Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 5 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* **Sep/Oct 2000**

Port Austin, Michigan Feast of Tabernacles 2000

The Feast of Tabernacles at Port Austin, Michigan was unquestionably the most diverse Feast I have attended. Many who attended said it was their best feast ever—it was not just a feeling they had, they explained exactly why. There were others who said it was their worst feast ever and that they would never attend a site like it again—and they wrote long letters explaining exactly why.

How could such a thing happen?

I think I understand the reasons why—and I hope my explanation will be a benefit to many readers who will be facing the issue of "with whom should I fellowship" in the future. Even though we did not originally plan it, a number of people associated with the Port Austin Center came to keep at least part of the Feast with us. They also spoke at some of the services and studies and participated in the music. Some of our practices and beliefs were the same, but some were quite different. That was the source of most of the good and bad feelings that were created.

How this Feast Came About

Before I go any further, I think it is important to understand that the way the Port Austin site turned out this year was certainly not my own design. I prayed that the Eternal would send people to me who would help me find a site that would serve people and help them to grow. I asked for a place where people could live and eat together inexpensively, but where there would also be motels nearby for those who wanted them. Beyond that, I asked for His wisdom for what we really needed.

At our Feast of Trumpets service in 1999, a visitor brought a Saginaw, Mich. newspaper with an article about a Christian music festival celebrating the 2000th birthday of Christ on the Feast of Trumpets. I asked him for a copy, and several months later he mailed it to

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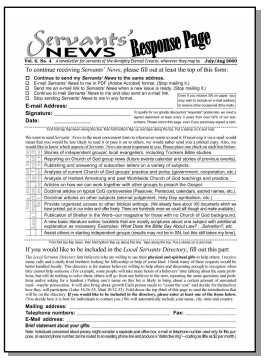
Send in Your Response Page!


Servants' NEWS Response Page

Vol. 6, No. 4 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* "July/Aug 2000

To continue receiving *Servants' News*, please fill out at least the top of this form:

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We want to send *Servants' News* to the most convenient mailing address for you. Your e-mail would mean that one e-mail for two likely to read it or pass it on to others, we would rather send one e-mail to many. Also, we would like to know which aspects of *Servants' News* are most important to you. Please place one check on each line below:

Stories of independent groups' local evangelism, including Truckers Bible studies.
Reporting on Church of God group news (future events calendar and stories of previous events).
Publishing and answering of subscriber letters on a variety of subjects.
Analyses of current Church of God groups' practices and policy (government, cooperation, etc.)
Analyses of historical Church of God groups' practices and policy (government and practice).
Articles on how we can work together with other groups by contact like Google.
Doctrinal articles on typical COG controversies (Passover, Pentecost, calendars, sacred names, etc.).
Doctrinal articles on other subjects (eternal judgement, Holy Day symbolism, etc.).
Provide organized access to other Biblical writings. We already have about 50 documents which we have printed, put in our index and offer freely. There are hundreds more we could sift though and make available.)
Publication of Shelter in the Word—our magazine for those with no Church of God background.
A new book—an update on the Servants' Directory. Will be published in 2001 and distributed free.
Assist others in starting independent groups (results may not be in ENI, but this still takes my time).

If you would like to be included in the *Local Servants Directory*, fill out this part:

The Local Servants Directory lists believers who are willing to use their **physical and spiritual gifts** to help others. It requires a minimum of 200 names to be published. Those who are listed in the directory will be encouraged to use their gifts to help others and receive help from others. The directory is for mature believers willing to help others and discerning enough to recognize those they cannot help overcome. (For example, some people will take many hours of a believers' time talking about the same problem, but will not do anything to help solve the problem. Such people are not candidates for the directory.) Please do not write to us before asking for a booklet. Putting one's name on the list is likely to bring about a certain amount of unwanted mail—maybe persecution. It will also bring about growth God's proven needs to "crown the vine" and decide the thistles/not thistles. Please do not write to us before asking for a booklet. Please do not write to us before asking for a booklet. Those who will be on the directory. **If you would like to be included in the directory, please enter at least one of the items below.** (You decide how it is best for individuals to contact you.) We will automatically include your name, city, state and country.

Mailing address: _____
Telephone numbers: _____ **Fax:** _____
E-Mail address: _____
Brief statement about your gifts: _____

(Please do not write to us before asking. Some people might consider a separate post effective, e-mail or telephone number used only for this purpose. (A second phone number can be crucial to avoiding phone ties and produce a "dial-in-the-sky"—costing as little as $3 per month.)

Thus far, we have received about 700 of the response pages that were mailed out with the previous issue. All but 50 wanted to continue receiving *Servants' News* in some format. About 60 would like it only via e-mail. Most of the people answered the questionnaire section, and about 200 want to be in the Local Servants Directory. We will summarize the results of the questionnaire **when we have more pages returned!**

If you have not returned your Response page, please do so soon. It might be better if you put it in an envelope, we mistakenly used return address labels with post office bar codes on them. Sometimes the scanning equipment reads that bar code instead of the *Servants' News* barcode and subscribers have received their own questionnaire back in the mail. If that happens, cross out the barcode on your address label and put it back in the mail. We also found that post office machinery crushes some of these small response pages. If we ever do this again, we will include envelopes.

Please let us hear from you. If we do not, we will eventually drop you from our mailing list. — *NSE*

Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#58-61

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

September 3, 2000

It's a little difficult to describe today's Bible study. This being a holiday weekend, we weren't expecting a large number of truck drivers, and we weren't surprised. On the other hand, some unique circumstances made this an interesting experience. My old friends Rod and Darwin Keesee (yes, they are brothers) dropped in around 9 a.m., and for some time we discussed lots of "inside" stuff such as tithing (are there three, two, one or none), Holy Days and their meaning, place of safety, Holy Day Offerings and abuse of the same, etc. While we were in the middle of this discussion, our Baptist preacher friend (whom I mentioned last week) came in, and we had to back up and explain a few things related to the jargon that we were using.

Think about it. When we say "Place of Safety", what would that mean to someone without a church of God background? Kind of like the word "rapture"—it doesn't appear in the scriptures. Feast Days—we have to explain that this refers to the High Days of the Old Testament, and so forth. I am glad that his presence changed the tenor of our discussion only slightly. (We backed off the church politics stuff somewhat.)

When talking with Trinitarians, it always jolts me to hear them referring to the Holy Spirit as a "he", but today it struck me that our lingo must strike others in a curious way as well. When we refer to the Holy Spirit as an "it", I wonder if little bells go off in their heads. It's the same with our terms such as "The Feast".

[Terms like "the Feast" that can be found in the Bible are not too hard to explain. Terms like "place of safety", "second tithe", "man becoming God", etc. are very difficult for others because they are not in the Bible and sound like additions to the scriptures—much like the common doctrines of "Trinity", "Christmas", "slain in the spirit", etc. What one group sees as their divine revelation or cherished Christian tradition, is often seen as non-biblical error to another. — NSE]

We were able to continue our discussion of the symbolism of the feast days, and Darwin pointed out a theory that needs to be pursued and studied a bit more regarding the parallels between the feast days and the ancient Hebrew wedding customs and how they relate to different covenants. The ideas are somewhat tentative, but could prove interesting.

At about 10 a.m. we were joined by a trucker who, it turns out, is a new driver. Previously he had been a missionary and had traveled extensively. He is originally from Argentina, and I noticed that his

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Servants' NEWS

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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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Notice: *The people listed above do not necessarily endorse every article in this newsletter.*

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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.

Akron Feast 2001

The Akron Fellowship is planning on putting on their own Feast of Tabernacles for 2001. If you would be interested in attending an interactive Feast site, we would like to hear from you as soon as possible so plans can be made.

If you are interested please contact Ed Schneider at ets124@hotmail.com or Will Blair at will_blair@excite.com or write to Akron Fellowship P.O. Box 5300, Akron, Ohio 44334. web site: members.truepath.com/akron_fellowship

— Will Blair

Norman Edwards Speaks in January in Akron

The Akron Fellowship, an interdependent Church of God, invites everyone to attend Sabbath services on January 20, 2001 at St. Thomas Hospital, 20 Olive Street, Akron, Ohio. Norman Edwards will be speaking on "Working with Other Believers".

Services are from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. with a potluck meal to follow. For more information, including maps, see: members.truepath.com/akron_fellowship or call Bill Ambrose at 330-335-0317 or contact Will Blair by e-mail at Will_Blair@excite.com

Musicians Users Group

I would like to help establish a Church of God Musicians Users Group to share music information and to promote church music writing and musical performance. There is much talent in the Church, and we hope this Users Group will help Church musicians be better and broaden their base.

I am planning to set up a conference telephone call on a Sunday late in December to start it off. The following individuals are asked to join the conference call: Mark Graham, Barri Armitage, Sharon See, Robin Todd, and George King. These individuals have all written and produced good quality Christian music. Other musicians are invited to participate.

— Richard C. Nickels
Giving & Sharing
3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718
phone: 307-686-5191
fax: 413-228-0483
Internet: www.giveshare.org

Wisconsin Spring Feasts

The Church of God, Berean Fellowship in Southern Wisconsin will sponsor a full week spring Passover festival, 2001. Services will be held daily (usually evenings) and on Sabbaths. We will accommodate a variety of Passover celebrations, including early 14th, late 14th and 15th of Aviv, simple bread-wine celebrations as well as a variety of Seders. All services are interactive, including the Passover celebrations.

Accommodations for those coming from out of town can be made in local members homes as well as local rental homes, hotels, etc. You will be our guests and we will do what we can to hold down expenses. We did this last year and the experience was wonderful. You can contact our web site at www.geocities.com/Berean_Fellowship or e-mail at friendssabbath@aol.com, or call us at 262-567-6488.

— John Merritt
"Don't fence me in"

Hebrews, Romans Tapes

United Christian Ministries has a series of 38 audio tapes covering the entire book of Romans. They have another series of 28 tapes covering all of Hebrews. Please feel free to request them. They are sent four tapes at a time along with a study guide. Contact United Christian Ministries, PO Box 361725, Hoover, AL 35236; Telephone 888-985-9066; e-mail: raywooten@unitedchristianministries.org

— Peggy Wooten

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.

Ousted Mormons Sue for Loss of "Becoming God"

This story seems almost beyond belief, but serves as a wonderful lesson showing how people can get incredibly caught up in church organizations. A group of Mormons led by Laurence and June Hoins spent seven years researching the biblical Anti-Christ and False Prophet, and concluded that "two senior Mormon Apostles matched the physical and other descriptions".

They took this information to their

church leaders and were surprised that they "ignored our very detailed summary of the evidence". They were further shocked when they were brought to a church trial and disfellowshipped, by Mormon leaders who had not read their book, and whom would not tell them why they were being excommunicated, nor would they tell them the "secret" rules for excommunication. Even worse, many of the Hoins' children, all Mormons, would no longer speak to them and some actually wrote denunciations of them.

The Hoins' answer to this was a multi-step process which essentially amounts to suing the Mormon Church for $80 million per individual who was excommunicated from the church. The Mormon teaching is that members in good standing become gods and goddesses in the after life and that the Mormon church's unjust removal of that privilege ought to be worth at least $80 million. The suit also seeks a revealing of secret internal rules and economic and political plans.

Many Church of God members have experienced cases where truth and justice apparently seem a whole lot less important than the immediate financial welfare of their organization. They have also experienced friends and relatives refusing to talk to them because they "left the church".

The Mormon church teaches tithing and is more autocratic and more wealthy than the WCG ever was. Yet, in all of this, there is still a lot of truth of the Bible taught and people benefit greatly from that. Maybe the Eternal has raised up the Hoins to wake up this corrupt church organization. On the other hand, it may be a lot better if they would simply realize that Christ is the one who will judge our eternal destiny. This author has sent them a copy of *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* in the hopes that some will realize that a bunch of men sitting in a fancy church judgment hall do not determine anyone's eternal future.

Members of Church of God groups might consider that it is a great blessing that the WCG has broken up into many little groups, none of which can reasonably make the claim that they are the "one true Church" and all others are false. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and many other organizations that also claim to be the "one true Church" still continue to deceive millions—even after they are cast out of such organizations.

To find out more about the Hoins' lawsuit, see this web-site:
http://www.angelfire.com/nt/metatron

To find out more about the errors and falsity of Mormonism, see:
http://www.LDS-mormon.com

A website of 65 different Mormon-related sites, some pro but most con, may be found at:
http://nav.webring.yahoo.com/hub?ring=lds

Ultimate CoG Web-site

Anyone interested in studying some of the various Church of God web-sites will probably find this one helpful: http://www.coglinks.org

UCG and COGCF Meet

Representatives of the United Church of God, an International Association and the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship met together for meetings on August 14-15 and November 19-20. The next meeting is planned for May, 2001. The meetings were held "with the focus on developing specific, practical ways for the two organizations to draw closer and work together."

This appears to be a welcome change in an environment where brethren have sometimes been persecuted by one organization for working with another. The UCG-IA's report on the meetings stated that "campers and staff members from both churches have often participated together in summer camps, congregations and members often combine in some church areas for social and educational activities, and ministers have conducted funerals, weddings, baptisms and anointings for members in the other church. This type of mutual cooperation is encouraged to continue and expand."

The UCG-IA's report went on to say that "Additional ideas being submitted to the councils by the task forces include coordinating certain Feast sites and activities, sharing literature and articles, working on cross-over ministerial speaking opportunities, and extending invitations to attend each others' board/council meetings and ministerial conferences."

The report acknowledged that the largest barrier to reconciliation is resolving the hurts of the past. While the report did not spell out exactly what those hurts were, UCG-IA and COGCF members have indicated that many revolve around disfellowshipments and shunning that occurred during the years of 1993 to 1995.

Most of the members of the COGCF were once part of the Global Church of God, which began in 1993. Most of the people who went to the GCG were disfellowshipped by their WCG ministers and shunned by their WCG brethren.

Hundreds of WCG ministers and tens of thousands of members left the WCG to form the UCG-IA in 1995—many the very same ones who disfellowshipped and shunned the GCG members. But on the other hand the GCG leadership for months did not acknowledge the existence of the UCG-IA, and then began to criticize it for its "voting and unbiblical form of government".

The extent of these hurts vary greatly from one area to the next. In some cases, the ministry and members of different groups got along just fine, in other cases they were always at odds. The UCG report mentioned the need to follow "the biblical instructions regarding peace making, conflict resolution, and forgiveness and endeavoring to dwell together in unity." It did not name any specific scriptures and stopped short of any kind of apology to members for disfellowshipment and shunning.

There was no stated plan to merge the two church organizations or open up the talks to members of other groups. There was also no mention of the problem of ministerial authority: How can one minister claim the authority of God to command a member to do something, when that member could walk across town to a different, but recognized-as-genuine "Church of God" group and find that the minister there commands no such thing? Nevertheless, these talks are an encouraging thing when many church groups seem to be closing their doors to others, rather than opening them.

More information about these meetings may be found at:
http://www.ucg.org/a/news/ucg-cgcf.htm
http://www.ucg.org/a/news/ucg-cgcf2.htm
http://www.ucg.org/a/news/ucg-cgcf3.htm
— Norman Edwards

Church of God (Hulme)

We are occasionally asked if we have any information on what is going on in the Church of God organization started when David Hulme split from the United Church of God. This particular group has been relatively quiet, as they apparently do not allow their members to interact with other groups much.

Nevertheless, their web-site is kept up to date and contains quite a bit of information on their activities.

From the sound of their November 30, 2000 "weekly update", his "outreach" is almost totally on the Internet, and his main plans for future outreach are to expand the material on the Internet. Here's a brief excerpt:

> This week I am able to give a statistical update on some of the Church's activities in the U.S. Over the past year to the end of November, income from all sources has increased by 7.1%. Within that increase the first tithe account is up 7.4%, holyday offerings up 1.4%, festival tithe up 31.5%, and church assistance fund/third tithe up 16.5%. We can all be grateful that God has blessed His people with such abundance and that His Spirit in them inspires such generosity.
>
> As far as numbers of people on the U.S. file, we have approximately 7500 individual subscribers to *Vision*, more than double last year at this time, and a little over 1100 [adult, baptised] members.
>
> Attendance at the Feast around the world this year was in excess of 2700 [including children]. Again we can be grateful for the faithful and pleasantly surprised at the scope of the Work of the Church and its geographic spread so early in its development. As you will see from the just mailed November Church of God News, the Feast was observed at 18 locations (15 of them outside the U.S.)

Herbert Armstrong is referenced frequently in other letters, especially when it comes time to ask members to give more money. The *Vision* magazine is quite well done, but its circulation of 7,500 is no bigger than the combined circulation of three or four small independent publications done at one tenth the cost. Nevertheless, we can be thankful that some people are learning Bible truth through the efforts of this church organization. The most difficult fact is that they pretend to be the only "Church of God". Their "who we are" page states:

> The Church of God, based in Pasadena, California, traces its antecedents to Sabbatarian roots in 17th-century Europe, and before that to the first-century Christian church at Jerusalem. Accordingly the Church endeavors to uphold the original practice and teachings of Jesus Christ and His followers.

Those interested in gaining more information can access:
http://www.church-of-god.org/members

At this site you will be asked for a user name and password, type "member" and "access" without the quotes. (You are not trespassing, the note inside says that it is "not private information, simply of less interest to those unfamiliar with the beliefs and practices of the Church.")

— Pam Dewey & Norman Edwards

WCG/HWA Study Site

Those interested in studying the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God and Herbert Armstrong may find this website useful:
http://www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa

A set of 298 letters from the Personal Correspondence Department (PCD) is available. These were the "short answer" generic letters sent out in answer to typical questions from the public and church members. The compiler notes that these were the versions sent out after Joe Sr. took office, but most appear to be pretty early on, and thus might be expected to have had little change, if any, from what they were like under HWA.
www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa/pcd

This same site also has all of the HWA co-worker letters, in a very convenient layout to find the one you might be interested in.
www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa/coworker

And it has the 58 lesson Correspondence Course:
www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa/bcc

Also, most of the main HWA booklets, including the 1956 version of 1975 in Prophecy are available:
www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa/booklets
— Pam Dewey

Ex-Gothard Discussion Group Similar to Ex-WCG

I have had reason to do some further research on the underpinnings of the group that will now be using the Big Sandy Campus, Bill Gothard and his Institute in Basic Life Principles. The internet is loaded with sites both pros and cons about this authoritarian guru. It would appear he has invented a system that is in some ways more legalistic and dictatorial than the old Worldwide Church of God. Although not teaching Sabbath or Holy Days, he has hopscotched through the Old Testament and picked a diverse group of points to impose on his followers—including the need for circumcision. He has added his own "revelations" on just about every matter from how to make a shopping list to how and when to have sex and how to instill absolute instantaneous obedience in children from infancy.

As with most similar groups, the obscure teaching comes packed along with some pretty sound Biblical teaching—and a heavy dose of personal charisma and salesmanship with a well-thought-out marketing strategy. All of these things tend to obscure the underlying serious error.

To get a real flavor of just what is going on in his world, I have signed up for the Gothard Discussion forum at www.egroups.com. It appears to be made up primarily of former Gothard supporters, but also includes a certain number of current supporters and apologists. Things can get pretty heated. I just received the welcome to the forum this morning, and was startled at just how much it sounds like the Welcome to Likeminds, a discussion group for former (and some still current) WCG members.

One of the major issues that both groups struggle with is simply asking members to talk about doctrine issues openly and logically rather than becoming upset and attacking those

with whom they disagree. (When people have believed that they were in the "right group" with all the right doctrines for many years, realizing that some of their teachings are not clear teachings of the Bible can be somewhat unnerving.)

It is also quite evident that both groups are very tied up with the doctrines taught by their founders. Since Gothard taught that circumcision was required, there are great volumes of papers and messages on it, whereas WCG discussions on the subject are often fairly brief. On the other hand, WCG discussions of holy days, calendars and related matters are often voluminous, whereas in the Gothard group they would be minimal. Of course, most people involved in the extensive discussions of a specific doctrine believe they now correctly understand what the Bible teaches on the subject. They also seem largely unconcerned that they have spent little time studying the parts of the Bible that their "founder" spent little time studying.

An important thought to think about: Suppose you found a former Gothard group member that, after studying on his own, came to believe all of the same Bible truth that you believe. But this member is still spending most of his time in discussions with other Gothard group members trying to convince them of his way. Now, suppose that a friend of yours, a new believer, were moving to this member's town. Would you recommend that he fellowship with the Gothard member? Of would you think he might be better with someone who just teaches Bible truth, rather than someone who always seems to teach everything as either a "support for" or a "correction to" what Bill Gothard said? I hope we can use this story to look at ourselves and see that the ministry of helping people who have left a controlling group is very different than a ministry to teach new believers. It is difficulty to be living in the past and the future at the same time.

— Pam Dewey & Norman Edwards

WCG Sells Furnishings

"My tithe dollars at work!" That thought went through my mind when reading the following article about the auctions of expensive furnishings being sold by the Worldwide Church of God. Well, at least the ten years' worth of tithe we sent in might have bought one place setting of the nicer china or maybe a pretty old pitcher or painting. My husband, George, was making $1.35 an hour at the time we began tithing in 1965. He was making less than $10,000 a year when we left the WCG.

Actually, the revelations of this incredibly lavish lifestyle in the *Pasadena Star News* in 1978 is one of the reasons we walked out and never came back. I suppose those who had been at headquarters just sort of took all this for granted. But to those of us out in the boonies, being asked to "tighten our belts" and send in sacrificial offerings so the Gun Lap could be finished, the realization that this was what our belts were tightened to provide was eye-opening. Honestly, I cannot even pronounce the names of a lot of these things—or the names of the artists listed.

— Pam Dewey

Evangelist's property to be sold at auction

By Janette Williams, Staff Writer
***Pasadena Star News,* Nov 6, 2000**

PASADENA—The late evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the fundamentalist Worldwide Church of God, enjoyed a lavish lifestyle at his mansion on the Ambassador College campus.

The self-proclaimed apostle of God who preached against medical treatment, celebrating Christmas and makeup and short skirts for women and who believed Jesus would return to reign on the throne of England spent 50 years surrounding himself with the finer things in life.

Now some of them, his Louis XVI giltwood armchairs, Meissen urns, St. Louis crystal, Sevres porcelain, Minton china, a pair of Steinway grand pianos and a silver model of the Mayflower will go under the gavel 6:30 p.m. Monday in Ambassador Auditorium.

The 350 auction lots, expected to fetch from $100 to tens of thousands of dollars each, can be previewed from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday and Monday inside the mansions on the church's Orange Grove Boulevard property.

"These are terrific things," said Pasadena auctioneer John Moran, who will conduct the sale. "They've had four auctions already, but they were all lesser things. They've actually saved all the good things for this sale."

Armstrong, whose 100,000 adherents worldwide originally donated 10 percent of their annual income to the church, philosophized that Ambassador College students should be educated beyond "narrow subjects and academics," said Bernard Schnippert, Worldwide Church of God treasurer and director of finance and planning.

"It was part of his belief that students should be helped to appreciate the arts, that it would help build character into them," Schnippert said. "So the surroundings at that time were in accordance with that philosophy."

Most of the things haven't been used for years, Schnippert said.

Moran said he'd been told graduating seniors were once invited to dine with Armstrong off the finest china, linens, silver and crystal.

"It was a setting of high quality and beauty," Moran said. "I believe they entertained many world-class musicians there, too."

The church was based in Pasadena from 1947 through 1990 and at its height had an annual budget of $200 million. It provided $5 million annually for Ambassador Auditorium, where performers from Luciano Pavarotti to Count Basie entertained. The famed concert series ended in 1995 when the subsidy was withdrawn.

Armstrong, who died of heart failure in 1986 at age 93, traveled the world, hobnobbing with royalty and heads of state and enjoying his estates in Pasadena, Tucson, Ariz., and Bricket Wood, England.

In the 1970s, however, there was a bitter falling-out with his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, and some members of the church sued officials for misuse of funds. They alleged that about $70 million had been siphoned from church coffers for personal use.

In 1979, the state attorney general appointed an auditor to look at the books, but dropped the case after a law was passed prohibiting the state from becoming involved in church matters. In the years following Armstrong's death, the church fought to survive through doctrinal

conflicts that split the membership, ended mandatory tithing and brought a slew of financial problems.

The 50-acre Ambassador College campus was sold for development to Legacy Partners for an undisclosed amount in January last year, nine years after the college moved its operations to Big Sandy, Texas. Escrow is expected to close in early 2001.

Four mansions on the site including Mayfair, the Tudor revival house in which Armstrong lived will be restored as private homes each costing upward of $2 million.

Schnippert said the gifts Armstrong received from church members and heads of state over the years including an ornamental peacock from Queen Sirikit of Thailand will not be sold. They will be kept for display at a new site the church may soon move to in San Dimas, he said. The auction proceeds will go into the general fund that originally provided the money for Armstrong's purchases, Schnippert said.

A partial list of the items for sale, from http://www.johnmoran.com included:

Cataloged sale of 350+ high quality items including: two Steinway & Sons grand pianos, one Steinway & Sons Hamburg. 7'custom ordered in Rosewood case serial no 405397, and 6'10" ebony grand serial no 416190-B, Tiffany & Co. fancy grandfather clock, superb French empire center table with classical figural bronze supports & marble top, pair Louis XVI 19th c. giltwood armchairs, 14 chair Chippendale style d/r suite with triple pedestal base table, Baker breakfront bookcase (4 door/32 light) cabinet, fancy English walnut bar cabinet by Beresford & Hicks, pair marble/bronze sculpture stands, antique Japanese lacquer coffer, stupendous dore torchier/floor lamp, Baker sideboard armoire & sofa table, console tables, French bureau plat, bombe chest, desks, approx 70 lots of high quality modern furniture (near new) including d/r sets, sofa groups, uph chairs, b/r suites, etc., 11'×22' Sarouk oriental rugs.

Fine pair French Louis XVI style figural dore/bronze & green mottled marble urns & covers (26"), lg rouge marble & gilt oval urn signed F. Barbedienne (French 1810-1892), 2 lg. bronze figural groups including: dore/bronze chariot/three horse team s. Emmanuel Fremiet (French 1824-1911), hunter & hounds signed DeLabrierre (French 1829-1912). Terrific French ormolu mounted clocks & garniture/candelabrum, modern Patek Philippe table clocks, pair Empire urns on gilt wood pedestals (5'9") French dore/bronze tantalus case. Paintings including: Eugenio Zampighi (Italian 1859-1944) 24"×20", Timoleon Lobrichon (German 1831-1914) 34"×47", Alfred DeBreanski (British 1852-1928) 24"×36", F.M. Bennett (British 1874-1953), A. Herbert (British 19th Century), Erwin Eichinger (European 1892-1950), G.W. Mote (British 1832-1909) 40"×56", 3 pc Norman Lloyd (Australian 1897-1985), more.

Monumental pair (36") antique Sevres covered vases (as lamps) artist signed, Lg Meissen campana form urn, lg Sevres covered vases, fine pair Royal Vienna cobalt covered urns, over 250 St. Louis crystal stemware (sets of 12-18) in fancy filigree gold & "Excellence" patterns, numerous Baccarat sets, artist signed Waterford, Steuben, decanters & bowls, Royal Worcester covered bowl & plates, pair antique French porcelain ice pails w/liners & lids, Coalport china service "Lady Anne" (94 pc), Minton "Dynasty" (18) 133 pc china service, wonderful set service plates, French porcelain cache pots, more. Silver including: hallmarked silver ship model of the "Mayflower", pair of sterling/parcel gilt jousting knights in armour, elaborate rococo center bowl, lr. Victorian sterling figural tazza, English hallmarked tea service, candelabrum sets, 149 Wallace sterling flatware "Sir Christopher" pattern for 20, fine quality Asian silver mounted vases, ivory, etc.

Yes, the WCG always taught that members were paying "God's tithe", so they had no right to question how it was spent. That means, that in the judgment, the WCG leaders will not be able to say that "the members let us spend the money this way so we did it"—because they clearly claimed that they were spending God's money His way. Yes, the Eternal is wealthy, but Christ taught us not to be concerned with storing up physical treasures in this life (Matt 6:19-20, 31-34).

Was it God's idea to write dozens of letters to the brethren over many years commanding them to "sacrifice so the work could be finished"—all the while having a completely different standard for His leaders? Does God send a prophet or an apostle to preach one thing and practice another? If these riches were of God, did the WCG ever try to educate its members as to the "godly reasons" why each item was necessary?

The idea that these riches were necessary to educate students in the finer things of life is largely false. I was a student, faculty member, and employee at that campus during the years of 1977 to 1992 and I never saw or heard of the vast majority of these things. My friends who worked in accounting, insurance and facilities departments said that there were a lot of expensive things that were purchased and warehoused—they never saw the light of day anywhere on campus. Most of the others remained in the executive offices where they were regularly seen by only a few dozen people. Only a few things, such as the pianos, some lamps and some pictures were seen by all.

Were these things necessary to take the gospel to heads of state? Only a very few heads of state ever visited the WCG campus, and I don't think any ever toured the warehouses or read the fixed-assets statements. The only explanation I have ever understood in regard to why these things were purchased is that some of the WCG leaders liked to go to expensive stores and buy expensive things—they somehow made them feel more important, maybe even closer to God. The concept of buying more expensive quality items that will last and be cheaper in the long-run is good, but the items listed here are mostly expensive impractical items. This history will be forever available to anyone who wants to look into the history of the WCG. Will we who have exited that movement make excuses, or will we acknowledge our error?

— NSE

Power Bible

Internet users can now purchase the power Bible CD for $19, containing a number of translations, commentaries, dictionaries and topical references, from http://www.powerbible.com

Inscription Rock

America's ancient Indians called it the "Cliff of the Strange Writings". It has been named Phoenician Rock or the Commandment Stone. It is called today Inscription Rock. Located west of Los Lunas, New Mexico, at the

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us. It sat in a pile on my desk for several more months. Meanwhile, Kevin Pomaville, who lives in central Michigan, found a nearby site which both of us planned to visit together. Out of curiosity I called the Port Austin Center in April just to see what they were about and I was surprised to find that they intended to rent out their facilities as a retreat center until their school was in full operation. They seemed eager to have us there for the Feast. So my friend and I planned to visit both Port Austin and the other site, but after being in Port Austin and finding the facilities to be adequate, very inexpensive, but what I believe we needed for the Feast, I felt we should work with them. I was also intrigued that the man representing Port Austin Center at that time mentioned that others in his group also believed in the Feast Days and Sabbath. I paid $1,000 down to reserve the facilities and we did not even visit the other possible site which clearly would have been more expensive and had less facilities.

Later, the Port Austin Center management decided that the retreat idea was distracting them from other projects, so they canceled all of their retreat bookings except a football camp and ours. Our file was temporarily lost, so they did not call us. It was not until I called late in July that I found out about this change. They stopped doing major repairs and they tried to get us to go somewhere else several times—indicating bathrooms and other promised facilities would not be ready. I told them that I could not find another site with comparable facilities in time and that I thought most people would simply go to another site and some would not go to the Feast at all if I canceled Port Austin. About two weeks before the Feast, I wrote and called those planning to come that we would have lessor accommodations, but not one of them changed their plans based on this information. It was at this same time that Warwick Potts, the present manager of the Port Austin Center, told me that he was inviting thirty or more people to come. I told him that I would schedule a couple of speaking time slots for him, and we agreed that we would add whatever evening and afternoon studies we thought appropriate. With many last-minute preparations to be made, I had little time to determine exactly what would be said at the meetings.

I cannot prove to anyone that the circumstances of this Feast were orchestrated by the Eternal. I believe they were because I believe I received what I prayed for, plus a few things I needed but didn't know to pray for. I remember Danny Smith calling to tell me he would arrive at the Feast site two days early to help. I wasn't going to be there that early and I had no idea what he would do. But with all the work of preparing food, facilities and other things, there was no one to make the beds or clean many of the rooms which had not been slept in since the remodeling was completed. But others may conclude that this Feast was a big mistake or a trick of Satan. I know that I acted according to what I believed would be best for everyone at the Feast. I am sure that Christ will sort it out in the Judgment.

> I think it is important to note that the Feast of Tabernacles is... not the "Teaching of Tabernacles" or the "Services of Tabernacles". The emphasis in the scriptures is on feasting and rejoicing—not on the messages delivered

The rest of this article will be divided into three sections: **1)** those things that worked well at the Feast, **2)** those things that were mistakes that I will try to avoid in the future and **3)** things that were a problem to some people and not to others. The final category contains many of the lessons I think we need to learn in working with other groups.

Family Environment Was Great

Over half of the people stayed in the dormitories and houses right at the Port Austin facility. Most of the others were within a very few miles. About three fourths of the people shared meals with everyone in the dining hall. The meeting room, dining room, dormitories and indoor recreation facilities were all less than a minute's walk away from each other. (The indoor facilities included basketball, volleyball, racquetball, pool, ping pong and a video room.) Bowling and outdoor recreation facilities were only two to three minutes away.

Children could play while parents and singles took as little or as much time talking and eating. Adults and children frequently played together. If there was a need to find someone for a music rehearsal or to simply take part in a conversation, one could usually find them simply by walking through the several buildings that we were using. I personally only left the Port Austin Center only three times during the entire Feast—always with other people, and just a few miles away to visit the beach.

I think it is important to note that the Feast of Tabernacles is called the "Feast of Tabernacles", not the Teaching of Tabernacles or the Services of Tabernacles. The emphasis in the scriptures is on feasting and rejoicing—not on the messages delivered. In many past Church of God Feasts, brethren were together primarily for 10 services, and then spent most of their time in restaurants and entertainment places—among people who knew nothing of the Feast. The Bible does command the reading of the Law once every seven years at this Feast (which was done in afternoon sessions at Port Austin), but there is no particular command for extensive teaching the other six years. Actually, there is no command even to assemble on all the days—only on the first and eighth day. There is nothing wrong with services every day and we had them, but they should never be taught as a biblically commanded part of the Feast.

Eating and living in close proximity naturally creates many opportunities for conversations between people who do not know each other and would not speak to each other if they were rushing off to their own hotel or restaurant. It was wonderful to sit and ask people how they had begun studying the Bible and how God had changed their lives. It is nice to overhear an interesting conversation and ask to join in. It's nice for

single people, young and old, to be able to sit and talk to people of the opposite sex, yet still be among other brethren knowing that "anytime this guy (or girl) gets weird on me, I can just get up and leave". This is much better than going on a "feast date" (even a "group date") with people one does not know very well.

The rooms were not at all fancy, but we had everything we needed. The high ceilings in the main room made for good sound. There was a room for children's classes nearby which were well-organized by Ruth Smith. There was no stage in the room (which makes it very difficult for the back rows to see when a presenter or musician sits down—or when children are involved), but Kevin Pomaville and several others precut the pieces and then put a stage together in just a few hours before the feast began.

The music of the Feast was excellent. Many talented people—young and old—shared their ability with both vocal and instrumental music. We had a morning singing service for 45 minutes before the main service where we sang anything from old standards to modern praise music. We used an overhead projector to display the words and music for many of the hymns. A couple days into the feast, we found that our 6×6-foot screen was a little small to see in the back, so we began using the white wall as a huge screen that all could easily see. Special music was performed at every service. It included a children's choir and an original praise dance performed by some of the teens. The family variety show and karaoke night went from 7:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. and was more enthusiastically received than any previous Feast show that I remember. There were still plenty of people left to help clean up the room at that early morning hour.

With the great diversity of people attending, some were staying in nice hotels and wearing expensive suits every day. Others were staying in the campground and wearing jeans and t-shirts. This did not appear to bother anyone while I was there, as the first day I read from James 2:2-4 where it specifically says that a person who comes to a service should be equally treated no matter how nice or poorly he is dressed. It does not say that the person "must be wearing the best they have". (Nevertheless, after the Feast, one person wrote a whole page complaining about the way others were dressed, referring to scriptures about how Levites were required to wear linen and about the man without a wedding garment (Matt 22:12)—which is not about services or clothes, but about being clothed in righteousness to be a part of the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7-8). I do not know if he applied Galatians

God is not the Author of Confusion – But He Sure Lets Men Author Confusion

Probably a hundred times I have been with someone who saw something that they did not like in a church group and say, "That's confusion, and 'God is not the author of confusion' (1Cor 14:33), so that is not of God." It does not take a very long look at the social, legal or political systems of mankind to see that God allows men to be the author of confusion. He does not stop it. He allows it. He even allows it in His Church. Notice these scriptures:

> "For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you… For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1Cor 11:18-19,21).
>
> "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church" (3Jo 9-10).

The Apostle Paul said division would be necessary to know "those who are approved". The Apostle John mentions a church leader who lies about him and puts out true brethren, yet remains "in the Church".

The letters to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 show that some believers had the sins of losing their first love, allowing the doctrine of Balaam, allowing the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, allowing the woman Jezebel to teach falsely among them, knowing the "depths of Satan", having a name of being alive while being dead, and being lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Some brethren in Smyrna were being jailed.

Is this confusion? I think it is. Did God author it? No, He didn't. God gave truth and men brought in all of these false doctrines. You might ask yourself, what would you do if you were alive in the first century and Christ sent you to visit those seven churches in Asia? Would you visit only Philadelphia because they do not seem to have any problems? Would you visit Smyrna and risk being jailed? Would you refuse to go anywhere near that false teacher Jezebel?

We do not live in the first century, but we do need to ask ourselves, "If men had created that much confusion in the first century and Christ still claimed the seven as his churches, how much confusion might He be working with today?"

Furthermore, we need to look at ourselves. When someone seeking Bible truth comes to a "Church of God" group, they soon learn about how the WCG preached the Sabbath and Holy Days for years, and how its new leaders reversed that teaching. They see that the WCG ministry and members split into dozens of competing groups which largely do not work together or even acknowledge each other. Would not they rightly label that state of affairs as "confusion"? **It certainly is confusion**—but it was created by men, not by God! Nevertheless, a person is not automatically an "unbeliever" just because they attend a service with some confusion.

If we expect others to accept confusion among our groups, we ought to be able to accept some among theirs. "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matt 7:2). —NSE

6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17 and attempted to correct the people whom he thought were poorly dressed or not.)

In general, most people went away from this Feast quite refreshed. There were 120 on the first day, about 30 associated with Port Austin Center. I did not keep a careful count, but I think attendance was in the 70s to 90s for most of the rest of the services. Most of the Port Austin people went home before the end of the Feast, as they were keeping the Feast for the first time and had not planned for it all year. (Remember your first feast!) Some of them were already keeping the Sabbath, others have begun to meet on the Sabbath after this Feast. Many of them had begun to eat only clean meat just a few months before this meeting.

The Port Austin people are strictly non-denominational—so they do not all believe or practice the same things. If they had one person telling them what they should all believe, or if they got together and voted on what they would believe, they would simply become another denomination with another doctrinal statement. Is it "confusion" to have a lot of people in a room worshiping together and apparently getting along with each other even though they do not all believe the same thing? I think that is far less confusing than having hundreds of separate groups all claiming to be "Christian" and claiming to have the "right" doctrinal statement, but refusing to work with each other. The first method encourages people to hear each other and study the scriptures to see what is true. The latter encourages people to rally behind their group and its doctrinal statement and to shut out any truth that the other groups might have.

Improvement Needed

I apologized to several people for not clearly stating before the Feast that there would be speakers about which I knew very little. They came expecting to hear messages along standard church of God themes and were not given a clear way to know that they would be listening to people with rather different ideas. Some people look forward to the Feast as a time to get away from the false teachings that they are among at their school or work and to "hear truth". Some see the feast as a time to teach others and are willing to listen to teachings that they might find false in order that those others will hear their true teachings. A person ought to be able to know the nature of the Feast they are going to, and I will certainly make that clear in future Feasts.

The First Day of the Feast, we had a "meet the church" service where someone in each family had a few minutes to stand up and say something about their spiritual background. That practice has worked very well in previous years—especially when the number of families attending was smaller. But this time there were more people who spoke and some spoke for ten or fifteen minutes. Some of the long-winded ones were just visiting for the day. I found most of the speeches quite interesting, and so did many others, but they lasted considerably longer than I had hoped and I did not have time for the many scriptures I hoped to read about the Feast of Tabernacles. (I ended up reading them on the Eighth Day). In the future, I think I may plan a "meet the church" session on the evening after the first day or on the second day.

> The music of the Feast was excellent. Many talented people—young and old—shared their ability with both vocal and instrumental music

The speaking portion of the Feast also needed improvement. I am opposed to requiring every speaker to have his presentation ready long in advance of the Feast—because sometimes the Eternal simply gives words to people when they need them (Luke 12:11-12; 21:14-15; Eph 6:19). On the other hand, if one schedules a speaker whom one knows little about and who does not give a topic in advance, then it is difficult to know what to expect. Many of the speaking sessions would have been better if the speakers had a better understanding of the background of their listeners.

Diversity of Doctrine

Some doctrines, such as British Israelism and no eternal punishing in hell were accepted by nearly everyone at the Feast. But there was some teaching at the Feast that was new to most everyone who was from a Church of God background. I found some of it to be wrong, some questionable, some not worth the time to study and some good. I was amazed that some of their teaching was in agreement with things I had studied but never wrote about. Their explanations for some scriptures were better than any I had previously heard. Other people found much of the teaching "heretical", others agreed with more of it, and others agreed with different parts. At least, we can be fairly sure that people were actively thinking because I do not know of anyone who "agreed with all of it."

I cannot possibly cover everything that was said at the Feast in this short article, but I will try to cover some of the more important examples.

Steven Jones

Before this Feast, I did not even know Steven Jones (6269 University Ave NE Suite 1, Fridley, MN 55432), but Warwick Potts gave him one of his service speaking slots and then Stephen spoke at two other evening studies. Steven Jones has had a national newsletter, booklet and tape ministry, circulation about 2500, for a number of years.

He moved from Arkansas to Minnesota a few years ago to teach regularly at a non-denominational congregation there, but is not considered the pastor there and only some of the people there regularly help in his ministry. Steven believes that local congregations should be governed by elders, not by one "pastor" or some far-away church headquarters. (This is actually very similar to the size and operation of *Servants' News*—I do not "run" any local congregations either.)

Steven Jones did come from the Identity movement—people who believe that the USA and other nations are modern Israel, but who also believe that non-Israelite races are not offered salvation by God in the same way that Israelite races are. He has since renounced this teaching and now preaches universal salvation—that everyone of all races will be saved. Nevertheless, links to his site still

appear on some of the Identity movement web sites and he has spoken at some of their conferences as little as a year ago. Why? Because they still like some of his teaching, they invite him to speak—and he believes he has helped many hundreds out of the "only Israelites can be saved" movement. Again, we need to look at ourselves.

But when a group has such a vile doctrine that writes off 90% of the world as unsavable, should he simply have nothing more to do with it? We ought to look at ourselves. People have asked me, "Why, do you have anything at all to do with the former-WCG groups and leaders? Don't you know about all their extravagance and sexual sins? Don't you know that they used to command happy families to break up? Don't you know that they falsely claimed they were the one and only group that God was working with?" When I respond, "Yes I know about those things, but there are many people I know and love that are still in those groups, but they do not see these things as such a big problem and I want to help them." Sometimes they understand, but other times they chuckle and say they cannot believe that I would have anything to do with those "oppressive, hierarchical Church of God groups".

I know that Steven Jones has rejected the "only Israelites can be saved" idea because I visited the congregation he attends and there are non-white people who attend and work with him in his congregation. Also, he is making quite an effort to translate his work into Spanish—a non-Israelite language.

Most of Stephen Jones' work is about prophecy, chronology and Biblical symbols. When I was invited to speak to the congregation he meets with, I thought I might talk about the difficulties that the WCG had with their prophetic scenarios that there is a need to serve and teach others now, not just to speculate about the future. But when I arrived, I quickly found out that they were involved in a prison ministry, a ministry to street people, a Wycliff Bible translation project, and some other local ministries. This group of less than 50 people was clearly doing far more than most Sabbatarian congregations I know about, so I felt I would be completely out of place speaking about "showing some fruit". Instead, I delivered a message on why I keep the Seventh-day Sabbath. I later realized that Steven Jones did not need to write a lot of basic booklets because this group, being non-denominational, used a number of other basic booklets (about repentance, faith, baptism) in their ministry that were produced by other groups. (Corporate Church of God groups generally have to write all of their own literature because they do not believe that other groups have worthwhile knowledge of God.)

Stephen Jones has a chronology worked out for most of scripture. He wrote a book explaining how Christ was born at the Feast of Trumpets, 2 BC. I have only studied parts of his writings and I disagree with some, but have, in general, found his work better than most of the other chronologies sent to me. In 2 BC, the Jewish calendar shows Friday Passover, which would not allow for three days and three nights in the grave. I pointed out to Mr Jones that the calculated Hebrew calendar was double-postponed that year and that it is quite possible that the actual calendar in use was being observed—which would have placed Passover on a Wednesday and allowed for three days and three nights. He did not say, no I have it all right, but he was receptive to the idea. However, I completely disagree with his statement in that book that says, "Jupiter rules Jerusalem."—though I might accept proof that historic events in Jerusalem in some way match Jupiter's orbital cycles. (See more about astronomy/ astrology under "Warwick Potts", below).

I found Stephen's concepts interesting regarding an "age of Passover" (a time of animal sacrifices up to the death of Christ), an "age of Pentecost" (a time where the holy spirit is poured out on men who are still flesh, sin and die) and an "age of Tabernacles" (which roughly corresponds to the "Church of God" concept of the "Millennium"). He teaches many of the details differently, and I would have to study them a lot more before reaching a conclusion, but I find it very helpful to have a fresh look at prophecy from someone who believes the Bible, but is not basing his study on any previous literature. Also, I have found him less dogmatic about being "right" than most other chronologists.

In addition to Chronology, Stephen Jones does a lot of teaching about symbols and numbers from the Bible. There are some that I disagree with, but I found some very helpful. For example, Leviticus 14 goes on at length explaining the priestly procedure for cleansing a leper. We do not have Levitical priests now and I don't know of anyone with leprosy, so what use is that scripture now to me? Should I reread it every time I go through the Bible? Mr. Jones taught that leprosy, an incurable disease, symbolizes our sin. Two birds were required to cleanse the leper, one was killed and the other was dipped in the blood and let go. He tied this to the Day of Atonement procedure in Leviticus 16 where one goat was killed and the other was sent away bearing the sins. In order to remove human sins, Christ first had to be sacrificed, but then he also had to live and physically remove our sins so that we sin no more. We can only be completely "at one" with Christ when both of these things are done. We have accepted the sacrifice of Christ, but He has not yet completely removed sin from within us.

> The First Day of the Feast, we had a "meet the church" service where someone in each family had a few minutes to stand up and say something about their spiritual background

Jory Brooks

Mr. Brooks has served as the pastor of a variety of congregations for a number of years. He was involved with the Identity movement and ultra right-wing groups at one time, but has since abandoned that. I witnessed him working to make a presentation more acceptable to Jews. He gave a slide-show on British-Israel history, which was interesting and largely well accepted.

Warwick Potts

Warwick Potts and his family were very likeable and easy to get along with. They provided some fine music

and were quite helpful in taking care of the accommodations—as the circumstances would allow. He is the son of a non-denominational preacher, so he has lived with that all of his life. His father had a gift for simply walking up to people, talking about the Bible and starting a new congregation. Later on, some of those congregations were taken over by a local "king", who would no longer let Warwick's father come back to speak. Warwick has observed the seventh day Sabbath for a number of years.

In his message during a service, Warwick made the mistake of starting his message by asking people not to have fear of learning new truth, then went on to present new ideas without substantiating them from the scriptures. I think he was a little amazed at how scripture-oriented the church of God audience was.

One of the controversial subjects he brought up was **numerology**—the idea that numbers stand for certain things in the Bible. Obviously, the Bible teaches this to some degree in that there are 12 tribes in Israel, twelve Apostles, 12 gates in the new Jerusalem and all of these things are specifically tied together in various verses (Matt 19:28; Rev 21:12). The Old Testament contains numerous specific numbers in regard to offerings, dates and times. The New Testament chronology of Christ actually skips a couple of generations in order to end up with three nice sets of 14 generations (Matt 1:1-17 & 1Chr 3). When Peter becomes a "fisher of men", the Bible says he got a net "full" of fish which is enough to tell the story, but then goes on to specify 153 fish. Does that number mean anything?

Obviously there are a great many people who add up Bible numbers, make all kinds of exciting conclusions and turn a great many followers after themselves. One should never think that a person is a great spiritual teacher because of the neat mathematical things he can do with Bible numbers—it is better to look at his character. One should never disobey the clear commands of scripture based on some complicated number theory. On the other hand, to say that God has not placed significance in Biblical numbers just because some misuse them is a mistake. There is no scriptural command to find essential Bible truth by doing mathematical operations on Bible numbers, but for those who can study, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter" (Prv 25:2). How much better is it to learn the details of God's doings rather than the details of TV, movies, sports, video games, etc?

Maybe the most difficult teaching was the idea that **astronomy, even astrology** has a Biblical place in showing future events. Warwick did not recommend that one go to a local astrologer to "get a reading", but he and his audience did point out some of the scriptures that show that there might be some good purpose in looking into the skies to know about future events. My notes do not clearly show which scriptures were actually discussed at the service but I will list relevant ones here.

"Then God said, 'Let there be **lights** in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs** [distinguishing marks] and seasons [appointed times], and for days and years… He made the stars also'" (Gen 1:14-16). This verse clearly says that the lights in the heavens were made for, among other things "signs"—that Hebrew word is used elsewhere to indicate important events. The Holy Days are obviously the most important, shown by the moon and sun.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Pslm 19:1-4). These verses, unless they are symbolic in some way, say that knowledge is available from the night sky. Bullinger and other authors of many years have claimed to show how the night sky stars reveal God's plan of salvation.

"**He** made the **Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades**, and the chambers of the south" (Job 9:9). "He made the **Pleiades and Orion**; He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth; the LORD is His name" (Amos 5:8). Here are clear references to three of the constellations of the "zodiac". My research indicates that the twelve constellations are truly ancient—they are not an invention of some pagan religion of the last few thousand years.

"Can you bind the beautiful **Pleiades?** Can you loose the cords of **Orion?** Can you bring forth the **constellations** [Hebrew *Mazzaroth*] in their seasons or lead out the **Bear** with its cubs?" (Job 38:31-32, NIV). Here, the Eternal himself is speaking and ***He*** inspired the Hebrew word *Mazzaroth*, which, according to any information I could find, means the 12 constellations of the "zodiac". This is the only place in the Bible where this word occurs. The KJV does not attempt to translate it, but just leaves it: "Mazzaroth". Job is often considered the oldest book of the Bible. Job may well have had some knowledge that has now been lost.

"…and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him [Daniel] chief of the magicians, **astrologers**, Chaldeans, and soothsayers" (Dan 5:11). These verses do not say that Daniel ever became a magician, astrologer, etc. He could have been in charge of them, but relied upon God rather than their methods. Or he may have used *some* of their methods, sorting out the truth from the error.

Are there "good astrologers" and "false astrologers" just like there are "true prophets" and "false prophets"? In Isaiah 47:13 the Hebrew *chozeh* (Strong's #2374) is translated as "stargazer"—which is used negatively with "astrologer", but everywhere else the word is translated "seer", in a good sense. Similarly in the New Testament, we find the Magi or "wise men" coming to visit Christ near the time of his birth (Matt 2). They receive instruction from God in a dream, yet they also claimed to find Him due to a star (which may have been an angel). The Greek word for these men is *magos* (Strong's #3097) and is also used for an ungodly sorcerer in Acts 13:6-8.

An exhaustive concordance will show three Hebrew words that are translated "astrologer(s)" in the Bible, used in 9 verses. One is Isaiah 47:13, and the others are in the book of Daniel. These verses never condemn people because they are "astrologers", but there methods are continuously

shown to be inferior to revelation from the Eternal. Jeremiah 10:2 says: "Thus says the LORD: 'Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.'" This verse does not condemn learning from the heavens, but simply tells us not to be afraid of what we see. People should fear to disobey God rather than fear that some "heavenly ordained disaster" is coming upon them. The Bible never talks about an "astrologer for God" or recommends that believers listen to one, but there are numerous commands to listen to God's true prophets.

The problem with nearly everything called "astrology" today is that it is nearly always mixed up with the occult, demonism and other false religion. The Bible clearly condemns such practices. If the Eternal intended us to learn about future events from the stars, how does one go about learning how to do it? Even if an astrologer's predictions (or anyone else's predictions) do come to pass, we should **not** follow them if they do not obey God (Deut 13). One could attempt to learn righteous knowledge from the stars by correlating historical events with astronomical data and looking for patterns, but I know of very few who do this without reading other "astrology books".

I see no biblical purpose in consulting the stars on a daily basis for what I should do with my life—I should go to God in prayer for that. But if someone believes that they understand part of the timing of God's plans by observing the stars, I cannot say that the Bible is against it. But before I would teach it, I think I would insist upon a using a whole new vocabulary so that what I did would not be confused with largely ungodly astrologers of today. I don't know how much of this article the Port Austin speakers would agree with, but I only heard them talk about using the stars to understand timing of historical events—not for governing one's personal life.

Most of the Port Austin Speakers

I found most of the Port Austin teachers too much on the side of "the world is all predetermined", so I showed them some scriptures that show where individuals made decisions and God changed. They tended to believe that God had this great plan from creation and has caused each person to fit into it every step of the way. I attempted to show them that if the world is a predetermined script, then people cannot be responsible for their own adultery because the children born from it had to exist according to God's predetermined script. Actually, God would be responsible for all sin if he predetermined it to happen in advance and men were powerless to stop it. I further attempted to show you that God is so brilliant and capable that He can make a master plan in advance, give billions of people free will (but limited resources), and still bring about His plan by simply making little—often imperceptible—changes here and there. They listened. At another time, they agreed that even though the scriptures say to them that all people will eventually be saved, there are a few scriptures that might mean that some people will refuse salvation—and that whatever God does in the end will be acceptable to them. I said that I think the scriptures indicate some people will reject salvation and be forever destroyed, but if I am wrong and God has a plan to save them all, then I am all for it.

> I believe many people learned valuable lessons from this Feast and I know of many who have renewed interest in studying the scriptures because of it

Several of the Port Austin speakers would occasionally say "God told me" or "Father said to me" and then go on to explain something that they did or were going to do. While this kind of talk is fairly common in some religious circles, I think it can be taking God's name in vain if a person uses it to attribute their own ideas to God. Was God or the Spirit really speaking to them? The New Testament surely indicates many instances where the Spirit spoke to people (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 16:6-7; 20:22-23; 1Tim 4:1). Of all the things that they claimed "Father Said", I did not hear anyone say anything that I thought was unbiblical. On the other hand, I do not believe I saw enough fruit come from these statements to be convinced they were messages from God. I asked at least one person the exact means where by they heard from God, and he indicated that several prayed the same thing separately, and they all would receive the same answer. Since neither I nor the group was asked to do or believe anything based on these things that "Father said", I was not too concerned about these claims. If anyone had begun demanding that others or I do things based upon their "word from God", then I would have felt compelled to come to a decision (either become convinced that the messages were from God, or ask them to stop.) The New Testament has many examples of God directly guiding His people, but I have also seen many people think they are being guided and later conclude they were not. Each person is responsible to God for "testing the spirits" (1Jn 4:1).

Conclusion

I did not cover everything that people found significant at this Feast. One person wrote a couple of paragraphs about methods for improving the method for selecting a person to give opening and closing prayers. I would have printed one of the letters that found difficulty with the Feast, but even after several requests, the people who wrote the letters declined to have them printed.

I believe many people learned valuable lessons from this Feast and I know of many who have renewed interest in studying the scriptures because of it. I do not know of anyone who has accepted what I consider "error" as a result of this Feast.

If I had a chance to do it all over, I would do it again, hopefully fixing some of the problems. As a matter of fact, for the Feast of Tabernacles 2001, we are planning to meet with a Sabbath-keeping group of about 40 with no Church of God background in the Nebraska/Colorado area. They are just beginning to keep the holy days. I hope those who would like to meet with, befriend and help teach brethren from a different perspective will come to this site. Details will be announced in future issues.

— Norman Edwards 🕮

Feast of Tabernacles 2000 Reports

We printed all of the Feast reports sent to us. They came via mail, fax and various forms of e-mail. If we missed one somewhere, we are sorry. We realize that there are a great many other wonderful Feasts for which we do not have reports.

While reading these reports, I could not help but think, "Feast-keeping is here to stay!" There are now so many different people sponsoring Feast sites that the practice will be maintained for generations to come no matter what happens. Feast-keeping no longer relies on a big organization "placing their name" somewhere or even on "ordained" ministers to give sermons. Many brethren are organizing successful sites that involve the participation of most of those attending. — *NSE*

Niceville, Florida

This site is probably the largest attended by non-aligned brethren. The beautiful Fine Arts Center at the Okaloosa-Walton Community College filled up with about a thousand brethren. With any other smaller sites being within an easy drive, this Niceville (Destin) site is an ideal place to meet old friends and make new ones. The weather was gorgeous the whole time. Rain was predicted for late in the week, but it never came. Days were low 80 degrees F (28°C), nights 50s/60s °F (10–15°C).

While this site is considered the Christian Educational Ministries' site (CEM), it is not run by Ron Dart and his little CEM staff, but by a "Festival Association" made up of volunteers from all sorts of corporate and independent affiliations. Ron has a role of general oversight, particularly in approving speakers, but is much more a facilitator than a benevolent dictator. For instance, the woman who was running most of the details at the information table this year is actually an employee of the UCG HQ in Ohio! Many of the speakers and seminar leaders came from outside his own CEM operation. Some have no affiliation with CEM at all.

Even the offering taken up at the feast does not go to CEM. It is set aside specifically for Feast use only. Any funds not used to cover this year's expenses are banked for next year's. They did not take up an offering on both Holy Days as is typical in corporate COG circles. They literally follow the Biblical admonition about not "appearing empty" on **three** occasions in the year instead of seven. So the only offering was taken up on the first day of the Feast.

The feast began Friday night with an inspiring message about the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The first Holy Day message was about investing in God.

The Youth Day service really stood out. First, the beginner's choir, a delightful group of 3 to 5 year olds gave their all in bringing us a joyful performance. Then the senior teen choir of about 30 teens sang a rousing number. A brother and sister give their testimony of what Christianity has meant in their lives. The "Cool Christians" of the junior choir (about 35 six to eleven year olds) finished the wonderful singing part of the performance. That was followed by an imaginative stage production of "Elijah's Claim to Flame". It was well presented and had everyone wondering "how are they going to make that fire appear?" The answer came with a wonderful surprise as the Eternal's fire burned up the right sacrifice. That was all topped off with an uplifting message from a young man in his 20s about individuals who served God.

The message on the Last Great Day was about the reunion aspects of the Feast. Indeed, many were able to see and visit with old friends. That was then carried forward to some wonderful reunions all of us look forward to with loved ones and friends who have not been called at this time.

The music throughout the feast was excellent. Brent Kern had the choir sing an opening hymn to start every service, and two specials during the week. Of these eight opening hymns, five were from the Maranatha book—one used by a number of independent congregations. And one of the specials was a rousing rendition of "Shine, Jesus, Shine" complete with superb piano accompaniment. The audience was mostly wildly appreciative and clapped long and hard afterwards.

This Feast had activities for everyone—too numerous to mention There were Bible classes for children and teens as well as fun activities of all kinds. Numerous seminars were conducted in addition to the main services.

One example was Pam Dewey's seminar on Biblical Chronology, Monday morning at 9:15. The classroom had tables and chairs for about 75. They were all full at "starting time", but other people kept coming in. They filled up a row of chairs along the back wall, and finally it really did end up standing room only! Several either leaned against the wall or sat on the floor. There were 105 in all. Pam started out asking how many had been in the WCG at some point in their life, expecting it would be almost all. I was surprised when less than two thirds raised their hands. I then expected that the rest must be former CGI, but was pleased to find that probably 20 or more had been in **neither**! When they raised their hands, a spontaneous

round of applause arose from the old-timers. CEM and other independent efforts are obviously bearing some fruit. A 16-page handout was given to each participant—a revised version of the *Shelter in the Word* "It's About Time" series. (They are available on the Dewey's web site, www.youall.com/oasis/library.htm#time). The seminar went extremely well. Audience rapport and participation was enthusiastic, most were taking copious notes.

Other seminars included "Understanding Personality Types" and "Gender Communication" by Trish Svehla and "Dysfunctional Families" by Tony Kuzynski. Tony's was especially moving because he gave personal testimony and related it to the church in a poignant manner.

There was also open house for CEM, Likeminds, Likehearts and Interact forums on the Internet. Folks were welcome to drop in any time between 3 and 9 p.m. and stay as long as they liked. About 70 people visited. This gave a chance for many to meet some of the people whom they had heretofore only known via a keyboard and screen.

A favorite nearby site to visit was the Friends of the Sabbath site hosted by John Merritt. Brethren who visited there mentioned the use of esrogs and lulavs (Lev 23:40) and an interesting presentation on the Tabernacle by Charles McLendon.

— Norman Edwards, Pam Dewey, Horst Obermeit

Clearwater, Florida

Another delightful, spiritually rewarding Feast of Tabernacles and Great Last Day in Clearwater, Florida occurred with brethren of God's Church, known more by its publishing name—the Church Outreach Program (COP). COP is responsible for publishing, free upon request, such articles as Man or Angel, The Beast with 7 Heads, The Mystery of 666, The Beginning and a tape cassette Album titled The Light, as well as distributing numerous sermon tapes. Approximately 80-percent more brethren attended as were present in 1999 [don't know exactly how many —NSE]. The commanded holy convocations, or public meetings, for the First and Eighth Day both took place in Clearwater Beach at the Harborview Center.

General Pastor Robert Roenspies, COP's featured speaker, explained how the Feast of Tabernacles pictured the celebration, in advance, of the marriage of God's prepared/readied Bride, Firstfruits, Church, "temples," "tabernacles," if you will, to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It was recommended we imagine we were 10 billion years into the future and, from that point in time, look back at the Feast of Tabernacles as a "memorial" of the Lamb's marriage to His Bride (Firstfruits) as a predestined "done deal" in God's eyes (Romans 4:17). The Great Last Day pictures children from this marriage.

Throughout God's Feast excited brethren from around the Country, learning and growing together in unity, were found fellowshipping and talking about God's wonderful true plan of salvation.

Additionally, the brethren enjoyed eating a special evening meal at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort as well as enjoyed a special family trip to Busch Gardens. Brethren also enjoyed unique dining on the107-foot Starlite Princess, a three-deck Paddle Wheel Riverboat, on smooth inland waters.

— John Gordon, 119 Pine Street, Nashua, NH; 603-889-1958, branch00@aol.com

Fort Walton Beach, Florida

One hundred-twenty five of the Family of God registered at the Feast of Tabernacles at the Four Points Sheraton sponsored by the Church of God of Central Arkansas in association with the Church of God Outreach Ministries and several other independent Church of God groups. Visitors from other nearby feast sites were welcomed as family and invited to join in all activities.

Most of our worship services consisted of songs and hymns of praise and two speakers in a split sermon format. Three of our services were enriched by scripture readings by Bethea Davis, T. J. Davis and Chelsea Davis. They were heart warming and much appreciated.

Speakers were: Ron Bridges, James Ussery, Rory Reis, Ian Hufton, Herb Morrow, Marshall Bryan, Robert Marlowe, Dan Girouard, Jim Kely, Max Davis, Ken Svehla, Bill Hillbrenner and Dave Havir.

Interactive Bible Studies were presented by: Ian Hufton, John Beasley, John Havir, Jack Morgan, James Ussery, Rick Beltz, Ken Svehla, Eddie Staggs and Herbert Britt.

Seminars were presented by: Ian Hufton on "Local Church and Youth Development", Terry and Ida Green on "Driving Safety," Thalia Hufton on "Grief Management" and "Tips on Child Rearing", Rory Reis on "Why Our Kids Do the Things They Do", and Barbara Marlowe, Dot Ussery and Donna Toombs on "Women's Role in the Church".

Activities included: a luau at the poolside courtyard, a fishfry at Liza Jackson park, a deep sea fishing excursion, balcony dolphin watches, cookouts, dinners and breakfasts with kindred spirits, sunrises and sunsets, barefoot walks on the beach, hot tubs and swimming pools, food, fun, and best of all, fellowhip with God's family.

— Theda Horton, 3105 Tyler St, Little Rock, AR 72204, 501-663-9712

Sevierville, Tennessee

The United Christian Ministries Feast of Tabernacles 2000 is now "in the books". I hope your feast was as inspiring and energizing as mine. Our attendance was around 240 on the first day. It dropped off some during the week and swelled back up for the last day. The attendance did not fluctuate as much as it does in some places. There are not many independent sights in the area.

I certainly want to thank everyone who participated in what I feel was the most peaceful, as well as energizing feast that I can recall, ever.

Jeff and Sharon Ledy presented an outstanding seminar: "Building Godly Families" which was in keeping with the theme of the feast. Building God's Family by Building Godly Families." I

cannot stress enough the dire need in the world today for Godly families. Satan has focused on our families and is constantly trying to destroy them. Therefore, it behooves us to understand God's will for our families.

There were so many positive comments about the messages, the music, the physical blessings, etc, in Sevierville that we simply cannot share them all. There were many raving reviews. Rather than write a report on this feast myself, I am including some comments made by some of the attendees.

— Ray Wooten

We had a great Feast of Tabernacles in Sevierville, TN. We went with the UCM group and the theme of the Feast was "building God's family by building Godly families." It was an awesome Feast…great to see so many families recognized.

We had lots of every age group and so many were recognized during the feast. There was a two-week old infant and someone who was I believe 93. It was one of the most open and tolerant feast sites in my memory, with everyone from a WCG minister to many who were meeting alone.

There were numerous bible studies. The messages were outstanding! This is one Feast when every message really touched my heart and my mind in some way to draw me closer to God. The most important aspect of the Feast was the spirit. On the first day, Ray rebuked Satan and asked God to bar him from the feast, and I believe God did. Never have I seen a more loving and tolerant Feast site. We did have some healings take place at the site, which was also very encouraging to the group.

— Heather Kemp

Beautiful red and yellow foliage and bright blue skies in Sevierville, TN helped 240 attendees rejoice in a truly fall festival sponsored by UCM.

The theme of building godly families was a much-needed one, with excellent sermons by several of the men, gifts for children and teens, and fun activities. As one man who had come from NY commented to me, the atmosphere was that of a warm and loving family. He had heard about the UCM group when he was with the Living COG in Pigeon Forge.

Jeff and Sharon Ledy also conducted a series of workshops on the same theme. They have taken training in series of courses by Gary Smalley. I would recommend the workshops to everyone, even if you think you should be the one doing the courses!

Since we had quite a few musicians and singers at the feast, Wes hopes to get a band (country and classic) developed for next year's feast. If we have a large enough facility, we can make the Feast even more family friendly by holding a free family dance on one evening and maybe an outdoor carnival on family day. UCM did a great job of hosting this year by having coffee, teas, juice, and assorted cookies and snacks every day of the feast, plus a very inexpensive but well prepared luncheon on the first Holy Day for all who wanted to attend.

— Linda H. White

Lake Texoma, Oklahoma

"We said we would and we did!" To quote a phrase from Prof. Harold Hill. One hundred and sixty eight happy people rejoiced before God and partook of eight days of His wonderful physical and spiritual blessings.

I'm sure we shared the sentiments of all Feast keepers in the usual fare of great sermons, bountiful food and great fellowship. Unique to Lake Texoma was our nightly prayer service which has grown slightly from last year. About 8-10 of us gathered to consider needs and problems and present them to our loving Father.

Wednesday afternoon, a flotilla of three fishing boats invaded 93,000 acre Lake Texoma loaded with 12 highly trained and experienced fishermen (women and boys). Together the catch equaled 90 stripped bass from 1.5 to 5 lbs; and 2 catfish which were promptly returned. The next day all at the feast were invited to a fish fry but were unable to consume it all.

Other neat additions were a Bible quiz game, two barbershop quartets from Dallas, a cobbler and ice cream social, and mini bible study sessions.

We were well pleased to have nearly 30 children who kept the bible school teachers very busy. Afternoons and evenings they were kept active with bowling, a fun park, kids carnival, and a fort outing.

Decorations were plentiful and beautiful and music filled the room often. Much of it was supplied with the harmonies of the Tulsa church choir which were greatly enjoyed.

On the Last Great Day, a seminar and bible study were held in the afternoon and we hope to continue this tradition.

— Steven & Suzanne Kieler, 2193 Sheker Drive, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-8707; 515-576-5743; sskieler@juno.com

Clipper Mills, California

Shalom!! May Yahweh's name continue to be praised! We had a blessed celebration for the Feast of Ingathering in Clipper Mills, CA. There was an attendance of 47 people. We had many days of inspiring topics of study about the present times we live in and how to let Yahweh lead us to His glory. We had a variety of speakers each day with a wide range of topics.

We fashioned our site after the group in Fir Point, Oregon. We worked together and built a sukkah, which could hold many people. We decorated it with lights, corn stalks and various types of foliage from the area. We also held our kiddush and havdalah services sitting inside and outside of the sukkah. Each day people had the opportunity to sit inside and reflect on their life and the direction that Yahweh is guiding them. There were water-pouring ceremonies done in front of the sukkah and everyone participated. By doing so, we learned the importance of Yahweh's spirit being poured out upon us.

There were many other activities that included; dancing, bible studies, fellowship and plenty of family games. There was a game we called: "How well do you know the twelve tribes of Israel?" And we also set up a small reward store from which to buy gifts and treats. At the close of the store on Thursday, we raffled the remainder of the items. Others took the opportunity on our free day to explore some old ghost towns and gold mines.

There was messianic circle dancing

at each service which was for all to participate! It was lots of fun! The Torah was read and discussed, and a sermon was given daily. After services we set up for our lunch meal. As an incentive for cleanup participation, we gave "Tabby-bucks" to all that had helped. We had children of all ages helping to receive their bucks, so they can buy items from the store.

The night of the Last Great Day, we had a wedding supper. At the supper, all the parents said a special blessing upon each of their children. We also offered bread and wine respectfully and asked the Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bless us and keep us. The women lit candles and children had hands laid upon them.

This Feast of Tabernacles was full of serving and sharing with each other. Everyone was active in doing something. There was not a moment that something was not going on. Everyone was excited to take his or her turn at blowing the Shofar each day to call everyone to assemble!!

Yahweh be praised!

— Rick and Theresa Bates, Hallel Fellowship, 1701 Judy Court, Modesto, CA 95358

Sunriver, Oregon

[This is more of an evaluation than a report, but it shows the effect that independent Feast sites are having on people in the corporate churches.]

I attended four services this year at the independent Feast site at Sunriver, about fifteen miles south of Bend in central Oregon. There were 140-150 people attending on the Holy Day weekends and an average of over one hundred during the week days (this information supplied by Steve Moyers, one of the Feast organizers).

The weather was generally chilly in the evenings and mornings, usually warming up to about 55 to 65 degrees by noon. One day did break 70. Another day rained heavily; the next morning the rain had turned to ice for a few hours in the early morning before rising to the 50s as I recall. New snow on the mountain peaks was another result. Pine trees predominate; other trees were at their peak fall colors. All very beautiful.

I was amazed to meet several brethren from one of the Oregon congregations in the David Hulme organization (Church of God an International Community). I know many of the brethren from that group in my San Francisco-Oakland California region. They tend to be conservative and exclusive. Sure enough, these brethren were being pressured and cajoled by their pastor because of the decision to attend this site. Some had already been advised to stop attending their congregation.

The messages were sound and biblical (both Old Testament and New). There was no pressure to conform to any doctrinal statement or to support any organization; or not support same.

Steve Wineinger from Spokane, Washington, gave a fascinating sermon interspersed with some references to another group (which he did not identify) where he had been a principal speaker up till a message he gave on a Holy Day some years back in which he spoke of some not-well-received points including his belief that brethren should utilize the gifts God gave them in whatever group they were in. He said the pastor in the afternoon sermon on the same day spent the first half of his message publicly refuting and chastising Steve for his morning sermon. Steve seemed to allude to being disfellowshipped later, assumedly by this same pastor.

This Feast site has been there since 1986. It is organized and run by voluntary efforts of the brethren involved and attending. It is relaxed, unpretentious and welcoming. I highly recommend it. If your local pastor gives you a bad time for attending here, then he's the one with the problem.

They mentioned that their Bible Studies at the site were interactive and that others were invited to express their views and scriptures and contribute to mutual understanding. They said that is how they normally moderate such studies in their respective home areas. How refreshing!

— Bruce Lyons

Glendale, Oregon

We at Omega Praise Fellowship hope the memory of the wonderful time of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) will remain for a long while with those who came to Fir Point Bible Conference [Center] in Glendale Oregon. From our view, all the brethren brought *something*: willing hands, inspiring music, grateful hearts and loving attitudes. We thank each and every one who made the Lord's Feast so very, very special.

We especially thank those families whose children brought such **joy** to us. They were a **living torah** (instruction) of how our Messiah wants us to come to **Him**—without guile, without ego—yet with an enthusiastic desire to **please Him**!

The Feast of Tabernacles provides many different kinds of "dishes" for us to ingest—The **Word** as spoken, The **Word** as it is read, The **Word** expounded upon **and**, last but certainly not least, the **Word** set to music. This year, with double the attendance of last year, Fir Point feasters were given special music offerings, spiritual and uplifting, every day, morning and evening! We had family groups and fellowship groups, not to mention a few soloists. Music ranged from traditional (Amazing Grace) to religious rock (When the Children Cry), a dose of "messianic" (Yahweh) thrown in for good measure, plus contemporary instrumental (Autumn Journey Home).

Congregational music, mostly tape or CD accompaniment, included many songs that also have "Davidic dance" steps designed for them. Thus, brethren were able to not only vocalize their musical praise, they had the opportunity to dance it as well. For some this was the first time they had been exposed to this type of worship. As the Feast days progressed the number of participants in the Davidic worship grew and grew. Many found that to focus on the King of the Universe and on His son, while singing **and** dancing a worshipful song (e.g. *Kadosh* which means "holy") can be very prayerful and meaningful. One participant expressed it this way: "to **dance** my praise, to use my **whole body** in praise, made me feel completely **free** to express my love for Yahweh and Yeshua."

Feastgoers heard from three different teachers: Lionel Nightingale, a "scholar of the Greek language", gave

presentations on the first Holy day and the 8th Day; James Sorenson, our own "resident chronologist" and author of his own book on that subject (*The Appointed Times*), gave teachings on the 2nd and 8th day; Robert (Sam-Bob) Salmon, one of Omega Praise Fellowship's originators, our own Messianic Jew, was the featured speaker on the other days. Tapes for most of these teachings are available. Simply write to us and make your requests known.

Five different participants gave seminars at the Feast. Topics were: "Song and Dance in Worship" by Deirdre Salmon, "Blessings" by Sharon Bonney, "Family Purity Laws of the Bible" by Diana Wells; "Health" by Majorie Qualls and "Matthew 18" by Jim Snyder. Tapes of all but the seminar on Matthew 18 are available for the asking.

This was the sixth Feast hosted by Omega Praise Fellowship. We hope we have learned a few things along the way that have helped us to develop a formula which we hope can be useful to other small groups who want to sponsor a Feast. The "feast equation" is fairly simple but the results can be pretty amazing. It goes something like this:

1. **Pray** for Guidances—put aside egos, and ask for **Abba's** [father's] direction in **all things**.

2. Find a site that is "self contained"—where housing, meals and daily services can be provided.

3. Divide the work among as many as possible in your fellowship—participation makes for enthusiasm!

4. Publicize as early as possible—make your site available to other brethren. It is part of "**iron sharpening iron**"!

5. Provide for the "fatherless" and the "widow"—it is the stuff of which "pure religion" is made.

6. For your service, focus first and foremost on the **Word of God**, both reading it and singing it.

7. Incorporate into services those "show and tell" things that help us understand the **Word of God**. For example, wave the Lulav and recite Psalm 107:1 to show how **God** blesses all **His** people; read John 7:37-38 noting that Yeshua spoke this on the "last and great day"—the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles—the same day the "water pouring ceremony" is conducted in synagogues around the world. Then, demonstrate the "water-pouring".

— Sharon Bonney, Omega Praise Fellowship of Souther Oregon, PMB 48, 1720-A Redwood Ave, Grants Pass, OR 95727-6075; sbonney@mcsi.net

Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

This site was hosted by the Canadian Church of God. The feedback I received throughout and at the end of the Feast, to say the least, was "great". The highlight for me was the participation of the people. Our numbers continued to grow again as it did last year and we counted between 150 to 170 people throughout the eight days.

The sad part was the dinner that was so greatly attended on the Thursday that the establishment, even though they had to truck in additional tables, could not hold all the people and some, the late comers, had to return to their temporary dwellings. This is what a feast means to me. When almost all the people attending want to be together for all the activities.

We baptized two new members at the feast and give God thanks and praise that others have joined the body of His beloved Son.

The feast started with a Hymn sing on the Friday night for those that showed up early and the fellowship was great. The Saturday services were spliced with teachings on the closeness that God wants with His children. The phrase was that "many people know about God from reading about Him in the Bible but cannot be certain that He is working in their lives". This topic about getting to know God and letting Him work in our lives became the focus for the Feast and resonated in the Breakfast Seminars that followed.

A teaching course from "Shelter in the Word" was used on "Spiritual Harvesting" for one seminar and the audience participation showed us how we have to plant good seed if we will ever get a good harvest with an emphasis on improving the harvest every time.

The evening Bible studies emphasized the fact that God is reproducing Himself and growing his family. This was a topic that went into the technicalities of the two YAHWEH found in the Psalms. The studies also showed that this awesome destiny is not reserved for the angels, but is something that men, mere human beings will arrive at.

We had a fun night of variety shows which included a little light magic that mesmerized and left people in awe. There were lots of comedians coming out of the woodwork and caused us to spend two solid hours of rip roaring fun.

This fun night was different to the Pizza Night that had so many boxes of pizza that the stacks were climbing to the roof. The sing-a-long that followed was a joy to listen to and participate in.

For an independent Feast site, the joy of having people from The Worldwide Church of God, Church of God International, The Living Church of God, the United Church of God and many independent groups shows that with God as the focus, we can all put aside our differences and concentrate on rejoicing before Him for eight days.

— Syd Merchant; sys@sydmerchant.com

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Thirteen seniors who did not have the resources to travel to distant Feast sites, observed the Feast of Tabernacles in Edmonton, Alberta. These folks, who normally attend with various organizations, met daily at normal Festival times utilizing Feast videos supplied by several COG organizations. The fellowship among these attendees was joyful—spiritually and physically. No permission was sought for this unauthorized but very successful event.

Ironically, there was an "official" Feast site only 100 miles away sponsored by the Philadelphia Church of God. However, it was open only to their members, so none of these 13 seniors were welcome to attend that "place where God placed his name".

Next year, the small group should double in size providing some parent organization does not interfere with this unauthorized Feast gathering.

— Bill Storey, 11817 62 St,

Edmonton, Alberta, T5W 4C5, Canada.

Kendall, England

There was a wonderful feeling of peace at the Festival this year, as some 25 brethren met up with each other again at Kendal. We were thankful for the fact that we were together; that God had protected us during the year and made it possible for Frank and Pat Scherich to return. The surroundings were beautiful and historical, the meeting hall very light and comfortable.

The services were uplifting and the messages varied. We feel blessed, having heard from a number of local speakers, namely David Kingston, Anthony Miles and Trevor Smith as well as Frank Scherich who was our Festival elder. The main theme that remained with us after the Festival is the fact that the God we serve is very merciful and kind. This was the subject of one of Frank Scherich's sermons during the Festival. Other topics were *Paul's letter to the Philippians, A search for God, The work of the Spirit* and one about how God works through little things.

One day we took a trip over the mountains and continued with a ride on a narrow gauge steam train to the coast. Much to our surprise we found the remains of an old Roman fort high up there in the hills with a lot of interesting historical information about the Romans. Even though English mountains are relatively low, seldom have we experienced steeper, narrower mountain passes. It was quite an adventure to drive there and we decided not to take the same way back, opting for a longer but less demanding route.

Another day several of us went for a boat trip on lake Windermere. As some feared the water, afraid that the boat might sink, they sadly had to stay behind. The boat took us to a large aquarium just off the lake where we could walk under the water and view fish from many different angles. At this aquarium they also kept otters and we enjoyed seeing the otters running around, playing with pebbles.

Being a small group we were very encouraged by the baptism of a new member, David Appleby. There was also a little child, Randy Scherich, who was blessed at the Festival. It brings joy to see growth. We look forward to being able to meet up with everyone again next year, as that is the only opportunity some of us have for fellowship during the course of the year.

After the Festival Frank and Pat Scherich came to Norway for a few days meeting up with the brethren on the Sabbath. Tore Sørensen, who attends regularly here, wanted to be baptized, requesting that this be done outside somewhere in a forest lake. He came to us on the Sunday, it was absolutely bucketing it down with rain and we had sleet during the night—but, shortly before he arrived, the clouds parted and the sun came through with a beautiful large rainbow.

We decided, therefore, to drive out into the woods and walk to a nearby lake. Frank Scherich and Tore waded out into the cold water. The baptism took place with only friends present, we were there totally alone, but it must have been cold, though they both assured us it was nowhere near as bad as one might think. We drove back to our house with the sun still shining. Tore had hands laid on him there and shortly after that the clouds came back and it poured with rain again.

— Anthony Miles

Baguio City, Philippines

The Church of God—Internationally Affiliated Associates (COG-IAA) sponsored the Feast of Tents with a theme of "NOSTALGIA: A Perspective to Recapture our First Love." Brethren traveled from Metro Manila, Bataan, Cavite and Laguna to Baguio early morning of Friday (10/13/2000). They were was welcomed by Pastor Enrique Gabuyo.

An aggregate attendance of 35 brethren joined us in Baguio, with several first-timers. The brethren were elated when Miss Auria Delfino, after attending the church's regular Weekly Sabbath services and Bible Study Campaigns for almost a year, decided to go through the water of the baptism. The baptism was held at the swimming pool of Hotel Supreme. The baptism ceremony was performed by Pastor Enrique Gabuyo and was assisted by Melanie Chua and Mina Ho. We had morning and afternoon services on the first and last day and morning services in between. The women brethren performed daily morning intercessory prayer from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m.

Pastor Enrique Gabuyo, Mr. Rodel Carating and Mr. Raul Hipe spoke on different technical and inspirational topics which were geared towards helping the brethren recollect and recapture his or her first love. Faith and Obedience to God, Seeking first His Kingdom and believing that all these things shall be added unto us, the temporal nature of our physical life, possessions and the world we live in, Knowledge and Deception, Worship, Marriage, Family and Children, Millennium and the White Throne Judgment were the central focus of the messages.

The Book of Haggai and Ecclesiastes were also reviewed with emphasis laid on priorities and vanities of life. Stressing the point that Life without God is Vanity (Meaningless). At the end of the sermon, everyone agreed with one accord that the Book of Ecclesiastes is not teaching us the vanity or meaninglessness of life but is teaching us that we need God to put meaning in our life.

Activities during the Feast included a Baguio tour. Being so close to nature one can't help but praise God and imagine how the earth was during the days of Eden when His creation was brand new and free from human abuses. The brethren attended a concert sponsored by COG-Manila. Our very own teen and children choir contributed two songs for the show. Everyone was jubilant with the splendid performance by our younger brethren.

Aside from the traditional Bible bowl, a number of new games were introduced including Charade, Husband and Wife game which put to the test how well each couple knew each other, Math Scramble, and Bible Character Guessing Game [similar to "20 Questions"] wherein a representative was called from each group one after the other and given a name of a Bible character, the group members then asked question that can be answered only with "yes" or "no".

Once the last member asked the final question, the group should guess the correct Bible character.

The brethren also enjoyed games of Ten Pin and Duck Pin Bowling, Billiards and Basketball. We were able to play basketball with brethren from other Churches of God. The teens took a good jog at the oval track of Teacher's Camp. The brethren also enjoyed biking and boating at Burnham Park, one of the city's popular park.

We also had the traditional potluck dinner on the eve of the eighth day as a get-together meal. And on the Last Great Day (*Shemini Atzeret*), we were treated by a children's choir under the guidance of Mrs. Vivian Hipe and was accompanied on Guitar by Miss Gina Constantino, a brethren from the Church of God—Manila.

At the conclusion of the Feast, the brethren by His grace and the power of His Holy Spirit have with conviction recollected and recaptured their first love. One of the verses read was (1 John 2:15-17) *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* With the final hymn *"Till we meet again"* sang, the Feast came to an end with love and unity abounding between brethren. With the renewed zeal and commitment to do the commission, the brethren left for home with the hope and faith in the coming Kingdom of God.

The Church of God-IAA congregation will be holding the next Feast of Tents 2001 at Baguio also. Reservation for the Feast site was already made. We hope and pray that you will be able to join us next year as we rejoice in this God-given Feast.

— Herbert Chua
flipper@pacific.net.ph
COG-IAA, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

Our Weekly Sabbath Rest: More of the Story

by John Eastman

After writing the article about *Our Weekly Sabbath Rest: A Reminder of Our Rest from Sin* (Jul/Aug 1999), I have understood more about this subject and would like to share it with you.

My personal belief is that the Sabbath day has two sides just like the Ten Commandments have two sides. One is the physical side and the other is the spiritual side. For example, we are commanded not to physically kill (Ex 20:13), and not to hate (Matt 5:22). Another example is that we are commanded not to physically commit adultery (Ex 20:14), not to lust (Matt 5:28).

Concerning the Sabbath Day, there is also a physical and spiritual keeping of this commandment. We physically keep it by resting from our labors, and by doing this we are also spiritually keeping it as a "shadow" of Jesus Christ living in us and giving us eternal rest from sin (Col 2:16-17 and Heb 4:9). Some people think when you keep the Sabbath Day that it is a picture or "shadow" of the 1,000-year rule of Christ on Earth. I believe the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the 1000-year rule of Christ, so there must be a different spiritual meaning for the Sabbath Day. It is not very logical that God would have two important Holy Days (Lev 23), the Feast of Tabernacles and the weekly Sabbath Day, picturing the same thing. Even though the 1,000-year rule of Christ in some respects is a type of a Sabbath Day, or has some relationship to the Sabbath Day, I believe the main meaning of the Sabbath Day has to do with Christ living in us and giving us rest from sin.

After Christ died for us (as pictured by Passover), He knew that unless we received help from Him, we would continue to sin. We would continue to need a savior and He knew that the Father and Himself were the only Ones that had the power to destroy the works of Satan. Through God's Spirit, we need Christ in us, creating God's righteousness in us, so we will become the express image of God. This is what I believe the Sabbath is really about.

Although all of the Ten Commandments are commanded by God, some people try to leave out the Sabbath commandment by saying that those who keep it are trying to gain salvation by keeping it. This reasoning is incorrect. Nearly all Christians refrain from murdering—not to earn salvation, but because they believe Christ in them would refrain from murder. So it is with the Sabbath. I personally believe that keeping the Sabbath shows our faith in Christ dwelling in us and giving us rest from sin, which is the spiritual side of the Sabbath. Th physical keeping of the Sabbath Day, resting from our labor, is a "work of faith". We need "faith **with works**", which is living faith (Jms 2:17-21). This is the faith in Christ that He gives to us. Physically keeping the Sabbath day is really our "works" that reveal our faith in God's gift of salvation. (It does not gain salvation for us!)

These two aspects of the Sabbath are also illustrated by the "two Adams" mentioned in the Bible. "And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual (1Cor 15:45-46). The Sabbath represents our two creations, the physical rest from our physical creation and a spiritual rest from sin through our spiritual creation in Jesus Christ. Just as we are physically created from the first Adam, we are also spiritually created through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Through the physical Adam, we were born into sin and sin brings death, now through the Spiritual Adam, Jesus Christ, we are born into God's righteousness, which brings eternal life and eternal rest from sin. "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all died, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1Cor 15:21-22). The Sabbath Day pictures our physical and spiritual rest and our creation through the physical and spiritual Adams. Therefore, the Sabbath Day has two sides, our physical rest from our labors and our spiritual rest from our sin. 🕮

Small Groups and Evangelism

Due to illness, Arlean Kelley will not be serving as our Small Group and Local Evangelism Editor. We are still interested in your stories of small groups and local evangelism. For the time being, please contact us directly and 517-625-7480, or info@servantsnews.com

New Group Forms Near Washington DC

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA — A new independent group was formed in the Washington, DC area, meeting at the Pohick Regional Library Meeting Room (off of Old Keen Mill Road in Fairfax County, Virginia). The group first met November 18 and plans to meet every third Saturday, then possibly every other week. Planing to govern by simple democratic voting, the group will have no direct links to any other existing organization, but there is interest in other Churches of God.

Most members are currently visiting with other groups and it is hoped the flexible schedule will allow them to continue to do so. The first meeting went well with all members acting like parts of the body with and were with one accord. We had a talk on the legitimacy of the book of Daniel as opposed to liberal theologians criticisms of it and a study of Judges 13. Contact John Carter (the initial organizer of the group), 3911 Egan Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030. Telephone: 703-591-3592.

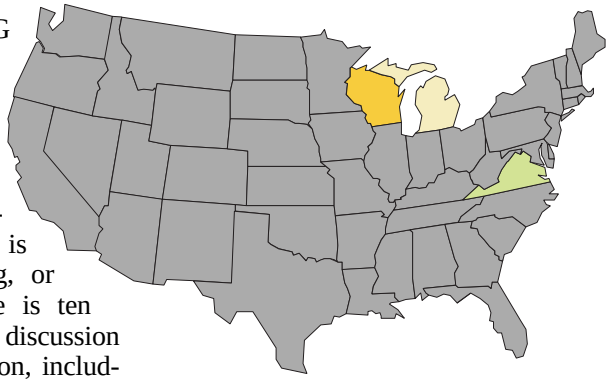
— Rod Koozmin, Reston VA

Church of God Berean Fellowship

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN — this fellowship group celebrated their first anniversary in November 2000, being formed by former members of the UCG. Attendance varies from 30 to 50, with a lot of young adults.

Hal Geiger, the spokesman who talked to *Servants' News*, told us the group has multiple elders as seems to be outlined in the New Testament. Although Hal himself was ordained an elder in the WCG in 1979, he pointed out that the group has no formal elder ranking system and operates more like a brotherly fellowship.

The service has many innovations from the traditional COG one of a sermonette followed by a one-hour sermon. The Berean Fellowship opens with prayer, has one or two songs, then a 15 to 20-minute presentation. This is followed by another song, or special music. Then there is ten minutes or so of interactive discussion about the earlier presentation, including questions to the speaker. This is then followed by intercessory prayer, in which the whole congregation participates. Then another song, followed by a second 15 to 20-minute presentation. This one is likewise followed by ten minutes of interactive discussion and questions. The service is then closed with a song and prayer.



Hal said the group has noticed several advantages to their service format. First, any male member, even older teens, can give a presentation. Nearly all of those eligible have given presentations. What seems remarkable to Hal is that most of them had never spoken in services before, yet they are becoming quite proficient in doing so now. Hal pointed out that the interactive service with its discussions and questions has created an electric, mutually beneficial environment. He added that the interactive part is not an argumentative one, but more of a diagnosis of the material presented, a taking apart and looking at the pieces so that all may learn more of the subject presented. It seems to be a very effective way of iron sharpening iron. It is felt this approach is also extremely beneficial in *retaining* the information learned about the subject and seems to work far better than the tradition in many COGs of one person lecturing while the others merely take notes. The consensus seems to be that members have been better nourished this past year than any previous year they can remember.

Hal was especially enthusiastic about the intercessory prayer portion. This is conducted by the Prayer Leader for that week. The session is not to just ask *for* something, but includes *thanksgiving* items—members telling about their answered prayers or special occurrences the past week for which they were especially thankful. The Prayer Leader starts the prayer. Quite often, however, the person requesting prayer or offering thanksgiving will then voice their own portion of the general prayer. Even children can do this. In accordance with Matt 5:44, even "enemies" or those who have spitefully used a member may be included in the general prayer. The intercessory prayer session has turned out to be a powerful and moving part of their service. It is felt the group has experienced what appear to be actual divine intervention or miracles, results that evidently occurred at the very time of the general prayer.

Another innovation of this group is their use of electronic helps. For example, they use a computer and overhead projector during the entire service. The words of that day's songs are thus provided to the congregation on a big screen. More importantly, the scriptures used by the presenters are also placed on the screen. The software program used for the scriptures includes extensive and quite often very helpful footnotes. Related scriptures, even different translations, can also be quickly found and projected on the screen. Many of the group bring their

own laptops, and sometimes one member, for example, will be looking up the Greek while another the Hebrew. Quite often a Presenter will use Power Point software to better explain his presentation, and that information is then displayed on the big screen. Or, a Presenter may use a white board and write certain information on it.

The Berean Fellowship also has guest speakers, probably one every six weeks or so. These guests have included Norm Edwards, Dave Havir, Mark Kaplan, Gary Pifer, and others. Steven M. Collins, the author of the book, "The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel—Found" is scheduled to speak in January.

The group recently started cybercasting their live services on the internet. The information on how to access this innovation can be found at the group's website at www.geocities.com/berean_fellowship. An interesting thing about the cybercast is that it also is interactive. With the proper equipment, listeners can actually participate in the service with their own live comments or questions.

In addition to their interactive church service, the group's twice-a-month bible studies are also fully interactive. These are done in a casual way, with members sitting around a large table. Both sexes may contribute something, including the older teens.

Still another innovation of this group was done for the first time during this year's Feast of Unleavened Bread. They held the traditional services on both High Days, but added evening Bible studies and a meal at different member's homes during the other days of the Feast. This came about in an interesting way. The Spirit working on many people at the same time appeared to result in a consensus that starting this program would be a good thing to do. The Berean Fellowship was joined in their weeklong observance by others from distant areas. This included visitors that came from Alabama, Boston, and the Ozarks. Hal added that for his family, this had been their richest Feast of Unleavened Bread ever.

[Note: A weeklong observance during the Feast of Unleavened Bread has some tradition within the COGs. The WCG had services every day during this annual feast until about 1966.]

Future planning includes the possibility of trying a once-a-month Sabbath service on Friday evening. This would free up the whole Sabbath for visiting other groups, or perhaps doing community service such as serving in a soup kitchen, visiting a nursing home, or doing other things to serve others.

The Berean Fellowship was a co-sponsor of this year's Wisconsin Dells feast site along with the COG Minneapolis and the COG Big Sandy.

Hal and Scarlet Geiger continued for the sixth year their tradition of hosting a Barn Party at their home the second Saturday after the Feast. The food featured an assortment of home-made chili potlucks as main dishes together with pie and cookie baking contests. A big bonfire and hayrides were part of the festivities together with a talent show and much dancing. Tent camping and RV sites were available on the grounds. Of special interest was the barn itself, which is over a hundred years old, having been built in 1887.

The Barn Party was attended by 175 people from several states. Ninety or more attended earlier Sabbath services in the barn facility.

Although they are more interested in learning than in producing big numbers, the Fellowship is planning a sign to be displayed outside during their services. They are also looking at doing some community public-service work. This may include a lot of musical efforts, as the group seems to be unusually blessed with musical talent.

The main interest of the Fellowship is to follow Acts 17:11 in proving all things so as to come to a better understanding of the scriptures and of God's will. They also want to develop a more gracious attitude respecting differences, looking more at the fruits of those with differences instead of focusing on the differences themselves.

The Berean Fellowship meets every Sabbath at 1:00 p.m. in the Dousman Municipal Building, Dousman, Wisconsin. The building is easy to find. Dousman is essentially a one-street town and the Municipal Building is right on Main Street. The mailing address is: Box 215, Dousman, Wisconsin, 53118. Their toll free telephone number is 877-444-4252. Hal's home telephone is 262-593-5637. Or, another contact person would be Jeff Hagan at 262-594-2063.

— "One-third Century in-COGs"

Small Home Meeting Bears Fruit

LIVONIA, MICHIGAN — I'm not sure that I have words to inspire someone else, but I did want to share some of my experiences.

I've spent the majority of my life in God's church. I grew up in WCG and my parents left in the 1970s when I was a young teen. I spent the next 8-10 years recapturing what I thought was something I had missed as a child. During my years at WCG, there was not any children's activities, or sports. We were to "come out of the world", yet it was replaced with nothing. Later they changed that, but for me, I was an orphan in my world (or so it seemed).

Anyway, it was not until more than 10 years later, when I was marrying a Baptist man, that I gave my beliefs any real thought. I hadn't spent much time thinking about the Bible, or any of the lessons of my youth until I sat in services on Sunday morning a week or so before Easter. This was a small church in my hometown, and one that was open to discussions "during" services. At a moment when I thought I had enough time to ask, I said to the minister, "How do you justify Good Friday and Easter Sunday when there are not 3 days and 3 nights there?" His reply to me was, "What difference does it make as long as you believe?" I spent the rest of that service, looking around at where I was, and on what day it was, wondering if it really mattered what day, and if 3 days and 3 nights really mattered. I went on a mission from that day—studying, reading, praying and fasting—and I heard my God in those studies! I came to a realization that a second generation Christian (understanding the Sabbath, Holy Days and other truths) was just like every other child in any of the other religions. They spend their religious life following "traditions", not "convictions". In all the years I had been in the church, I never

proved anything to myself—I had no need to do it. I went to church with my family because—that's what we did!

Mistakenly, I married that man, and we're now divorced. From that marriage I was given 2 beautiful children, who live with me, and follow God's commandments and Holy Days. Their father is familiar with what we do, although keeps none of it since the divorce.

About 8 years ago, I met a young man at work. He was the son of my boss at the time. His name is Jim and he would ask me why I kept the Sabbath on Saturday and never worked overtime then. (Our job paid well—even better at "time and a half" for overtime. Most couldn't understand how I could pass up that kind of money.) I would give him comments here or there, but nothing really too deep and I'd walk away. Little did I know that he hung on to every word I said and would go study to see if what I said was true. Soon, we had many studies together. It became quite difficult once he decided to actually act out and live the things he was learning, primarily, because his dad was my boss. My boss did not give me any grief for missed days, but certainly never understood how I could deny my children Christmas pleasures and other such things. Now, his own son began denying himself and his grandchildren of this "blessed holiday". We all still work in the same room, but now, I am a boss, and that young man works for me now. We feast together and spend holy days together and, about 5 years ago, Jim was baptized. His wife started to come to my home as well, reading with us and studying the word of God. A year later, she was baptized.

I am now remarried to a man with two young daughters ages 6 and 9. My children have probably taught them more about what is in the Bible than they have learned in their own Sunday school. My new husband no longer keeps Christmas or Easter and attended his first Feast with me this year down in St. Augustine, Florida. Christmas this year will be a very difficult time for him and his children as they try to understand what their dad is doing.

I have found that politics and human nature will pop up whether you are established as an organized corporate church, or whether you are a small living room church of God.

For about seven years now, I have held a Bible Study in my home on the Sabbath. Sometimes, its just family, other times we've had as many as 20 in attendance.

A situation arose in my home several years ago where one older gentleman and his wife started attending regularly, and then for the most part, led the studies. Other than these older folks and myself, the others attending were truly babes in Christ. When they couldn't attend on one Sabbath afternoon, they called to say I needed to cancel the study because they wouldn't be there. I told them to enjoy their trip out of town, and that we would be studying here without them. That seemed to create a problem for him. I didn't give it much thought until the next time they came to my home. When we discussed the Bible lesson from the previous week, he found out that I had typed it up and passed it out for a study reference. He accused me of wanting to "take over" the Bible studies, and then announced that it was against God's will that a woman teach or usurp authority over a man. It was then that the people in the Bible study stood up against him. The wife of the young man spoke the loudest. She told this older gentleman, that if it weren't for God using me as a vessel to teach her husband, he wouldn't be where he was today. She then told him that if it weren't for me teaching her the milk of the Word to understand the foundation of His Word, she wouldn't be where she is today either. It seemed as though some ultimatum was being spoken but without any words. It is difficult to explain. This wasn't the first time my presence in affairs had caused this man grief. It was this older gentleman that had baptized the young man. Even that was a problem because the young man wanted me in the water with him. He said that if God had used me as a vessel, then he wanted me to be part of his baptism. This was met with resistance to the point the young man was told that if I came in the water, he would not baptize him. I did not want this to be a stumbling block for anyone, so I assured the young man that I would be right there in "spirit" with him.

Since that meeting in my home about preaching to these people was addressed, the older couple no longer attends with us. I have no hard feelings and we still speak and e-mail one another, but we do not see eye to eye on the exact nature of my role.

I do not think that I have any authority over anyone; I just read the words from the Bible. The calling and desire to study was not my own work, but the work of God.

I spend a lot of time "in the Bible" showing my children the words of the Lord. We have studies where "they" give the lesson from the Bible, letting them get familiar with the scriptures and the books of the Bible. I don't want my kids to do things because of "tradition"; I want them to do it because they know it is the word of God.

I have an awesome testimony about my daughter who is soon to be 11 in January. This past Atonement, she wanted to fast with me. Her conviction to do this led to her little brother (7) wanting to try. We went to that young man's home this day and we studied and sang songs all afternoon. I did not think my ex-husband was taking the kids this evening, so we were making Bible lesson art projects when he came. It was the first time that my daughter didn't seem to want to go with him. I had already made some verbal plans for breaking our fast together. Before leaving with her dad, she turned to me to ask when the Sabbath would be over, and I told her. She went with her dad and he took her to her grandmothers for dinner. When she arrived, the grandmother had dinner waiting on the table. My daughter wouldn't eat. She told them that the Sabbath wouldn't be over for two more hours and she would eat then. Her dad and grandmother and little brother sat and ate, while she waiting patiently for the Sabbath to end. This story makes my heart swell with pride and my eyes fill with joyful tears. You never know the will of your child when they are away from you, and to show that willpower, knowing that she was hungry, and they were all eating while she stood strong for her God makes me tremble with joy and humbled at the blessing of the daughter He has given me.

— Kim Snyder, kimba1@ameritech.net 🕮

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.

Enjoyed Port Austin Feast

LETTER: November 28, 2000

Norm and Marleen,

Tom and I want to thank you for a most unique feast. It was more than the best feast ever. We heard messages from both groups that have ignited our Bible studies. We appreciate the challenges and we'll be digging deeper and deeper to search out God's will. Thank you again and we hope we can all meet together next year as well.

— Tom and Shannon Hartle, Pennsylvania

RESPONSE: I'm glad you felt that way about the Port Austin Feast.

— NSE

CG7 Idaho Keeps Holy Days

LETTER: October 13, 2000

Dear Norman,

We received your note and thank you for writing. To answer briefly, we have never had any connection with Herbert W. Armstrong nor the Worldwide Church of God, or any of the break-offs from that church. Some who now belong to the 7th Day Church of God had earlier connections with the WCG, but most do not. The majority came to the knowledge of God's Holy Days through their own study of the Word and the enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.

If we can be of further help to you, please feel free to contact us again.

In Jesus,

— Pastor Paul Woods

Seventh Day Church of God, Caldwell, Idaho

RESPONSE: Thank you for writing. There are so many former-WCG brethren who claim that Herbert Armstrong was alone in teaching the Sabbath and Holy Days for many years. Unfortunately, I have never met anyone who both claims this and has made a serious effort to see which other groups have taught these doctrines.

— NSE

Approving Sunday Services is Unpardonable Sin?

LETTER: December 18, 2000

Please stop sending the *Servants' News* to me in any format. I was sorry to see that you continue to subtly water down the 4th commandment before members of the body of Christ. On page 10 of the latest issue (July/Aug 2000) of SN, you make the statement that one commandment is missing from the lists you personally chose to use to try to prove that the 7th day Sabbath is not mentioned in those scriptures. It was very easy for me to see that you did not include the 4th commandment where it could have easily been included: "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." God told Israel to refrain from doing their pleasures on the Sabbath. It is the 10 commandments that we are to use in making judgments pertaining to Matt 18, not just 9 of those laws. It seems that many are able to see that Tkach Jr. teaches heresy and is a false teacher but some are not able to see that protestant ministers do the same. Giving our approval for those in the faith to sit before false teachers every Sunday as Ron Dart has done is putting some in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. I am sorry that you have chosen to go in this direction.

[Name Withheld]

RESPONSE: I think you misunderstood the article on page 10. I did not take 1Corinthians 5:11 and 2 Timothy 3:2-5 and try to find all of the ten commandments in them except the fourth. I simply noted each phrase that clearly matched one of the ten commandments. Commandment one is about loving God with all that one has and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" is the exact opposite—breaking the first commandment. Loving pleasure rather than God does describes only a part of Sabbath-breaking. Many people work at jobs that they do not like on the Sabbath, but do not know God gives them the day off. Other people want to put God ahead of their pleasure, but they erroneously think that Sunday is the Sabbath.

I did not set out to avoid finding the Sabbath, but when I was through marking them, I realized that it was the one commandment that was missing. That does not make the Sabbath a less important commandment nor "water it down". It just appears that if someone is mixed up on that issue, but is otherwise seeking to live by the Bible that it is possible to work with them and learn from them in areas where they do have understanding.

I would not recommend that a believer regularly attend at service where the seventh day Sabbath is continually taught against. I would not recommend that anyone regularly attend a service where a large amount of any kind of error is continually taught. But the reality is that most Sunday-observing groups do not teach against the Sabbath much at all. Non-denominational Sunday groups may actually welcome teaching on the Sabbath and other truths. Joe Tkach, Jr needs to be avoided much more than the average protestant minister because he is actively teaching against the Sabbath and attempting to get Sabbath-keepers to become Sunday-keepers.

If we are to ever get away from the error of denominationalism, we must realize that we can hold godly beliefs and practices, even though the people we are worshiping with do not hold them. We need to realize that nearly every teacher teaches something false—every teacher I know has at some time corrected something in their teaching. You should know that the Bible does not say that "giving approval to false teachers is the unpardonable sin". John clearly showed Diotrephes to be a false teacher (3Jn 9-10), but did not command all of the brethren to never listen to him again. Rather, he told them the same thing that I would say to someone who attends Sunday services for whatever reason: "beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good…" (3Jn 11). Even Christ did not command all the members of the seven churches to immediately leave the false teachers in their midst, but to individually repent of their errors (Rev 2, 3).

Nevertheless, Galatians 6:1 applies. A person who is less spiritual and likely to become caught up in sin should not be the one to reach out and work among sinners. If a person finds that they begin to stop keeping the Sabbath because they

are among Sunday keepers, then they should break off their contact. But those who can be a light, should let it shine!

— NSE

Prophecy Web Site

LETTER: September 16, 2000

Hello Mr Edwards,

I am just writing to you to thank you for the inspiring articles at your *Servants' News* web site. I am an ex-WCG member. I believe that the present-day WCG has been led into apostasy, so I must receive my instruction and teaching from other sources. I am not attending any of the off-shoot Church organizations. I visit various internet web sites to receive my teaching and understanding. I thoroughly enjoy visiting the *Servants' News* web site [www.servantsnews.com]. I also enjoy the articles at Bill Dankenbring's web site, everything except the prophecy.

For understanding of prophecy there is only one web site I visit and can trust on prophecy, and that is www.zionministry.com This man [Neville V. Stevens] is also ex-WCG, and God seems to have given him the gift of understanding end-time prophecy, however I would like your opinion on the above web site, if you would be so kind. Thank you so much for all you are doing in honor of our Great God, and may God continue to bless your efforts on His behalf. In Christian love,

— Graeme Whittet, via the Internet

RESPONSE: I agree that the news and some of the articles in Bill Dankenbring's *Prophecy Flash!* are helpful, but I, too, disagree with most of the prophecy. (Those interested may contact him at PO Box 292, Altadena, CA 91003; tel 626-797-0075.) When I received your message, I thought, "Oh good, maybe you have discovered someone who really has been given a gift of prophecy from the Eternal." When I first looked at www.zionministry.com, it looked fairly well organized and had pages on many different subjects. I had other matters to attend to, so I asked Pam Dewey to look at it—and then I got back to it later.

The "I know more than you do" style of speaking was quite troubling. One quote from an article: "Perhaps you think you understand what the Kingdom of God is, and when it is established. But the Bible gives very detailed information on this, and the truth is not what you have always believed. Now you can know the shocking and graphic truth!"

How does he know what I have always believed? Does God reveal truth only to him? If this were an isolated exaggeration, it would not be so bad, but statements like that abounded.

The first article on the site dismisses the book of Galatians: "It is childishly flawed. At least half the Book of Galatians was written by someone who had very limited knowledge of the Bible, and a total absence of the Wisdom of God."

To me, the most important thing in looking for a teacher is honesty. Will he clearly tell me what he really knows, what he doesn't know, and what he thinks he knows?

How does one evaluate a prophecy teacher? It is difficult if none (or only insignificant) of his prophecies have come to pass yet. But most prophecy teachers end up talking about astronomy or science at some time, and if one has a background in those things (or knows someone who does), then it usually does not take very long to see if a teacher is being honest.

The web site contains an article: *Geology, Dinosaurs, Chaos—What Really Happened to the Earth?* While it does rightly raise some problems with modern scientific theories that are based on an evolving universe rather than on a created one, many of *his theories* show a clear lack of understanding of high school science. Here is a quote from the above titled article:

"But now let's imagine that the asteroid enters our orbital path from the opposite direction and is travelling at the same speed as the earth—an impact speed of 222,000 kilometres per hour. Now we're really talking about energy release. Even a relatively small asteroid of 10 to 50 miles in diameter is going to do more than just erase life…. An asteroid of this size and speed would release energies on impact that we could not begin to calculate. What would the effect be? The impact alone of such an object impacting earth at that speed would, momentarily, at least, slow the earth and cause everything on the impact side to tend to continue in a straight line [end of quote]."

A high-school physics class could easily begin and finish calculating the effect of such a collision. The volume of a sphere is figured by the formula $V= 4/3\pi r^3$. Since the earth's radius (r) is 4,000 miles, its volume is about 268 billion cubic miles. The volume of a 50-mile diameter asteroid would be 524,000 cubic miles. This means that the earth is about 5,150,000 times bigger than the asteroid. If the densities of the two bodies are similar, then the earth weighs 5 million times more than the asteroid, so its speed will be decreased by only one 5-millionth—a fraction of a mile per hour. The author's concept of "decreasing speed momentarily" goes against basic physics—once the collision occurs and the speed decreases there would be no force to speed the earth up again. This collision would be like a jumbo jet hitting a bird: the bird will be completely destroyed, the overall course of the plane will not change, but the plane will be damaged at the impact point.

Because of the much higher speeds involved with asteroids, the destructive force of this collision would be huge, but quite possible to calculate. The formula is kinetic energy (in joules) = $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$ where m is mass in kilograms and v is velocity in meters per second. 222,000 kilometers per hour = 61,700 meters per second. The mass of the earth is $5.96x10^{24}$ kg, and if the asteroid was similarly dense, but one 5-millionth the size of earth, its mass would be $1.19x10^{18}$. Using the $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$ formula, we get $\frac{1}{2} \times 1.19x10^{18} \times 61{,}700^2 = 2.27x10^{27}$ joules of energy. One megaton of TNT is 4.24×10^{18} joules of energy—see web site:

www.phys.uconn.edu/~hayden/refdata.html

So, by dividing the above figures we get a 535,000,000 megaton explosion. An ancient massive volcano eruption in the Yellowstone park area was estimated at hundreds of thousands of megatons (http://volcano.und.nodak.edu/vwdocs/frequent_questions/grp10/question3546.html).

There is little point in continuing our analysis of this theoretical impact. It is just one of many places where the author speaks like he has great scientific knowledge, but actually does not. The article also states: "In fact, THE EARTH IS DESIGNED AFTER THE MODEL OF THE ATOM." If he would have taken my son's high school chemistry test, he would have gotten several questions wrong. There are many experiments that clearly show that electrons do not "orbit" the nucleus of an atom, but behave **both** like particles (matter) and waves (energy). The "tiny solar system" model of an atom was used for years, but discarded over 30 years ago because it could not explain the way atoms give off light. We will supply

one final quote from his article that even the non-scientific can understand:

"The evidence is in the geological record of the earth. This evidence is so amazing THAT IT REVEALS HOW AND WHY ALL THE PETROLEUM, COAL AND DIAMOND DEPOSITS WERE LAID DOWN and where they can be discovered. Because 'science' has so foolishly ignored the evidence they cannot understand. Billions of dollars of shareholders funds are wasted on exploration for these resources based on foolish theories that cannot be proven. Now you can know the truth!"

The article did not explain this "truth" at all. If it were true, its author would find dozens of mining companies more than willing to pay him very well for locating mineral deposits without exploration! (What a great "work" he could do with all of the money!)

The author calls modern scientific theories, stupid, foolish and many other names. Some "evolution" theories obviously wrong, but he seems to ignore the fact that "modern science" has produced things that actually work well. I do not think it wise to trust a "prophecy teacher" that makes such statements about science apparently without the ability to use high school physics. If he pretends to know a lot more than he really does in this area, is he not likely to do the same in prophecy?

— NSE

Just Judgment Important for Local Congregations

LETTER: September 16, 2000

Members, United Church of God-IA:

Dear Church of God Brethren,

The purpose of this letter to you dear brethren is for a conclusion of this matter as of the date of this writing.

RESPONSE: This letter was included with about 100 other pages of correspondence between Darwin and Laura Lee and various ministers within the United Church of God, *an International Association*. In briefest summary, the UCG-IA became involved in their divorce and remarriage (D&R) case, and the Lees felt that they were treated unjustly and were not dealt with honestly in their efforts to resolve the difficulties. The UCG-IA felt the Lees were uncooperative and rebellious toward the ministry.

Judging just judgment is a very important issue in the scriptures (Deut 16:18; John 7:24, Acts 17:31). So often, people "do not like confrontation" and the popular idea is to leave the issue of judging to "the government" or "the church authorities". Those who hope to reign with Christ should be learning to judge righteously, now.

The Lees believe that they have exhausted the possible remedies within the UCG-IA, so they are attempting to continue the Matthew 18 process and take the issue to the Church. The rest of the documentation for this case is available from Darwin & Laura Lee, P.O. Box 2333, Bismark, ND 58502. Paul Luecke, the primary UCG-IA minister involved, may be reached at P.O. Box 7453, Bismarck, ND 58507. The UCG-IA headquarters address is PO Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254.

LETTER: Laura and I also appeal to all of you who read this letter and the material sent to you—see 1Corinthians 6:1-8. Is there a wise and just man or women as well in our midst out there? "…no not one that is able to judge…"? (1Cor 6:5). Most of you have been in God's Church for many years. Are you not able to judge righteous judgement? If Laura and I committed a sin by getting married without the ministry's permission, then hang us on the gallows. If the ministry has the right to do what they did with us [suspend them from services] because we asked brother Steve Nutzman [UCG-IA minister] to set up marriage counseling with us because, as he put it, "We already made up our minds", then we will hand you the stones that you may stone us. Also, as a reminder, the letter sent to Laura by brother Richard Pinelli [head of UCG-IA ministry] regarding her D&R decision clearly says that marriage counseling was recommended. Yet, we asked and brother Steve Nutzman refused.

RESPONSE: In general, I feel that the Lees have done a better job at sticking to the facts and documenting the facts than the UCG-IA. However, the language about "hang us on the gallows" and "stone us" is a mistake. Judgment should be about facts and intent, not about emotion stirred up later. Neither the UCG-IA, nor the New Testament, nor our present civil government executes people for adultery or other marital problems. Anyone who would attempt to kill you for such a reason (even if you handed them the stones), would find themselves guilty of a crime under our country's laws.

However, I believe that you are right about the basic issue. If the UCG-IA ministry felt that your sins were so bad that they had to suspend you from services, then they should publicly state why, just like Paul did when he told the Corinthian church to put the man out who had his father's wife in 1Cor 5. The UCG-IA letters continually stressed the need for confidentiality in D&R cases and how they did not want the Lees to have witnesses or tape recordings of conversations with their ministry. The UCG-IA approach seemed to be a continuation of the WCG's method: we are the ministers of God, if you oppose our decision, you are opposing the Church of God and ultimately God Himself.

They forget that the same logic was used for years by tyrants: we are the authorities established by God, if you oppose us, you oppose God. This thinking led to secret court sessions and trials where the authorities could simply threaten the person on trial with death or some other punishment in order to extract a confession, then go away from the trial saying, "see, we are in agreement, the person confessed to their crimes." And nearly everybody who heard the news believed it. How can the victim prove that he was coerced into signing the confession? The USA and many other modern nations have enacted many laws to make trials public, to guarantee that a person does not have to testify against themselves, etc. (We are gradually losing many of these blessings, but that is a separate issue.) I am not saying that the UCG-IA is behaving as an evil tyrant, I think they have the good of their church and the people in mind. However, their ministry is probably not used to thinking cases through and attempting to treat everyone similarly. They certainly don't feel comfortable with laying out all the facts so that others could make a judgment.

LETTER: If we sinned because we dated before Laura's D&R decision was final, then judge us so having sinned, but the same judgement you use on us be sure you use on [Couple X, names removed] who also dated and got married without even going through a D&R process. Yet brother Steve Nutzman and Brother Gary Petty together conspired to marry them and went ahead and did just that in spite of what they preach to us that everyone has to go through the D&R process.

Then brother Paul Luecke in his September 13, 2000 letter to us said no less than four ministers were in agreement on this matter [suspension] with us and says we were cynical, insulting, had angry accusations towards the Bismark brethren, issued ultimatums, threatened and had disdain for the local pastor, other ministers and UCG administration. **If** what we have presented to you in all this material proves these things, then judge it so.

RESPONSE: I think there were places where your letters were cynical, insulting and showed disdain for the UCG administration. In some cases, I think they deserved it. It is very hard to uphold good character when in an important disagreement, but we can learn to do it—Christ did it and He should be in us. On the other hand, I think most of the substance of your disagreement was poorly addressed by the UCG-IA.

LETTER: We **were** called adulterers. We are not just making an angry accusation. It was something that took place and a lie that was started by none other than brother Paul Luecke who, in our 5½ hour meeting with him and brother Gordon Guller on March 6, 2000, said that [Woman's name removed] said that in confidence to someone not in UCG-IA. That is all he could say about that lie and rumor that he and he alone could have started and the defamation of our character and he thinks absolutely nothing of it. What a travesty of justice and in his own words "at least none other than four ministers are in full agreement". All of the other things that took place mentioned in this material are not angry accusations either, they are things that took place and we went to the home office asking that this conduct be put to an end. If the ministry feels that was a demand from us, then so be it. The very spirit that God gave us demands us to love one another "as I have loved you" (John 13:34; 15:17). Taking care of that problem would have been love in action. "My little Children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in **deed** and **truth**" (1Jn 3:18). If we have disdain for the ministry, then we truly are guilty because that conduct and other non-Christian conduct by ministry throughout this ordeal is disgusting to us by those who stand up and claim they are ministers of Jesus Christ. Is this truly what Jesus Christ ministers? You judge.

RESPONSE: Big church organizations frequently take the approach that they need to "support their ministry"—which all too often means that if a minster makes a mistake, the headquarters will claim it was not a mistake or even say it did not happen. This is contrary to 1 Timothy 5:20: "Those [elders] who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all [everyone], that the rest [of the elders] also may fear."

Church organizations also tend to "support their leaders". The UCG-IA's claim that all four of their ministers agreed would be more meaningful if ministers regularly gave independent decisions. But the mood of most hierarchical churches is that whatever the highest-ranking minister says is right and the others ought to go along with him. I simply cannot recall ever seeing a disfellowshipment or disciplinary letter of some nature from a CoG group that acknowledged that some minister(s) disagreed with the action being taken. Yet this concept has worked for hundreds of years in USA appellate courts where a "dissenting opinion" will be written by a judge who disagreed with the majority.

LETTER: As far as brother Paul Luecke claiming we issued ultimatums and threats, again, you judge. We brought the things mentioned in this material to church administration's attention in the name of decency to do something to straighten out the lie that the Bismark Brethren were told and other issues, yet all we got from UCG church administration was agreement that what brother Paul Luecke was doing was O.K. with them and had their backing. They are all in agreement. Read it for yourself again. See the letter by brother Paul Luecke dated September 13, 2000, paragraph 2, line 3. One thing needs to be corrected here. Paul's next words: "…your response to our communications to you…". The correction here is that we communicated to the ministry what was going on here in Bismark and they refused to do anything about it. Now they turn around and try to claim they can't teach us anything any more and that we're bad-mouthing the ministry. They created this problem and they refused to fix it and turn and twist the whole mess to make it look as if we were creating division. **We** ask you at this time, "what was the division?" Getting married? They said Laura was free to remarry. Not getting marriage counseling? We asked them to set it up and then we were refused by them because "we decided we were going to get married." Dating before Laura's D&R process was final? [Couple X] was free to date and get married without ever having to go through a D&R process. We did not appreciate being called adulterers and being told that our conduct made the brethren do it, so we are responsible. And brother Paul Luecke said we were causing division. Is this the real "twilight zone"? Now I suppose that is being cynical.

RESPONSE: Yes, I think you are being cynical. Your case would be better presented if you concentrated on clearly stating the facts and stayed away from name calling (i.e. "twilight zone"). Your organized set of letters (you could add a "table of contents") is what states your case.

LETTER: They never came to us about anything since we got married on April 10, 1999. Neither did brother Paul Luecke come and talk to Laura and myself about anything, let along comply with the recently adopted *Suspension and Disfellowhsipping Policy* of the UCG-IA dated August 30, 1999, before Paul suspended us. And he says we have disdain for the ministry! Any clues as to why that might be? Brother Paul Luecke **never once** at any time had any meetings with Laura and myself about any problems he had with us before he suspended us. Yet the twelve council of elders clearly gave him a directive not to suspend someone without **two** prior meetings with those he has a problem with. If we have disdain for the ministry, It's for a cause. If they want us to respect them, then maybe, just maybe they should have respectable conduct while claiming to be ministers of Jesus Christ.

RESPONSE: I cannot help but think, again, about the efforts of those who founded our country to insist that if a person were accused of a crime, that the charges had to be specific and made known to him. When I first studied this in school, I remember thinking, "how silly, leaders wouldn't accuse someone unless they had a good reason—and of course they would tell the person. Not so. If someone is making life difficult for a leader, but has violated no laws, leaders often have a tendency to punish the person. If there are no specific charges, or if it is a vague charge like "causing division", then it is difficult to defend oneself. Church leaders may say, "Your actions are causing members to think about leaving the Church, but we cannot tell you who the members are because that would be betraying ministerial confidence". Again, how can one refute

such a charge when they don't know whom they have offended? This is why all parties and witnesses to a dispute must be made known to all—our nations' forefathers understood that.

LETTER: So in closing, just one more thought. You are all being trained by Jesus Christ in and by God's word to be future judges as well as now. God and Jesus Christ will be watching how you judge this one and whether you will be capable to judge in His Kingdom. Also, for the record, we bear no ill will towards brother Paul Luecke, his wife, the Bismark brethren or any ministers or church administration personnel of the UCG-IA. What was done by them was wrong. Why can't those who claim to be servants of Jesus Christ (ministry and member alike) admit error, and that to their own brethren? Is pride so deep within us that we just won't do it even if it puts our salvation at stake?

The ministry wants to be respected, trusted, honored, and held in high esteem by those he serves. Well, let me say this. I have a dog of five years. I'm its master. It respects me, trusts me implicitly. Why? Because I treat it with respect, love and care for her; indeed as Jesus who is our master treats us with respect, great love, and care, so in turn we trust and respect Him as our true Master. If the ministry wants and feels they deserve that position of master, then they need to fill Jesus Christ's shoes and live and walk as He walked and live the life they profess to teach others. Jesus the Christ said judgment is one of the main points of what He wants from His leaders to display and practice. He also said to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). So now its in your hands. Will you judge righteous judgment?

Sincerely,

Your brother and sister in Christ's Service

— Darwin Lee and Laura Lee

PO Box 2333, Bismarck, ND 58502

701-258-7172

RESPONSE: I have written a number of letters and send many articles to various Church of God organizations about their methods of governance and/or specific cases, and rarely ever received a response. The root of the problem has been around for nearly 2000 years: denominationalism. Church groups seem to believe that their doctrinal statement and/or their organization are somehow just a little bit better than all groups and therefore as long as they are internally satisfied with whatever they have written or done, that it matters little what the rest of the world thinks about them. I could spend a lot of time reading everything available and talking to people about this case, but I do not see any value if the UCG-IA is not ready to listen. I wrote them a letter asking if they were interested in the brethren's opinions of your case, but have not received a response in two weeks.

The reason why you have had all of this difficulty in the first place is twofold:

1) The UCG-IA has replaced the instructions of Matthew 18:15-17 and related scriptures with their own policies. These policies allow a few ministers to decide to remove a person from their local congregation, rather than letting the brethren in that local congregation decide. The only way to solve this problem is for either the leaders or the brethren to insist that it be done.

2) The Bible does not give authority to ministers, priests, rabbis or anyone to bind marriages. Marriages in the Bible were handled by agreement of the parties or the parents of the parties. There is no Bible example of any kind of spiritual leader counseling someone for marriage or performing a wedding. Leaders should teach what the Bible says, and, when brethren come together, they may need to remove someone from the congregation who has an obviously incorrect marriage (a man was married to his father's wife in 1Cor 5:4-5).

No matter how the brethren judge, it will probably not make much difference in your relationships with the UCG-IA. It may be hard to leave a congregation where you have many friends, but that is often the only solution when a specific case of non-biblical decision-making separates brethren. After everyone has learned what they can from this case, you will need to leave it rest until the eternal Judgment. In the meantime, you will need to look at the talents that God has given you, and see how you can serve other brethren until then.

— NSE

Is Worshipping Christ Sin?

LETTER: September 8, 2000

Norm; Thanks for the response [to a previous letter].

I think what's at issue here is "Worshipping The Christ". In Phil 2:9-11, I think on close examination you will find that since Jesus is "The Messiah", The "Only Begotten Son of God", The "Heir" of all creation, the one who will be, no the one who is "King" of The Kingdom of God, ordained by and to the glory of God, the Kingdom that encompasses both heaven and Earth, That God, who sits on the throne over all his creation, always has, always will, that God has ordained that all of the creation, (those with voice), should bow the knee and with the tongue confess, declare, swear allegiance to Jesus. Having been atoned for and justified by and thru his sacrifice He is to lead us in Worship of the Father.

RESPONSE: While Christ certainly does worship the Father, he also receives worship: "Saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' " (Rev 5:12-13).

LETTER: This is what Messiah means, It's purpose for being. I think we have lost the meaning and the understanding of this office/title, it is not part of Jesus Immanuel bar Joseph's name. What is the great error of the trinity doctrine? Is it the violation of "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One"? [Deut 6:4] Is it "You shall have no other God besides/ before/in presence of me"? [Ex 20:3]

Is it the teaching of multiple Gods?

Which is the greater error, The trinity, or the binity (two gods in one)?

RESPONSE: The error of the "Trinity" doctrine is not so much the teaching of "multiple Gods" as it is teaching a definition of God that is not in the Bible. Most people who teach the Trinity do not teach "three Gods", but one God that appears in some way appears as "three persons", but is the same God. They write many words about "three in one" and "one in three" that are simply not in the Bible. Most Trinitarians teach that these three "persons" are somehow equal, but Christ said: "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) and "But when he [it], the Spirit of truth, comes, he [it] will guide you into all truth. He [it] will not speak on his [its]

own; he [it] will speak only what he [it] hears..." (John 16:13). The Bible teaches that the Father is superior to Christ, and that both are superior to the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not record anyone having a "two way conversation" with the Holy Spirit, nor is it ever seen in heaven as the Father and Christ frequently are (Acts 5:31, 7:55-56, Col 3:1; Rom 8:34; 1Pet 3:22; Rev 5:13; 7:9; 7:17; 22:1).

Considering Christ as "God" does not make Him an "other God" forbidden by Exodus 20:3 since He is united with the Father: "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). The Hebrew word for *one* in Deut 6:4 is *echad*—which clearly can be used to describe ***two*** unified people: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become **one** flesh" (Gen 2:24).

LETTER: Isaiah 42:8 says "I am YHWH, that is my name, I will not give my glory to another".

Isaiah 43:10 says "Before me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me".

Isaiah 44:24 says "I YHWH, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by myself, and spreading out the earth all alone".

RESPONSE: I think you are missing the context of the above verses. If you would have finished quoting Isaiah 42:8 and quoted the next verse or two from the others, you would have seen what the subject is:

> I am the LORD [YHWH], that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, **nor My praise to carved images (Is 42:8).**
>
> "I, even I, am the LORD [YHWH], And besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, **And there was no foreign god among you;** Therefore you are My witnesses," Says the LORD [YHWH], "that I am God" (Is 43:11-12).
>
> Who foils the signs of **false prophets** and makes fools of **diviners**, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense (Is 44:25, NIV).

In these verses, the Eternal is showing that carved images, foreign Gods, false prophets and diviners are not "gods". But these verses do not say that YHWH cannot have a Son or even many children who will be like Him. Isaiah 42:1 begins to describe one who is to come: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." All of the Old Testament scriptures that are against multiple "gods" are against the multiple **competing—often warring—gods** pagan religion.

The book of Revelation clearly indicates that the Father **does** share His glory with the Lamb (who is Christ—John 1:36). Notice:

> To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and **sat down with My Father on His throne** (Rev 3:21).
>
> Therefore, "they are before the **throne of God** and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne **will spread his tent over them**" (Rev 7:15, NIV).

It seems that the Eternal is sharing both His throne and His tent (dwelling) with others.

LETTER: Jn 1:14 tells us that the glory of Jesus depends on one thing. While the Father has many sons, there is only one that is **begotten**. This is his glory.

Take this away and he is not Messiah, he would have no glory, He would have been just another descendant of Israel!

RESPONSE: The above quote indicates that you believe the "Word" in John chapter 1 is Jesus. If so, it seems that one must conclude that Jesus is God:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God** (John 1:1).

LETTER: Jesus today sits at the right side of the throne of Glory, waiting for he who sits thereon to put away all rebellion, and to deliver up a kingdom to him that is under subjection. The only thing that Jesus has been given authority over today is the Elect. The only ones that comes before the judgement seat of Christ now, is the Elect.

RESPONSE: Matthew 28:18 seems to disagree with your statement: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, '**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**' "

LETTER: You ask, "do you really believe that when we appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that he will tell people, 'you were worshiping Satan'?"

Yes I do! Matt 7:22-23: "Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!' "

RESPONSE: If you read these two verses, it could sound like Christ is saying that people who do works in His name are "practicing lawlessness". But the previous verses show that the problem isn't that they have the "wrong name" or the "wrong God", but that some people are "ravenous wolves" bearing "bad fruit". Verse 21 says:

> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Obviously, **some** who do say to Him "Lord, Lord" **will enter** the kingdom of heaven. There are many scriptures explaining the Apostles willingness to baptize, perform miracles, teach and even die for the "name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38; 3:6; 4:10,18,30; 5:40; 8:12; 9:27,29; 16:18; 19:5; 21:13; Col 3:17). It is those who claim to know Him but practice lawlessness who will not enter the Kingdom. One such example are the seven sons of Sceva who cast out demons in Jesus' name, but did not know Him (Acts 19:13-17).

LETTER: And again, I believe that the principle in Matthew 15:8 will apply: "This people worships me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."

RESPONSE: This scripture does **not** say "these people honor Me with their lips when they should be honoring the Father." The problem is that the people's hearts were far from Christ. The previous verses tell about people who had invented tradition to avoid God's command to "honor their mother and father".

LETTER: When John fell down before the Angel [Rev19:10; 22:8-9], the Angel told him "that's not acceptible". Should we not tell those who "worship" the Messiah, "that's not acceptible". You are to bow in submission to him to be lead in worship of the only God!

RESPONSE: There is a vast difference between Christ and the angels. This is explained in Hebrews 1:3-6: "Who being the brightness of His glory and the

express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son'? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' "

Whenever the Bible mentions worship of angels, people are condemned for doing it. It also mentions many times when people worship Christ (Matt 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:38)—and nobody is ever condemned for doing that.

LETTER: This may well be the greatest hoax ever! Hoards of people worshiping the created rather than the creator. Vaccinated against the Truth. Why? Because they did not love the Truth! 2 Thes 2:10.

RESPONSE: I certainly have to disagree with that statement. There are far more people in the world who worship idols and ancestors than there are people who worship Christ or the Father. The Bible has numerous clear statements against idol worship. Would it be better that we spend our efforts trying to reach those people with the truth rather than debating the worship of Christ among ourselves—a subject that is less clear in the Bible?

LETTER: We are studying your Judgement article now. Sabbath Blessings

— Jack Pye, Georgia

RESPONSE: Thank you for your blessing. I am glad that you are studying *What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?* There are a huge number of scriptures that make it clear that people will be judged in regard to how they treated their neighbors. But there are very few that talk about a person being asked to explain the "nature of God" in the judgment.

Three of the Gospels record the parable of the rich young ruler who asked "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Matt 19:16-21; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-22). In all the accounts, Christ tells him to keep the commandments--then repeats most of the last 6 commandments. He did not quote any of the first four commandments on "loving God". While this young ruler probably had a good understanding of the Eternal, Jesus did talk to him about "other gods, images, pictures or even the Sabbath". He told him to love his neighbor, which included selling his wealth and giving to the poor. Why?

> "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1Jn 4:20).

— NSE

Do We Qualify for the Kingdom?

In a recent letter by a prominent church leader the following was written, in regards to the recent Feast of Tabernacles: "The focus on qualifying by overcoming and doing a work in the world was maintained everywhere."

But what does the Bible say? Does it say we are "qualifying" for the Kingdom? We could not find a Bible version that used the term "qualifying for the kingdom" or "for salvation" or anything like this.

Runners, golfers and other sports figures qualify for certain contests by demonstrating a certain level of performance before the contest. Students qualify to go to a college by achieving a certain score on a test. While these qualifications are not exactly the same as the "real thing", they involve demonstrating the ability to do at least part of the "real thing".

When someone preaches that we must qualify for the kingdom or salvation, those who have a knowledge of the Bible are likely to say, "eternal life is a **free gift**!" Romans 6:23 ways, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Bible does not talk about a qualifying concept. If so, it would say something like, "those who are righteous enough on their own will qualify to receive Christ's righteousness."

How can we qualify for a gift? How can we be possibly qualified in any way whatsoever to be fit for the Kingdom of God? We are nothing but carnal flesh that sins. God works with us, to perfect the spirit, and to prepare us for the Kingdom. No major Bible translations says anything about "qualifying" for this. Adding terms like "qualifying" to the Bible teaching leads most sincere Bible students to conclude that it is a non-biblical doctrine.

The scripture does say: "But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). It also says: "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God (Rev 3:12). If we have the spirit of Christ in us, we will be doing His work. If we do not see these fruits in our lives, we pray for them. A prayer doesn't "qualify us" for an answer, nor does it "earn" an answer. But if we do not pray, we do not get an answer: "Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (Jms 4:2-3).

We have to both ask, and use our knowledge of the Eternal's will to ask within it (1Jn 5:14). We do not sit back and do nothing, nor do we "sin so that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1), but our best efforts do not "qualify" us for the Kingdom (Rom 3:10). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:23-24).

"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phlp 2:13). We do need to let our Father work in us—so He can receive the credit for the works.

The idea of "qualification" is especially dangerous if applied to baptism. The Bible teaches that people should confess their sins (however great), repent and be baptized (Matt 3:6; Acts 2:38; 22:16). The only people who were refused baptism were the Pharisees and Sadduccess who did not come confessing their sins, but who claimed to be righteous (Matt 3:7-9; 26:23-24). People who are struggling with sin do not need to be told to "qualify" for baptism by overcoming on their own, but to be forgiven of that sin and to be given the power of Christ. (If a new believer has a problem, be it sex, violence, smoking, theft or something else that makes him or her a threat to other believers, the new believer should not fellowship with others until they are safe to be around—but this does not stop them from being baptized.)

The Bible does not teach a standard of qualification for "baptism", the Kingdom of God or eternal life. God provides those things. It does teach us to maintain contact with God so He can work in our lives: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit" (1Thes 5:16).

— David King and Norman Edwards

"Truckers Study" from page 2

Bible is the New American Bible, which is a modern English Catholic version. With a Baptist preacher, a former Catholic missionary, and three Church of God guys, communication can suffer unless one has at least a basic understanding of the important theologies of the different groups represented.

As one small example, the missionary made a comment that when Jesus was resurrected it was to a spirit body. I glanced over to our Baptist guest, who had a very troubled look on his face. Now somewhere down the road I had picked up that the nature of Jesus' resurrected body is a big deal among evangelical Protestants. In fact, they used to accuse the WCG theology of teaching that Jesus' resurrected body was spirit rather than flesh and bone (which was never WCG theology) and pointed to that as one of the proofs that WCG was a cult. Knowing and understanding this, I was able to explore the question a little further and help clarify the true Biblical explanation. This was particularly important because I don't want our teachings to be misunderstood and create a problem where no problem exists.

The missionary had an interesting take on John the Baptist, who he said was somewhat of a failure. Why, the question goes, did he not just fold up his ministry when Jesus began to preach and then start to follow the Messiah? Why did he doubt him and end up asking, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to look for another?" While there is some sense to thinking that, and maybe he was right, it does reveal the organization/ hierarchical concepts of the Catholic Church (the One True Church Idea) we ourselves once knew and loved. Although the scriptures don't say it, many of us believed that "God always works through one man."

[An excellent point! Both Catholics and CoG people have a tendency to think that ***if*** *the Eternal is really working with two different people who know each other, that they would naturally join forces and understand the same things (and one would probably be "over" the other). Christ said, "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matt 11:11). John was great because he lived righteously and fulfilled his mission, even when it cost him his life. Christ does not hold people responsible for truth he has not revealed to them. Christ did not choose John as one of the twelve apostles. John had to ask Christ if he was the Messiah because nearly all the Jews at that time were looking for someone who would overthrow the Romans and set up a physical kingdom. Even the 12 Apostles were still looking for a physical kingdom after His resurrection (Acts 1:6). Those closest to our Father are sometimes simply told, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7). — NSE]*

The missionary also related a trip he took to an island in Japan that is one of the few places in that country with a heavy Christian influence. He said that 350,000 Japanese Christians have been martyred (I presume he meant since Christianity was first introduced there) and that they still suffer discrimination and persecution. He had an obvious significant emotional experience, as his voice broke with emotion as he spoke about them.

We also had a discussion about the destiny of man and the resurrections. One thing we were pleased to hear was our Baptist friend stating that he believed that God will grant salvation to anyone who sincerely seeks him whether they proclaim Christianity or not. He pointed to Romans 1, which says that God is revealed through his creation, and therefore, in his mind, even those with a rudimentary knowledge of God will be saved. Now, we disagree with this and explained Revelation 20 and the resurrections, but we do appreciate that the God he envisions is a God of mercy. That's a step above where many are.

A final example relates to what seemed to be a totally non-sensical remark made by the Baptist. We were having a bit of a discussion on the book of Revelation (I think it was about going through persecution during the tribulation), whereupon he commented that the Church is nowhere mentioned in Revelation after the fourth chapter. We said, "What about Revelation 12?" He contended that referred to Israel. Still, I was having trouble understanding his point. Later it dawned on me. He was trying to make the point that whatever it was we were arguing about was unimportant because the church was going to be "raptured" away anyway. His theology even had a way of disposing of Revelation 12.

All this points out the need to learn about what other people believe so that we can pick up on their cues. The more we know about them, the more we can understand their perspectives. And who knows? Maybe sometimes their perspectives are better then ours!

[Who gets to decide what is symbolic of "the Church", "Israel", a nation or a literal person in Revelation? Is what we believe right because we believe it? Or because we have truth in one area, does that mean our interpretation of prophecy must be right? I don't believe the "rapture" doctrine is correct either, but I hope I have learned to be as patient toward other's prophetic understanding as I would hope they are with mine — NSE]

September 24, 2000

One young man was relatively new to Christianity and even newer to over-the-road trucking. He is one year past his baptism and four months into long hauling. He is from Regina, Saskatchewan and found that he could make more money hauling long distance than locally, but this has placed a strain on family life that he recognizes and regrets. But economic necessity sometimes forces difficult choices.

We were visited by one of our "regulars" (I've lost count of how many times he has come), and then more and more truckers trickled in throughout the study until we ended up with a total of eight, which is unusually good, but can get somewhat unwieldy. But, hey! Who's complaining?

The subject matter today was a bit scatterbrained, but some interesting points were raised. Based upon the comments of one of the men, I turned to 2 Timothy 1, where we are told that God has not given us a spirit of fear but of a sound mind. I was trying to make the point that God can help us overcome problems of depression through

the power of His Spirit, but we ended up getting into such areas as spiritual gifts (taking off on verse 6) and why Christians seem to be fearful of the last days instead of full of hope.

I wanted to make the point that too often Christians are filled with paranoia when in fact we should have a sound mind and not fear the future. The questions we should ask regarding the last days should be the same questions that the people asked John the Baptist (Luke 3) when they thought the "wrath to come" was at their door: "What then shall we do?" I believe that question was answered well by John, and then answered again by Jesus himself in Matthew 24 and 25.

I had a lively discussion going on with one of the truckers relative to evangelism and whether our lifestyles reflect the gospel the way it should. All in all, we weren't in great disagreement—we just express it a little differently. Still, I have to believe that much of the problems that Christians have faced over the past two millennia result from the dissonance between what Christians parrot and what they do. Jesus did tell us that we should let our lights shine before men so that they can see our good works. Once we establish a good reputation, it is then that we have the moral authority to point them to salvation and to show them their sins.

The young Canadian told me how much he misses church, and once again it was impressed on me how important a service we are providing—a safe haven as it were for lonely truckers to be able to share the word of God together.

October 8, 2000

Three of the truckers today had joined us before. Two were a husband and wife team with whom we have had some engaging and thought-provoking conversations, and today was no exception.

Since tomorrow is the Day of Atonement, I introduced a concept relative to the breach between God and man, a breach that began in the Garden of Eden and can only be healed through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When they sinned, God covered them with skins. The skins could have only come from the death of innocent animals, which means that blood had to be shed, foreshadowing the need for the true Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But in addition to that—and pertinent to the Day of Atonement—the Scriptures say that God "covered" them with the skins. In fact "Yom Kippur" literally means "Day of Covering".

This led to a lively discussion about sin. The book of Jonah is read in synagogues on the Day of Atonement, and at the end of the book we're told that the Ninevites didn't "know their right hand from their left". Paul tells us that Eve was "deceived". Jesus says in Luke 12:47-48 that the servant who doesn't do his master's will because he doesn't know better will be beaten with only a few stripes. Hebrews 9 says (NKJV and NIV) that the High Priest sacrificed on the Day of Atonement for "the sins that the people committed in ignorance" (v7). This Holy Day seems to point toward those sins which mankind has committed because he is deceived and therefore not wholly responsible for.

It is interesting to present material such as this in a way they have probably never heard it explained, for these insights—though hardly new—can be made so much clearer in the context of some of the things we in our tradition take for granted.

One of the men said that he has a friend in Salt Lake City whose church is looking into the Holy Days and starting to keep them and also beginning to follow the dietary laws. (If anyone knows anything about this group, I would love to learn more about them.) He warned his friend not to become legalistic about them, whereupon I said that Christians can become legalistic about anything. (Examples: Legalistic about praying exactly 30 minutes a day, about church attendance, about Bible Study). We can learn much about God's plan for us from the festivals, but keeping those days doesn't save us. If we think they do, that's when they become legalistic.

I would like to ask for prayer in regard to two of the men today. One man has become almost a regular in our study, and I count him a friend. He left today in the middle of the study but did not come back. Something seemed to be bothering him—I don't know what. He left about the time I was reading Hebrews 9:7, using the NIV because of clarity of translation. He is a King James Only fan. Although he and I have discussed in prior weeks my position on this (the King James Version is my main study Bible, but I refer to modern translations for clarification of poorly translated verses), I have a suspicion this had something to do with his departure. In any case, I count him a friend and ask everyone's prayers that he will come by again some time and we can have a chance to talk matters through.

[Obviously, we should try to avoid offending others in our teaching. If we are talking to one person whom we know likes only the KJV Bible, then we should use it with him as much as possible. But some people are "turned off" by the KJV's Old English. When a group is larger, it is not possible to please everyone all of the time. Some people were offended at Christ just because of who He was (Mark 6:3). It is sad that people are offended, but we should not worry when it is not our fault. — NSE]

Another trucker asked for prayer for his estranged wife, who has become involved in crack and a generally immoral lifestyle. It is evident he still cares about her and wants her to return to her Christian roots. Truckers have a reputation for being tough and burly, but when combined with a love of God these people can be among the most dedicated believers you will ever find. Please remember them in your prayers. They lead lonely lives.

October 29, 2000

Before the study today, a trucker came in early to share a burden he had been carrying with him. A while back he visited by invitation a Pentecostal church and said for only the second time in his life he was "slain by the Spirit". Afterwards, one of the parishioners came up to him claiming to be a prophet, who proceeded to try to prophesy for him. Some of the things this prophet told him were correct and some were not. No, he was not having financial difficulties (at least not yet), but yes he was a little dissatisfied with his job (who isn't)? He was told that he needed to move to a "two-climate" area (i.e., down south), but he has just bought a house in Idaho that he is

content with, but not totally pleased, since it is in a depressed area and not large enough if he were to get married. The driver was wondering whether this was really a prophet and whether he should sell his little house, move and take other life-changing actions.

I turned to 2 Timothy 1:7, which says that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. I submitted to him that whatever this spirit was, it seemed to put fear on him, and that is certainly not a fruit of the Holy Spirit. I also pointed out that a prophet of God would be right on the details if the prophecy was truly correct, as we read in Deuteronomy 18. If the prophecy is false, then we shouldn't fear that prophet. Finally, we looked at Ephesians 5:17, which discusses God's will for us. We read the passage and its context, and it is evident that God is not as much interested in where we live as he is in how we live our lives. The trucker laughed and said, "I don't see anywhere in here that God's will is for me to live in a 'two-climate' area".

We were joined at this point by another trucker, and we discussed how society has changed over the past thirty years, and we discussed how all this happened. Jesus tells us to "remember Lot's wife" when speaking about the last days. The story of Lot and his wife reveals that they gradually became accustomed to society around them, and that their society changed them without them realizing it. The same thing has happened to us.

Carl, the Baptist who joins us regularly, has made an extensive study of New Age philosophy, and he pointed how much that has begun to influence our society. The spirit of God must be used to resist it. I made an oblique reference once again to 2 Timothy 2:7 to the first truck driver, reminding him that we had talked about this earlier and that there are spirits that are not of God—which I believe is what he encountered at that Pentecostal group. Both Carl and the second trucker related experiences where they knew an evil spirit was present and prayed that God would rebuke such. The specific circumstances they described lead me to believe that their assessment of the circumstance was correct.

The concept of the One World Government and concerns about the same are on many people's minds. We were able to discuss these issues openly, and while I am not one to get concerned about conspiracy theories, I do know that such is coming at the instigation of the devil. I reminded the truckers that Isaiah 2 illustrates what the world will be like after Jesus Christ returns, and that the Gospel is good news. Things might look bleak, but in the end everything will be okay.

It was an especially rewarding discussion today because we were able to help a man escape the bondage chained on him by a false prophet. This was a man who knew enough about the Bible to find on his own the scriptures we discussed, but not enough to discern the spirits.

[After years in hierarchical groups, it is taking many years for me to really grasp how Christ imparts gifts in individuals and works with them on a daily basis. Most Pentecostals have known that all along. On the other hand, many who have been in Pentecostal groups for many years are used to being "slain in the spirit" (falling over backwards) and experiencing other "spiritual manifestations" that are not in the scriptures. Some are just now learning to avoid it. We have known that all along. Maybe we can help each other. — NSE]

Special Offer

Of the two Great Commandments, Christians find it easy to profess love for God, whom we cannot see. But loving one's neighbor, whom we can see, too often finds us lacking. How does love for God reveal itself in our love for fellow human beings? How can we grow in fulfilling the Second Great Commandment?

Helpers of Your Joy Ministries and the Church of God Kansas City is pleased to offer a free cassette tape of the sermon entitled "Love Your Neighbor", presented by Ramon Coleman.

If you would like a copy, please send me your mailing address.

— Lenny Cacchio
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News from Local Congregations from page 7

base of Mystery Mountain (also called Hidden Mountain) this rock has been raising some eyebrows.

The stone preserves an abbreviated form of the Ten Commandments as written in Exodus 20. The inscription has been translated, and further details and photographs are available at members.aol.com/KHoeck777/Comstone.html

Free Newsletter

Gilford Monrose publishes a free newsletter called *In Him*. He held a crusade in New York in August, with the "purpose of propagating the gospel in Brooklyn", which attracted visitors from far and wide. The address to request a free copy is: In Him Newsletter, 203 E 37 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11203.

eGroups Discussion List

The Sabbath More Fully [SMF] forum is primarily for the presentation and discussion of Scriptural feasts, the Weekly Sabbath, Annual Sabbaths, and Sabbaths of Years and their relevance for us today. All who are interested are welcome to participate in kindness, respect for other views, with a desire to share as well as learn. Parallel views of intense discussion and research such as Calendar, the Sacred Name, the Godhead, etc. are allowed as long as done with a kind attitude of respect. All who are willing to participate may do so. Messianic Jews, Seventh-Day Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, SDA, Church of God Seventh-Day, World Wide Church of God, WWCG. All may find something of interest. Feel free to contact Merwin Abbott (list-owner) at pmretreat@alltel.net or visit the web site at www.egroups.com/group/SabbathMoreFully

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 Featured This Issue:

Study Resources and Information:

Barnabas Ministries Bookmark Bunch, by Alan Ruth, 6 pages. Three 2-sided bookmarks covering Bible basics, Plan of Salvation & Words of Comfort, and Worldwide Web Resources. Excellent to keep, carry or give away.

Bible Sabbath Association Order Form, 8 pages. Sabbath books, booklets, and tracts—some very hard to find.

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.

The Churches of God Newsletter, by Rick Beltz, 12 pages. Free Sabbatarian Newsletter.

The Fellowship Commentator by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.

***Friends of the Family Lending Library* Order Form** by Rod McKown, 2 pages. Check out family books and tapes.

Green Pastures Gazette edited by Phil and Diana Keener, 8 pages. Free monthly newsletter of Sabbatarian news of congregations in the Texas/Arkansas area.

Hebrew Roots Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.

***History Research Projects* Order Form** by Craig White. 4 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.

***In Him* Newsletter.** An issue of free every-2-month newsletter for teens & people working in youth ministries.

Learning Together Newsletter, by Ron Wilson, 20 pages. Bible study articles published by a variety of Sabbatarians.

Living Relationship with Original Language Text Unfolding, by John J. Purvins, 40 pages. First issue of free Christian living magazine and Hebrew study course.

Living Room Church of God (LRCOG) Directory edited by Robert Bodkin, 16 pages. Find a place to fellowship!

Prison to Praise by Merline Carothers, 118 pages. Book reporting miracles that occurred as a result of praising God. Shows difficulty we can have telling others "they don't know God."

Sabbath History edited by Leon Lyell in Australia. One free sample issue of 26-page newsletter about the history of Sabbath keepers & groups. There is nothing else like it.

The Sabbath Sentinel One free sample issue of 16 page magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.

***Sanctuary of Silence* Book Promotion and Order Form** by Peter Kershaw, 2 pages. Information about the difficulties with church incorporation and 501 (c) 3 tax exempt status.

Scattered Brethren Contact List, 8 pages. List of cities of Servants' News subscribers & directions on how you can contact them.

The Churches of God Newsletter edited by Rick Beltz, 12 pages. Free Sabbatarian newsletter.

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.

What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about "bad" people? "Good" people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Read the many scriptures that answer these questions.

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 & tape 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,** 68 pages.

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