norman Edwards

Make Your Own Music Available to Others

Have you written your own music/songs and have professionally recorded them? (Or at least recorded in a good home studio?) Have you produced some good Christian music? Or recorded instrumental music? Let me know!

The Bible Study Web site is collecting music created by church of God people to put on the Internet. We currently have 4 songs and 3 instrumentals now on the site (all offered live on the Internet in stereo, or downloadable in CD-quality). Check it out at:

<http://www.biblestudy.org/audserm/main.html#music>

Of course, any music either must be created by you (referrals welcomed!) or be music you have permission to sell/distribute (we do not want to run into copyright problems). I am neither charging for this service nor paying anyone for their music. (If anyone wants to make some of their songs available on the internet for free and then include an order form for other songs, that is fine.) I look forward to your music and suggestions:

— Alan Ruth: Barnabas Ministries, PO Box 3393, Farmington Hills, MI 48333; e-mail: webmaster@biblestudy.org; web site: www.biblestudy.org

New CoGR Web Site

The Church of God Restored is pleased to announce the launch of its web site: <http://www.cogrestored.org>

It is our desire, as always, to serve God's children. To that end, your comments are invited. As with most new web sites there may be areas that are still under construction. There are other areas that are designed to be updated with timely information.

We believe we have some unique features you will find of value in your walk of faith. Rather than giving you material that you can find on other COG sites, we chose to give you features with refreshing insights. It is our privilege to provide you, God's precious jewels, with a web site you can add to your list of favorites and visit often. May you grow in grace, knowledge, and most importantly the love of Christ which surpasses all else.

In His Service,

— Mardy Cobb, Director of The Church of God, Restored

[Ten years ago, very few WCG members would have ever considered leaving the WCG to go to a small church organization with no "WCG-ordained" elders. Yet, the Church of God Restored is exactly that. From its activities and meetings it appears similar to other WCG splinter-groups. The idea that there is one true church organization that teaches the Sabbath, Holy Days and anti-trinitarianism is gone from most people's minds. We can expect that groups will survive based on their ability to teach and care for their members as well as to serve others and to preach the Gospel in a way that is appropriate for their size. — NSE]

STP On the Net

The Systematic Theology Project (STP) was begun in the 1970's in the Worldwide Church of God to document, in one place, the Biblical basis for the church teaching on various issues. It was designed to go in a loose-leaf notebook so that changes could be made as new truth was discovered or when better explanations were written.

Herbert Armstrong eventually ended the project, saying that it was contrary to his teaching. From what I read, it largely supported and documented his teaching. The difficulty it produced for Mr. Armstrong however, is that it documented the problems

with his teaching. When a booklet or an article was produced on a subject, its main purpose was to teach the subject in an easy-to-understand manner, not to be an exhaustive dissertation. If the booklet left questions in the reader's mind, a WCG representative could always say, "those will probably be answered in a future article or booklet". But the STP could not do that. If it did not have the answer, then that probably meant that nobody in the organization had the answer.

For example, it quickly became clear that there were no scriptures mentioning a "third resurrection", merely an assumption that Revelation 20 is two separate resurrections.

Another example is the tithing doctrine. Almost no WCG tithing articles or booklets attempted to give a biblical or historical explanation of where believers tithed for the 40 years that the Temple still stood. Did they tithe to the Levites or "the Church"? If one says that believers immediately began tithing to the Church, then one has to wonder why the Jews did not simply charge Paul as a Benjamite unlawfully taking tithes, rather than having to make up charges against him. Furthermore, one most wonder why there are so many mentions of offerings given to the Church and no references to tithing.

The STP took the approach that tithing continued to the Levites until the destruction of the temple—and that the Gentiles probably did not tithe anywhere because the Jews of the day did not want tithes from Gentiles outside of Israel. This conclusion is probably right. But then the STP had to go on to justify tithing by saying the church had authority to change tithes to the Church—even though there is no New Testament command or precedent for it. From that point, all that is needed is for someone to ask the question: "When did 'the Church' start collecting tithes?" In which case the answer is available in the history of the "Church Fathers": the Roman church began collecting tithes in the 300s to 400s A.D.

The Systematic Theology Project has been modified to some degree for The Church of God, Intercontinental, which is the host of its web site. They did not clearly mark what they

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More Feast of Tabernacles Sites 2000

These sites are in addition to those listed in the Mar/Apr issue on page 16. Feast sites listed in this article, as far as we know, all welcome non-aligned Sabbatarians. Corporate church organization's Feasts may be located by contacting their headquarters: The United Church of God-IA at 513-576-9796, the Living Church of God at 619-613-7970; the CGI at 903-825-2525, the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship at 877-846-2072.

Please let Feast sponsors know now where you are planning to attend! It is very difficult to plan a Feast when the number of people attending is unknown. Time and money are wasted if attendance estimates are too high. Facilities become too crowded if estimates are too low. **If you are not sure yet, it is better to notify the site you are most likely to attend, then change your mind later if necessary.**

- Unless otherwise noted, all sites use the Hebrew calendar—the evening of Friday, Oct. 13th through Saturday the 21st.
- We are happy to print information on other Feast sites that welcome all brethren regardless of organizational affiliation.
- Please send information on such sites to *Servants' News* (contact info page 2 or back cover).
- **An updated list of feast sites is available at** <http://www.olivebranches.net> Or write: Olive Branches, PO Box 1293, Fairview, TN 37062.



Eastern USA

Port Austin, Michigan Update

This site is sponsored by the Servants' News Staff. Please see the details in the Jan/Feb and Mar/Apr 2000 issues, or contact us at 517-625-7480, e-mail: info@servantsnews.com

Someone has contributed a little bit of money to help someone from Michigan or adjoining states who could otherwise not attend. Please contact us if you know someone who needs help.

—Norman Edwards

Roanoke, Virginia

Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains on the shores of the most beautiful lake in the east, we three are sponsoring a feast again this fall at Bernard's Landing. Last year was such a wonderful experience, we know it should be repeated.

“But the hour is coming and now is, when true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23) If you believe in “contending for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude-3), come join us for a great Feast.

—Al Winters: 541-759-2424
Jerry Simmons: 601-736-0418
Helm Holbrath: 440-639-0916

Nashville, Tennessee

The Church of God Fellowship of Nashville, Tennessee, will meet at the beautiful *Horton Haven Christian Camp and Conference Grounds* 3 miles south of Chapel Hill, Tennessee on US 31A behind Henry Horton State Park. Hospitality hour will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday; services will be at 10 a.m. daily. Possible accommodations include Celebration Inn, 931-359-7490, \$40 for one king bed, \$45 for a queen; Richland Inn, 931-359-1800, \$46 for a one person, \$50 for two people. Henry Horton State Park, 800-250-8612 or 931-364-2222.

For more information call Paul Bell: 615-896-9365 or Wilfred Saulsberry: 931-294-2127.

Central USA

Lawrence, Kansas

Lodge facilities are available for \$11 per person per day (ages 4 and under free). Kitchen facilities provided, but bring your own food. Most people here will use “sacred names”. Contact Yahweh's New Covenant Assembly: P.O. Box 50, Kingdom City, Missouri, 65262-2562; 573-642-6566; fax: 573-642-6360.

Western USA

Pasadena, California

This year, Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God) will host its Feast of Tabernacles at Pasadena, California, the headquarters of this end-time work of God. It will be celebrated from: Friday, Oct 13 to Thursday, October 19, and Shemini Azeret (the Eighth Day) on Friday, October 20.

Services will be at The Nazarene College Center, 1530 E. Elizabeth St., Pasadena CA 91104. Special messages on the meaning of Sukkot, the lulav, historic celebration, and related Biblical prophecies will be the focus, as well as an insightful look into current prophetic development around us.

—Bill Dankenbring, Triumph Prophetic Ministries, PO Box 292, Altadena CA 91003, e-mail: triumphpro@aol.com fax: 626-797-0075.

Sunriver, Oregon

An open Feast site will be held again this year near Sunriver, Oregon. For info on this site, interested persons can access the following web page: <http://www.z2cs.com> and click on the link to Sunriver Feast.

Ocean Shores, Washington

This site, sponsored by Christian Renewal Ministries International, features many well-known speakers from the Hebrew Roots and Messianic Jewish movements. Some are returning, having spoken last year: Eddie Chumney, Hebraic Heritage Ministries International; Dean Wheelock, editor of *Hebrew Roots*; Steven Berkowitz, director of Hineni International Ministries; Randy Felton, director of Potter's Clay Ministries. *Global Mode!* will be back for a concert!

New speakers include: Hiam Levi, Director of IFMJ; Angus & Batya Wooten, MIA and House of David Ministries; Boaz Michael, director of *First Fruits of Zion*; Bruce Booker, author of *Call to Holiness*; Dr. Danny Ben Gigi, Hebrew Language Teaching

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Analysis of HWA's book *Mystery of the Ages*

by Bruce Lyon

In the past few years there has been some ado about Herbert W. Armstrong's final book, *Mystery of the Ages*. Most "Church of God" groups ignore it, but others teach from it—like the Philadelphia Church of God (PO Box 3700, Edmond, OK 73083; <http://www.pcog.org>) which reprints it and gives it to whomever asks. (Quotes in this article are from the PCG edition which sometimes differs by a page from the original 1985 edition.)

I believe Mr. Armstrong, in general, well analyzed the "why" of God's choosing of unconverted Israel:

"[God] was going to prove to the world that without His Holy Spirit... the mind of MAN, with its one spirit... could not solve human problems... The nation Israel would be his guinea pig to demonstrate that fact." (Page 169)

"God let many generations of ancient Israel and Judah PROVE by hundreds of years of human experience, that the best of humanity, without God's Holy Spirit CANNOT SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEMS AND EVILS!" (Page 174)

Pages 175-176 also show that man is "HELPLESS" and "cannot be righteous" without God's Spirit.

That God is the "SUPREME RULER over all the nations, governments and kings—that GOD RULES THE UNIVERSE!" and that "Satan the Devil remains on earth's throne only because God allows it" (pp. 297-298) are truths that we sometimes confuse with subordinate concepts.

Authority of the Book

What authority does the book have? Was it directly inspired by God? Mr. Armstrong's own words show that he regarded this book as nearly on a level with the Bible:

"Time may prove this to be the most

important book written in almost 1,900 years" (Page xii)

"...this book, written since God's time for it has come... I have been led to write this book... to share... the answers that... God reveals in his Word..." (Page xiii)

"These are the SEVEN GREAT MYSTERIES... The PLAIN TRUTH of all these mysteries is revealed in the Bible..." (Page 5)

"...these GREAT TRUTHS" (Page 12)

Also on this page he draws comparisons to the revelations God gave to Moses and Paul. On page 30 Mr. Armstrong again asserts that the truths in this book are revelations from God.

The question he never does answer is, "How can anyone be sure these are revelations from God?" Most Bible writers clearly claim that they heard

God does not fail in His purposes and plans. We should have complete confidence in the ability of "the supreme, almighty God" (regarding His part) to bring His plan for us humans to perfect and successful conclusion

God's voice or had a vision or dream. Mr. Armstrong does not say that anything was specifically given to him in some miraculous way by God. He claimed to find it in the Bible, just like we can.

I find that, along with the good material, there are noticeable errors, and even concepts contrary to the Bible. Even though Gerald Flurry, David Hulme and other heads of "Church of God" groups continue to say great things about *Mystery of the*

Ages, none of them has any miraculous proof we can observe. All we can do is check it against the Bible. Notice what Mr. Armstrong says about the Bible:

"Does it [the Bible] speak with authority? That question puzzled me and is the mystery to be cleared up in this volume." (Pages viii-ix)

"I found absolute... proof of the existence of the Supreme Creator God and also of the absolute authority of the Holy Bible as the Word of God..." (Page x)

"The Bible is the basic mystery..." (Pages 3, 5)

Mr. Armstrong states that he will show that the Bible is authoritative (page ix above). Yet, he does not follow through on that claim:

"This is not the place for a lengthy, detailed account of my intensive search in the Bible... The essential point here is the simple fact that I did find irrefutable PROOF of the divine inspiration and supreme AUTHORITY of the Holy Bible..." (Page 25).

This is exactly the place for such proof! Herbert Armstrong's words are not proof. A book that is to be the most important book since the Bible should establish the Bible as supreme. True, one can only accomplish so much in one volume of 363 pages. But Mr. Armstrong's autobiography (in two volumes) totaled over 1,300 pages. Surely, the "GREAT MYSTERIES" are more important than that!

Hit the High Spots in Order

There are many good points to the book, but I will not promote them here. (If you read the book—it does a good job of promoting itself.) I will cover the major problems and errors in the book. There are many minor problems, which, for space, cannot be covered here. Chapter 1 has several examples of such problems, but they

are related to the more significant problems of chapters 2 and 3.

Angels and Evil Spirits

Mystery number two, *Mystery of Angels and Evil Spirits*, has the same fundamental errors noted in my previous article on *The Incredible Human Potential* book (back-issues may still be available from *The Journal*, September 25, 1997 issue or from *Servants' News*). The concepts are similar.

Of course I agree with the Bible as Mr. Armstrong quotes on page 62: "Are not all angels merely spirits in the divine service, commissioned for the benefit of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14, Moffatt Translation).

Where I do find significant error is in Mr. Armstrong's idea that God's original purpose was to build holy, righteous character in the angels and upon their successful completion of His purpose for them, they would be rewarded with the rest of the universe to populate and finish the creation thereof. The plan to reproduce Himself through mankind was only a secondary backup plan (more fully expounded by Mr. Armstrong in *The Incredible Human Potential*), in case God's first plan for the angelic realm proved faulty beyond repair (which it did!). Here is a sampling (refer for more details to my previous article):

"What was God's ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE for the angels? Beyond question it is that which, now, because of angelic rebellion, has become the transcendent potential of humans!" (Page 70)

"Evidently if the now-fallen angels had maintained the earth... improved it [etc.]... they would have been offered the awesome potential of populating and carrying out a tremendous creative program throughout the entire universe." (Page 88)

The Bible does not state or demonstrate the above two quotes.

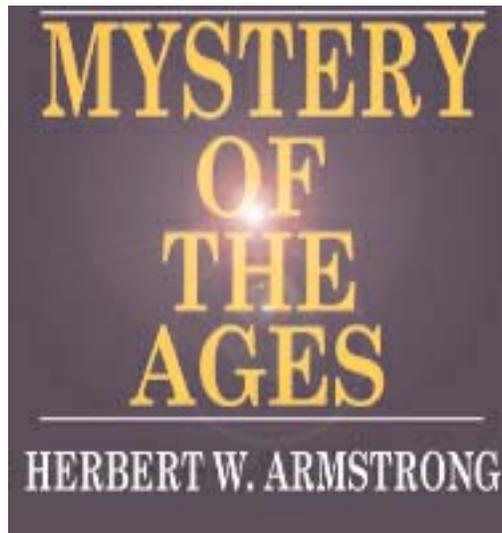
"How must God have looked at the situation, as he started renewing the face of the earth—after the colossal debacle of the angels!" (Page 87)

"As God surveyed this cataclysmic

tragedy..." (Page 93)

"God saw that no being less than God, in the God Family, could be *certainly* relied on never to sin... *And that is why God put man on the earth!* That is what caused God to do this most colossal, tremendous thing ever undertaken by the supreme, almighty God—to reproduce himself! The following chapter will make this undeniably clear." (Page 94)

What is undeniably clear in this scenario: (1) God created a class of beings



(angels) and a plan for them that could not succeed (hence, God Himself actually failed to plan well enough for them); (2) God did not accept the success of the other two thirds of the angels (and archangels Michael and Gabriel) who did prove loyal, holy and righteous, due to their original poor design capabilities.

Mr. Armstrong stated the correct principles on pages 13 and 122, "His [God's] purpose shall stand"; and page 87, "God does nothing in vain." In mysteries two and three he forgets these fundamental truths.

In my previous article about *The Incredible Human Potential*, I cite scriptures from Genesis to Revelation (see mystery number three below for a sampling) showing that God does not fail in His purposes and plans. We should have complete confidence in the ability of "the supreme, almighty God" (regarding His part) to bring His plan for us humans to perfect and successful conclusion (Phlp 1:6—NKJV

throughout when I quote the Bible; HWA mostly uses KJV).

"The good news is God's purpose through mankind and the fact that the two thirds of the angels who are holy and righteous outnumber the demons and remain as God's invisible agents to minister to and help in the righteous character development of the myriad of humans who shall yet become... members of the great God family." (Page 95)

God needs no help. He uses angels, but not because He needs them. All the archangels and regular angels are no match against the infinite and almighty creator God. A majority on God's side is not necessary. God is the majority! (1 Kings 8:27; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 40:12; Jeremiah 23:24).

The Mystery of Man

Mystery number three, *The Mystery of Man*, also has problems because it is linked inextricably (according to Mr. Armstrong—see page 99) to the previous mystery of the angels. Again, my previous article deals with this unbiblical concept (that God had to implement a "better idea" after His first plan failed).

"Much supposed 'Christian' teaching has been that God created the first man a perfect immortal being, but that when God was not looking Satan stole in and wrecked this wonderful handiwork of God. Salvation is then pictured as God's effort to repair the damage, and to restore mankind back to a condition as good as when God first created him." (Page 124)

This is remarkably similar to what Mr. Armstrong has taught in this book, and in his previous book, regarding the "first plan" with the angels and the "secondary backup plan" with mankind scenario:

1. God created the first beings (angels) perfect immortal spirits (though still unproven in loyalty, etc.).

2. God had not looked forward enough in His designing and engineering of the plan for the angelic realm so Satan stole in, corrupted the angels under him, and wrecked the wonderful handiwork/purpose-of-God for them—not only for the rebellious one third of the angels, but also for the loyal two thirds—actually exposing

the fact that God had an unworkable plan for all the angels and archangels.

3. The salvation of mankind is then pictured as God's effort—via a better plan—to repair the damage done to the Government of God which had been nullified on earth by Satan, and to restore that Government back to a condition as good as when God first created other beings.

This is contrary to what God says about His own ability to plan ahead and be successful in any and all endeavors. See Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 33:11, 104:24, 147:5; Proverbs 8:14, 22, 23; Ecclesiastes 3:14; Isaiah 14:24, 46:9-11, 55:11; Ezekiel 36:36; Luke 1:37; Ephesians 1:11; to name a few verses.

Mr. Armstrong ends mystery number three on page 135:

“God created man on the earth to build in us what the sinning angels refused to let God build in them—his perfect CHARACTER!”

But two thirds of the angels did NOT refuse; they succeeded! So should we humans not exist? Plainly, something is very wrong with Herbert Armstrong's (NOT God's!) scenario of mysteries two and three (which were taken directly from his previous book, *The Incredible Human Potential*).

God's Government Nullified?

One constant theme in both his last books: Mr. Armstrong says we humans were placed here to restore God's Government that had been nullified on the earth by the sinning angels (see pages 50, 73, 94, 100, 103, 113, 114, 122, 131, 137, etc.).

God's Government has never been nullified anywhere in the universe at any time (Genesis 14:19, 22; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 103:19; etc.—also page 20 of *The Good News*, March/April 1998).

God only allows individuals and groups to stand, for a time, in opposition to Him for His purposes. So, all this was His choice, not ours. God chose to place us here on the same planet with Satan and the demons. Nothing forced Him to do this. God makes the rules. God rules (Psalm 103:19)!

The lessons from all this

Satanic/human civilization experience—where the great majority of mankind has lived in poor to utterly horrendous circumstances throughout history—without the true knowledge of God, His law, His Spirit—are invaluable and should aid most to know deeply the value of choosing God's perfect way when the opportunity for spiritual free moral agency is given to them in the future.

Even for God's own converted children now, He often does not heal immediately or even intervene in life-threatening situations. Nor does He

Mr. Armstrong says we humans were placed here to restore God's Government that had been nullified on the earth by the sinning angels. God's Government has never been nullified anywhere in the universe at any time

alleviate financial and other burdens.

God by His wisdom and love knows what is in our best interests. And that is despite His overall desire that we “may prosper in all things and be in health.” Nothing can keep God from giving us the full benefits of 3 John 2; Psalm 103:3; Malachi 3:10; and Psalm 91:9-12, for examples (and I am talking about converted people making sincere, diligent effort toward God). God chooses when and where and in what measure to implement His stated desires for us. These are not yardsticks by which to judge our brethren spiritually.

The apostle Paul was not known for his material wealth, or for complete healing, or for absolute physical protection from all harm (1 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 6:4-5, 10, 11:23-25, 27, 30, 12:5, 7-10; Galatians 4:13-15).

What the Bible Says About the Tree of Life

“Had Adam taken of the proffered tree of life the whole course of civilization would have been entirely different. Peace, happiness, joy, health and abundance would have spread over the

earth.” (Page 140)

Just how plainly did God offer the tree of life to Adam and Eve?

Adam and Eve were unconverted, though not yet sinners, when they met Satan. Contrary to what Mr. Armstrong often alleged, they (per the biblical record) are not shown to have been given much knowledge by God aside from some material instructions (Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15-17, 19-20, 22-24, 3:1-3).

The Bible does not say that God even mentioned the tree of life to Adam and Eve. The only reference to it before their sin is the narrative account in Genesis 2:9). God gave a simple, clear command NOT to eat from the evil tree (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:2, 3, 11, 17). Other than that prohibition, the other trees are simply lumped together as edible. Is it possible that Adam and Eve had to try all of the trees to find which was the tree of life?

Why is there no positive command recorded regarding the utilization of the tree of life to Adam and Eve? Later, God gave clear instructions about good and evil to the Israelites, as well as a positive command to “choose life” (Deut 30:19).

We see Satan's clever sales pitch to Eve (Genesis 3:1-6, 13, 17). Satan was allowed to call God a liar. Note also that these two babes-in-the-garden didn't even know enough to be startled by a talking snake!

So, where was the Almighty God of the Universe's even greater sales pitch of the incredible potential of partaking of the good tree? If Adam and Eve were clearly promised eternal life by eating it, wouldn't they eat of it first?

Why does the Bible not record God giving Adam and Eve a healthy warning against Satan on one hand, but no positive encouragement to eat the right tree on the other? If this is to be a fair fight, should not Adam and Eve be prepared for both? How is it they so quickly and easily went astray at the first drop of a forked tongue?

And who allowed the arch-deceiver and most consummate liar in the universe (who already had successfully deceived millions of spirit beings, each superior to any human) into God's own garden? — God did.

I don't believe any human—or group of humans—without God's Spirit actively assisting them can possibly outwit the great evil archangel Satan (Revelation 12:3-4, 9; Isaiah 14:12-17)—the “super DECEIVER!” (page 33).

And God barred all people from that point from even the possibility of stumbling upon the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). The Bible does not clearly say that Adam and Eve ever knew where it was.

How were Adam and Eve to know whether the first being (God) was entirely truthful or not? Satan's offer appealed to their human nature: Eve wanted what looked good and sounded like an extra bargain. Adam failed to exercise good leadership and went along with his wife. What leadership training had he received prior to this?

“Had he [Adam] taken of the tree of life, he himself undoubtedly would have succeeded Satan on the throne of the earth, restoring the government of God...” (Page 141)

I doubt this was God's plan at all; the Bible does not corroborate this conjecture. The Bible says that all sin (Romans 3:9-28; Ecclesiastes 7:20), not that “Adam could have had salvation without Christ”. Even hundreds of years into the Millennium in utopian circumstances, with no Satan around, and under the perfect rule of Jesus Christ with millions of perfect God Beings assisting Him, the Bible still shows that no human will ever partake of the tree of life and walk on into God's Kingdom having never sinned.

God has so designed and engineered us in His infinite wisdom and perfect planning so that each of us will be in absolute need of the Savior, even without Satan around (as during the Millennium). So, our nature does not come directly from Satan exclusively.

How we naturally are as humans and how we naturally become is all part of our nature: human nature. This is how God created us. “In Romans 8:7 it is stated plainly that the natural mind of humans is hostile against God” (pages 37, 239).

It is not a matter of a possibility, or even of a probability, that we humans will sin in our lives (1Jn 1:8). It is an

absolute certainty. This is no accident.

Yet, God is absolutely against sin. Sin is absolutely evil, always. God commands us not to sin. Yet God also has absolutely assured us, by how He made us, that we will sin in our physical lives. See Romans 1:23, 6:19, 8:20-26; 1 Corinthians 1:19-29, 15:42-50, 53-54; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 7:28; 1 Peter 1:3, 23; Psalm 89:47; Jeremiah 10:23.

This is a paradox, at least to our limited logic. So, why would God still find fault with us? Is this fair?

Was it fair that Christ, who was perfectly innocent, died the hideous death on the cross? It is not a matter of what is fair, but what is necessary (as God has determined—Luke 22:22; John

I don't believe any human—or group of humans—without God's Spirit actively assisting them can possibly outwit the great evil archangel Satan

19:10-11). See Romans 9:11-23. What God offers us is far greater than fair (Rev 21:7).

We still have our personal responsibility. Though we have done things in ignorance or weakness, we have also willingly participated in things we knew were wrong. The dynamics in us toward sin are exceedingly strong; overall stronger and more relentless than we are. Again, this is no accident. It is the challenge God has given us. By this He will know who is really interested in what He offers.

Only the omnipotent God of love can make the end justify the means. Remember, He even sacrificed His own innocent Son (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28). I believe Romans 8:8-23, 28, 32, 35-39 fit here. God has created not only good things, but also detrimental things: harmful bacteria, viruses, diseases, poisonous plants and spiders, savage beasts, venomous snakes, biting insects, etc. (Isaiah 45:5-7; pages 39, 57, “God is Creator of ALL...”)

God could have created the human reproductive system to conceive and deliver only healthy, perfectly formed babies. He could have made us so that

we all die quickly once the results of age or massive injury occurred, versus death after often long, painful situations.

Who bound foolishness in the heart of children (Proverbs 22:15)? God knows the answer to His own rhetorical exclamation in Deuteronomy 5:29.

This latter verse, along with Genesis 6:5-7, shows that God is not emotionless about what He allows to go on. It does seem plain that the extremes of sinful behavior and atrocities are mostly the direct result of Satan's and the demons' influence (e.g. pre-Flood violence, recorded history, the endtimes, the end of the Millennium—Ephesians 6:12). Yet God allows all these up to an amazing point (billions killed, tortured, maimed, including many saints; including Christ!) before He intervenes. The extremes God allows are hard for us in our limited minds to accept or understand.

Romans 9 helps us see some of the difference in God's logic versus our logic and perspective. Also Isaiah 55:8-9.

God did create us the way we are and the way we naturally become, and He knew exactly what He was doing.

God has ensured that there will be no boasting (Rom 3:27-28; 1Cor 1:29, 4:7; Eph 2:7-10). And that we will be grateful forever (Psalms 136, 144-150, many others). God owes us nothing. But He offers us everything good forever (Rev 21:7).

God want us to know just how exceedingly evil sin really is (Rom 7:13).

We are not absolved from personal responsibility by all this. Once God calls us, then He expects us to turn from sin and overcome, through Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit. That is then our choice. It is God's universe, and we either cooperate wholeheartedly and live (but eternal life is still a gift, because God owes us nothing), or we become self-satisfied in sin and therefore die.

Racial Issues

A fair portion of the *Mystery of Civilization* and *Mystery of Israel* chapters (pp. 147-174, 341-342) contain dominant themes regarding racial purity and condemning interracial marriage.

The Bible is not concerned with the color of one's skin in any way pertaining to salvation. Even in Ancient Israel, a racially "mixed multitude" (Ex 12:37-38) went up with Israel out of Egypt. God said there was one law for them all (verses 48-49; Lev 19:33-34). Provisions were made for other races to join the congregation of Israel (Deut 21:10-13; 23:8).

Notice the following quotes that do not reference a scripture, because there is none to reference:

"There was rampant and universal interracial marriage [before the Flood]—so exceedingly universal that *Noah*, only, was unblemished or perfect in his generations—his ancestry." (Page 147)

"It is amply evident by the time of Noah there were at least the three primary or major racial strains on earth, the white, yellow and black, although interracial marriage produced many racial mixtures." (Page 148)

"It is evident that Adam and Eve were created white." (Page 148)

Where does it say that in the Bible? If all mankind is created in the image of God, why would that make any difference whatsoever?

"God originally set the bounds of national borders, intending nations to be SEPARATED to prevent interracial marriage. Notice, 'when the most High divided to the nations their inheritance [speaking of land or geographical boundaries], when he separated [notice—he *separated*] the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people...' (Deuteronomy 32:8)." (Page 148)

By itself, this is not proof that God's overriding concern was to prevent interracial marriage. Certainly the land-inheritance system that God doubtless will utilize in the Millennium, as He did in ancient Israel, would minimize interracial marriage. But the Bible does not at all prohibit interracial marriage per se.

"His [Noah's] wife and three sons were of that same white strain. But Japheth evidently had married an Oriental woman, and Ham a black." (Pages 148-149)

"God intended to prevent racial intermarriages." (Page 151)

"Ham, married to a black woman,

had black children... Japheth, married to a yellow woman, started his own family, which were of yellow extraction. The early history recorded in the Bible speaks of 'families,' rather than 'races'." (Page 154)

This creates quite a problem! Would God condemn the world because of interracial marriages, then preserve the races through two interracial marriages to Noah's "white" sons? By this logic, the marvelous, interesting variety of ethnic groups throughout mankind are a direct result of Japheth's and Ham's mixed marriages. Maybe God preserved the races that way, maybe He

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did it another way. But why make such dogmatic statements without biblical or historical proof—or the clear word of God?

"The probability is that these people [Israelites] were all—or nearly all—of the white racial strain, unchanged since creation... He [Abraham] prevented his son Isaac from inter-marrying among the dark Canaanites then in the land... The whole community of Haran, where Laban [Jacob's uncle] lived, was of the same family ancestry as Abraham... Even the maids [from whom four of Jacob's sons were born] were undoubtedly of pure Hebrew stock." (Page 167)

Words like "probability", "dark Canaanites", "whole community", and "undoubtedly" do not sound like the Bible, history or divine inspiration. They are guesses. Pharaoh gave Joseph (son of Israel) an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife. Was she white or dark? Actually, the Bible makes no effort to give us racial details of most people in it. There is no clear section of the Bible dealing with interracial marriage and racial purity.

God gave Israel prohibitions against intermarrying with other peoples, but it appears that these things are for reli-

gious (spiritual) not racial (physical) reasons. There are examples of Israelites marrying people of other races who have accepted Israel's God—and these people are called righteous. But *Mystery of the Ages* continues, ignoring such examples:

"Jesus Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, and it was necessary that He be of the original pure racial strain, even as Noah was." (Page 174)

The Bible teaches that Christ's ancestry was mixed. His genealogy mentions mostly men, but specifically four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah's wife Bathsheba (Matthew 1:3-6). Some historians believe they were all Gentiles. Two unquestionably were Gentiles: Rahab was from Jericho before Israel conquered it; Ruth was from Moab (Ruth 1:4); Bathsheba was formerly the wife of Uriah, a Hittite, and the daughter of Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite (2Sam 11:3; 2Sam 23:34—Gilon is a Gentile area). Tamar, Judah's "harlot" came from Adullam, the same place

where Judah's wife came from, who was a Canaanite (Gen 38:3-30).

Christ had at least two Gentile ancestors. And one, Rahab, came from the "dark" Canaanites then in the land.

Ephraim and Manasseh

"Ephraim and Manasseh journeyed on into the British Isles. They became a colonizing people, and according to prophecy they were to lose their first colony." (Page 183)

I have never seen this prophecy quoted in WCG literature and I do not believe it is in the Bible. Remember that Ephraim and Manasseh—the progenitors of the birthright tribes—were half-blooded Egyptians. See pages 42, 103, *United States and Britain in Prophecy*, 1980 edition, by Mr. Armstrong. The ancient Egyptian people (Mizraim) descended from Ham and his "black" wife, as did Canaan.

"...neither America nor Britain has come out on top in any major conflict since that time [Korean War, 1950-1953]!" (Page 189)

Wrong! Britain won the Falklands War (1982). America led and mostly staffed the successful Gulf War (1991);

Iraq was booted out of Kuwait according to the UN mandate. Mr. Armstrong wrote this book in 1985—a very uninspired knowledge of history and prophecy.

The Mystery of the Church

“Peter was the first and chief apostle.” (Page 221)

The Bible does not use the term “chief apostle” (or words to that effect) in exclusive reference to the apostle Peter. My reading of various key verses does not indicate the “primacy of

Peter”. See Acts 8:14, Acts 15; Galatians 2:6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:17. The Bible says that Christ holds this honor (Hebrews 3:1).

“The Pharisees KNEW JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH!” (Page 224)

The Bible does not say that. Some thought that He was a teacher from God (John 3:2), but there are numerous statements where they denied His authority, teaching and even His miracles.

“The Messiah, and he alone, would be able to overcome and conquer

Satan—to QUALIFY to replace Satan ON THE THRONE OF THE EARTH! Only through him could the sons of Adam be reconciled to GOD...” (Page 235)

Another constant theme in both Mr. Armstrong’s last two books was that Christ had to “qualify” in order to replace Satan on earth’s throne, as just quoted. That God the Father required Christ to go through what He did as a human—yes, He had to withstand Satan’s best shots. There was the calculated risk that He could sin.

And, of course, God required a sacrifice for our sins according to His plan, applicable upon godly repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). But was Christ at any time **unqualified** to be King or even **less qualified** than Satan? What scripture could anyone use to prove that?

“God left them [sons of Adam] to their own devices—knowing full well they would willingly and willfully follow automatically Satan’s ‘GET’ way.” (Page 235)

I agree.

“For GOD hath concluded them all in unbelief [“disobedience” per NKJV], that he might have mercy UPON ALL!” (Romans 11:32)” (Page 236)

I believe that God planned all along that we humans begin spiritually from a sinful state (whatever time after birth once we first sin) and that we struggle—

with God’s help and mercy all the way (Colossians 1:10-29; Philippians 2:12-13; etc.)—toward the tree of life (Revelation 2:7 and 22:14).

On pages 48-50, 205 to 273, and 325 to 351, Mr. Armstrong holds forth in no uncertain terms that the Church must believe exactly the same things and cannot be divided into more than one organization. And it must be hierarchical (such as we experienced during his time) with one man in control and command under Christ.

I believe God’s Church is a spiritual organism that cannot be, in this age, defined by any human or visible organizational boundaries.

Also on page 251 he refers to the 18 restored truths (published by Joseph Tkach some time after Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986, see also pages 241-251). The very first of these “truths” prohibits a general conference and voting as a means of governance. Even though the UCG-IA may verbally embrace the “18 truths”, they are not following the first one. I think they are learning.

Imperfect Prophetic Interpretation

“Nebuchadnezzar was the first real world ruler. He had conquered a vast empire...” (Page 297)

Nebuchadnezzar ruled the region of the fertile crescent and Egypt. By the standards of the day it was a great empire. But it was only a relatively small chunk of the whole world. The previous Assyrian Empire ruled that same region.

“[Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was] to reveal—preserved in writing for us TODAY—what is to happen ‘in the latter days’—actually within the next two decades—THIS LAST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY!” (Pages 297-298)

Those events (including Christ’s Return, Daniel 2:44), therefore, must come to pass by December 31, 2000 AD. This is yet another example of Mr. Armstrong setting dates.

I distinctly recall Mr. Armstrong saying, with obvious satisfaction, that whilst others in the Church had set dates for the endtime events, he himself never did. He claims to have been

Continued on page 43

In 1969 a 19-page double-spaced article was sent to the Plain Truth editorial staff for publication. The headline began like this:

THE BIBLE REVEALS THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Things Which Have Been Kept Secret From the Foundation of the World But Are Now Revealed in The Pages of Your Bible So You can Understand!

Was this Herbert Armstrong’s initial version of *Mystery of the Ages*? Actually, no. It was an article by Bernard H. Kelly, a 1963 Ambassador College Graduate and editorial employee of the Worldwide Church of God. Whilst *Mystery of the Ages* is obviously a much longer work and contains many things not in Bernard Kelly’s article, the concept of the Bible revealing the mysteries of God is the same. Herbert Armstrong showed that he was not above plagiarism with his books titled: *U.S. & BC in Prophecy, Has Time Been Lost?* and *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. (For details, see *Servants’ News* issues Nov 1998, p. 19, 23 and May/June 1999, p. 32.)

Photocopiers were not common in the 1960s and Mr. Kelly said he did not make a carbon copy. We don’t have any specific proof that Mr. Armstrong used this article in writing *Mystery of the Ages*, but he did review most articles considered for publication in the 1960’s. Also, we can be sure that he did collect a lot of research material for his last book. He quotes extensively from C. Paul Meredith’s thesis, which was published in the early 1960s. He also makes use of the *U.S. & B.C. in Prophecy* and quite a few other Church of God publications. *Mystery of the Ages* was clearly not written by Mr. Armstrong typing or dictating all new material, but was a compilation with some new writing.

For more details, Bernard Kelly may be reached at 130 W. Huntington Dr, #120, Arcadia, CA, 91007-3025.

e-mail: bhkell1@juno.com

He recently began producing a paper entitled *The Bible Expositor*.

—Norman Edwards

'Building the Next Church' Conference

Building the Next Church was sponsored by the International Bible Learning Center (IBLC) on June 30 to July 2. About 100 people (including children) attended the conference—most from independent congregations, though there were several who normally attend UCG-IA. One of the greatest concerns I heard before the conference was, "Are they going to try to build a new church organization?" That concern turned out to be unfounded as none of the speakers or other participants tried to do this. The emphasis seemed to be on each group learning to do what the Eternal wants, and being willing to work with other groups when it makes sense to do so.

The conference was divided into 11 speaking sessions and two interactive sessions. Most of the speakers took a few questions and comments after they spoke. There was also a congregational singing and special music hour, a family dance, and four fine meals. There is not space to fully summarize each session, so this writer will attempt to give the overall impact and list one or two points that seemed especially helpful.

John Merritt spoke on *The Church as a Family*. The church should grow like a family—slowly and steadily, not like a mass-marketing campaign. At a Church of God Seventh Day conference, brethren whose congregations **were growing** believed these points were important: **1)** Everyone in the congregation needs something to do—whether it be a small or large responsibility. **2)** Be involved in the local community. **3)** Invite friends and family. **4)** Make sure everyone learns something in every service—teach the young people. **5)** Keep services enjoyable. One group went door-to-door surveying people, asking them where

they went to church. Later, they contacted the ones who said that they did not go anywhere and a substantial congregation grew from it.

Roger Sandmark presented *Toxic vs. Healthy Churches*. We used to have an overly negative opinion of "the world"—those not in the WCG. Unfortunately, some people are now extending that approach to everyone who is not in their tiny splinter group. Non-Sabbatarian congregations of all sorts are growing in many places, while many of ours are not. We need to put aside a lot of insignificant differ-

"Local congregations need to let the holy spirit draw them together, they need leadership that is accountable to the congregation, and they need to be willing to work with each other and begin ministering to people's needs in the name of Christ."

ences and be ready to respond to what Christ will do next.

Ray Wooten conducted an open forum discussion, focusing on making Christ the center of what we do. A poignant comment by Harry Curley: The King James Bible mentions "unity" 3 times and "peace" over 400 times. Too often, we have striven for unity in all things, and have lost peace, the more important thing.

Wes White spoke on *The Church of God Mindset: Historical Fact vs. Fiction*. In the early 1800's, William Miller (a Sunday-keeper) traveled the country teaching that Heaven is not the reward of the saved, but that Christ was returning for a millennial reign. Without a big organization or budget, he taught millions of Americans. He

taught Christ would return in 1843/1844—which became known as "the great Disappointment". Some dropped out, but many went to their Bibles to see if they were lacking something.

The Seventh Day Adventists, the Church of God Seventh Day and the Church of God, Anderson Indiana (Sunday keeping) emerged. All these groups grew after this. The Church of God Seventh Day suffered from divisions in the 1930s and shrunk. During this confusion, Herbert Armstrong began his work.

By 1950, the Feast of Tabernacles attendance was only 90 people. Growth was greatest during the 50s and 60s—when hierarchical government and fleeing in 1972 were preached. Quickest growth appears to come when there is one strong leader and when a definite prophetic message is preached—but a large decrease in membership usually occurs within a few years after the leader dies or when the prophetic interpretation fails.

In both big hierarchical groups and small scattered groups, local leaders (either "ordained" ministers or "pillar" brethren) make a major difference. When many local leaders are serving and caring for the brethren, that congregation often grows when the organization is in decline. An uncaring spirit in local leaders can produce local decline even when the organization is growing. Completely isolated local groups have grown steadily over generations when there are kind and caring local leaders present.

David Havir gave a presentation titled *Deconstructing the Myths: What the Church Should Be and Do*. He distributed the drawing (shown on page 13) which can be seen as an old lady looking to the lower left, or a young

lady looking away to the upper left. The hair and coat is the same for both ladies, but the chin of the young is the nose of the old and an ear of the young is an eye of the old, etc. Doctrines are like this. We get used to certain scriptures meaning certain things to us, they all fit into our view of a topic, and we often never take a "second look" to see if there is any other possible meaning.

David Havir went over many scriptures explaining exactly what is the church and what is a minister. He mentioned that a lot of his acquaintances were mean to him when the Big Sandy Church of God separated from the UCG-IA, but like Joseph's captivity, they meant it for evil, but it worked for good. He learned that when problems like these arise, it is important to focus on the issues: what the Bible says and what it does not, not upon who does or does not have God's Spirit.

In the comments portion, Allie Dart pointed out that we should not find it strange that there are inconsistent definitions of "the church", the WCG taught it was the "one True Church" and at the same time taught that the Church of God Seventh Day was the "Sardis Era" of the true Church. Dixon Cartwright said that **organisations** are **not** "churches", nor are they "members" of the True Church; people are members of the one True Church.

Ronald Dart spoke on *Building the Next Church*. He clearly stated that the Church of God refers to **1)** a local community of believers or **2)** the entire body of believers throughout all ages. Everything else is a "ministry" that exists outside the church.

The Church of God is not a delicate flower—it has flourished during rough times. Christ is building it. We can work with Him as "subcontractors". Every man's work will be tried (1Cor 3:9-15). The WCG was really one man's ministry. It caught fire and burned, but some people remained. In the early 1900s, there was a tremendous push away from local government toward centralized civil governments. Mr. Armstrong did the same thing in his ministry.

Local congregations need to let the holy spirit draw them together, they need leadership that is accountable to

the congregation, and they need to be willing to work with each other and begin ministering to people's needs in the name of Christ.

George Crow talked about *The Acts of a Growing Church*. He has come to realize that we have a history of being concerned with "our numbers", not with "God's numbers"—we built large groups not realizing who was dedicated to what. If the WCG 30% growth had continued until the year 2012, the entire world would have been in the WCG. Would they all have been truly converted?

Mr. Crow once thought of going to court to try to preserve the assets of the WCG to "do God's work", but has since come to see that God does not need them. Christ had only 120 followers after three years of ministry. When God wanted His Church to grow, He worked miracles through the apostles and thousands came to Christ (Acts 3 and 9). If we had such miracles today, would we use them to declare the greatness of God, or the greatness of our group?

Bill Kilgore, a Seventh Day Adventist, gave his experience with *Personal Evangelism*. We all need to avoid being like Jonah, who pouted when he did not like the job he was given. If He clearly gives us something, we should do it. If we want to evangelize, start with **1)** ourselves, then look outward: **2)** immediate family, **3)** relatives, **4)** close friends, **5)** neighbors, **6)** casual acquaintances and **7)** strangers. We should keep these things in perspective: we should not offend those closest to us in an effort to reach a stranger. God is the one who calls people. We can plant seed—put out ads, literature, etc., but He has to bless it for it to bear fruit. Teens need to be challenged, not continuously entertained.



He once asked a teen-group if any of them would be interested in spending three weeks to build a church building in central America: there was no modern plumbing or air conditioning. About 30 volunteered. He made sure that they all looked at the pictures of the area so that they understood exactly where they were going. By the time he was done, 50 volunteered. The teens went, worked long hard hours in primitive conditions and completed their goal. On the way home, one of the teens began circulating a list for the many who wanted to go again the next year.

Linda White, the conference organizer, spoke on *Where Do Women Fit in the Next Church?* The presentation was divided into two parts, the first part covered many scriptures showing the diversity of ways in which women served in the Bible.

The second part focused on how women are serving in the independent Church of God groups today. Linda stated that possibly the biggest mistake in dealing with women during the WCG years was encouraging young women to council with the minister rather than with the older women (Titus 2:3-5). Too often, the women

received idealistic but impractical advice and sometimes ended up in an affair.

Linda had two writing boards set up, one for Church-related activities that were not appropriate for women to

“The electronic forum provides a means where a variety of individuals in different places can ask a teacher questions—and thousands (or millions) can watch it as it happens”

fulfill, and another for activities that they could. She started with “women publicly teaching men” on the “inappropriate” board (1Tim 2:12, 1Cor 14:33-35) and women privately teaching men (Acts 18:26), women teaching women (Titus 2:4) and women praying and prophesying (1Cor 11:1-16) on the “appropriate” board.

She went on to ask those attending the conference about other activities such as congregation host, board member, treasurer, piano player, choir director, moderator, teen teacher, prophetess, etc. At least some of those attending said that women had done each of those things in their congregation—which seemed to surprise some people—including Linda. Mrs. White intends to produce an article for *Servant's News* along the lines of her presentation.

Alan Ruth's presentation was titled *The Coming Cyberchurch*. He was not proposing that eventually a church would consist of individuals linked only by computer, but showing that some groups use the Internet as their primary means of evangelism and distributing their teachings. The Internet has not replaced personal contact, but in some cases it has replaced radio, TV, magazines and printed literature.

It has also opened up a tremendous ability for interactive study. The electronic forum provides a means where a variety of individuals in different places can ask a teacher questions—and thousands (or millions) can watch it as it happens. The cost of all of this

can be far less than conventional means—an average of one cent for someone to download a substantial piece of literature.

During another session, people were asked to raise their hands if they did **not** have access to the Internet—only 2 hands went up. Ron Dart remarked that at a previous conference only two years ago, about 50% had Internet access.

Melodee Overton talked about *Conflict Resolution for Churches*. Her presentation was based around the three-step Matthew 18 instructions, but covered numerous little problems that come up along the way. Her conclusions:

1) If resolution takes place at any of the three steps, then you have gained your brother.

2) If resolution is not forthcoming, sooner or later you must move forward with your life.

3) Develop faith that all things work together for good.

4) Take unresolved conflict to God in prayer and leave it with Him.

5) Accept God's timetable.

6) Keep the good and discard the rest.

7) Learn from your mistakes, we all make them.

8) With practice, all things get easier.

9) We often ask “Why me?” Short answer: to build godly character, to give glory to God, to learn how to properly help others.

10) Continue to be a Christian “Work-in-Progress”.

Dixon Cartwright spoke on *Transparency and Openness*. Dixon explained that the various independent Sabbatarian publications (*the Journal*, *Servants' News*, and many others) have greatly changed the way church organizations operate. They can no longer ignore significant questions, ideas, or problems—their members will find out about them.

Because of this, there are now four things that many “Church of God” can do which were almost impossible five years ago:

1) Visit friends in another group.

2) Attend a Feast with another group.

3) Attend an open forum where the

leaders can answer questions.

4) Make their own decisions about doctrine and practices.

Some people think these things are good, others think they are bad. Yet it has been **this free exchange of ideas** that has helped ex-WCG members heal from the difficulties of the past.

The hope of most of the Church organizations is that all of the WCG members will someday get back in “their group”—which seems less and less likely to happen. We need to heal more quickly and begin to have outgoing love for others. Is it possible that our readiness to help others determines, in part, **when** the Father calls people?

Ronald Dart and **Dave Havir** conducted the final question/answer/comment session. One person said: going to conferences is not the work of a believer. Conferences are to encourage and to help believers do their real work—personally growing in Christ

“it has been this free exchange of ideas that has helped ex-WCG members heal from the difficulties of the past”

and helping others. Even though a diversity of beliefs existed on some issues, there were no arguments or harsh words. Ronald Dart even reflected on a new-found freedom: “The freedom to say ‘I don't know’”.

This is living in reality—a far improvement from the groups that claim to be the one true church and have the answer to nearly everything. When we look at the suffering of the past that occurred from leaders who “thought they knew”, but did not, we can all rejoice in the freedom to do what we clearly understand to be true from the Bible, and to go on learning about the rest—rather than think we already know it all.

This writer would like to thank Linda White and those who helped her for organizing the conference. Tapes will be available from IBLC, (toll free) 877-444-4252 or info@iblc.org ☐

—Norman S. Edwards

Another View and Another Lesson

Our previous issue (Mar/Apr) contained an article *Are We Living in the Last Days?* It showed how the apostle Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-32 and referred to his own time as the “last days”. Most of Joel chapters 2 and 3 speak of great disaster coming upon Israel and then the nation’s restoration at the return of the Messiah. The point of the article was that Peter was inspired to understand that certain parts of this book were being fulfilled in his day—the pouring out of the Spirit and the offer of salvation: “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

On the next page we have included an article by Ron Wilson about these verses. He points out that Peter also quoted the verses about the “wonders in heaven and earth” and showed how they were fulfilled during Peter’s time. Mr. Wilson claims that Peter said all of this prophecy was fulfilled in his time, but the book of Acts does not actually say that. Nevertheless, we can ask, “why did Peter quote it all, if it were not being fulfilled?”

Mr. Wilson goes on to show how that all of Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled during the time of the New Testament. Some of the “fulfillments” he identifies would have been witnessed by only a few people—not the many who were living at his time. Others, such as the “moon turning to blood” being a full moon at sunset, are common astronomical occurrences that might be hard to accept as special “signs” from the Eternal.

But this is where we can learn an important lesson about prophecy. Prophecy is a symbolic outline of future events. The Eternal is free to bring about those prophesied events in any way that he chooses—often based upon what people do. The Eternal does not force people to do evil.

When He prophesies that someone will do evil, He does not have to force someone to do evil, He usually finds too many people who are eager to fulfill His prophecy. All he needs to do is make sure that someone is **not** being

punished for their sins for a while: “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl 8:11).

Of the many Old Testament prophecies about Christ, most seem to be about his genealogy, his miracles and other common events that people of his day could have personally verified. But there were other prophecies that only a few would have witnessed, such as the giving of bread to Judas (John 13:18) or the gambling for His garments (John 19:24). It is completely God’s choice as to how a prophecy will be fulfilled. Christ could have given bread to His betrayer in the temple or some other public setting, but he gave it at a small, private meal.

Similarly, someone may have been planning to make Christ’s garment a prize for some public game but at the last minute realized it was wrong—so the prophecy was fulfilled by a few soldiers. Did the Eternal make those soldiers dishonor Christ? Probably not. Some of the soldiers actually believed that He was the son of God (Matt 27:54).

What would have happened if all of the soldiers associated with His trial would have refused to gamble for His garments? Would the Father have to force a soldier to be evil? No. The garment could have been left on the ground—and a couple of beggars could have gambled for it—maybe without even knowing who it belonged to.

The Bible clearly teaches that the actions and decisions of people can change the way prophecy is fulfilled:



The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it (Jer 18:7-10).

So was Joel 2:28-32 completely fulfilled in the time of Peter? It may have been. Or, it may be fulfilled in the future in a much more dramatic and powerful way.

Unless the Eternal has told us, we cannot know for sure. What actually will happen in the future depends upon the future actions of individuals—including you and me.

The Eternal created the Earth and all that is in it, but gave dominion over it to mankind (Gen 1:28). He told Adam to “tend and keep” the Garden of Eden and He brought the animals “to Adam to see what he would call them” (Gen 2:19-20).

As the years have gone by, mankind has completely destroyed some species of plants and animals that the Eternal made.

But every step of the way, the Eternal has been able to bring His plans and prophecies to pass, at the same time letting each man reap what he sows—an operation that is complex and ingenious beyond any man’s understanding (Eccl 3:11).

—Norman Edwards

The article “Was the Prophecy of Joel 2 Fulfilled?” begins overleaf

Was the Prophecy of Joel 2 Fulfilled?

When we look at the first Pentecost the disciples or apostles celebrated after Jesus' death, we can read part of the message that Peter proclaimed, which includes a section from a prophecy in Joel 2:

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel'" (Acts 2:14-16).

Peter tells the people that heard the rushing wind that what they have witnessed is the fulfillment of a prophecy that he is going to tell them, a prophecy that Joel spoke and the Jews of that time would have known. Peter tells them what they are witnessing is not drunkenness, but a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32.

This is the prophecy that Peter said was fulfilled:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your you men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show signs in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:17-21).

Peter quotes a section of prophecy from Joel, not just a couple of verses. Peter is saying that the whole prophecy was fulfilled, not just part of it. Peter does not imply that only part was fulfilled, but he says "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Many people feel that Peter could not be saying that all this was fulfilled because the signs and such "are not to come until the great day of the Lord." But is that what Peter meant?

We have many examples of prophecies of Jesus being fulfilled that were only one verse quoted of the prophecy that Jesus fulfilled. The gospel writer did not quote more of the prophecy that did not have to do with what Jesus did at that moment. Peter did not just quote the beginning of the prophecy, but the whole of it and said that it, the whole of it, was what they were seeing fulfilled before their eyes. Is it possible?

First, we have to see that Peter understood that the last days started when Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. He understood that he was now living in the last days.

"God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb 1:1-2).

"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another. He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:24-26).

The writer of Hebrews shows that we are now in the last days and that Christ offered the sacrifice of Himself for us at the end of the ages—the start of a new time referred to as the last days.

"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet 1:20).

We can see that Peter did understand that he was in the last days and the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. So, we see from other scriptures that the last days Joel mentioned were starting and that this prophecy was now taking place.

What Was the Prophecy About?

The prophecy was about the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all men, not just select men of Israel. God promised He

would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, your sons and daughters would prophesy (tell people about God and Christ), young men would see visions, old men would dream dreams. So children would receive the Holy Spirit as well as old people.

God did not want to allow people to misunderstand the word *all*, so he even includes the servants that people had, not just men, but women also. God literally meant all people, men, women and children. All people would prophesy and tell of God and Jesus. All men would be saved that called upon the name of the Lord. We see here the gospel of faith in Jesus Christ would save people, not their works.

But what about the seeming switch to the future, the 'day of the Lord', in verses 19 and 20? Is there really a switch? Was Peter mistaken and only part of the prophecy fulfilled? The answer is definitely not! Peter knew that it was all fulfilled, it had happened and the things they had seen were the witness that it was happening right then at that time. The prophecy was fulfilled and from that time on the Holy Spirit was to be available to all mankind that would put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

"I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord." (Acts 2:19-20)

Joel in the prophecy explains that all these things that he was told, the coming of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, and yes, these signs, would come before that day. Mankind would have the Holy Spirit before that awful time. We, today, know that it has been available for almost 2,000 years and the day of the Lord has not come yet, but the signs did. The signs all happened before Peter gave the message on Pentecost. Let's look at the signs that Joel said would show that the Holy Spirit was going to be given.

Fulfillments of Signs

Because it is possible to show more

fulfillments of these signs, I will separate the “wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath” as different from the “blood, fire, vapor of smoke, sun darkness and moon to blood” even though the text indicates that they are really speaking of the same things.

1. Wonders in heaven above

a.) “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’...”

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was” (Matt 2:1-2, 9).

b.) “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:8-14).

c.) “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11).

2. Signs in earth beneath

a.) “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to

the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” And they remembered His words” (Luke 24:1-8).

Joel in the prophecy explains that all these things that he was told, the coming of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, and yes, these signs would come before that day

b.) At the end of the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus Jesus walked with them and taught them:

“But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:29-31).

c.) “Now as they said these things Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have’” (Luke 24:36-39)

d.) “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they

went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Matt 27:51-53).

And there are additional miracles that Jesus did that I have not the space to mention.

3. Blood

The blood is pretty self-explanatory, it is Jesus Christ’s blood shed on the cross for our sins. The blood that today covers our guiltiness for the sins that we have committed. The blood that makes it possible for us to have the very righteousness of Jesus given on our account, that we can be children of God.

4. Fire

“Then there appeared to them dividing tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3).

5. Vapor of smoke

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

In Joel 2:30 it is translated “pillars of smoke”. Pillars comes from the Hebrew word, Strong’s #8490, *timarah*, which means “a column, cloud, or pillar”. In Acts 2:19 the word “vapor” comes from Strong’s #822, *atmis*, which comes from #109 and is translated “mist or vapor”. Strong’s #109, *aer*, means “to breathe unconsciously, to blow air”. Thus the mighty wind would be blowing air.

When you have dusty streets and dirt floors and there is a wind mighty enough that the multitude of people there in Jerusalem could hear it from wherever they were, there would be much dust, like smoke in the air.

We see from the words that God chose to be used that it could be a cloud or a blowing that formed a cloud. The rushing mighty wind was the “vapor of smoke” or the blowing of air to make a smoke-like appearance. There had to be some noticeable sign that the Jews knew where to run.

“And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” Acts 2:6).

Another sign on the earth.

6. The sun shall be turned to darkness

“Now from the sixth hour until the

Continued on page 35

Ambassador Report: Eric Snow's Assessment

Below is reproduced a letter from Eric Snow with comments inserted by Norman Edwards, in response to the earlier articles about the *Ambassador Report*.

LETTER:

June 23, 2000

To the Editor:

Since I'm someone who had actual dealings with *Ambassador Report* and the late John Trechak (I even got mentioned in it once or twice by name due to letters I wrote to him), not to mention anti-cultists in general, my perspective on SN's (tepid) endorsement of reading *Ambassador Report* is worth some consideration. It's important to realize that even though it's clear the WCG had many problems, including sexual sins among the leadership (GTA in particular) and tithes that weren't especially well spent, it still did the largest evangelistic work of any non-Trinitarian Sabbatarian group since the first century A.D.

The sins of its leadership don't refute theological truth as a matter of epistemology (i.e. how we know that we know). Hence, any readers who go out and read *Ambassador Report* (AR) for the first time should realize that their personal salvation isn't going to be lost or gained based upon the sins of HWA, GTA, or this or that elder, pastor, or evangelist. HWA's and GTA's interpretations of Scripture were fundamentally correct (on major issues, not some "picky points" or minor teachings).

RESPONSE: I agree with your fundamental conclusion that a person can teach truth while their life is very sinful. People should not reject biblical truth simply because King Solomon, Herbert Armstrong, David Koresh, or the Pope taught it. It is quite possible for the student to be saved whilst the teacher is lost. Christ told people to do what the Pharisees taught, but not follow what they did (Matt 23:3). I think most people understand that. The real questions that need to be answered are these:

1. Was HWA "the end-time apostle" or "the Elijah to come"?
2. Should we believe and teach doctrine and prophecy because HWA taught it, even though we cannot independently "prove it" from the scriptures?
3. Were the WCG and its leaders

examples that we should still hold up to the rest of the world and say "this was the place where God was working"?

These issues become more important when one becomes convinced that HWA did teach some major doctrinal errors—see our Dec 1998 issue, *Herbert Armstrong's 18 Truths Report Card* and our other papers: *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* and *How Do we Give to the Eternal?* (Norman realizes that Eric disagrees with the conclusions of some of these writings, but if you have not read them, we encourage you to get them and compare the contents to the scriptures for yourself.)

LETTER: After I first started receiving the WCG's literature in 1982, as a 16-year-old high school student who had very little previous religious training (the Unitarian-Universalist church I had had some contact with as a kid was definitely a "social club" and a joke of a "church"), I became soon converted to the truth of the Sabbath and the denial of eternal torment in hell. As I attended the first year of college (Jackson Community College), I happened to see a *Christianity Today* magazine in the college library which had a cover article on the SDA church and Ellen White. Since at that time I had not attended the SDA church, I found it all very interesting.

But even MORE interesting was a certain one-page article towards its back on the WCG. It discussed Raymond McNair's (messy) divorce, and then mentioned Mr. Armstrong getting divorced from his SECOND wife. Since I didn't even know he even had a second wife, I decided to engage in a research project that most "prospective members" of the WCG had never engaged in: I decided to look up all the magazine articles I could find on the WCG using the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*.

Needless to say, I found a very unpleasant mess. I read about the whole receivership/lawsuit mess, GTA's sexual sins and eventual permanent exile, the D & R rules' disastrous consequences, the deadly cost of

the ban on medical care, various revolts and schisms, the failed 1972/75 predictions, mis-spent tithes, oppressed members, overkills on corporal punishment of children, etc. The magazine articles came mostly either from a skeptical, secular, liberal perspective or the conservative, evangelistic "anti-cult" perspective. Between the two, the coverage was almost completely negative.

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for this honest admission. We hope everyone understands this. Anyone who researches the WCG in a library is likely to find only negative information. Another researcher who tried recently reported that he could find almost **no** information—smaller libraries simply do not keep all magazines for 15 years.

The WCG leaders never wrote articles for mainstream magazines or invited their writers to see the good things that they were doing. Books tend to last longer, but the few WCG books were not published by mainstream publishing houses and are no longer available (except from ministries like the PCG).

LETTER: But, I hesitated very little: After attending the SDA church as a mere stopgap for nine months in 1985-86 because I knew full well my mother wasn't going to lend me the family car to drive to services in Ann Arbor or Lansing, Michigan (approximately a 35-mile drive either way from Jackson, MI, where I lived), I started attending the WCG the December of 1986 after I moved to East Lansing in order to attend MSU. I was baptized in the August of 1987. For even then, I was exclusively driven by doctrinal considerations, and I saw the SDA church as no proper substitute, since they were Trinitarians and they didn't observe the Holy Days. Truth matters more than the hypocrisy within the leadership.

RESPONSE: If one is simply a student learning at a distance, then your last statement makes some sense. You only learn and do the good things the teacher teaches, but do not follow his bad example. But if you directly experienced

the negative side of hypocritical leadership, you would probably see it differently. What if corrupt leadership broke up **your** family, got **your** daughter pregnant, took **your** life-savings or caused you to lose all of **your** friends of many years through unjust disfellow-shipment?

As far as eternal judgment is concerned, **numerous scriptures** teach (Matt 23; Luke 12:47-48; John 9:41; Rom 2:13; James 1:22; 3:1, etc.) that those hypocrites who know the most but do the least will receive the greater judgment.

“Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes [expensive business suits], love greetings in the marketplaces [wherever they were among the members], the best seats in the synagogues [separate minister sections at services], and the best places at feasts [the best motels and minister-only meals], who devour widows' houses [HWA asked for widows mites over 100 times in co-worker letters, and for a pretense make long prayers [or give long sermons]. These will receive greater condemnation” (Luke 20:46-47).

LETTER: When I would look at anti-cultist research on the WCG in local Christian bookstores, I could readily see the appalling errors in it. They were constantly stating the doctrines wrong, such as accusing HWA of being (for example) an Arian, a polytheist, a believer in salvation by works, etc. So, the ambitious soul that I was, I decided to systematically scan over the WCG literature that I did have, making notations on it, and bought books and copied articles from magazines by anti-cultists.

I then wrote what became (as amateurish as some parts were) a source book on WCG theology, featuring long direct quotes from WCG booklets, books, and magazines in order to rebut one or more chosen statements taken from this or that anticultist (such as Dave Hunt, Walter Martin, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, Bob Larson, Paul Benware, and Roger Chambers). I showed these people to be in error time and time again when compared to what HWA and other church writers had in print in the 1980's.

I did the basic writing of what became its first edition during Christmas break (hey, call it what it is!) of the sophomore year at college (1985-86). I did read and receive some

copies of *Ambassador Report* when doing my anti-cult research and refutations as a WCG member, although I never officially subscribed until 1995, when the breakup of the WCG over the “New Covenant” theology began. (I HAD to have an independent news source then, since I didn't know that something like *In Transition* or *The Journal* would eventually exist).

But as I told Mr. Trechak, I found what he wrote to be largely irrelevant to most of what I wrote defending the WCG, because he focused on the personal sins and failings of the leadership, while what I defended (except for one chapter of what ultimately became 152 pages) concerned the anticultists' doctrinal misconceptions of the WCG's teachings.

RESPONSE: I agree that the anti-cultists were not very good at refuting WCG doctrine and that they frequently did not even state it correctly. Because they did such a poor job of this, most WCG members did not believe they were telling the truth when they wrote about the leaders' sins—when, in fact, they usually were. *Ambassador Report* was primarily concerned with the sins and hypocrisy, less concerned with doctrine. I think they did adequately refute some error, and erroneously tried to refute some truth.

LETTER: A couple years later or so (1992), he asked me if I was still an apologist for the WCG and whether I thought it was “legit”, to which I said “yes” to both. I was well aware that his publication had the opposite bias from the *Worldwide News*, which was to selectively publish the most embarrassing facts possible on the church. For example, what Stanley Rader said in defense of the WCG in *Against the Gates of Hell* concerning the receivership I found quite valuable in writing up my defense of the WCG. For example, would AR ever mention these facts concerning the receivership?

1. Arthur Andersen & Co. had audited the books in 1978, and found no problems.

2. The IRS had gone through the Church's books no less than eight times in previous years, and found no problems.

3. The receivership hired a major outside accounting firm, Peat, Marwick & Mitchell, which spent one and a half months going over the WCG's records, and found nothing!

And that despite the presumption of guilt! I would suggest the truth (interpretation of the facts) on such issues will be between AR and the official WCG line, since the selective quotation of facts doesn't prove as much as we may like to think (just like selec-

tive Bible quotation!)

RESPONSE: It certainly is easy to tell the part of the truth that is most favorable to one's own bias. Your statements about audits are true. But does passing an audit mean that nothing unethical or illegal was occurring? Obviously not! Nearly all the financial scandals one reads about in the papers occur within companies that are regularly audited. Audits investigate only a token few of the hundreds of thousands of financial transactions that corporations conduct. They primarily check to see that accounting controls are in place and followed.

I worked for the WCG computer department and participated in some of these audits. I had many friends in the accounting department who participated, also. These systems prevent someone in the organization from simply grabbing some cash or writing a check to themselves without being detected. However, if a person who knows the accounting controls invents a tricky way to get around them without being detected, then it is unlikely that these auditors would find the problem either.

(There is not space to go into the many ways of doing this, but as one example, accounting procedures might require that anonymous cash donations be opened and recorded by two people so that no one steals this cash for which nobody is expecting a receipt. However, an evangelist might tell these two clerks that the Pastor General needs some unaccountable cash for his international trips, and that they are not to record half of the anonymous cash donations but rather put them in an envelope and give them to his office, and that they will be disfellowshipped if they ever tell anyone or do not comply with these instructions.)

Auditors may make inspections to see if procedures are being followed, but they do not plant hidden cameras, search employees without warning, and do other things that would be necessary to find people “working around the system”. Furthermore, if there is no law against a church official spending \$10,000 on a “business lunch” or a million dollars to remodel his house (“parsonage”), then the audit will say nothing about this.

I agree that the truth about the WCG is probably somewhere between the WCG's and AR's writing. But we must

realize that the WCG had complete access to the facts about itself, claimed to be God's one true Church, and claimed to be a model government for the Kingdom of God on earth. *Ambassador Report* had to hunt and dig for information about the WCG and never claimed to be a "Church" or to be God's example to the world. The WCG virtually never mentioned names or contact information for those who disagreed with it, whereas *Ambassador Report* did.

The AR staff offered to meet with the WCG and talk over their differences, the WCG was never interested. If you had to be a leader of one of these groups facing judgment, which would you rather be?

LETTER: It proved to be a somewhat entertaining effort dealing with these anticultist people by correspondence. I even sank most of my spare second tithe one Feast (1991, Wisconsin Dells) by copying and firing off dozens of copies of a short 14-page version to various anticult research organizations listed in a Directory one of the largest organizations published. I twice personally met Josh McDowell during evangelistic meetings (about five years apart) he had in Michigan to give him information on the WCG since he wrote a book (*Understanding the Cults*) with a critical chapter on the WCG. I corresponded extensively with a man in Ireland who was doing a dissertation on the WCG named Neil O'Connor. (He once said that I was so good at it that I should be made head of the WCG's PR Dept.!) I even got one woman who ran a small anticult group part-time to withdraw a tape critiquing the WCG that was absurdly full of errors.

Needless to say, this all was unauthorized by Pasadena (except for some of the correspondence with O'Connor towards the end). Someone at HQ eventually caught wind of my operations, and requested of the local pastor a copy of what I had written (the 152-page version) that another local member had given to him that I unwisely had given to him. (This pastor then proceeded to sit on it, saying nothing about it to me, for six months until turning that copy over to Pasadena when they found out such a thing existed from the anticultists and started inquiring. Later on, I got together with this pastor and his assistant, and got formal permission to write up a defense of the WCG, pending HQ's approval down the road, which I acknowledged would have the power to kill it if desired).

So how could a good hierarchalist like myself justify doing this, since I really did believe in obeying what ministers told me to

do? I had always operated by the principle that what isn't formally prohibited is allowed.

RESPONSE: I applaud your diligent research and defense of what you believed. Most people simply left these things to the ministry, which often did not get involved with these things at all. I am *amazed* but *pleased* to hear your admission of how one must accomplish things within a hierarchy: don't ask, just do it. You realized that if you started your project by asking for permission, you would probably be told "no" or put "on hold". The WCG hierarchy certainly never would have asked you, an unordained nobody without a previous "track record" to produce a defense of their theology. Yet what you produced may well have been better, for its purpose, than anything they had.

But your very action seems to fly in the face of hierarchical government. If the Eternal wanted you to do such research, shouldn't He have inspired some church leader to tell the ministry to find someone to do the research and then they would be guided to find you?

You should realize that a great many other WCG members (even some ministers) began sensible projects that were not officially approved and found themselves disfellowshipped without a hearing. You did not run into any trouble probably because you never posed any threat to the membership or income of the WCG. In general, you supported the WCG hierarchy and never seemed to be the type that would "start his own group". But if a **big contributor** to the WCG had first read your paper, then went on to read other anti-WCG writings, and eventually **left** the WCG (whether over doctrine or leaders' sins), there is a good chance that you would have been disfellowshipped.

LETTER: Since nobody specifically told me I couldn't write and do such things, for years I chose to engage in unauthorized apologetics in defense of the WCG. And this was despite of the fact that I was well aware of the many of the sins that HWA and GTA had committed (or been accused of). Perhaps part of the reason why I didn't find such problems so off-putting was because I had been quite badly treated by my peers as a kid in school (the archetypal wimp who's good in studies but awful in sports), and I found far more social acceptance than I ever had before among people in the church I dealt with locally. The church had proven itself to

be far better than the world, in my social experience. So far as I saw (and I didn't see everything even locally by any means, since I had no role in leadership or speaking), even with the first minister who was known to be especially strict (although he mellowed even during the time I knew him), people got along quite well generally locally.

RESPONSE: I have heard many different people relate how they were better accepted in the WCG than by "the world". I experienced this myself. However, I have heard similar stories from people who joined other "we are the one true church" groups. Why is there such a family-like atmosphere in these groups, even though they are large? I believe there are several causes:

1) Group members all believe the same thing and expect to be friends with the people in their congregation until they die or move away.

2) Group members believe that everyone in the group is special to God, that they will be spending eternity together, so they must "get along".

3) The ministry of such groups either sincerely believe that it is their job to encourage a family togetherness, or carnally try to keep everyone in the group to keep the "numbers and money" as high as possible. The ministry can discipline or remove members who are making life difficult for others.

4) The Holy Spirit is actually at work in some of the people and they have genuine love and concern. It is not possible to know exactly what percentage of each point is responsible for the "friendly" atmosphere that exists in each congregation.

I began attending services in 1973, but I never had any difficulty with the ministry or hierarchy until the 1980s. My attendance and tithe checks were quite regular. I did not have a lot of problems that affected others. I was not involved in any church leadership or speaking roles. My experience was pleasant, apparently not all that different from yours.

LETTER: So what's the point of this (by now) rather meandering letter? If I can read lots of this anticult literature, including even some of AR, and all these charges about personal corruption, sexual sin, failed predictions, etc. and still believe the WCG was the truest (cute modifier, eh?) Church of God, I would encourage those brave souls who venture to read AR as the result of SN's endorsement to still believe that HWA's teachings

were the truth (mostly) despite his sins and those by others close to him. For again I challenge the independents at SN: Can you name another church organization that did more to spread a non-Trinitarian Sabbatarianism around the world than the WCG under HWA?

RESPONSE: Sure! **The Gideon Bible Society.** They have placed millions of Bibles throughout the world which contain the truth that HWA taught minus much of his error. I have met a number of people who have learned much of the same truth simply by reading the Bible and praying for understanding. We have no way to know how many there are whom God has taught in this way.

Secondly, the combined conferences of the **Church of God Seventh Day.** They have a couple hundred thousand members throughout the world today. You might say, "But they are not a single central organization!" To which I reply, "That is better." There is no one headquarters that can be infiltrated to steer away the majority of members.

By contrast, after about 12 years of doctrinal changes from the WCG headquarters, about half of the 1988 WCG members are no longer in an exclusively Sabbatarian group. (They are either in the WCG, a completely Sunday-observing group or are no longer attending anywhere.) Whilst the Church of God Seventh Day has had doctrinal ups and downs, they have certainly never experienced the wholesale change as in the WCG.

The first article in the December 1998 *Servants' News* gave 26 Sabbatarian groups, many of which were non-trinitarian. Was the massive media campaign of the WCG somehow more righteous than the personal evangelism of the Church of God Seventh Day? We must realize that the WCG did not promote Sabbath keeping and non-trinitarianism in their big media, the *Plain Truth* magazine and the *World Tomorrow* telecast. These were mostly secular in the 1960s and 1970s. My own brother was very familiar with these and read many booklets—but went to Ambassador College in 1971 not knowing about Sabbath-keeping.

The WCG kept very good records of their TV audience size, their literature distribution and the responses to these things. We have no idea how many millions of people have heard the truth

about the Sabbath and the Trinity from less centralized Sabbatarian evangelists or from members talking to their neighbors. God knows these things.

The other thing we do not know is, "How many people read those media articles you talked about and concluded that Sabbath-keeping and anti-trinitarianism were wrong doctrines because the people teaching them lived such sinful, unchristian lives?" Many Bible students know Matthew 7:15-16 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?"

While the WCG taught much truth, it is easy to see why people who saw the leader's fruits first simply turned and look no further. When King David was involved in just one case of adultery, the Eternal said: "However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:14).

LETTER: God decided to use some especially defective human instruments (HWA and GTA) to spread His truth (basic correct interpretations of Scripture on major doctrines in one package, not bits and pieces of the truth scattered about in various denominations) that the traditional Christian world generally didn't know or practice.

When I asked one man, a CGI pastor who knows the anti-WCG literature even better than I do, why God used HWA, his response was that was God's way to show His all-consuming grace. If God could use HWA despite having personal failings far worse than (say) Billy Graham's, something like Solomon's or Samson's sins, why should we doubt our salvation or the basic truths we learned in the WCG in the past? Are we to be more demanding than God is of His own servants? As a matter of philosophical logic, it's a false *ad hominem* argument to say that because so-and-so has sinned, therefore, his interpretations of Scripture are false.

God will deal with HWA in due course. Meanwhile, let's rejoice in knowing God's truth through whatever servants God chose to use in calling us.

Sincerely,
Eric Snow

RESPONSE: I agree. HWA's teachings are not wrong just because he presided over and covered up a lot of sin. How-

ever, you and your minister friend seem to misunderstand the difference between being "used of God" and having salvation. Solomon was "used of God" in a big way, but the final words about his life say that he "turned from God" (1 Kings 11:9). Judas was used by Christ to be the treasurer of His work (John 13:29), but it appears that he does not have salvation (Matt 26:24). Jonah was used by God, but was not an example of cooperation (see the book of Jonah).

God's grace forgives sins when we repent—it does not alter the qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Your writing and *Ambassador Report* have documented numerous cases where Herbert Armstrong disqualified himself. The congregations should have rejected him and some other WCG ministers from being elders, but most of us did not know our Bible well enough to do that while he lived.

(Please don't say that a congregation has no right to reject unqualified elders—if you claim that God cleans up His church from the top down you are speaking contrary to the reality of the Tkach appointments, numerous men who lead other WCG splinter-groups that claim to be the one true church, and most of the rest of church history. God allows most church leaders, good or bad, to live a long life and teach whatever they will, and sin however they will. He promises to teach individuals through His Spirit, not organizations—John 16:13.)

I think God did have a mission for HWA to accomplish. The story of Loma Armstrong's dream where Christ said He had much work for them to do supports this idea (if it is true). However, Herbert Armstrong, like David, Solomon or Jonah, was still a free moral agent able to choose the right way to live or to choose sin. When he sinned, he was free to go to those whom he sinned against and attempt to make restitution (Luke 19:8), or he was free to cover up his sin and disfellowship any who knew about it. Jesus Christ is our standard to look to for salvation.

Anyone who thinks that all they have to do is live a life better than Samson, Solomon or HWA to be saved, is proba-

Continued on page 40

Small Groups and Evangelism

He Will Guide You Into All Truth

Thinking back, our small group started all unexpectedly one night about 5 years ago at what is known in Central Florida as a “gospel sing”. The “sing” was held at a Baptist church and several friends were there together. One of the men said, “I wonder what would happen if we all just got together and worshipped God with all our hearts.” We said, “Okay, let’s do it!”

The following Sabbath we had our first meeting. We were not Sabbath people. We belonged to mainline churches so Sunday was already tied up. Since that day we have been on an adventure with Jesus! How our lives have changed!

At the start, we had 12 to 15 people at most meetings. Much of our time was spent in singing, praise and worship—and still is. One never knew what direction the meeting would take. If someone had a difficult week, we listened and prayed. Someone might tell something they discovered in the Bible. Other times we spent extended times in prayer. Our goal was to learn to be led by the Spirit during this time when we were literally gathered together around Jesus. Our Savior was our focus and our reason for being there. And it was wonderful.

We discouraged depending on the writings

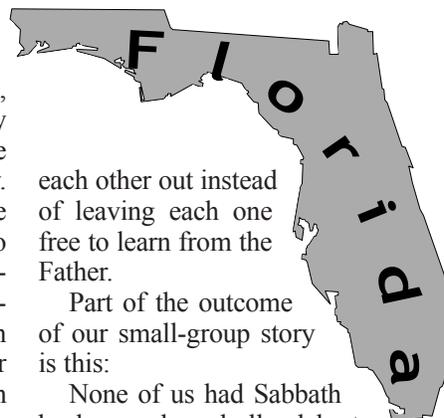


of men, but sought His writings—the Bible—only, although we did use Greek and Hebrew concordances, Greek interlinear Bibles, and history books. But not commentaries. The Bible alone was, and is, our authority. We consciously sought to lay aside the traditions of men. This is difficult to achieve when you have been conditioned to seek leadership and knowledge of men rather than God. It can take years just to sort out which of our beliefs came from the Bible and which came from men.

Some of us covenanted to read through the Bible every year, and to put our time with God in scripture and prayer first every day. The goal was to approach the Bible afresh. Whatever He said, we would do. Whatever we could not find for ourselves, individually, between those covers, we would put on the shelf—perhaps forever.

We learned that when we consciously lay down everything else and seek God only, walking with Jesus becomes an adventure. Each day brings new discoveries, fresh blessings and an infilling of joy. And why not? This was always God’s plan. Church doctrines and traditions interfere with this process because, whether they realize it or not, people are required to put the tenets of the religious organization first in order to “belong”. Specifically this means they are required to put something else ahead of God and His personal dealing with them. That “something” is their

denomination and their church or leader’s beliefs or traditions. If we are not careful, we will reproduce this situation in our small groups because we have been so conditioned to that environment ourselves. It seems easy for human nature to want to control and straighten



each other out instead of leaving each one free to learn from the Father.

Part of the outcome of our small-group story is this:

None of us had Sabbath backgrounds and all celebrated “normal” Christian holidays. As we approached the Bible afresh, someone started to question the Sabbath. It appeared that the disciples observed the Sabbath after the resurrection.

There was disagreement. This writer has learned that people usually initially reject something that is contrary to what they have “known” all their lives. Understanding that makes it easier to expect it and not argue. Just share what we discover and then leave it with them and God! Take our human hands off. After all, we don’t want them to follow us. We want them to follow God. If they truly believe they should worship on the first day, then to the best of their ability they are following Him. But, in a humble attitude, we will plant a question in their minds and then let Jesus deal with His own servant!

Our central lesson from all this: We do need to disciple new believers. But above all, we need to teach them how to have a relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, search the scriptures and obey what God shows them, then allow them to follow Him.

In time, part of our group set out to observe the Sabbath. Some also decided to leave the mainline church because we could see that a group, led by a plurality of elders instead of by one man or woman, was God’s original plan for His church. We just didn’t think we could improve on His plan.

We have celebrated Passover and other scriptural holy days for several years. Some have struggled with the

issue of Christmas. One more person in our group came to the place this year where she let it go. She said that she truly wants Jesus to be Lord of her life and she wants no idolatry. She did it from a heart that is surrendered to Jesus rather than a denomination urging her to do something that God had not yet revealed to her. When Christmas has been wrapped in happy childhood memories of loving family around a Christmas tree, giving that up is a life crisis and no one can effectively make someone else see that. The Father must show it to them if it is to be real.

Finally, not all the people in our group came to agree with us. As we made these changes, many left. We are, to some degree, starting over from a core group. We think this is God's purifying process and that He has to get our group right before He can do the work that He wants to do through us. We maintain close relationships with believers who left. We continue to love them and be there for them in times of need. We are walking in joy and in His blessing. I am so glad we decided to "just get together and worship God with all our hearts" that first Sabbath day. And that we decided to abandon everything in order to just cling to Jesus. If you decide to do that, all I can say is hold on for the ride! There is no telling where He will lead you. Wherever it is, life will take on new meaning and the joy of the Lord will be your strength! We really don't need much else.

This group meets weekly on the Sabbath in Grant, Florida. Contact Neil and Melody Carson, 321-768-2023, melandneil@yahoo.com or Arlean Kelley, 561-663-9417, arleankelley@yahoo.com.

[Some Church of God brethren have difficulty believing that a group could learn all of these truths on their own from the scriptures. They have read scriptures like Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers". They believe that truth comes to a group through its apostle(s) or other leadership. But today, we have the writings of the original apostles—something that people in

the first century did not have.

We can continue in the "apostles' doctrine" by reading it in the Bible. Furthermore, we must realize that God never told believers that church leaders would have all the truth, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). — Norman Edwards]

Midlands Christian Church of God

This group started in 1995 as a CGI affiliate. They went independent in the spring of 1998. Their attendance ranges from 12 to about 20. The Midlands Church has a traditional COG service with songs, a sermonette, and a sermon generally given by the pastor, Ralph Hanahan. They use the purple CGI hymnal.

Once a month, however, they eliminate the sermonette and shorten the sermon. This gives them time to have an interactive Bible study. The subject is selected in advance so as many members participate as possible, including the ladies.

They feel very fortunate in having found their meeting place. It is a separate activities building owned by and located in back of the Shandon Methodist Church. It is called the Billy Bartlett Building. Not only is it a fine facility with its own kitchen and parking, but the church has let them use it for years FREE. They have Sabbath services at 10:00 a.m. The street address is 3406 Devine, Columbia, South Carolina.

For their evangelism efforts they sponsor the *Born to Win* radio program on the Hartsville, South Carolina, station. They especially like the scheduling on this station because the program immediately precedes the Billy Graham program. The call letters are WTNI, 1490 on the dial, 7:00 a.m. on Sundays. Ralph mentioned that *Born*

to Win is well received by the local station management.

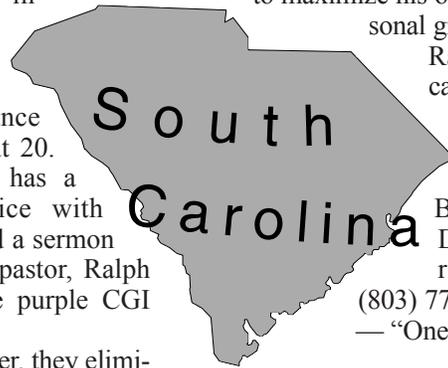
Although it is a major undertaking for them, they have just last week agreed to start *Born to Win* on Columbia's number one AM station. It will be broadcast on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. on station WVOC, 560 on the dial.

They are also looking into other evangelistic possibilities. One of those will be learning more about advertising and distributing Tom Justus' reprints of some old WCG booklets. (See the Jan/Feb 2000 issue of the *Servants' News* for more information.)

Asked for the main interest or focus of the Midlands Christian Church of God, Ralph said it is to have a peaceful learning environment for the Christian to maximize his or her own personal growth.

Ralph Hanahan can be reached at (803) 732-7869, or Jimmie Beard, church Deacon, can be reached at (803) 776-9478.

— "One-third Century in-COGs"



No Small Group? Try a Big One!

Our family attended several different "Church of God" groups over the past few years. My wife, our two teenage sons and I witnessed the splits and divisions. The independent group we were attending recently broke up as many members moved out of the area and others went back to bigger "Church of God" organizations. Our boys were asking for us to find a church where there would be other kids. My oldest goes to Tulsa Adventist Academy and most of his classmates began attending a new Seventh Day Adventist congregation in South Tulsa. The new pastor is a friend of ours and we were asked to come attend the church.

It appears that the SDA Conference (central headquarters) is becoming

aware that the SDA church has been seen as operating in the "Stone Age". This new conference-supported church is only 14 months old and has grown to 200 attending each Sabbath service. The majority of these are new converts, not "stolen" members from other churches. The Conference has approved a \$750,000 loan for a new building project.

The standard "church" format has been modified to appear like a fellowship. Sabbath starts out with breakfast, followed by Sabbath School, Worship Service and a fellowship lunch. We have just completed a Wednesday night study on the infilling of the Holy Spirit—can it apply to the SDAs or is it just for the charismatic churches? The conclusion of those in the study is they are receptive to it. There are many other activities.

Monday nights include a men's prayer meeting. We just finished up the Promise Keepers book. The next project is a book called *What God Does When Men Pray* by William Carr Peel. There is also a divorce support and study group to help people struggling with these problems. They are studying a book called *Rebuilding Relationships*. On Tuesday there is a study on the book of Daniel which has been going on for 32 weeks and, on Wednesday, a prayer meeting and Pathfinders children's group. The Bible study is on *The Incomparable Jesus* out of the *Walking With God* series. Thursday has a Revelation Seminar for Kids and a Bible Marking group. A Friday night kids evangelism night is being planned, but it hasn't happened yet.

There is some competition here as there are several other kids nights in some of the very large charismatic churches in town that draw up to 500 kids every week.

Every weekend there is a church activity. Two weeks ago it was swimming, BBQ and skiing at the local reservoir. Last week it was a trip to Branson, Missouri. This weekend it is a game night at church. We will be playing a modified version of "Millionaire".

The church will sponsor their second "Power Seminar", then a "Prophecy Seminar" back to back, with Leo Schreven (web site at

<http://www.prophecyseminar.com>).

The church is planning a project with Maranatha Ministries (not the same as Maranatha Music) which is a worldwide SDA organization that builds physical church buildings. I went on a mission trip two years ago with Maranatha where we built a church for a congregation in Panama in one week. It is interesting that most of the people that went on that trip are now members of this new church—including the pastor.

The main focus of this new congregation is local evangelism. We have a majority who are somewhat biblically illiterate, so in-depth study such as "Our Jewish Roots" is not part of the plan. I read from my Tanakh, B'rit Hadashah and Chumash, no one has made an issue over these versions. I do get some friendly inquiries from time to time from members on what my source is. I like to throw in some curve balls now and then for fun. I try to be discreet and not argumentative. I don't directly challenge basic SDA dogma but I do nibble around the edge, which they are receptive to.

The main thing that this SDA group has learned is visitor and new convert follow-up is a must. The last SDA church we went to never did call back and it was two years after we went that they finally showed up at our door.

Additional information about this congregation may be found at:



<http://www.websites4churches.com/institution1.asp?account=1578>

—Wes Gordon: 2827 N. Kingston Ct., Tulsa, OK 74115; 918-836-9208; e-mail: wjjcg4@busprod.com

Wes and his family are not becoming Seventh Day Adventists. He realizes that there are many problems with Ellen G. White's teaching, as there are with Herbert W. Armstrong's teaching. He has chosen this congregation because there are many people with which his family can fellowship, because much of what they do is right and good, and because he is free to believe and even talk about Bible topics new to most Seventh Day Adventists. Is this true of all Seventh Day Adventist congregations? Probably not! One good way to find out is visit the ones near you and see. The Bible teaches that the Eternal calls and works with people—he does not put His Spirit in organizations. The question for any fellowship is: can I effectively learn, grow and serve others there? —Norman Edwards 

Do You Meet With a Small Group? A Living Room Church?

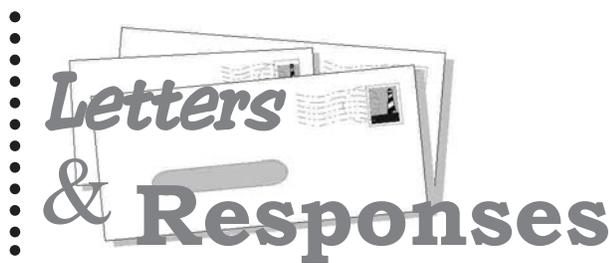
If so, you have valuable experience that may inspire and encourage someone else. We need to hear from you!

How did your group start? What challenges have you faced and resolved? What is your meeting format? What is unusual about your group? Anyone doing special ministry (jail, nursing home, etc.) or recently led someone to Christ?

We're even interested in your unresolved problems. They will help us choose subjects for future issues.

You don't have to be a large group to qualify. Remember—where two or three are gathered... you *are* the church! You don't have to be a writer either (although you may be). Just contact us and we'll do the rest!

Contact Arlean Kelley 561-663-9417, or 933 Frangi Pani Dr., Barefoot Bay, FL 32976 or arleankelley@yahoo.com



**Letters
& Responses**

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.

General Purpose Letter to Make Peace in the Family

LETTER: First written in 1996
Dear **Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Son or Daughter** (you fill in),

I know that you want what is best for me, and that you believe that your understanding of God's word is the correct understanding. At this time I don't see things as you see them. Perhaps it is because such truth has not been revealed to me in the same light as it has been revealed to you.

As we grow in the grace and knowledge of God and His word, He reveals more of His truth to each of us as we are able to receive it. As you grow He reveals more to you and things as you see them now may be somewhat different in days, months, or years to come. So it is with me. As I grow in faith and understanding with God's Holy Spirit guiding me I will see things differently in the future.

As you see, we don't see everything in exactly the same way because we all grow at a different pace and our Father in heaven reveals His truth to us at a different pace. Wherever we disagree now we will find agreement at a time when all of God's truth will be revealed to us.

For now, let us rejoice in the things on which we agree and let us, in love, be patient with each other in the things on which we do not agree.

With love, patience, and understanding,
Your (Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Son, or Daughter)

— Gene Phelan, Texas

RESPONSE: Is this letter peaceful wisdom or watered-down liberalism? The answer is fairly simple. If an individual really believes he understands what the Bible says on a certain subject—or many

subjects, then he should do what he understands. He should live up to his high standards. But if someone else does not have all of our understanding, then we do not have to hold him to it or judge him for it.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand (Rom 14:4).

It is not a sin to have **high** standards for ourself and **low** standards for others, as long as our acceptance of others does not cause us to become like them.

If we have **low** standards for others and **low** standards for ourselves, then this is indeed watered-down liberalism and a dangerous thing.

If we have **high** standards for ourselves and **high** standards for others (even though they may not understand), we will be a good example, but we may find very few people with which we can fellowship or teach.

If we have **low** standards for ourselves and **high** standards for others, that is hypocrisy and the most dangerous of all possible combinations.

— NSE

Eternal Judgement Motivates

LETTER: February 29, 2000
Dear Mr. Edwards,

I've just finished a quick reading of your paper on Eternal Judgment and want to thank you for the well-balanced and well-thought-out approach you have taken with this difficult subject. My husband and I have studied and discussed this subject on many occasions with his conclusion being that what everyone does now in this life affects their eternal salvation whether or not they have a real understanding of God and my conclusion being that God would not condemn anyone without giving them an opportunity to know him and his plan of salvation. It seems to me that you have addressed both of these issues in your paper and I found it immensely interesting to read.

I also found it personally motivating to change my life so that it more accurately reflects that Jesus would be doing in my life and am very excited that it has been published before the Passover season when we should all be taking

a good look at our relationship with our Savior and with each other.

Again, thank you for your dedication to serving God's people.

Sincerely,

— Ann P. Stevens, California

RESPONSE: In a nutshell, it seems that much of the history of religion has been a debate between "who you are", and "what you do". Numerous religions, from the Catholic Church to Protestant denominations to the WCG claimed that being a member of their group was the main thing necessary for a favorable judgment. Many evangelical groups would say the group doesn't matter, but those who have publicly "professed Christ" will be saved., while the others will not be. Many Pentecostal groups would say that those who speak in tongues or who have had other signs know they will be saved. Nearly all of these people, no matter how sinful, would not want to trade places in the Judgment with a kind and compassionate Buddhist who never heard anything about Christ. They believe their knowledge of Christ or their church membership would get them a lot further than those "pagans".

I am not convinced. Sinful Sodom and Gomorrah, which knew very little about the true God, will apparently fair much better in the judgment than Jews who know a lot about God (Matt 10:14-15). Matt 25:31-46 indicates those who knew little of Christ in this life, but who served others will receive Eternal life.

Thanks for your encouragement.

— NSE

Original Sin

LETTER: March 1, 2000
Dear Norman,

I hope this finds you well and happy and enjoying God's blessings each day.

I know you are very busy with all your work with the *Servant's News* and all the mail you must get, and all the reading you need to do. I do not envy you in this. However, I have a few questions regarding "original sin" or the "fall" of Adam to which I hope you will respond directly if possible. I am quite in agreement with your view of the subject.

(1) Did Adam's "fall" affect only Adam or did it also affect his descendants? And, if it did affect his descendants, what was the effect.

(2) What do you believe in regard to Adam's fall (original sin) and mankind's subsequent ability to obey the commandments and laws of God?

(3) Does man have the natural ability to obey God's laws? If not, why not? If so, how so?

(4) Did man's nature change because of the fall of Adam? If so, to what extent was it changed?

(5) Is God's prior grace or intervention (apart from mere preaching the Word) necessary for natural man to obtain the ability to respond in a positive manner to the Word of God? If so, how does this work?

(6) Can man respond positively to God on his own, or must God first open man's understanding by making some sort of internal influential changes or adjustments within the man's disposition or basic nature?

Thanks much, Norman. Sincerely,

— F. Paul Haney, Connecticut

RESPONSE: Whenever the word or phrase that describes a doctrine is not found in the Bible, I become suspicious. For example: Trinity, Rapture, Christmas, "succession of ordination", "third resurrection", "church authority", etc. "Adam's fall" is another one of those doctrines. The Bible talks about "Adam's sin", but not "Adam's fall". The Bible discusses this issue here:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, **because all sinned** — (For *until* the law **sin was in the world**, but **sin is not imputed** when *there is no law*. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who **had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam**, who is a type of Him who was to come (Rom 5:12-14).

This scripture answers many questions. It shows that all sinned, though not necessarily **in the same way** that Adam sinned. The WCG used to teach that Adam was "taught the law of God", but this scripture indicates that sin was not imputed at that time because there was "no law". The people still suffered and died because of their sins, but when the flood came, God faulted them for being "evil" (Gen 6:5), not for breaking a specific set of laws. Obviously, Abraham kept God's laws (Gen 26:5), but he had a relationship with God wherein he may have been given laws, whereas most of the world apparently

had none. It appears that the Eternal left men complete on their own to see what they would do and the results were not good. Continuing:

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore, as **through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation**, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were **made** [appointed, set in place] sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Rom 5:15-20).

God said that the sins of the fathers are visited upon children to the third and fourth generation (Ex 20:5). Modern studies have shown that this frequently happens automatically—without some intervention by God. If parents are liars, thieves, alcoholics, abusers, adulterers, etc., their children are much more likely to be.

When Adam was expelled from the Garden and the tree of life, his children for all generations no longer had a chance to live there. His children grew up seeing their parents sin and imitating it without even knowing it. The term "made", used in verse 19, above, does not mean "created", but "appointed" or set it place. All people since Adam have been turned into sinners by imitating imperfect parents. Sin may not be imputed to them if done in ignorance, but it still produced death.

Numerous scriptures say that each person has sinned (Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:23; Gal 3:22; 1Jn 1:8-10, etc.) Most Christians accept that. I think they depart from the Scripture when they say that Adam could have achieved eternal

life on his own, without the sacrifice of Christ. Genesis only records a few commands to Adam and Eve, and their breaking of one of them. It does not record that the Eternal told Adam and Eve about the **tree of life** or that He told them where it was. We do not know what they would have had to do in order to eat from it and "live forever" (Gen 3:22). Would they have had to live a lifetime without sin and be tested in many other ways? We know that once they sinned, they could not eat of the **tree of life** and had to leave the Garden.

One could call this "Adam's fall", but it would probably be better classified as "mankind's first sin". We all sin, and Adam and Eve were the first ones to do it. Consider the analogy of a watch that runs both on sunlight and an internal battery—but comes in the store without a battery.

If the watch was set at the store, it will continue to work throughout the day. It will look nice and give accurate time. But when it becomes dark, the watch runs out of power and fails—it sins. The watch did not "fall" from one state to another, it is still the same watch that was purchased at the store. It can still use the light that will come the next day. But in order to completely fulfill its mission as a watch, it needs to have a power source from within to carry it through the dark times.

Like the watch, Adam and Eve were made "very good" (Gen 1:31). As the watch works when the sun shines, so Adam and Eve avoided sin when God was with them. Even today, almost every society has some form of the "golden rule" and most people believe that it is a good thing to follow. This is a reflection of the truth of God.

However, when Satan and his evil temptations came, Adam and Eve did not have the power to overcome him. They listened to his temptation and did not follow the Eternal. They did not have His power inside them. Certainly, the Father knew this was likely, as the sacrifice of Christ was planned from the beginning of the world (Rev 13:8). Adam and Eve were not in some elevated state of existence before they sinned. They were sinful humans who simply had not sinned yet.

Like the the watch in the day, men and women naturally have some ability to do what is right. Most of the Bible is

the story of the decisions people made—good and bad. “Even a child is known by his deeds, Whether what he does is pure and right” (Prov 20:11).

God told Ancient Israel that they could keep His physical laws: “For this commandment which I command you **today** is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off... But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (Deut 30:11,14). But neither they, nor we can be spiritually perfect until our human nature is gone and we receive Eternal life (a battery that lasts forever).

Can man respond positively to God on his own or does God have to change him some how? “There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God” (Rom 3:11). “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).

The Eternal must be involved in bringing people to Him. But here is the big mistake that the WCG and nearly all other groups make: it does not say that “the Church” or “Church leaders” must be involved in bringing people to Him. The WCG frequently said that “God is not working with the world” and the “world”, to them, was “everyone not in the WCG”.

The truth is, we simply cannot know or understand all that the Eternal does (Eccl 3:11). He caused an unrighteous prophet, Baalam, to speak his words. He caused Baalam’s donkey to speak to Baalam. Our Father even prophesied through Caiaphas, the high priest, while he was plotting to kill Christ (John 11:49-53). Was there some person present at that meeting with whom the Eternal was working? Did He hope that that person would repent? We don’t know. I can now see how the Eternal was working with me before I was baptized or had much of an interest in Him.

Once we all realize that the Eternal can work with whomever He will in whatever manner He chooses, then nobody has to worry about what He has to do to get us ready to come to Him. We could study the Scripture and probably learn more about this subject, but the bottom line is that any person who had the least bit of interest in God or the Bible needs to act on that interest—we cannot say that “God is not calling them.” Furthermore we cannot excuse

our own lack of effort to preach the Gospel by saying, “we can’t do anything, God has to call them.” We need to prepare ourselves so we can be used to help those whom the Eternal is calling.

I took time to answer these questions because many people ask them and they are sincere. Nevertheless, this history of both Jewish and Christian religion is too often about more and more complex doctrinal arguments, and less and less helping those truly in physical or spiritual need. Christ did not answer every doctrinal question put to him. He told his disciples that they did not need to see the Father, (John 14:8-9) and that they did not need to know when He would set up the Kingdom (Acts 1:6-7).

Yet theologians have spent millions of hours debating the “nature of God” and “the timing of the return of Christ”.

When I am judged, I would rather have been able to say that I helped six people in need, than to be able to say I have the most Biblical answer to your six questions.

May the Eternal strengthen all of us to live by what we know He wants us to do.

— NSE

Understanding HWA History

LETTER: September 5, 1999

Dear Norman and Marleen,

Thanks for the literature packet you sent to me that I had requested. Among this literature were co-worker letters from HWA that spanned years from the 30s to the 80s. Talk about an eye-opener. I had begun attending WCG in the early 70s and knew about his (HWA’s) basic appeal for money on up until he died. But I had no idea how far back he did this nor to what depths he went in order to squeeze out every dime he could from the people. I hope everyone who has not already done so will send for these letters and read them. [Ask for HWA coworker letters from *Servants’ News*.]

I am truly appalled at the audacity of this man. I am nearly speechless. How in the world can anyone justify his actions and still uphold that he was some great leader from God? To make things worse, he did all these things in the very name of Jesus the Messiah who taught against treating people in such a manner. Jesus lambasted the Pharisees for doing exactly what HWA did.

The attitude of exalting oneself above everyone, controlling and exercising authority over everyone does not come from God.

At certain times, in earlier years, he informed people that in just a few short years they would not have their money, possessions or property so why not “invest” them where they would be building up treasures in heaven. That place, of course, was his pocket. All the while, he was telling people this and was trying to strip them of every dime he could, he was busy as a bee building his own empire, colleges and “fine” auditorium.

HWA used fear, intimidation and guilt to drain the people dry of any personal assets they had down to basic survival.

I am interested to know exactly when he began receiving his “modest” annual salary of \$200,000. How could he justify this kind of salary while he consistently demanded the widow’s mites? He was also quick to inform that the mites were plural. He didn’t want people to get the impression they could send just one “mite”.

Now after all is said and done, where is his empire today? Has its destruction been an act of Satan as proponents of HWA might say or a fulfillment of prophetic words of Gamaliel? Acts 5:34-39. His empire and his works have come to nought. All the people who followed him and believed in him, will be judged by their hearts.

For years, people sacrificed everything in order to support what they thought was of God. They are not the ones I fear for. They are not the ones to be pitied. Those who took advantage of and abused these hearts are to be pitied and prayed for. For the first time since I have begun to see HWA (and other leaders) for whom they really are, I can sincerely from the heart pray for them. I truly do desire God’s mercy for them all!

For many years, HWA held over the heads of the people the threat of the tribulation and the lake of fire all by the authority of Jesus Messiah.

One of the big ten clearly states “You shall not take My name in vain”. HWA did this. In God’s name, he heaped upon himself treasures on earth, a vast empire with millions of dollars at his own discretion: no checks and balances. If he decided to do something, feeling strongly about it, then it was God doing it. No questions asked.

If anyone desires to defend HWA against these words, let them first read his own letters. [Please ask *Servants’ News* for the Herbert Armstrong Co-worker Letter Reprints, 104 pages, and they will be sent upon request].

The leaders who even now stand upon the foundation HWA laid will not answer any questions concerning his atrocities. They continue to uphold his position as a great leader from God whose only “boss” was Jesus Himself.

Several claim that now they occupy that exalted position. Would they if they thought the people would stand for it pick up where HWA left

off in squeezing the people dry of all their assets?

Do they resume the same abusive tactics in their co-worker letters that is so prevalent in HWA's? For those who are affiliated with these men, it would be well to question.

Many of us were not around in the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's so unless we check back on material written during these years, we cannot know the hypocrisy and false prophecies within his words. He shouted, time is short! He emphasized in large, oversized letters, as if doing so would make it more believable. This was done in the 30's. Sure, in God's time, time was short. But HWA was not referring to God's time, but ours. He said he did not set dates. Read the letters. He set dates! He had a clever way of getting around his "mistakes" when his prophecies did not come to pass. How did he explain Jesus not returning in the mid-70's? He said Jesus "delayed" His coming because the people weren't ready. He blamed the people! He would not admit he was wrong. He upheld the prophecy that the date was correct for Jesus' return, but because of us, Jesus had to delay.

Also, in reading these letters, one can see that he gave many prophecies in a total, assured and dogmatic fashion that never came to pass. How can a man who sits in a position directly under Jesus, who is led and guided by Jesus Himself, be so wrong in his *many* prophecies?

He justified his many mistakes by saying that he was only human and he made mistakes. All the more reason for individuals not to look to him or to any man, but to the Father and Son alone.

How many times were we told that even if he was wrong, God would back him up? In saying this, he was teaching that even if he sinned, we were to follow him as God demanded that, due to the all important government issue.

HWA wrecked families (divorce and remarriage issue), drained people's assets, conned people, threatened people with the Tribulation, or eternal extinction, and did so all in the name of Jesus.

Many times as he judged other religions, he would say that they were sincere but they were sincerely wrong. Also, anybody who was deceived did not know he was deceived. As he pointed a finger at them, he should have been facing a mirror. At least I hope he was simply deceived, for if he did all that he did knowingly, he is in a serious state of reckoning.

As I hope for mercy on my own sins and weaknesses, I also hope for mercy for HWA and the others who sailed with him on his abusive, materialistic voyage at the expense of many pure and faithful hearts. Shame on them.

— Tawanda Ray, Alabama

RESPONSE: Your letter seems to be

accurate. We don't know how much Mr. Armstrong understood the error of his ways and how much he was simply deceived. We do know that those of us who understand it will be held responsible if we repeat his errors. We must acknowledge that many people were helped by the teaching of Mr. Armstrong and the shepherding of **some** of his ministers—just as we acknowledge that many of the scribes and Pharisees who put Christ to death also helped many people by teaching and copying the scriptures. Works and fruits are different. [See page 5 article, Nov 1998 *Servants' News*.]

—NSE

Comments on *Will Christians Be Judged?*

LETTER: January 5, 2000
Dear Norman,

Please continue to send me the *Servants' News* and *Shelter in the Word*. Enclosed is a donation to help you with expenses.

Now, just a comment about this latest issue of SITW. In your reply to Jeff Castle Nov 18, 1999, your comments were frighteningly familiar. Please continue trying to come on out of WCG, and discard more of those "ingrown toenail" beliefs, as it is difficult to walk on a sore toe!

I know you have the tools to check this out! If you check it thoroughly, I think you will see what I am suggesting is true.

Scripture clearly shows that we become Christians, first of all, because God our Father initiates a calling! If you will check the scriptures about our calling, you will also begin to see, that by His having extended His grace, His faith, and His Holy Spirit to us, that He is directing our thought processes, as we are learning to trust Him.

Yes, we can take credit for making decisions, especially at times when we are not as close to God as we need to be, and those decisions culminate in negative or unpleasant results!

However, I respectfully suggest to you that our Heavenly Father knows exactly what choice we will make, before He allows a situation to encounter us, which forces us to make a decision. The decision and the lessons learned by it are for us in our experience of walking in righteousness as we are yielding more to Him.

He is not leaving us to ourselves as you suggested to Jeff, to see what decisions we will make. Surely you know that when we are resurrected and have the "fullness of the Spirit", decision making will not be a problem. We will

not become perfect before we die, nor will we learn every jot and tittle we will need to know after our resurrection, before we die!

Without God putting His Holy Spirit in us directing our thought processes, few, if any, would ever make a righteous decision! God does make evil people obey Him, but He does it by calling them out of evil, like He did the Apostle Paul. Then He begins to direct their thought processes to think righteous thoughts.

Your answer to Jeff was very disappointing and lacking in spiritual understanding. I hope you will prayerfully take another look at what you told him and try to generate a better response than that.

Also; just one more thing: Those scriptures you gave him from Revelation are scarcely relevant to irrelevant and steering him away from the real truth of what they actually do represent. I hope you will do an in-depth study of those scriptures and come to know them for what they are, not what WCG thought they were.

I think you are a sincere man and that you try hard, and I know that everyone is not right all the time, not even you, with all your computer equipment and research ability. Sometimes you just don't aim it in the right direction. Please read Isaiah 45 very slowly.

Sincerely in Christ,

— Darl Arbogast, Georgia

RESPONSE: Eternal Judgement is certainly a complex subject—probably as complex as all of the various judgments in the Old Testament. However, I disagree with your statement that I need to "come out of the WCG" on that issue. What I teach is not what I learned in the WCG, but what I learned from the Bible which differs considerably from the WCG teaching. The WCG never had a book specifically on "eternal judgment". I believe that the second death is the end of existence because I see absolutely nothing about a resurrection from it, as well as other scriptures indicating that those who do not want eternal life will be destroyed.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And **the LORD was sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, **for I am sorry that I**

have made them.” (Gen 6:5-7).

How can God be sorry for doing something if He knew it would happen exactly that way from the beginning?

If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and *if* that nation I warned **repents** of its evil, **then I will relent** and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And *if* at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and *if* it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, **then I will reconsider** the good I had intended to do for it. “Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. **So turn from your evil ways**, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions’” (Jer 18:7-11).

If the Eternal knows everything that everyone will do before they do it, why should He have to change His prophecies? Why does He not prophecy only what He knows is going to happen? How can God reconsider anything if He already knows everything that will happen? We could look at the times that Moses and others plead with the Eternal and “changed His Mind”. Did He know they were going to do it all along?

The idea that “God is omniscient” (knows everything about everything, past, present and future) is from Greek philosophy, not from the Bible. Some people would say that “He could not be God if He didn’t know everything”. But where does that idea come from? The Creator identifies himself as “Eternal”, as “all powerful”, as “completely righteous”, etc., but not as the one who knows everything. He has the power and ability to change events as they are happening. But in general he does not control the decisions of men. Notice:

Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will per-

suaide him.’ The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so’” (1 Kings 22:19-22).

If the Eternal knew when He created the universe what each person would do, why did He not create the universe so that Ahab would think to go up to Ramoth Gilead and die like he was supposed to? Why did the Eternal plan the universe so He would need to use lying spirits to help do his work? The answer is that the Eternal directs the affairs of men and evil spirits as things occur.

Darl, you asked me to read Isaiah 45 slowly and I did. I was amazed at how many places there are where The Eternal says what He **will do**—not what “he already knows will happen”. He also commands things of men: “Look to Me, and be saved” (v 22). He did not say “I already know which of you will be saved”, or “you are all saved whether you like it or not”. Verses 23 to 25 say that all men shall bow, take an oath, be ashamed if they were angry and be justified by the Eternal. The word “all” used in these verses is a general word referring to the mass majority, not “every single person”.

(Use a concordance or see my eternal judgment paper’s appendices section on “*Universal Salvation*” and “*Predestination*”—there are places where there are exceptions to “all”).

The next chapter goes on to explain that the Eternal takes actions to bring about what he wants. Men are free to decide within the parameters that He allows them.

Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. **I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.** From the east I summon a bird of prey; **from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.** What I have said, that *will I bring about*; what I have planned, that *will I do*. **Listen to me**, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing

my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel (Isa 46:8-13, NIV).

If the Eternal knew everything that everyone would do before He created the universe, then He knew about every lie, murder, theft, adultery, etc. that every person would commit before they were born. Could adultery be judged a sin if it conceives a child that the Eternal “planned to have born from the creation of the world?”

Did the Eternal know that I would write this letter before He created the universe? Did He know you would read it? Do you have to finish reading it because He has already planned for you to do so? Or can you stop? If everything we do is predetermined (the Eternal already knows), then eternal judgment is a pointless exercise for everyone. Each person can simply say “I acted out the script that the Eternal knew I would follow when He created the universe.” How can I, a mortal human, do anything other than what the Eternal already knows will happen?

The obvious answer is that each person can make decisions, and is expected to do so—in a limited way if they have limited understanding, in a powerful way if they have the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the Bible. This is best explained by the “parable of the talents” (Matt 25:14-30). We are all given different amounts of abilities. The Eternal is compared to a master potter in Isaiah 45; He makes some vessels to honor and some to dishonor. But we are **judged** on what we do with what we have been given. The New Living Translation puts it well:

To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 25:29-30).

Our Father is merciful. But let us not lull people into thinking that what they do now does not matter. As a practical example, most of the people I know well who are over 40 wanted to be married, sought out a mate, and nearly all of them got married. By contrast, a few people I know well believed that if the

Eternal wanted them to be married, He would pick out a mate for them and the two would meet and it would be obvious that they should get married. Most of those people are still single.

— NSE

Copyright Laws Irrelevant

LETTER: September 23, 1999
Dear Mr. Edwards:

I have read with interest your item concerning "plagiarism" on page 9 in the new July/August 1999 issue of *Servants' News*.

I find the conflict among various Christian ministers very unusual and unique in view of the cultural context in which the New Testament scriptures were originally written.

Whether or not copyright laws are man-made is an irrelevant and pointless argument. In 1 Corinthians 6:7, the apostle Paul clearly tells us that brethren should allow one another to be defrauded by each other instead of brethren taking one another into the carnal courtrooms of this world. If we do take one another before the carnal judges of this world's courtrooms, we most definitely defraud one another, according to Paul's judgment in verse 8.

Anciently, ministers were financially supported by what we today would call patrons (compare Matt 10:9-14). It wasn't until after the invention of the printing press that authors and musicians sought their financial support from publishing their works for profit to financially support themselves. The various copyright laws were enacted to protect the financial incomes of book authors, music composers, and others.

Today in our Western Christian civilization, the Christian Religion is divided into many differing and conflicting groups, each one seeking tithes and offerings from their fellowships. Getting money is the bottom line—not the spreading of the Gospel to the world. This carnality makes copyright laws most important to worldly types of Christianity and relevant to the seeking of financial support to each differing Christian sect.

In Phil.1:15-19, the apostle Paul expresses that he didn't care under what circumstances the Gospel was preached—by enemies of the Gospel, out of contention, not sincerely, or whatever. Paul rejoiced that the Gospel was being preached, and exactly by whom didn't matter to him (verse 18).

As predicted by the apostle Peter, we have arrived at the time when true Christians are being exploited by the carnal world. The practice "to make merchandise" of true Christians can take many forms (2Pet 2:3). The Greek term is "emporeuomai" which means "marketplace" or

"to make a gain of" (See: *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Entry: from their copyrighted books, videos, cassettes, etc.) It is a shame to witness ministers in the Church of God caught up in the carnal pursuits of this present ungodly argument!

— David Whitaker, Oklahoma

RESPONSE: I agree that it is wrong to copyright Bible-teaching works in order to protect the income of the authors. I think truth suffers a lot because of that. I freely give permission to people to copy my works. People who believe that the Eternal wants them to teach should trust that He will supply their needs.

I also believe that if a poor person asks a person of means for help, that he should receive it (Deut 15:7-8). However, I do not feel he should steal from the wealthy if he doesn't get it. Similarly, I don't believe that teachers should steal the written works of those who claim ownership of the writings—especially when they have not gone to the trouble of even asking permission to use them. (I have asked for and received permission to reprint copyrighted stories.) Is the Eternal so short of people who will preach the gospel for free that He has to steal the writings of people who want to preach it for money?

Furthermore, I think it is utterly wrong for anyone to claim to be a teacher inspired of Christ, yet read other's works and pretend as if they were his own. If someone really believes that Christ wants them to spread a certain book or tape to others, then they should be straightforward enough to tell others: "I believe I have been led by Christ to read this other guy's work to you."

—NSE

Peace After the Turmoil

LETTER: February 3, 2000
Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am very glad to have this opportunity to return a blessing to you. For several years, you have faithfully provided me with the *Servants' News* and I have made very good use of every issue.

I know there are many people like yourselves who are doing a good work for our God. He knows who they are. You folks are dear to my heart because of your humble attitude, putting others ahead and a sincere desire to serve.

Here in Winnipeg we had a small church of about 21 adults but we just got smaller, recent-

ly. They have left for various reasons, but they are still in God's church. There is a positive side to this turmoil we have gone through. It has helped us to re-focus and to continue on in love and peace.

My desire for you is to continue being a blessing to others. May the *Servants' News* reach far and wide. If there is anything I can help or be of service to you, feel free to call on me.

Your friend and fellow worker in Jesus,
— Olivia Gardner, Canada

RESPONSE: Thanks for the encouragement. Sometimes we have been able to use volunteer help of various kinds, and other times we have not. We made a note of your offer.

—NSE

Questions on Tithing

LETTER: February 3, 2000
Dear Norm,

In your paper on tithing, on page 3 in the section on supporting the apostles' ministry, tithing nor non-tithing is mentioned in the verses. Is there a verse in the Bible that says tithing is done away?

RESPONSE: The only verses that establish tithing, establish a tithe of people's increase paid to the Levites.

"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD..." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away (Heb 8:9,13).

The Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats and much other old Testament instruction existed apart from the covenant made with the ancient Israelites. However, all of the things associated with the Levitical priesthood did vanish away in 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem, not long after the book of Hebrews was written.

LETTER: Also, in Heb 7:6, it says that Abraham paid tithes. Is this the only verse that mentions Abraham paid tithes?

RESPONSE: If one reads all of Hebrews 7:1-10, it is clearly talking about one incident where Abraham gave a tenth of spoil to Melchizedek. This was not increase as Abraham did not keep the spoil (Gen 14:23-24). Spoils of war are

not mentioned as tithable under the Sinai covenant, and one time they clearly gave 2% to the Levites (Num 31:27-30).

LETTER: Some ministers teach that the church (called out believers) is the spiritual nation of Jacob's descendants of Israel. They say that the church is bound by the agreement that Jacob made to God to tithe for the rest of his life. (Matt 21:43 erroneous teaching is that the nation here really refers to the church, since it is bearing fruit). These ministers teach that the promises to the church include salvation, physical blessings, and a spiritual priesthood, which of course means modern day ministers.

RESPONSE: I realize that many people teach this, but the Bible does not. All believers are priests (1Pet 2:5,9), **not the ministry.** But tithes did not go directly to the priests, they went to the Levites. The New Testament is silent on the concept of "spiritual Levites".

LETTER: Also, on page 19 of your paper, it says that Abraham paid tithe, one time, not his entire life. Would you please explain where in the Bible it says Abraham did this only once?

RESPONSE: The quote from the article is referring to Hebrews 7 and it says: "three separate statements here declare that Abraham tithed one time-not his entire life." In other words, all of the statements in the Bible about Abraham tithing are about the spoils of war he gave to Melchizedek. There is absolutely nothing about Abraham tithing on his flocks and herds, even though he had those things.

LETTER: Also, where in the Bible does it say that tithing was annulled?

RESPONSE: Hebrews 7:18 mentions an "there is an annulling of the former commandment". Most people would agree that animal sacrifices were annulled. I believe other evidence shows that the funding system for the Levitical sacrificial system was annulled also.

LETTER: Some teach that since we have a high priest (Heb 8:1 referring to Christ), then we must have a priesthood and tithing system that goes with it. Please comment on this.

RESPONSE: The Levites were told to give one tenth of the tithes they received as an offering to the Lord, to be received by Aaron the priest: "Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest" (Num 18:28).

Notice that it does not say that the

Levites were required to tithe on their own increase, but simply on the tithes they received. One could try to assign "spiritual roles" to all of these things and work out a system for now. Shouldn't we tithe on wisdom and faith, which are much more valuable than gold (money)? (Prov 16:16; 1Pet 1:7).

The truth is that we are inventing all of this. Numerous verses show that the New Testament gospel was preached from a variety of offerings, and that tithing was never transferred to the ministry. Historically, the "church" did not begin collecting tithes until well after 300 A.D.

LETTER: Many ministers teach that the book of Malachi is for our day. Under this assumption, it is easy to feel it is impossible to rob God if the tithes have been annulled. Their reasoning is, we are robbing God in tithes by not paying tithes to a tithe law. Obviously, Malachi was not written for us today. Please explain.

— Anonymous

RESPONSE: I believe that Malachi was written both for Israel and for the Church, today. Many of its statements clearly apply to both. The part about "bring all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house" (Mal 3:10) is obviously about tithing on food to the Levites who tithed to the priesthood. That was a problem for the several hundred years after Malachi was written, but before the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Malachi also mentions God being robbed in offerings. Both Old and New Testament people have probably spent far too much of their resources on themselves, offering little to the Eternal. But if we want to take a complete "spiritual" view of Malachi, then we could ask: "of all the truth, wisdom, faith and strength that the Eternal gives us, how much do we use for ourselves and how much do we give back to him?" Are church organizations most interested in brethren developing these things, or do they simply want a steady income? (For more information on this subject, ask for *How Do We Give to the Eternal.*)

— NSE

About Why So Long? Article

LETTER: January 9, 2000
Dear Norm and wife,

I have been praying for you ever since reading your explanation, "Why So Long?"

You have a very heavy load to bear, but you have done it so beautifully all these years.

You have no idea what a blessing *Servants' News* has been to me. I thank you so very much. Please don't be discouraged.

Much love and blessings.

You need not respond

— Neva Squires, Texas

RESPONSE: I do appreciate the prayers. I am not catching up to my publication schedule, but at least I am not getting further behind. Sometimes, it seems like there is so much to do that I will never get it done, so why even try. And when I think like that, I get even less done. What a lack of faith! The ancient Israelites, the apostles and others all faced many "impossible situations", but were able to accomplish what the Eternal wanted. I can see why Abraham was called the "father of the faithful". He was promised to be the father of a great nation (Gen 12:2) when he was 75, then had to wait till he was 99 for Isaac to be born. He was patient for 24 years. I have been doing this only 5 years!

— NSE

Any Dual Prophecies?

LETTER: July, 2000
Norm,

I was wondering if you could help me with something on prophecy. I know that you know much more about it than I do. My question is this. You have talked about it in your articles and others have always taught it, but I can not find any Biblical scripture or evidence of anything to do with "duality of prophecy." Meaning that a specific prophecy would be fulfilled more than once. Could you show me the scriptures and the evidence of one that did. I do not know of any that have ever been fulfilled twice, only prophecies that men have said would happen again after they happened once.

Could you please help me with this.

— Ron Wilson, Illinois

RESPONSE: I am not sure I know anymore about prophecy than you do, but others have asked this question. I think there are a number of prophecies that have or will be fulfilled more than once, but all of these things depend upon one's standards for fulfilling prophecy. Does the prophecy have to be fulfilled according to how you imagine it? How much of the prophecy has to be literal and how much can be symbolic? If the prophecy

says, "They shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Is 40:31), do people literally have to sprout wings? Or does this simply mean that they were given divine protection as Israel was fleeing Egypt: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself" (Ex 19:4). The Israelites did not grow wings; they walked out of Egypt.

I am much more a believer in multiple prophetic fulfillments. I think Leviticus 26 has been fulfilled many times—it is a general prophecy. I think the letters to churches in Revelation 2 and 3 have applied to many different groups—they all say "he who has an ear, let him hear...". I think there have been corrupt shepherds throughout the ages about which Ezekiel 34 has warned many people. I believe that Old Testament prophecies such as this and many others apply to both the Nation of Israel (which has had bad leaders) and the Church (which has also had bad leaders).

I think some of the Psalms applied to both David and Christ. Some of the more specific captivity scriptures seem to apply to the Israelite captivity, Judah's first captivity and Judah's second captivity. I think Matthew 24 applied to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and will apply to the final fall of Jerusalem in the end. Most people agree that Revelation was written after the fall of Jerusalem, yet it contains many prophecies similar to Matthew 24. If the Revelation prophecies come to pass, then the Matthew 24 prophecies will come to pass twice.

Sometimes, people will take several chapters of prophecy and apply it to a church organization or its leaders. I cannot refute them, but nor do I believe that God had a book written and carefully copied for a few thousand years so that a few people, could look back and say "God predicted what would happen to us."

David Koresh and the Branch Davidians believed that many chapters of prophecy applied to their situation. Whilst the number of people there were small, their worldwide notoriety far exceeded anything the Church of God movement has ever done. I think it is possible that some prophecy applied to them, but not exclusively to them.

Probably most serious dedicated believers from across the world would

say that they know of one or more prophecies which they believe applied to their leaders or group. The Jews certainly have many cases where they believe prophecy has been fulfilled, but Christians would know little about them.

This is why I believe it is not important to read hundreds of prophecy books to figure out who has "figured out" prophecy, but that it is important that we read prophecy and ask the Eternal to show us what we need to understand in our particular situation.

Obviously, I have not given scripture references and proven my point. I hope to do a more involved study at some time in the future. I suppose the "bottom line" on this issue is this: if one believes that no prophecy is dual, then one could try to figure out which prophecies (or parts of prophecies) have been fulfilled and "cross them off" their list of prophecies to study for the future. The catch is, how can we be sure which prophecies have been fulfilled—only a few dozen are declared fulfilled. Whereas, if one believes that prophecies can be dual, then all prophecies are worth studying for the future.

If any of our readers have done some study into the duality of prophecy, I would be glad to read and maybe print their articles.

—NSE

Postponed from What?

LETTER: April 16, 1999
Hi Norman!

It was very good to hear from you and receive more input about this calendar thing.

My little article was not really intended to explain how to set up a calendar. I do not feel the need to calculate a calendar. I just do not believe in postponing it.

RESPONSE: The question to be answered is: "postponed from what?" You seem to be taking the approach that the Jews who set up the calendar calculated the "true" calendar and then postponed it some years. That is simply not true. Their own records show that the calendar they keep today is not what they used to, only with the addition of postponements. Every significant aspect has been changed: the month used to begin by witnesses observing the first crescent and the year was begun by a combination of observing

the sun and the climate. Now, all of that has been changed to a calculation which frequently yields different results.

The current Jewish calendar calculates from a mean conjunction which is usually before the actual observed crescent. The postponements (about 60% of the years) sometimes delay the beginning of months so that they line up with the first observable crescent.

LETTER: My intention with the article was to express my feeling that we should not postpone and that we should consider more seriously than I see people doing, whether we are following the dictates of God about when to keep the Holy Days. You will see in the article that these are my main concerns and I believe originate out of the normal perspective that members of God's church usually have.

RESPONSE: Herb Solinsky and others have done exhaustive work showing that the calendar used by Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc in the Bible began with the observation of the first crescent of the moon. This largely agrees with the Talmudic explanation of what was done anciently. If you take the current Jewish Calendar and stop postponing it, you will observe the "true" days even less often than if you keep the postponements!

LETTER: My question further is how can the Jews postpone something unless they know when it occurs?

RESPONSE: The Jews could throw dice to decide when to start a new month, and then postpone that result so that the holy days would line up according to their specifications. Just because someone postpones something does not mean that their starting point was correct.

LETTER: And if they know when it occurs then why don't they keep it at that time? They do it only for traditions of men from what they say. That may fly with us, but, God is the judge. [Request for our *Biblical Calendar Basics* article removed.]

The [other] information I need sparked by your comments is on the orbit of the moon. My question is how would this affect when the Jews calculate the new moon? The new moon is the conjunction of the moon. The Jews use the mean conjunction as you said. So, no matter what the orbit or time schedule, the new moon occurs at a given time for the seventh month, right?

Then that is when they should observe the Feast of Trumpets and that regulates the timing of the other fall Holy Days.

RESPONSE: There is no instruction in the Bible to calculate a conjunction

(“mean” or “true”) and begin the month.

LETTER: Yet they unashamedly say that they keep Trumpets a day or two late in order to insure that their traditions are not violated. They shift the calendar to do this. This is where we part ways. I cannot deny God's command for Jewish tradition. God did not say keep the Holy days by a calendar. He said to keep them in their month.

RESPONSE: If you calculate the mean conjunction to keep the holy days, that *is a calendar*. The Jewish calendar basically alternates 29 and 30 day months. However, if you were to observe the first crescent of the moon from one place on earth, you would sometimes see several 29-day months in a row and sometimes several 30-day months in a row. Also, the Jewish calculations for the exact length of a month and year are not as good as modern scientific standards could produce. As the years go by, they are drifting away from the actual motion of the heavenly bodies.

LETTER: Please be patient with me, but, I do not see [how] you [and] others do not think that matters are so serious. Personally, I would have had it the other way if it were my doing. I would not be on the outside looking in as far as the church of God goes. I would not now be doing this a little different than when HWA, who I love even now very much, was alive. But, as I said before, to me it is denying the command of God. That is serious business.

If you can explain why the new moon's orbit can rationalize postponing please let me know, because otherwise I will be the one keeping the Holy Days at the wrong time. Maybe that is it. I feel there is a right time and a wrong time. Can a case be made that the timing is not “absolute”, just like the Sabbath, at sundown. Personally, I do not think so.

Well enough said for now I guess,

— Joe [via the Internet]

RESPONSE: Many other people have taken the same approach that you do. They find out about the Jewish postponements, so they decide to keep the holy days without them. Some do not ask the question: “Is the mean-conjunction, from which the Jews are postponing, proclaimed in the Bible?”

Then, some people realize that they need to find all the rules for the calendar in the Bible, so they begin to look. The information about how to create a calendar is not perfectly clear in the Bible—there are scriptures that give indications, but people simply do not interpret them

the same way. They may use the principle of “interpret ‘unclear’ scriptures by the ‘clear’ scriptures”—but then it is often a matter of who decides which scriptures are ‘clear’ to them.

Most congregations with which I am familiar and which study the calendar end up with individuals keeping two or more different calendars—and changing several times as they “learn more”. Nearly all end up agreeing that there are times (especially when it is cloudy) that they simply have to “make their best decision” as to when to start the month or the year.

Many people compare the Sabbath to the holy days and say “if we cannot postpone the Sabbath to Sunday”, then we cannot postpone the holy days. The reality is that any child can calculate the Sabbath (work 6, rest one), and that there is no dispute to when it is. The holy days are based on a calendar that is not undisputably described in the Bible.

If the Jewish records are right, the calendar was somewhat determined by man, anyway. If the clouds covered the moon in the seventh month so that it could be seen only from one mountain, witnesses from that mountain could go to the Sanhedrin and they would declare the new month. Suppose all the people living on that mountain saw the new moon, but sent just three witnesses to Jerusalem. Suppose those three witnesses got sidetracked when someone spilled a bag of gold on the trail and they helped searching for the pieces and never made it to the Sanhedrin that night. With no witnesses, the new moon would not be declared until the next day.

The Day of Atonement would also be one day later than “it should have been”. But if the people who lived on the mountain and saw the new moon came at the earlier date, the high priest would not do the two-goat ceremony for them—he was commanded to go into the “Most Holy Place” only day per year, on the Day of Atonement. There was no provision for an individual who has the “right” date, even though the priest may be “wrong”.

The command to assemble is clear in the Scripture. That can be done if everyone uses the same calendar. Since there is no body of Christian Sabbatarians who can get together to agree on a calendar (there was a conference once, and few if any, changed their view), I follow

the man-altered system that the Jews have agreed upon for centuries.

If calculating the “right date” made the difference between “keeping the holy day” and “not keeping the holy day”, then we should expect that on years when the Jewish calendar matches the “right day”, that we would have great spiritual blessings and maybe miracles. And in years when the Jewish calendar calculates the “wrong day”, we would have uninspiring or even miserable holy days. I have never heard of a group that reported this phenomena. Have you?

— NSE

Borrowing and Restoring

LETTER:

March 27, 1999

Dear Mr. Edwards:

I've just finished reading your article covering Mr. Armstrong's 18 points [*Servants' News*, Dec 1999]. Here are three of my thoughts:

1. I don't understand the concept of “borrowing” the truth. Truth is not borrowed as much as acknowledged. If something is true, and I'm intellectually honest, I acknowledge and accept it. I don't see that as “borrowing” it. Where I find the truth is not as important as acknowledging it when I see it. Truth is. I either accept it or don't. Borrow isn't an issue. The fact someone else teaches it doesn't denigrate it's value or precludes me from believing it and claiming it as truth.

2. Along that same line, the word restore implies a return to an original state after depletion or loss. Restore implies the truth already existed, just either in a dormant form or in a less original state. Therefore, I don't see why such a big deal is made that others taught the truth or parts of the truth. The issue is not where it came from or did it exist, but is it true.

3. In my mind restore would include taking truth wherever I found it, no matter how many different sources that would be, and putting it into a coherent whole. I believe that's what Mr. Armstrong did, and that's okay by me. Even if every truth “borrowed” from these various sources were “borrowed” verbatim, just putting them into a coherent whole would be a restoration.

— T. H. Higgins [via the Internet]

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter. We do not have any difficulty with Herbert Armstrong learning truth from others and teaching it. Many Bible teachers (including myself) do it frequently. The difficulty I see is that Mr. Armstrong almost never said he was

teaching truth that he learned (or "borrowed") from a variety of sources. Mr. Armstrong claimed that he was "the one" through whom the Eternal restored his "18 truths".

If Mr. Armstrong learned about British Israelism from J. H. Allen, then would it not be fair to say that the Eternal restored this truth through "Allen and Armstrong" rather than through Armstrong alone? Yet we have found no instance where Herbert Armstrong ever publicly acknowledged J.H. Allen. Notice these quotes:

In 1927 God opened my eyes to the continuing command to observe the annual Sabbaths, as well as the weekly Sabbath. **None** of the Sardis era brethren in the United States would accept this truth of the annual Sabbaths, except for two or three families. As God continued to restore lost truths to His Church **through me**, the Sardis era brethren rejected all restored truths (*Worldwide News, Special Edition, June 24, 1985, bolding* by SN).

But before 70 A.D., Christ's true GOSPEL had been suppressed (Gal. 1:6,7; Rom. 1:18 [RSV]; II Cor.

11:4), and from the first century A.D. **THE WORLD HAS NEVER HEARD THE TRUE GOSPEL THAT CHRIST PREACHED** (announcing the coming Kingdom of God) until God began proclaiming it **through this Work!** (*October 29, 1976 Co-worker letter*).

There are many individuals and whole groups of Church of God 7th Day brethren who keep the Holy Days and believe some of Mr. Armstrong's other "restored truths", never-having learned them from him. I personally have met such people. How can I hope that these people will treat me as a brother if I claim that it was Herbert Armstrong who restored these 18 truths and that they cannot possibly have understood the truth without him?

This issue is further complicated by the fact that Herbert Armstrong taught some error, such as hierarchical government, or that Levitical tithing was transferred to the "church ministry". How does an individual view Mr. Armstrong when he sees these doctrines as errors?

How can we expect any non-"Church of God" members to look to Mr. Armstrong as a "restorer of truth" if

his teachings combined previously understood truth with some new truth and with some error? Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists would have a good claim if they said that they restored the Sabbath as well as other truths. But does that mean that you or I must become Seventh Day Adventists and look to Mrs. White's teachings? Actually, the reverse is true. You would probably not mind meeting and studying with people who are Seventh Day Adventists, as long as they did not insist that you join their group or continually teach from the writings of Ellen G. White.

Similarly, I believe Herbert Armstrong had so many clearly documented cases of prophetic failure and so many "restored truths" that were either not true or not "restored by him" that most serious outside believers examining "Church of God" doctrines will say: "We like the way so much of your teaching comes from the Bible, but please do not ask us to accept this 'Armstrong' who made more dogmatic claims about himself than any servant of the Eternal recorded in the Bible."

— NSE ☞

"News From Local Congregations" from page 4

changed, but most of it seems to be intact. It should serve as a good research tool for anyone trying to teach truth or refute error from the past. It is obviously much more useful than a doctrinal statement because it explains "why" not just "what". It can be found at <http://www.coginterlink.org/Directory/systemat.htm>

For those who do not have home internet access, you can simply take the above URL to a friend's house with internet access or to a public library and they should be able to help you start looking at it right away.

— Norman Edwards

UCG-IA and CGCF Dialog

The United Church of God, an International Association and the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship have agreed to send delegates to a joint meeting. (The CGCF consists largely the ministry and membership of the

Global Church of God, after the corporation was dissolved.) The purpose of the meeting is not to merge the organizations, but simply to explore how they can cooperate and where they have common ground. The first meeting date is set for August 14-15.

Both of these groups have already acknowledged the other as brethren. I hope that they will discuss how they explain the existence of each other to new believers in Biblical terms. In Christ's day, there were religious parties, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, etc. Jesus did not join any of them. Paul was raised as a Pharisee, but **did not** teach others to become so. In fact, Paul told believers not to align themselves with certain teachers (1Cor 1:11-17; 3:1-8). Will these men continue the "church organization" or "religious party" system?

— Norman Edwards

Corrections to GCG/LCG

I recently read your recent article on the events of the Global Church of

God, Living Church of God, Restored, etc. [*Servants' News*, Jan/Feb 2000, p 18] Since any accurate article should be correct in its statement of facts I found three statements that need correcting.

1) You incorrectly stated that the GCG kept TV and accounting employees so they would not go work for the LCG. There were 4 accounting employees and 6 total finance employees. All except the accounts payable clerk and J Edwin Pope supported Dr Meredith from the beginning and all are with him at LCG. In fact, due to the complexity of payroll reporting with ministers in several different states, GCG had to contract out some accounting work to keep the functions going. Also, Mr Pope had major heart surgery and was not able to work and the AP clerk did not have the budgeting and accounting background to oversee the finance area. They had to hire an accounting employee to see them through.

There were four radio and TV employees before the split. Two of them went with LCG and two stayed with GCG. They did attempt to pro-

duce a TV show but did not have the resources to keep it on the air.

The GCG mistake was not taking advice they were given by the LCG: in order to survive financially, they had to immediately lay off most of their HQ staff and even a couple of ministers.

It is interesting that the GCG board did not see this problem because one of their main complaints against Rod Meredith before the split was that he was running the organization into debt. The "board" did not want to believe the budget could be balanced including debt payments with no reduction in preaching the gospel. The GCG was making great strides in repaying all the debt incurred under the prudent and skillful financial management of Fred Dattolo, now current CFO of LCG.

2) You stated that LCG and GCG were virtually the same doctrinally. There is a *big* difference in their position on government.

[The GCG board certainly believed in government by a board, rather than one-man rule. But I do not think there was much difference at the local level. The local minister was still required to do whatever headquarters asked. A local GCG congregation was not free to select its own elders or to implement questions and answers in their services. —NSE.]

3) Dave Pack was not removed by Rod Meredith from being a director or a paid minister. He was removed from being a regional pastor and from the ministerial advisory council, but was never removed from the paid ministry.

[The writer of the above is personally known to me, but requested anonymity. I have received another letter with corrections to the same article which I may print later pending the writer's approval. Getting facts in these situations is difficult as most leaders of organizations do not reply to the letters I send to them. —NSE] ☞

"Was the Prophecy of Joel 2 Fulfilled?" from page 17

ninth hour there was darkness over all the land" (Matt 27:45). The sun was darkened over all the land, not just in Jerusalem at the place of Jesus' crucifixion.

7. The moon into blood

This had to do with the timing of the crucifixion. Jesus would have died for mankind at the time of the Passover lamb, as our Passover Lamb, and there would have been a full moon. If you want to see this happen, the next full moon go out and if it is clear as the sun goes down and the full moon comes up, the moon is red like blood from the sun shining on it.

We can see from the Bible that all of the signs that Joel was told to prophesy were there for all of the people who knew them to see. The people there listening to Peter speak did not question what Peter was saying, they were cut to the heart.

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the

remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:37-39).

Peter ends with what they should do and then states the very things that he had quoted from Joel. They would receive the Holy Spirit, they and their children and all that were afar off, that being even us today.

What a wonderful message God inspired Peter to tell that day, and it is the message that we should be proclaiming even yet today to all that will listen. That they too can call upon the name of the Lord and they, like us, can be saved. They can receive the Holy Spirit just as the people there that day did, they and their children, we and our children.

If we do not proclaim the message of the coming of the Holy Spirit like Peter, people may not know they can have a relationship themselves with Jesus and God. The veil was torn in two and you, me and every human being has access to God. If we will put our faith in our Savior and call on His name, we shall be saved. ☞

— Ron Wilson

"More Feast sites" from page 5

Programs; and Avi Ben Mordechai, director of Millennium 2000 Ministries. We plan music from Phil Pearlman & more!

The Sands Motel is the "place of choice" to stay, two blocks from the convention center. Rooms with 2 queen beds only \$35 per night, plus indoor pool. Four other motels are available in the \$30 to \$105 price range. Call 800-841-4001 for reservations at all motels—be sure to say you are with the "Feast of Tabernacles".

—Rick Richardson; CMRI; 800-333-5208;

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International

Kendal, Cumbria, England

Kendal is a market town at the southern entrance to the Lake District, a very hilly and scenic area in the north of England with a long mining tradition and many sheep. There are several castles and many picturesque villages to visit.

Services will be held at Stricklandgate House, 92 Stricklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4PU — in the centre of Kendal, opposite Westmoreland Shopping Centre, beside the town Library and next to the Elephant Yard Shopping Centre; about 10 minutes walk away from the main station.

A get-together meeting is planned for Friday evening at 7:30 p.m. Services are planned for both morning and afternoon on both Holy Days. Morning services are planned Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, and evening services for Tuesday and Friday.

Kendal has many hotels, guest houses and a number of self-catering establishments. Please book your own accommodation. An *Official Guide for the Lake District*, which lists places to stay in Kendal and the surrounding countryside, can be requested from: Kendal Tourist Information Centre, Town Hall, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4DL; Tel: 01539 725758.

[This site is affiliated with the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association and other ministries.]

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"Biblical Elders Needed for Healings?" from page 1

oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:14). There would also be a need of faith on the part of the one asking for healing and the will of God for the healing to take place.

At this point I would like to focus on the elders who are mentioned so often in the New Testament. What makes an elder? An elder is a leader in a congregation in much the same manner as a father is in a human family.

Paul was an elder (1Pet 5:1), but also likened himself to a spiritual father (1Cor. 4:15). John was an apostle and elder, he also viewed himself as a father image (3Jn 4).

God permits and expects His people to choose people that are acceptable to the congregation (Acts 1:22-23; Acts 6:3) but only requires that these people meet certain criteria (1Tim 3; Titus 1). In this way the person is acceptable to God plus acceptable to the congregation. Both parties (God and the congregation) are in agreement.

When these people prayed to the Father, people expected with faith that God would come to their rescue or if they had committed sin, God would accept their repentance and grant the elder's prayers for forgiveness (James 5:14-16).

Unfortunately, when most people think of elders, they think of a "church appointed" ministry. To whom is an elder subordinate? This is shown very clearly in Acts 15:1-3:

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.

It can be seen that the Church was not subordinate to the men from Judea nor were they subordinate to Paul and Barnabas. These people in this congregation took their responsibility seri-

ously. Since they could not determine which path to follow, **they sent** Paul, Barnabas and certain others up to Jerusalem where there were others taught directly by Christ. Christ taught that "the one sent is **not** greater than He who sends Him" (John 13:16). Since the Antioch congregation was not subordinate to Paul and Barnabas and since the elders took their instructions from the congregation, then the elders were not subordinate to Paul and Barnabas, either.

Paul was sometimes very aggressive, an "in your face" type of person (1Cor 5, 6) and viewed by people as being highly intelligent and educated (Acts 26:5 and Acts 16:24). The elders at Antioch were not being intimidated by Paul at all, even though Paul was an apostle, an elder and had this awesome reputation backing him up.

The question is: "Should elders today let some high-ranking leader in a church organization intimidate them in making a proper decision for their own congregation?"

Are these organization leaders greater than Paul? I am not speaking here of consultation, but intimidation to force a person to say or do something against their conscience. This was not an easy question (Acts 15:7). It was the Antioch elders who would have to answer to Christ and the Father if they were negligent. Consequently, they were not intimidated by anyone. The Antioch elders moved carefully and wisely in their responsibilities.

Are the elders today of the same mind set as the Antioch elders? Today God's people are divided up into many religious parties (let's call a spade a spade) and not individual congregations as can be seen in Revelation 2 and 3. God's word speaks against the destructive practice of sectarianism (1Cor 1:11-12). This system can also be seen to be starting to take root in 3 John 9-12:

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what

is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

It appears John is telling Gaius (v 1), that the congregation would be better served if they chose Demetrius to replace Diotrephes. Demetrius had the qualifications and John would also endorse him (v 12). But notice that even John, possibly the last remaining apostle, did not take it upon himself to remove Diotrephes and install Demetrius. He simply said that if he came, he would remind the congregation of the bad things he had done.

Today, most Christians are viewed as members of a particular sect or party, instead of belonging to Christ. They confuse the issue by calling their party a "church", but there is only one Church and Christ is the head of it (Matt 16:18; Eph 5:23). In the New Testament, the church was divided up into congregations because the people were spread out geographically. Today, under the party system, almost every Elder who is responsible for the people is appointed by the party (not the congregation). To keep his position, he must follow the party line. This in no way, shape or form resembles the Antioch elders.

This party system was also in force 2,000 years ago (seems people never change) with the Sadducees, Pharisees, etc. But Christ never joined or instructed the Christians to join any of these religion parties.

As I see it, elders who give their allegiance to a particular party (or association, if you wish) are not elders in the true sense of the position, when compared to the New Testament examples. They have a serious "conflict of interest", to use today's terminology.

At the present, on the other side of the road, we have many independent congregations that are reluctant to appoint elders under a New Testament format. These congregations usually struggle and go through many trials to survive, in much the same way families with no father figure struggle to survive.

Do you think the miraculous healings would return if the Church followed the New Testament congregational system led by Antioch-type elders? 📖

“Do We Need Religious Teachers?” from page 1

purposes, their “guru”. He was the ultimate authority for any question they might ask. It is very likely that Paul’s training from Gamaliel was conducted in this manner (Acts 22:3).

Unfortunately, all too often the Rabbis became too much of an authority figure to the students, and in these cases the students were closer followers of the Rabbi than they were followers of God’s way or God Himself.

As Christ traveled around with the Twelve, teaching them, most people would have regarded them as part of such a system: Yeshua the Rabbi and His school—plus a much larger group of “disciples” who listened to Him when they could. The twelve apostles used the terminology of the day: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; **for so I am**” (John 13:13, KJV). Christ was different than any other teacher of his day in that he deserved this high title, and He really could answer all their questions. It is interesting that this very verse comes in the chapter about foot-washing—where Christ had to teach them that a true leader serves the people he leads.

“Rabbis” and “Master Teachers” Today

There are still Orthodox Jewish Rabbis teaching a small “school” of a dozen or so, as well as speaking to a few hundred people on the Sabbath. There are some Christian groups doing the same thing. But mass communication methods have greatly affected the potential outreach of such “Rabbis” and “Masters”. Instead of a dozen disciples, they can have thousands or even millions.

In ancient times, the Rabbi would limit the size of his school so he could **intimately** interact with each one. He needed to hear their answers to questions so he could be sure that they were really learning and able to teach others some day.

There is a classic book called *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, available at most Christian Bible book stores, which advocates this same method as the most effective way to truly “disciple” new Christians. It encourages

each mature Christian or “elder” to mentor a small group of new disciples to the point that they can become mentors on their own of the next generation of disciples. It specifically teaches that new believers should not develop a dependency on the mentor, but look to him as an example as he follows Christ, with an eye to growing beyond the need for such an “overseer”.

But this whole concept can be short-circuited in our time by television, radio and tape ministries. A pseudo-intimacy is developed with the “master teacher” who uses such methods to interact with disciples. As some people come to believe that the people on soap operas are “real”, so some Christians develop what they honestly believe is a “relationship” with a man they may never have even met, or even corresponded with personally. They have just heard his voice for so long on tapes and/or read so many letters from him that it **seems** he is their “friend”—not just a distant speaker who doesn’t even know they exist.

Unfortunately, all too often the Rabbis became too much of an authority figure to the students, and in these cases the students were closer followers of the Rabbi than they were followers of God’s way or God Himself

Many such “master teachers” make a point of sharing personal details about their family, interests, habits, etc. These increase the follower’s sense of intimacy, but do not really help them evaluate the worth of the teacher. It is just too easy for a teacher to talk about only the positive aspects of his life and simply not mention the negative. This makes the teacher look glowingly righteous in the eyes of the followers. Whereas the people that we all really do know and see every day usually have apparent weaknesses along with their strengths.

Real-Life Examples

George and Pam Dewey were planning to leave the CGI in 1988, in dis-

gust over the dictatorial tactics of Garner Ted Armstrong. One of their closest friends, Chris, became very upset with their constant, open, very vocal criticism of GTA. He didn’t seem to care about the validity of their concerns, he just didn’t want to hear something bad about his “master teacher”. George had known Chris since their high school days in the early 1960s. Pam had met him right after their marriage in 1965. He had come into the WCG directly as a result of the Deweys’ “personal evangelism”, he had left there directly as a result of their influence, and he had come along to the CGI directly as a result of their influence. The Deweys and Chris had been together almost weekly for almost ten years while in the CGI. Pam had been like a big sister to him; he had sought her counsel for years. She even talked him out of suicide one time. He had even lived in the Deweys’ home at various times when he was down and out.

But when push came to shove, he chose the flickering image of GTA on the TV screen, a man who didn’t even know he existed, over a caring friendship of ten years. The Deweys were not even asking him to give up GTA. He broke up the relationship because the Deweys’ were no longer loyal to his “master teacher”. The day the Deweys left CGI was the last day that Pam saw or heard from him. He contracted lung cancer shortly thereafter, and died in less than a year, at barely 45. Although George visited him once in the hospital, Chris had little interest because of the illusion that he had a great “master teacher” who deserved his undivided loyalty.

A similar thing happened previously when the Deweys left the WCG. The fact that they were disloyal to Herbert Armstrong was enough for every person in their local congregation to **totally** shun them from 1978 until the day some of them left to attend UCG in 1995.

Brethren Do Not Know Their Own Teachers

Sadly, this same mind-set continues in the independent COG movement. The ancient Rabbis, including Jesus, practi-

cally **lived** with their disciples, so that the disciples really **could** see if their Guru was “walking the walk” that he taught them. There was an intimacy which would quickly reveal any sham. Not so these days. People may think that they “know” the man behind the mike, when they **really** know **nothing** about him but what he says on tape or in a letter. They have no idea to what extent some people or departments of people go to make a tape or letter that sounds natural and “off the cuff”, but yet thoroughly scrutinize it so that it does not contain the slightest hint of any problems, character flaws, etc., in regard to the teacher and his organization.

Herbert Armstrong’s tapes and writings are well known. There are millions of copies of them. But what was he like as a person? Nearly all of the WCG members had no way of knowing. Norman Edwards attended his Pasadena congregation from 1977 until his death in 1986, yet never knew of anyone who informally spoke to Mr. Armstrong at a service—save those few church employees who surrounded him all of the time. Mr. Armstrong’s close confidant, Aaron Dean, freely admits that Herbert Armstrong had a proclivity to immediately “fire” people who did something he perceived as wrong. He would usually rehire them the same or next day—but not always. If a man’s associates consist completely of paid employees concerned with being “fired on the spot”, can we expect them to correct him when he errs? Can we expect them to tell the truth to others about his errors?

It is sad that so many of the details of the life of Herbert Armstrong have to be told through the “investigative reporting” style of publications such as *Ambassador Report*. But the truth was not told while he was alive. Mr. Armstrong was largely surrounded by men who were helping him “do the work” and put forth a good “public image”, not men who were helping him to **live** a righteous life.

The leaders of many WCG splinter groups have been found plotting and planning, switching between groups for more power or more money, not doing what appears to be in the clear best interests of the people they serve.

Because they are not close to their members—the members are often the last ones to find out about these things.

Some of the thousands of members who have left big church organizations now look to new “master teachers” conducting independent tape or literature ministries. Sometimes these ministries are local and the brethren know the teacher. But in other cases, the ministries are national or global and the brethren do not know any more about the little in-

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dependent teacher than they did about the head of the large group. Sometimes these “master teachers” have very radical beliefs (like “the New Testament is a fraud” or charismatic ideas), but their distant students do not find out about them for years. The teacher does not include these radical beliefs in his teachings, but quietly introduces material to **prepare** his listeners to accept the radical beliefs if possible.

Other “master teachers” sit quietly at home plagiarizing the work of others and sending it to their mailing list. No one is there to see them make their tapes or write their literature from the other sources. Their supporters have the illusion that such a teacher is an **incredibly** dynamic speaker and spiritual giant who could come up week after week with wonderful analogies, metaphors, alliterations and so on right off the top of his head—all made to look so natural—never realizing he was just pretty good at finding material and pretending it was his own.

Ducking the “Hard Questions”
Many such “long distance” “master teachers” hide behind their mikes and computers, keeping their distance from their supporters to shield them from having to answer any “hard

questions” about their lifestyle, actions or teachings. There is, in many cases, almost **no** accountability that can be brought to bear against such a one. If a student perceives a serious problem with a teaching or a personal sin, the most he can do is call or write to the “master teacher”. If he just ignores his mail, e-mail and answering machine, little can be accomplished by the student—even if he asks a few witnesses to join in his request. The third step from Matthew 18:15-17 in dealing with disputes among brethren is taking it “to the church”—the body of believers who know that person—the ones who would treat him as a “heathen and a tax collector” if “he refuses even to hear the Church”. In this case, the church or congregation is the body of believers who are that teacher’s students—on his mailing list. If the teacher refuses to do this, the student who perceived the problem may have no way to resolve it according to Matthew 18.

Sadly, as with the Deweys’ experience with Chris, many still get very hostile at anyone who asks “hard questions” about their “master teacher”. Whole fellowship groups of close friends have been split over loyalty to a man whom **none** of the people really know personally! How ludicrous and sad.

These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, **and one who sows discord among brethren** (Prov 6:16-19).

A **whole lot** of historical as well as modern “master teachers” may face a **very** strong indictment when they stand before their Maker on this issue of separating brethren over matters which boil down to an issue of personal loyalty to themselves and their “ministry”.

Yes, certain people can have a clear “gift” for teaching the Bible in certain ways, whether it be Bible history, customs of Biblical times, or clarifying and bringing to life basic daily Christian living principles. Some may be able to help you learn how to use a concordance, how to do your own topical study through the Bible, and may

point out how certain scriptures clarify one another in ways you might not have noticed. Some can share material about a topic they have studied in depth in the Bible in a way that would take dozens or hundreds of hours to sort through yourself. Some teachers are skilled at stirring you to action—inspiring you to put to use knowledge that you already have. All these people can teach, and you can learn.

But the minute you set up **one** of those teachers as **your “master teacher”**, the main source of your understanding of biblical and spiritual matters—your personal Guru—you have suddenly elevated him to a position not intended to exist in the Body.

A Few of Today's Examples

One would think that after seeing the prophetic and personal problems of Herbert Armstrong, and then the difficulties with the leaders in the various splinter groups, people would learn their lesson. But the tendency has simply been to go from one “master teacher” to another. So they look to Fred Coulter, Bill Dankenbring, Wade Cox, Ron Dart, Jim Rector, Ray Wooten, Norman Edwards or any number of others. Some of these men quietly or very openly encourage brethren to look **only** to them for Bible teaching, while others understand Matthew 23:8-10 and **do not want to be considered a “master teacher”**. But simply asking people **not** to look to you as a “master teacher” does not stop them from doing it.

An ultimate example of a ministry stung twice by “master teacher” syndrome is Lon Lacey's A Church of God Ministry. Lon did not seem to seek after a great deal of glory or riches for himself, but he believed that he was the only teacher who correctly understood prophecy today. When Norman Edwards asked him if he would stop prophesying if his Y2K prophecies failed, he simply stated that he did not need to answer that question because his prophecies would not fail. Norman, and most of the others who read Lon's writings, were led to believe that this “master teacher” was getting his information from the Bible, publicly available world news and some “inside contacts” with influential people throughout the world. Although all of

that was true, the guidance of his teachings came from another “master teacher”, the prophetess Kathryn Sage and her son Elijah. (Does anyone care to guess what they were anticipating he would do when he reaches adulthood?)

The Bible does show that there were prophetesses in the New Testament (Luke 2:36; Acts 2:18; 21:9). But the Bible never mentions prophets or prophetesses secretly dispersing their prophecies through somebody else. It is no wonder that many of Lon Lacey's followers were bewildered when he was taken from them by an untimely death. Some seem to be rallying the others to continue his work. Others appear to be looking for another “master teacher”, whilst others seem to have learned from the episode.

We need to realize that most heads of the “Church of God” groups are nearing the age of retirement or death. Many have significant health problems now. Almost none have any sort of “Master Teacher Junior” to take over for Dad when he is gone. Far too few of these leaders are teaching brethren how to come to maturity themselves. It more seems that they are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Tim 3:6).

The Solution

So what is the solution? Should we never listen to another teacher again? No.

Each person should simply refuse to designate anyone as their “*master teacher*”. One should never be able to say, “Whenever I have a question that I cannot answer, I just ask this one person.” We must recognize that each person has different gifts. We should always be ready to check a teacher's explanation against the Bible and against other teacher's explanations. If all of the students simply left the men who act like “master teachers”, they would all soon disappear.

Obviously, Bible teachers need to give up the “master teacher” syndrome. **They should encourage those on their mailing list to read other information and study the Bible for themselves.** Yes, they will sometimes lose supporters when they read others' material. But teachers must realize that

Christ is calling disciples to Himself, not to a specific teacher. “For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?” (1Cor 3:4.) If supporters leave a teacher over a doctrine, then that teacher needs to find a better way to teach that doctrine—or to look and see if he is teaching it wrong. If supporters leave a teacher because false accusations were made against him, they need not worry—Christ is the judge, and the truth will eventually come out (Luke 8:17). If supporters leave a

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teacher because they find out about his sins, the teacher ought to repent—maybe stop teaching.

Many teachers will point out that in actual cases where new brethren have tried to learn everything on their own from their Bible and from a variety of teachers, they have either made obviously poor choices or have become confused and frustrated with the Eternal and have just given up. This is true.

The solution is “meat in due season” (Matt 24:45). Anyone who has raised either humans or animals from babies knows that they do not need the same food at different stages—their diet changes radically. The Bible compares believers to sheep. A flyer for Bible classes by John Purvins (PO Box 1, Little Chute, WI 54140; 920-733-5271; Jpurvins@churchcounsel.com) clearly stated a few concepts which we have expanded upon here in the conclusion.

Learning from Sheep

Christ is the Shepherd and mature believers hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). Baby sheep may hear the shepherd's voice—it may be comforting to them—but they do not understand it. They start out listening to their mother's voice and doing what

she does. Hopefully, the mother sheep will hear the shepherd's voice and follow it. But if she goes astray, the baby sheep will, also. The shepherd leads the sheep to good pasture, and the sheep eat what they need (the shepherd does not make them eat). But the baby sheep only nurse from their mother. They get only what she gets—but a good mother will share whatever she has and literally put her life into raising a baby.

Similarly, new believers need to begin learning from someone or some group. They are not quite skilled enough to learn completely on their own to start with. They will simply have to live with whatever deficiencies there are in the person or group that first teaches them. It is important to realize that a mother sheep with only a little food but who nurtures her baby is likely to be more successful than a sheep that has a lot of food but does not have time for her baby. In some rare cases, sheep will actually begin nursing from themselves! The obvious lesson here is that the teacher with the most truth is not always the best at nourishing new believers. They often use their resources to learn more and more truth and seem not to notice that new believers are "dying" for lack of the basics.

Sheep normally have just one mother, but if they get lost or if their mother rejects them, sometimes they can find another "mother" to accept them. The process usually has a lot of difficulty. It is much better for a baby to remain with one mother until it is old enough to eat and follow the shepherd's voice on its own. But changing mothers is better than dying. Similarly, it is usually better for a new believer to stay with the group that first taught them until they are ready to look to God directly—but it is better to change

groups than it is to stay with one that will not sustain spiritual life.

So how long does it take for a sheep to begin to feed itself, and to hear the shepherd's voice on their own? A baby sheep will begin to eat food in as little as three weeks. It will live on a combination of solid food and its mother's milk for another three months or so. At this point it is ready to be weaned—taught to stop nursing and eat for itself. Some sheep do this automatically. But if the mother does not wean the sheep, it will continue to nurse for months or

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even years—when it is old enough to have sheep of its own. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Heb 5:12). Most Church or God groups have had no organized effort to "wean" their members so that they can "eat solid food" (learn directly from the Bible) and "follow the shepherd's voice" (pray and receive direct answers from Christ).

It is strange to see a sheep the size of its mother still nursing, but it happens. After a year, sheep should be completely ready to follow the shepherd's voice, and to begin having their own babies (teaching other new believers). Some sheep develop more slowly and may take two years for this process. Obviously, the time periods in this analogy are for sheep, and not necessarily for humans. It may take some

people months before they are able to study the Bible for themselves, and years before they are ready to begin teaching others.

When we say "begin teaching others", we do not mean "become a full-time minister". This can apply to any responsible spiritual service in the body of Christ: speaking, writing, teaching children, serving the homeless or imprisoned—even telling one's friends or neighbors about the Bible. In a large herd of sheep, a few of the older, wiser ones will sometimes help the other sheep follow the shepherd—warning them of obstacles, going forward when the way looks tough. If there are goats in the flock, they will certainly do this. These are useful as long as they are obeying the shepherd—if they work against the shepherd, they are not. By analogy, these older sheep or goats are like our teachers, today: they are useful as long as they point the brethren to Christ. When they begin to gather a following for themselves, the brethren would be better off without them.

The people in the first century who heard the sheep analogies of the Bible often raised sheep and would certainly understand them well. Christ is the "Master Teacher" and all of His people are His sheep. He is described as a good "shepherd" many times in the Bible. There is only one reference to men as shepherds (pastors) in Ephesians 4:11. Even so, Christ is the "great Shepherd" (Heb 13:20). Everyone must realize that He is the Master Teacher, and any human teachers should be regarded as "fellow workers for your joy" (2Cor 1:24)—mature sheep who are able to help others along the way, but never to claim to be the "king sheep" (there is no such thing) and never to stand in place of the one true Master Teacher. ☞

**"Ambassador Report:
Eric Snow's Assessment"
from page 21**

bly going to receive a rude awakening—either now or in a later resurrection.

Thank you for writing the letter. I am glad that you do not claim that *Ambassador Report* is "all lies" with no proof, as many HWA supporters do. However, I hope you do see that

Herbert Armstrong does not fit into the pattern of any New Testament leaders. We find the apostles, before conversion arguing about who is the greatest and Peter refusing to eat with Gentiles, but we do not find any leaders with the adultery, greed, dishonesty and other problems of the WCG leaders.

I would much rather rely directly on what I can learn and what Christ will reveal to me from the New Testament,

than on the teachings of leaders who for many years missed the qualifications of a congregational elder.

Would I know about the Sabbath and holy days if it were not for the WCG? If the Armstrongs would have realized their sins and quit their ministries years ago, who are you or I to tell the Eternal that He could not have reached me another way? ☞

—Norman Edwards

"Truckers Study" from page 2

his study of Scripture, but was very open-minded, very eager to learn, and most importantly very much in submission to God's will in his life.

He said that he had been reading the minor prophets, most notably Micah, and we directed him to Micah 4, which talks about the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. He mentioned that it has only been within the past year that he has come to see that Jesus will come back and reign on the earth, and that many Christians don't seem to grasp this. We also discussed that the Gospel does entail the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His resurrection which gives us salvation, but that the Gospel also includes the return of Jesus to the earth and His kingdom. We studied Isaiah 61, which seems to cover all aspects of the Gospel, and is also the section of Scripture that Jesus read in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth.

He made some interesting comments that I believe are pertinent and wise to consider. When troubles and trials arise, he tries to come at them from the approach that this isn't home. The important thing is that God will solve all the problems, and that our home is "in heaven". Obviously I don't agree with the "going to heaven" concept, but the idea that our travails are temporary and in the end God will fix them all ("wiping away all tears") is scriptural.

Once again we had the opportunity to share the fact that this is not the *only* day of salvation. We got there by acknowledging that some people, who are decent human beings, just have no interest in things of God.

We discussed Matthew 11 in conjunction with Romans 11 and Revelation 20. He seemed to be very pleased with the clear biblical indications of the first and second resurrections, and that decent human beings who have not had a chance to understand will one day have that chance.

What a merciful God we know who has such a plan! How sad that so few can understand that! But how distressing it is when some get angry when this truth is discussed (which has happened on occasion). It is a strange view of God that some have.

Today's discussion was enjoyable. Talking with someone who is truly thirsting for Biblical understanding and seeing him figure out from his own Bible things that you and I take for granted—can anything be more rewarding than that?

May 21, 2000

We had two drivers today, including a repeat guest who joined us for the third time.

We began by looking at 1 Peter 2, which mentions that we are a royal priesthood. The wording is very similar to what we read in Exodus 19, where Israel was told essentially the same thing. A priesthood acts as an intermediary between God and man, and if that is the case, then it should imply that we should be acting in that capacity in our dealings with others.

Now, I find this concept to be interesting and exciting, but the serious Bible students I talked with today, whilst polite, acted like this is old news to them. I suppose my background has kept me from seeing this, where conventional wisdom has the ministry replacing the Levitical priesthood, relegating the rest of us to "pay and pray" activities. Some people really are ahead of us in some things!

One trucker talked about the growth in his church, which he attributes to leadership that is led by the Holy Spirit with a commitment to service rather than church building. This was refreshing in that too many church building programs today seem to be based on motives that are less than service-oriented.

We discussed Joseph and his time in prison, and how he remained faithful to God and how God remained with him, and the trucker said that he had spent three years in prison, but in some ways they were the best years of his life, for it was in prison that he began to study the Bible and came to know God. Even though he was in prison, he said he experienced a freedom that is hard to understand. God had given him grace. When the Scriptures say that the Lord was with Moses and showed him mercy, he could certainly identify with that.

We had a pleasant discussion today and were able to provide a place to discuss the Scriptures. We didn't change

any lives or attitudes, but we were able to provide a service for two men who wanted to spend a little time talking about the Bible and their relationship with God.

[Who knows? Maybe your report of this study will change some lives and attitudes. Maybe some long-time WCG member will realize that people in non-Sabbatarian groups have studied their Bible, asked God for understanding, and have learned truths that were never not taught in the WCG. That does not mean that Sunday-keeping or other errors are right. But, it should teach us that we did not come from "the church with the truth", but from a group with some truth and a lot more learning to do. God is patient! With many people! — NSE]

June 4, 2000

It is always best to let the Holy Spirit move the Bible Study. I had a wonderful topic put together to talk about today, and all it produced was the proverbial "deer in the headlights" look. This has happened more than once the past few months. A subject that could work in a Church of God congregation often is totally irrelevant (or worse, totally elementary) to people of other church backgrounds.

The challenging thing about these studies is the impossibility of knowing in advance the level of understanding of the guests for the day. That means one must always be perceptive, flexible, and willing to jump around in the Scriptures until you hit a hot button.

In today's study we began with four truckers who came more to listen than to interact. After my initial brush with irrelevancy, I went to various favorite Scripture topics, all of which fell flat until we got into the concepts in James' epistle about "faith without works is dead". It was about this time that we were joined by a fifth trucker (an immigrant from Belize), who frankly added lots of energy to the discussion.

Showing one's faith by one's works is very self-evident, if you think about it, but James points to the fact that we must live a life worthy of our calling. Of particular interest to me is the few last verses of James 2 which says that

Abraham was called the friend of God. Wouldn't it be nice to know that you are God's friend, that He walks beside you in all that you do? That He is with you daily?

In Matthew 7 we read about those who cast out demons in Jesus Christ's name, did many wonderful works in His name, but then they are told, "I never knew you." The fruits weren't in their lives. The real works of righteousness—doing what God says even when it doesn't make any sense, but having the faith that God knows what he is talking about—that's how we come to know God.

The driver who joined us late made some interesting contributions relative to Jesus Christ's comment to the Pharisees that "you are gods" and the destiny of man, which led naturally to a discussion of Hebrews 2. It was good to get people looking to eternity and the purpose God has for each and every one of us.

This driver stayed afterwards, and I told him that I didn't want to embarrass him in front of everyone, but that the Bible study was totally flat until he came in, and it was only after he joined us that things began to come together. We had prayed before the study that if anyone else would be interested in studying the Bible, they would find their way up to our meeting, and God certainly answered that prayer today.

June 11, 2000

One trucker joined us today, who will be retiring in just a few months. He was quite knowledgeable about the Bible, and he wanted to tell the story of how God selected Saul to be the first king of Israel. He pointed out that God chose a poor man from the smallest clan of the smallest tribe, showing that God often chooses the humblest of people to serve Him. God brought Saul to Samuel, showing that God will put us in the right place at the right time. And Saul tried to hide, showing that God knows where we are and will make sure we can't hide.

The trucker was telling this story in light of his pending retirement, illustrating that God will use him somehow as he enters retirement by putting him where God wants him to be. This struck me as a beautiful illustration of faith.

He belongs to an independent Pentecostal church, but he used to be a Baptist. He has never spoken in tongues himself, and he has studied the issue at length and has come to realize that tongues is not the greatest of the gifts. I was surprised that he understood that Acts 2 shows that the miracle was in the hearing and not the speaking.

He says he has experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in his life as illustrated by changes in his life since he was "baptized in the Holy Spirit", which came many years after he was baptized in 1960 at repentance. He related this to change that occurred in Peter between the time that he denied Christ and the events of Acts 2, where Peter preached a powerful, bold sermon.

His church, though Pentecostal, does not seem to be judgmental regarding those who have not spoken in tongues. We turned to several scriptures in 1 Corinthians regarding the issue, and he was very familiar with them, having studied them at great length. In his church, tongues-speaking is disregarded unless someone can "interpret", since without an "interpreter" such tongue-speaking cannot edify. So without an interpreter, he just disregards the speaker.

I told him that I view "tongues" as being "foreign languages", and it was evident that he was familiar with this approach. Arlo told a story about someone walking into a Pentecostal church, and then purposely saying something in Latin. Immediately someone came up to "interpret", whereupon the storyteller says, "No, that's not what I said." The way the story goes, they became angry with him and escorted him out.

We covered the concepts of how the Holy Spirit is a gift, and people seem to refuse the gifts that God wants to give. Apparently they think strings are attached, which they are. The truck driver knew that the Holy Spirit is only given to those who obey Him.

It is a pleasure as always to speak with people who sincerely seek God's will in their lives.

[I am happy to hear about another Pentecostal church that accepts members who do not "speak in tongues". This man

obviously has the opportunity to do it, but has not because he does not believe that God has ever given him something to speak.

Unfortunately, "speaking in tongues" is such an "in thing" at most Pentecostal churches that many members do it whether God inspires it or not. I personally have heard "tongue speaking" sessions where the "message" length was many times longer or many times shorter than the "interpretation".

Arlo's story of false interpretation of Latin is very believable and might be a good evangelism tool to wake up some Pentecostal churches that are open to see their error.

But these things do not prove that all "tongue speaking" is false. They just prove that there are tares among the wheat (Matt 13:25). Our job is to make sure we are a grain of wheat, to be be strong and continue on when we meet a tare, to avoid judging a bushel basket (a church group) as 100% tares just because there are a lot of tares on top and to avoid labeling our bushel basket (our group) as 100% wheat. — NSE]

June 18, 2000

Three truckers joined us today, including Matt, who has been with us a half dozen times or so already, and we haven't scared him off yet.

One of the truckers used to be a 747 pilot and now drives trucks. I asked why he got into trucking and he says it is no different to flying a plane: both have 18 wheels, and with both you pick up loads and drop them off where you are told to.

The pilot was one of the more interesting fellows to come our way. He was very refined even when disagreeing, articulate to the core, a penchant for story telling, offered unique observations borne from his experience, and he was very interested in what he himself had to say and much less interested in others' comments.

He has been involved in a number of different ministries of various types, and his own emphasis seems to be on the christian way of life, and whilst he claims to understand that Jesus Christ will return, he doesn't place much interest in it. Whilst we might view

these things differently, listen to his reasons: He says when dealing with hurting people, you must reach them by showing them the love of God in both in your words and deeds. You must get to the underlying source of their problems and comfort their hurts, bind up their broken hearts. All the teaching about the destiny of man is fine, but teaching that without taking care of the immediate needs is like saying "be warmed and filled" and not giving them what they really need.

He belongs to a strongly Calvinist church which harps on about sin all the time, and feels that one can take that too far and overlook the grace of God.

I wish everyone could have an opportunity to talk to people of different religious backgrounds and viewpoints. It's an education and a challenge.

[For hundreds of years, religious teachers have been proph-

esying the soon-coming return of Christ. Many people believed it. Some used this preaching to change their lives and begin to serve others. Others used this knowledge to say: "Why should I try to change the world, when Christ will do it in His Kingdom?"

Some died still trying to understand the last little bit of truth about Christ and His Kingdom—having done little to help anyone. When all of these people are raised from the dead, Christ will be ruling. Those who studied the Kingdom will probably recognize what is happening, but what will they say when they are judged? Has their "talent" gained any other "talents"? (Matt 25:14-30).

Believers who have not studied the Kingdom, but concentrated on serving others, may not recognize the Kingdom right away, but it will

take only minutes to figure it out. When their judgment time comes, they will be able to show what they did in their life—the "talents" they have gained. Obviously, the best thing is both to learn much truth and to serve many others.

The "Church of God" tradition has been for brethren to give a large amount of money to a central headquarters which would then "preach the Gospel" and do some limited good works. Whilst not perfect, this was better than nothing.

Now that many believers are no longer supporting a big headquarters, they need to consider how they will do good works in the name of Christ. — NSE]

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"Analysis of Mystery of the Ages" from page 11

the latter-day Elijah (carefully read pages 9, 10, 24, 157, 251, 267, 289-291). Elijah had been a prophet in ancient Israel. God actually spoke to him. "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (Deut 18:22).

"Now here [Daniel 2] we have described FOUR universal world empires—the only four that ever existed!" (Page 301)

This is gross historical inaccuracy! This time he says "universal world" empires. This is even stronger than his previous simple "universal" empires he wrote about in 1978 (when he also set a date for the endtime events).

Many empires from before and after those four empires have been as large or larger: Median, Assyrian, Persian, Arab, Turkish, Mongolian, Chinese, British, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, German, for prime examples.

A Mixture of Truth and Error

"All teaching came from Christ through

the apostles... God's Church today, as in the first century, receives its teachings from the living Christ, through an apostle, just as in AD 31." (Page 350)

Considering the plain errors noted in a number of the teachings of this book and the previous book (*The Incredible Human Potential*), something is terribly wrong here. I'll trust the Bible over Herbert Armstrong any day. Sure, I could go through this book and list a dozen or more good things. However, I did not come to praise this book, but to bury it.

I honestly thought we had allowed these two books, *Mystery of the Ages* and *The Incredible Human Potential*, to die natural deaths after they were both withdrawn by the WCG about 1990. They were rarely, if ever, referred to even before 1990 in my experience. I assumed that was because the numerous obvious errors were plain to many—especially to educated elders.

When books have upwards of ten percent error, then they are as much or more trouble as they are worthwhile.

In the categories of unproven statements and opinions stated as fact (many of which I believe are easily disproved), along with information that is simply erroneous, I estimate that *The Incredible Human Potential* is

30% or more flawed (and not just chapters 4 and 5!). I estimate that *Mystery of the Ages* is at least 25% flawed. I have only shown some of the problems in this book.

As a whole, these books have way too many holes!

When truth is greatly interlaced with errors, the credibility of the whole suffers and the credibility of those who promote it. Even unconverted people can often see some of the false concepts, scriptural and historical, noted above.

The mixture of good and error in these books is strongly intertwined. Several themes and concepts Mr. Armstrong weaves throughout both books are false or unsupported by the Bible (yet stated as fact).

My desire is simple: let's get rid of obvious biblical errors and other misinformation (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and let's not be unbiblically cult-like in any way.

God was never dependent on Herbert Armstrong. Nor does our salvation depend on Mr. Armstrong in any way; it never did.

If grossly inaccurate books are retained as beneficial and recommended, then continual and needless controversy and confusion will result. This is already the case. ☞

Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a **Complete Literature List**.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Items New This Issue:

Study Resources and Information:
Church of God Organization/World Wide Web Addresses
 by Alan Ruth, 14 pages. Mailing addresses for "Church of God" groups of all kinds. Many group web sites, also.

Basic Literature

Young Child's Bible Story Coloring and Activity Book, 24 pages. Coloring, questions and word search for ages 2 to

10. This will be handed out at the Port Austin Feast site. Those with children attending elsewhere are encouraged to get it.

Mature Literature

Satan's Fate—Life or Death? by Melvin Hershberger, 8 pages. An interesting look at a question that many have not studied (definitely *not* a "salvation" issue).

Items Featured This Issue (always available):

Mature Literature:

200 Years of Sabbath Keeping In Australia by Bruce Dean, 8 pages. Shows many Sabbatarian Groups in Australia

Basic Bible Study Tools by Richard Nickels, 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.

Church Government? by Wesley Webster, 32 page booklet. Former WCG/GCG minister (Webster), a long-time member (H. Curley) and a voice from the past (J. H. Allen) show the danger of religious hierarchy.

Eight Studies: Ordination, Laying on of Hands, Tithing, Nicolaitans, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Teachers by an anonymous author, 60 pages. Bible studies shows the problems with religious organizations that are often more like businesses.

Freedom and Christian Responsibility by Dale Stogner, 14 pages. Freedom, morality, love and liberty cause peace and prosperity. We are responsible for our actions and our inactions. We need to use the literature available from a variety of ministries to help ourselves and others grow.

God vs. Evolution Y2K by Rabon Vincent, 214 pages. Book on widely varying topics including evolution, Bible chronology, the calendar and British Israelism.

Is Christianity a Fraud? A Preliminary Assessment of the Conder Thesis, by Eric V. Snow, 136 pages. Now includes effective rebuttal to Conder's *By Gosh Josh*.

Pastoral Guide on True Shepherding and Caring for the Flock of God with Servant Leadership and "Being Helpers of Their Joy!" by Bill Swanson, 16 pages. Bible verses and practical points for anyone who ministers or desires to minister to others. This book would radically change the image of corporate churches if it were followed.

The Theological Marketplace of Ideas or, the Three "C's" of Ministry by F. Paul Haney, 11 pages. What is necessary for former WCG members to reach the world with the Gospel?

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of "Church of God" history.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages.

Biblical study of giving and tithing.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of "Church of God" history.

Study Resources and Information
Freedom Biblical Information Center
Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages.

Free, mostly Sabbatarian literature & tapes sources.

Giving and Sharing Order Form by Richard Nickels, 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 24 pages.

Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages.

Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index, 36 pages.

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