

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 5, No. 5

A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be

Sept/Oct 1999

Spiritual Food... or Slow Poison?

By Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

What books and literature do you use for help in studying the Bible? Do you use only works by Sabbatarians? Or will you use Strong's Concordance, Halley's Bible Handbook or Adam Clarke's Commentary? Do you primarily use a Bible translated by Sabbatarians? Will you read a religious article or watch a Bible video produced by people with doctrines different than yours?

It would take more than a few sentences for most people to describe the principles they use to select literature for study. The issues are complex, but important. We hope this article will help you think about it and possibly make better decisions.

If you have ever been a member of a church organization which considered itself "the One True Church", you probably could state your study policy in one sentence: Study **only** the religious

authors or speakers directly endorsed by your particular church organization. Members of such groups would not think to recommend materials of any other group to friends or family.

However, in recent years, many who once were totally convinced that they were part of the "one true Church organization" are no longer so convinced. Some left from the conclusions of their own study, others were cast out of their group and still others found their group dissolving before their eyes. This has not only been true of the Sabbatarian Churches of God movement, but also of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Seventh Day Adventists, and other exclusivist groups.

That leaves a large number of people who must now make their own decisions on what to read or listen to, and whose writings, tapes or broadcasts to

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Why Did This Issue Take So Long?

Thank you very much for waiting so long for this issue. There were many things that caused it to be delayed. Because of our delays, I decided not to rush the *Eternal Judgement* paper. I want it to include everything that I think is important about the subject.

I would like to thank those who wrote or called making sure that "we are still all right" and encouraged us "keep on going". I explained our situation briefly to some, but also promised an explanation in this issue, so here it is. In general, there were no major difficulties, but a lot of significant minor ones. We are a "low budget" operation, and I rely on my previous technical experience to solve a lot of problems that others might solve by hiring some-

one. Unfortunately, all of these things take time—time which is then not spent on the publications. Most of the problems have been solved, though a few remain outstanding.

Before I describe the unusual items, let me first mention the things that we do on an ongoing basis in addition to publishing *Servants' News* and *Shelter in the Word*. These activities continued, even while you were not receiving an issue.

Read mail and answer mail. We receive many more letters than those that we print in *Servants' News*. Some contain long articles. We read some and put others aside till later—possibly until we study a subject. We file this so they can be found in the future. We

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Feast 1999

This article includes all the Feast reports sent to us. (We do not intend to print any more for the 1999 Feast.) Will *Servants' News* host a Feast in 2000? We are waiting to see what happens in Y2K! Even though Butler State Park was an ideal place to spend the Feast, we will not be utilizing that site next year as there is neither sufficient Park rooms nor meeting space available. The Eternal will provide! —NSE

Butler State Park, Kentucky

The Feast at Butler State Park, Kentucky was a time of joy and learning for nearly everyone who attended. Between 70 and 100 people were present each day. A number of people spent part of their Feast elsewhere.

The majority of the first service was used to "meet the church"—someone from each household introduced their family and gave some of their spiritual history. This was extremely helpful, as many of those attending had not met each other before. From that point on,

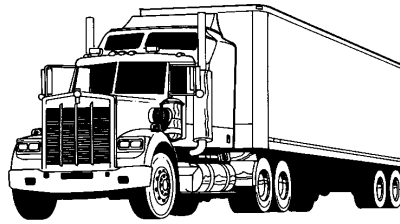
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Truckers' Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., #28-32



The Truckers' 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 19, 1999: We had six truckers today, a pretty good showing.

Today I decided to give a dry run to part of my Day of Atonement sermon, and we explored Genesis 3. This chapter describes the beginnings of the breach that has developed between God and man. It is interesting to note that it was man who hid from God, and not God that hid from man, and in fact this has proven to be the history of the world—man hiding from God. Indeed, beyond that, there is a breach between man and his environment and man with man. The healing of this breach can only come through atonement for our sins, and the Holy Days of the Bible teach the great lessons of salvation. In fact, Messianic Judaism is doing yeoman's work in bringing the understanding of these days to the Christian community.

Much of the study today was a discussion of the state of our society, and people instinctively know that something is wrong, and that the solution is spiritual in nature. Sadly, many are looking to the wrong spirit for answers, but in any case it is up to us to "stand in the gap" and provide the answers.

Several mentioned specific instances where the established churches in their home towns refused to get involved in some promising evangelistic efforts (a prison ministry for one) because they seemed to be **more interested in maintaining their own little congregations and agendas** specific to those congregations. This myopia seems to be more important than reaching out to the community at large. (Such attitudes are not unique to the Church of God.) Eventually, individuals picked up the ball on these individual ministries and ran with them. In the prison ministry case, two churches finally decided to become involved (once it became successful), and then they became involved in a turf battle that eventually destroyed the program.

One of the men mentioned some things he has heard on the radio teaching that the United States is in fact Israel. He mentioned the names Wayne Sparrow, and a fellow with the last name of Stairs, men with whom I am unacquainted. Has anyone heard of these men?

Today was an interesting session, not so much for the uniqueness of what was discussed, but at how these people who were perfect strangers one hour before could easily discuss the scriptures with one another as well as some very personal items from their life experiences.

October 10, 1999: A family of three from Huntsville, AL and the wife of another trucker attended today. John Curry of our congregation here also dropped in and lent a helpful hand.

I spoke at length with the family from Huntsville, and they described a nasty church split that they had to endure, and I was reminded once again that splits and the reasons for such splits are not unique to the Church of God. They were involved in the split a few years back in the Episcopal Church, and they became a part of the Anglican Church of America, which I gather is the more conservative end of the split. It was the "big three" that caused the split: 1) doctrinal changes, 2) who was to be in charge, 3) money.

[Many former members see the WCG breakup as some unique event orchestrated directly by God. While God certainly guides His people, we must realize that to the outside world, our breakup looks about the same as the breakup of

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

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

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News from Local Congregations



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

Kansas City 1999 Teen and Young Adult Retreat

It is time again for the annual Teen and Young Adult Retreat!! This year's retreat will be December 25th-28th at the Salvation Army Camp and Conference Center in Kansas City, Missouri. This year we have added a day to the Retreat and therefore the cost will be \$25.00 per person. It will start on Sabbath, Dec. 25th with church services at 1:00 PM. We would like to invite all family and friends to attend services with us and enjoy a potluck dinner and fellowship afterwards. We will be at the lodge by 8 AM to start checking you in and ask that you arrive no later than noon so we can have you checked in and ready for services by 1 PM.

The conference center provides a gym for volleyball and basketball, a game room with pool, table tennis and several free video games. Again this year we will have a pizza party and dance on Monday night. We also are looking into adding Roller Skating and Laser Tag.

All bedding and meals will be provided. You will need to bring personal items, bibles, pencil or pen, paper, and the appropriate clothing for Sabbath services. As always, this retreat is open to any teen or young adult from **any** of the Churches of God. We look forward to seeing you again this year!

If you want to attend this year's retreat, please contact Laurinda Armer; 6900 Lakeshore Dr. Raytown; Missouri 64133; 816-356-2436; e-mail: Shemp@swbell.net

CGI Hymnal Accompaniment

The Church of God, International is offering accompaniment music cassette tapes for their new Burgundy Hymnal. Their Burgundy Hymnal has 234 songs total including all the favorites from the

old World Wide Church of God Purple Hymnal and the old Radio Church of God Gray Hymnal. To order a set of tapes free of charge, please contact Eric Morris, Church of God, International, P.O. Box 2525, Tyler, TX 75710, phone: 903-825-2525, e-mail: info@cgi.org. The accompaniment music is also available on the internet at <http://home.fuse.net/rust/hymnal.html>.

—Vivian Rust, e-mail: krust@fuse.net

Song Service Accompaniment

This writer prefers live accompaniment to recorded music, but many small fellowships do not have a "live accompanist". Those interested in singing the best of traditional Christian hymns might want to consider *The Digital Hymnal* by Gulbransen, Inc., 800-677-7374. It is a 4-lb unit that plays accompaniment to nearly 6000 songs—mostly traditional hymns but some modern praise and worship music is included. You can choose the instrumentation and the order of songs. It is expensive at \$1000, but may be worth it if it stimulates people to praise the Eternal when they otherwise would not. —NSE

Women's Conference 2000

December 5, 1999—"Let the Older Women Teach the Younger" will serve as the guiding principle at the Women's Conference 2000 to be held in the Dallas area March 10-12, 2000. This groundbreaking conference will be open to women, regardless of church affiliation, who respect the traditional role of women in the Sabbatarian Churches of God but want to identify new areas of service and growth.

The conference will be sponsored by the International Bible Learning Center (IBLC), with support and endorsements from Christian Educational Ministries, United Christian Ministries, *Servant's*

News, and Friends of the Sabbath; independent congregations such as Big Sandy UCG and UCG Birmingham; and independent fellowship groups in Dallas, Houston, Tyler, and Waco, TX; Milwaukee, WI; and Nashville, TN.

Women's Conference 2000 will be held at the Marriott Hotel Solana, located at 5 Village Circle in Westlake, TX, which is a 10-minute drive from DFW Airport in the Solana Business Complex developed by IBM. The hotel is located in a secluded and elegant setting, complete with jogging trail, free health club facilities, and on-site restaurant.

The primary goal of the conference is to help women think outside the box in terms of the impact that they can have on their family, local congregation, and community. It will also include workshops geared to women of all ages and categories: teenage girls, single women, stay-at-home and working moms, wives, and grandmothers.

To help women who might not otherwise be able to attend, congregations are encouraged to consider financially sponsoring at least one woman who would benefit from the conference. IBLC will set up a special dedicated fund for those who would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to help defray costs for any of the general activities or for specific individuals.

There will be no conference fee if women register by January 15, 2000. After that, a nominal fee of \$10 per person will be charged for conference materials and attendance at all seminars and workshops. Accommodations and meals at the hotel will be offered at discounted rates: \$62 per room per night for 1-4 occupants and \$45 per person for meals, which includes the welcome reception on Friday, buffet lunch, drink break, sit-down dinner, and social on Saturday; and continental breakfast on Sunday morning.

"It is clear from Scripture that older women are to be teachers of younger

women. The NT simply does not limit how or when that teaching function of woman to woman should take place. Although we may be blazing a new trail, we are doing so consistent with Biblical guidelines," said Allie Dart, who will be one of the conference presenters.

One of the goals of the conference is to re-examine the valuable role of women in promoting the gospel through personal evangelism. "We want to recapture some of the practices that surely existed in the primitive church. At that time, women worked side by side with the apostles, and some like Lydia may have even set up churches in their homes," said Linda Hardy White, IBLC regent and conference organizer. "The apostles appeared to target leading Gentile women, for example, who were noted as being among the first to accept the gospel outside of Judea."

The conference will begin on Friday evening with a welcome reception and refreshments. Beginning at 10 a.m. on Sabbath, seminars will cover the following areas: *The Historic Role of Women in the Church*, *Educating the Next Generation*, and *Succeeding Through Biblical Wisdom*. The keynote address will be *Thinking Outside the Box—Fresh Insights on Christian Leadership and Service* by Dr. Jewell Cress, a well-known speaker and writer in Church of God (Seventh Day), who is also chairman of a business department at Oral Roberts University.

There will be an hour-long music program on the Sabbath. Afterwards, conference attendees will be invited to participate in an open forum on service programs and personal evangelism.

Breakaway workshops after sunset will include the following tracks: *Generation Next*—a forum for teens; *Juggling Time!*; *Homeschooling Pros and Cons*, and *The Single Christian*. The Saturday evening sessions will conclude with an ice-cream social, door prizes, and country music show. *Money Matters!* and *How to Effectively Deal with Conflict* will be offered as workshops on Sunday morning beginning at 9 a.m. The conference will conclude at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday.

"Certain segments of women, such as single or divorced women with or without children tend to have needs that are a little different from those of married women. We would like to focus on some of the issues that they

face as well as topics of general interest," said Pam Havir of UCG Big Sandy, one of the conference supporters. "And we hope everyone will take advantage of this great opportunity to make some new friends."

For more information or a registration form, call 877-444-IBLC (toll-free) or 972-492-3305; or send an e-mail to info@iblc.org or marketl@worldnet.att.net. A registration form also appears in the Connections section of the December issue of The Journal.

Milwaukee Splits from UCG-ia

This is a summary of my views and observations, from the inside, of the events that led to another independent church, this time in Milwaukee. There have been 4 factors at work in leading to the schism:

1. Tension between the pastor and the only local elder.
2. A widespread distrust of the honesty of the pastor.
3. The local council's dissatisfaction with UCG-ia's proposed rules of association.
4. Fundamentally divergent views on government: congregationalism vs. pastor-rule local structure.

The UCG-Milwaukee congregation has had a congregational form of government since its establishment, originally as a Worldwide Church of God-Texas associate in early 1995. Afterwards it elected to start down a road toward affiliation with UCG-ia. It formed its own charter, bylaws and business operations. The congregation voted overwhelmingly to ratify them. It elected a local council, and handled its donations and expenses locally, and set up a building fund. It's charter contained an article whereby the pastor has to be ratified by the congregation. The charter declared that it intended to affiliate with UCG-ia. But the council considered such affiliation to be dependent on published rules of association, to be eventually ratified by the council and congregation, after the UCG general conference ratified them. It gave a great deal of input to UCG-ia in developing the rules. Some ideas were even added, others not.

In this setting there has been years of independent action and thought in the congregation. Independent meet-

ings, socials, bible studies have been common among the local members for four years. The pastor sometimes participated, sometimes not.

Over the last year, however, the pastor had begun to attempt to suppress independent activities. He, controlling the speaking schedule, eventually left the local elder off the schedule, without explanation. Many of the congregation became upset at this and appealed to the council to intervene, and expressed their concern in local church meetings.

In March '99 controversy intensified. The pastor requested a study paper from a group independently studying the Old Testament Passover chronology. After the paper was developed and distributed, the pastor publicly denied any knowledge of it, even though he requested it. He was challenged from the floor, and had to back down. He later publicly misrepresented published doctrine and policy, and then publicly attacked a deacon who had baptized his own sons. This led to more public challenges to the pastor. The pastor's honesty was challenged, and when he declined to repent, there followed a series of formal meetings with witnesses, following Matthew 18. He recanted (temporarily) and promised not to publicly lie or attack a member from the pulpit again. There was a measure of peace for a few months. More and more members attended independent bible studies, and many attended independent holy days and feasts. Church attendance continued to drop off markedly from approximately 100 to 60.

The pastor and local elder had a series of agreed upon private meetings, but their rift only widened. Finally the pastor suggested to the local elder that the church should split.

The local church council was, in the meantime, increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of response from Cincinnati in obtaining a copy of the proposed rules of association, and wrote demanding them by a deadline. One council member went to Home Office personally and obtained a copy. He then distributed them to the local council and congregation. The council was upset that the proposed rules would be in conflict with the local charter and bylaws and scheduled discussions of the proposals.

This all reached a higher pitch on November 6, 1999 when the elder, seeking peace and choosing to avoid a nasty

legal conflict with the UCG Council over his having attended three non-UCG-ia festival sites, announced he was resigning from the UCG general conference, but would remain an elder for the local church.

One week later, November 13, 1999, the pastor called the elder early Sabbath morning and announced to him that he was suspended from services. A deacon also was so notified that morning. The pastor was told he would need local council and congregational approval for such a suspension. Council members called an emergency meeting an hour before services and invited the elder and deacon to attend.

On arrival at church for the council meeting, the pastor and 3 others attempted to block the doorway. The deacon came in thru the back door, but there was a 75 minute stand-off at the front doorway, as a crowd assembled. Finally all agreed that an open forum congregational meeting would be held immediately where all could be considered decently and in order. The main topic was agreed to be a discussion of congregationalism vs. pastor-rule church models.

The meeting was open, uninhibited, orderly, but passionate. A show of hands was called for by a council member, on who wished the elder and deacon suspended. The poll was 50 to 4 in favor of the elder and deacon. Speech after speech pleaded for tolerance, unity and outgoing concern for one another. But the pastor abruptly ended the meeting with the words, "I will be here next Sabbath, representing UCG-ia, and deliver a sermon, in a traditional format. Whoever comes is acknowledging a pastor-led model of church government and is rejecting congregationalism." Although many hands went up, he quickly commenced a closing prayer. And it was over.

During the week, the local council met, discussed the proposed UCG-ia rules of association, voted 5-2 against them, and began the process of an orderly separation.

It is expected that the independent congregation, now to be known as Church of God, a Berean Fellowship, will have about 40-45 and an IA group of 20-25, when the settling is over. A few may join the Living Church of God. Both groups have pledged to divide assets peacefully and generously.

Despite the stress and trials of the last year, there is a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm in the new Berean Fellowship, a feeling of freedom and liberty, not experienced since the liberation from Worldwide. Plans to cooperate with other congregations, and for local and regional evangelism are already under way. Contact with other isolated brethren is being made. An aggressive outreach program is planned. A local church building is high priority. It is time to re-embark on the journey begun in 1995, when we came out of Egypt.

These are my observations, a view from the center, the epicenter.

—John Merritt, MD
(founder of *Friends of the Sabbath*)

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(founder of *Friends of the Sabbath*)

Olive Branches Web Site

Greetings Fellow Sabbath-Keepers. We are the sponsors of the Olive Branches web site:

www.sabbatarians.net

One of our stated objectives when we established this site was "to promote and encourage cooperation and fellowship between individuals and groups regardless of organizational affiliation".

In growing toward the fulfillment of this objective, we would like to develop a section (page) on the web site that would serve the local Sabbatarian Community by providing a place to post announcements of news, events, and activities sponsored by the various sabbatarian groups in the region. In addition, this section would also contain a "Directory" of local sabbatarian groups, along with their regular meeting schedule, contact information, etc. (For those who would like to be listed).

This page will serve the purpose of encouraging fellowship and interaction between the various sabbatarians in the region, as well as serving as an outreach tool. The page will be accessible both directly, and via a link appearing on the Home Page of the Olive Branches web site. (Olive Branches places ads in several publications widely read by sabbatarians, such as *The Sabbath Sentinel* published by the Bible Sabbath Association, and in *The Journal—News of the Churches of God*). It is our hope that once the page is developed, we can place notices in some of the local newspapers from time to time (for example, the Tennessean's "Directory of Worship Services" section) providing readers with the direct

URL to the web page.

The region we would like to cover with this service would be an area within approximately a **200 mile radius of Nashville, TN**. If you would like to be included we will accept submissions in the form of announcements of events and activities, schedules of Services and other meeting times & locations, or other news of potential interest to the local sabbatarian community. For inclusion in the "Directory" section we suggest you include the following information: name of group or fellowship, meeting location (street address), contact information (i.e. a name, phone #, e-mail, website, mailing address), meeting schedule, an optional 6-line description of your group/fellowship, distinctions you feel might be important considerations for visitors, or additional directions to the meeting location.

Please note that we will not carry announcements relative to the holidays of Christmas or Easter as we feel that these holidays have been adulterated by the adoption and blending of pagan non-biblical customs and symbolism. Rather, we feel that it is appropriate to acknowledge the Messiah's birth, death, and resurrection through the observance of the biblical holy days of Tabernacles (Sukkot), Passover (Pesach), and Firstfruits (HaBikkurim).

We have already set up this web page (in prototype form) and we will be expanding it as more information is received. **If you do not have internet access**, and would like to see a printed copy of how the page currently appears, we would be happy to send you one. I would like to emphasize that this is a free service to the sabbatarian community.

To submit a listing or announcement to this page, e-mail news@olivebranches.net, or write to us at: Olive Branches, P.O. Box 1293, Fairview, TN 37062.

Your Fellow Servant,

—Michael L. Styer

Sabbatarian Singles Forum

Singles may want to look at the website listed below. (If you do not have home internet access, most libraries provide it). You may join the Sabbatarian singles forum there, as well as find links to other Sabbatarian Singles sites:

<http://www.ssff.freesevers.com> 

British Israelism, a Historical View

This is an e-mail question and answer between David R. C. Hudson of Texas A&M University (david-hudson@tamu) and Yair Davidy in Israel. British Israelism, sometimes called the *Identity* movement, is the idea that many British, American and other peoples are descended from the lost 10 tribes of Israel. It has been part of the doctrinal package of many religious groups—unfortunately it is sometimes combined with racist doctrines (only some races can be saved). Yair Davidy approaches British Israelism from a largely historical perspective. **Hudson's letter is in bold**, Davidy's answers are in plain type.

Dear Yair Davidy,

I also am very keen to learn more about you and Brit-Am. I hope the following questions don't appear over-intrusive! For example:

(1) Are there many Jews (i) within the state of Israel, and (ii) outside the state of Israel who believe that the peoples of north-west Europe constitute the nucleus of the lost ten tribes of Israel?

There are some. I cannot give you figures, but the numbers are not enormous.

If not, what other explanations are offered/believed?

The most common alternate notion seems to be the idea that the Ten Tribes returned to Judaism at some stage. Other ideas refer to Israel being in Afghanistan, Burma, India, Red Indians, Africa and all over.

Is there widespread awareness that this is an issue?

No. It is more something theoretical, abstract, from the world of legend and fancy.

(2) What is the sense of Jews who do so believe about Christianity within these nations?

Christianity is considered a basically pagan religion but one through which the truth may be reached since it recognizes the Old Testament and sets a moral standard.

Is there a belief that these nations are ultimately destined to be converted to Judaism?

Yes, in a general sense.

Or, are most Jews who do so believe "messianic" Jews, i.e. believers in "Yeshua"?

No. Some of the leaders are though some of the Jewish Christians seem to have a complex about recognizing the Ten Tribes subject, and are even hostile or highly critical. There are also many Gentiles who consider themselves "Jewish Christians" and perhaps most "Jews for Jesus" are Gentiles and these are often more receptive.

There are also Bnei Noach groups many of whose members are very open

to the Identity idea though some reject it. The reasons for accepting or rejecting this belief appear to be usually subjective, emotional, or instinctive ones.

(3) What are the declared aims and objectives of Brit-Am?

To promote believing in the Israelite origins of many people of west European descent. To do this from a believing Jewish perspective. To encourage research on the subject and to make the research known. To plant seeds that hopefully will bear positive fruit.

(4) How did you—and others—come to believe as you do?

Many were somehow exposed to British Israel, Identity, or Armstrong writings and found this notion to correspond with innate feelings.

Many were interested in Celtic or other ethnic studies and came to the same conclusions. I met people who came to this belief through the legends of King Arthur, the Dead Sea scrolls, the study of Genetics, etc. There is not one main cause. Many now believe or are open to the idea through reading Brit-Am publications or hearing our lectures or through private conversation. Some formed the idea on their own perhaps through meeting people from certain nations overseas. There are Jewish sources that point in this direction.

My personal reasons for first reaching these conclusions were compounded from the following: 1) The belief exists. 2) Jewish sources point in that direction. 3) Anti-Semitism and Philo-Semitism, i.e. the few friends the Jews have seem to mainly come from certain specific groups. 4) The plain sense of the Hebrew Bible appears to confirm it. It appears to be consistent with the Torah and Torah-learning and commentary, as I understand it. 5) Converts to Judaism etc, i.e. there are people from those areas who are identifiable as Israelite. These and possibly other factors over a period of time led to a cumulated impression that pushed me to undertake intensive research in every possible area connected to the subject

and this research strengthened the Brit-Am conclusions.

(5) Are there other organizations, similar to Brit-Am, in Israel?

No. But there is one group (headed by Rabbi Avichail) that directs its attention to Burma, Afghanistan, etc. This group is well funded and receives much publicity. It also has helped people of Jewish descent such as the Ethiopians and Marranos in Portugal etc but on the whole I consider its premises to be mistaken and in some ways possibly harmful -but then they may well say the same (or worse) about us.

(6) Do you face any opposition/hostility from within Judaism or the secular community in Israel?


So far nothing really serious. Some people have been highly critical, others sympathetic. On a qualitative level we consider our operation to be extremely important but quantitatively it is not large-scale. We have also reached and influenced quite a few people outside of Israel. Certain things have been achieved that may be historically significant or mere historical curiosities.

On the *one* hand there is always an element dependent on whether one wants to believe in it or not. On the *other* hand, in every field there exists evidence strongly supportive of Brit-Am beliefs. In some cases the evidence is really very strong and in my opinion cannot be easily dismissed. In other words it opens up questions that should be faced up to.

Many Thanks. I look forward to hearing from you,

—David Hudson

The Tribes, 2nd Edition Ready

Information on Davidy's research can be found in his recently released second edition of *The Tribes*. To purchase it, send US\$30 (or its equivalent in other currency). Checks drawn on your local bank or international money orders are fine. The price includes postage by airmail. Yair Davidy; POB 595; Jerusalem 91004; Israel 

Christians & Jews Learning Together at the Feast

In July of this year, we received two booklets by David M. Wiseman. (He also uses the Hebrew name, Zaide Reuben.) One book was entitled *Tabernacles—Succot; when the Messiah Feasts with Jews and Gentiles*. It breaks from the traditional Jewish idea that there is no need for Christians to keep the biblical Holy Days. The book greatly encourages Christians to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, as its title implies.

The book mentions some Holy-day-keeping and Sabbatarian groups—it even mentions *Servants' News*. However, its overall approach is still traditional Jewish. More about this at the end of this article.

Mr. Wiseman's other book is entitled *The Esrog*. What is an esrog and how does it relate to the Feast? Consider Leviticus 24:40, NKJV:

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

Four different descriptions of trees are mentioned above—two specific species (palm and willow), and two general descriptions (“beautiful” and “leafy”). Different Bible translations have many different readings in this verse. Even the Tanakh (1985 Jewish Publication Society translation) says the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain for some of these trees.

Nevertheless, Jewish tradition contains much about this verse, indicating that there are four separate species here. We include the traditional Hebrew names in parenthesis: the citron (*esrog*), the palm (*lulav*), myrtle (*hadass*) and willow (*arava*). **Jewish tradition attaches great amounts of symbolism to these trees.** Some of it seems to be profound indeed. This writer has not studied these traditions at length and does not know which parts of them were inspired by God and which parts were simply ideas of men passed along for generations. But anyone interested in studying these four species, especially the Esrog, can learn a great deal about them from Mr. Wiseman's book. If you accept his findings and want to use these species in your future Feast observance, you can also purchase branches or small trees from him:

David M. Wiseman; 6757 Arapaho,

Suite 711; Dallas, Texas 75248; 972-931-5596; fax: 972-931-5476; e-mail: ZRsEsrog@aol.com.

Christians & Jews Closer Together

Much of Mr. Wiseman's overall approach is from conservative Judaism. He quotes the Talmud and other Jewish writings as if there is no need to question them. He clearly states that he does not believe that Jesus was a true Messiah, but a God-ordained deception on the same order as Mohammed, the founder of Islam. This is **not** going to reach anyone who believes Jesus has changed their life in a major way. It may reach people who have become dissatisfied with mainstream Christianity or some particular branch thereof, but I do not believe it is a long-term solution for anyone.

I personally believe that Jewish and Christian efforts to reach out to each other are, in general, good. They are much better than the name-calling, hatred and killing that has happened between them for centuries. There is much that Christians and Jews could be learning from each other. However, I do not believe that real reconciliation can be achieved between people in either group until they get back to basing their doctrine and practice on God-inspired scripture and demote their traditions back to what they are—traditions.

The New Testament does not teach that the Old Testament was “done away” or that Christians should hate Jews. It criticizes the acts of corrupt Jewish leaders who taught one thing but did another (Matt 23:3). But these scriptures apply to *all corrupt leaders*, **not** to *all Jews*. After all, Christ and nearly all of the first Christians *were* Jews! But nearly all of mainstream Christian **tradition** has been anti-Jewish, and that is what has created the problems. There are many false and pagan practices in Christianity that Jews see and should reject, **not** because the practices are from the Bible but because they are from Christian tradition.

Similarly, the Old Testament is not anti-Christian. The spiritual concepts of loving one's neighbor as oneself, sacrifice, repentance, forgiveness, the salvation of the entire world, etc are all found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament contains no clear prophecies for Jews to hate Jesus or hate the Jewish “sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5) that

became known as Christians. It does not define them as a Gentile “lower class” of spiritual life. The Old Testament does not teach Jews to become wealthy at the expense of Gentiles. But the Talmud and other Jewish writings do teach those things. It is these traditions that encourage animosity between Jews and Christians, not the Old Testament.

Are we then saying that all Jewish and Christian tradition and scholarly learning is bad? How much more simple life would be if that were true! **But the reality is that both Christian and Jewish tradition is a mixture of good and evil.** Many leaders were sincere and honest men seeking the Eternal. But others were politicians, seeking their own political power (John 11:48). Notice what Isaiah 5:17-24 says about this:

¹⁷ Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture, And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat [humble men will learn apart from the corrupt leaders]. ¹⁸ Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, And sin as if with a cart rope; ¹⁹ That say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, That we may see it; And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, That we may know it" [religious leaders often claim to understand prophecy and the will of God]. ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! [Teaching error for truth!] ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! ²² Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, ²³ Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man! [Leaders who do not want people looking into their personal lives] ²⁴ Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the **law of the LORD** of hosts [the Tanakh or Old Testament—not Jewish tradition], And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel [The words of Christ in the New Testament—not Christian tradition].

—Norman S. Edwards

An Open Letter to All Believers

by Angel Gonzalez, July 19, 1999

The Word of God—the Holy Scriptures—is the express will of God. As we search the scriptures, we must allow them to search us, examining our character and conduct. We must not treat the scriptures only as a source of spiritual knowledge, but more importantly, as the expression of His will for our daily lives, to guide or conduct in Holy and Godly living.

The Word of God is the knowledge of His will in order that we may live a life worthy of His calling and be pleasing Him in every way. Our conduct and doctrines should be reflecting that will and obedience to Him who called us.

As believers, **are we noted** for our humility about our doctrines—our beliefs about what the Bible teaches in various areas of Biblical teachings? Do we tend to feel our position is airtight, and that anyone holding a different view is wrong? Do we tend to be impatient with anyone who differs from us? It seems like the more we believe our views come from the teachings of the Scriptures, the more rigidly we tend to hold those views.

It is one thing to be persuaded that what we believe is correct as we understand the scriptures; it is quite another to believe that our views are always right. This is not to suggest we be wishy-washy in our beliefs so that we are blown here and there by every wind of teachings, and doctrines, but that we are to hold our beliefs in a spirit of humility.

We should remind ourselves that God has not seen fit to have our minds, or even our particular church, group, or individual, the depository of the sum total of His truth, His will, law, and teachings. Or are we under the impression that our biblical insight and spiritual knowledge are all the truths of God?

At times, our behavior toward those of different views, is: “Everyone has an opinion, but only mine is right”. No one’s point of view is less worthy of being heard than another’s. Some believe and act in some undefined way, that somehow we are a little bit wiser, a little bit smarter, a little bit more knowledgeable and more responsive to God’s truth than others.

Does this mean we give into other’s demands or opinions? Not at all. But it

does mean we humbly listen to the instructions, teachings, beliefs, and corrections from other believers, we test our faith by searching the scriptures to see if these things are so. And if so, we accept it and change where we need to. We also share our faith with them in a spirit of openness and humility.

Once we begin to argue, reprimand, forbid, deny or belittle anyone else for what they believe to be the truth, it is the moment we claim in our actions, words, and behavior that we are correct and they are wrong. This only creates a spirit of contention, bitterness, resentment, and an atmosphere that quenches dialogue, sharing, participation and fellowship, leaving many feeling uncomfortable.

The result: A barrier is placed between us and them, not allowing for truth to be taught, shared, and listened to, keeping others from learning from it.

Our scriptural knowledge might be accurate but incomplete. No one has all the truth. How many of us still believe exactly, without change, everything we first learned when called? How many have changed some of their beliefs as additional knowledge came to light? How many have incorporated new doctrines, new truths, new understandings into our beliefs? And how many think that all we believe today—is never going to change—and no new truths will enter our practice and faith?

How are we to serve one another, love one another, honor one another, teach and learn from one another if our superior knowledge of God’s truth and His will blinds us to one another, keeping us from being shining lights to one another?

We all profess to have God’s truths, obeying God’s law, statutes, commands and will. We all profess getting our spiritual understanding and true interpretation from the Holy Bible. We all profess to have the Holy Spirit within us guiding us to all truth.

Do we believe that we are always right? Do we correct immediately anyone who deviates from what we believe? Do we stop anyone who contradicts what we feel God’s Word actually says? Do we deny anyone the opportunity to express their beliefs and nit-pick on their jot and tittles?

Are we all right? Is everyone else

wrong? Let’s look at this a little closer.

- More than one Passover date.
- More than one Pentecost date.
- Unclean meats okay versus not okay.
- Circumcision required versus not required.
- Rapture versus resurrection.
- Heaven versus Kingdom of God.
- The Name of God.
- King James Version versus other versions.
- Postponements, moons, calendars, etc.
- On and on it goes.

With so much confusion, we end up not loving one another—keeping from sharing what we believe with one another. We judge one another based on doctrine and belief, so our fellowship is not strengthened, but weakened. We begin to resent and become embittered with one another. And on and on it goes.

We find many churches, groups and individuals separated from others. We find many works, teachings, practices, doctrines, interpretations and truths all claiming to be done in God’s name and will—all claiming they are right.


Sisters and brothers—God is not pleased. Many of us are not pleased.

May Christ come quickly! May He personally reprove, correct us, chastise us, and lovingly, patiently teach us all the truth based on His correct and true interpretation of the Father’s will and thinking. So that no one could ever say again “Everyone has an opinion and mine is correct”. But all will say “we are one, we know the truth and there is no other”!

Christ my love—come quickly!!

Sincerely,

—Angel Gonzalez, New Jersey

[Thank you for this clear statement. Thoughts like these have caused me to study “eternal judgement”. What is really important? For what will we be judged? Will our judgement be a doctrinal test and will those that score high will be given a “high position”? It is wrong not to obey truth that we understand. But when others have a harmless doctrine that we think is wrong, we should try to avoid offending them, not chastise them (Rom 14). It is good to stand against clearly false but popular doctrine (like Sunday-observance). It is foolish to quibble over a doctrine on which we ourselves have recently changed opinions several times. —NSE] 

Open Letter To All Former Members, Ministers, and Leaders Of The Radio/ Worldwide Church of God

by Jesus Cardona, 2nd printing, enhanced with subheads, October 22, 1999

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, behold and consider:

The offshoots of the Big Split,
The split of the offshoots,
The splits of the split,
The divisions of the divided,
The disagreement of the disunited,
The disfellowships of the disfellowshipped,
The castouts of the disfellowships,
Ad nauseam...

All of the above events (a real horror scenario!) of the past several years in what we all know as the post **Radio & Worldwide Churches of God** have brought mostly ascending aggravation, confounding distress, spiritual trauma to everyone of us. Yes to **you**. And to all of **us**. Even as we have tried to become objective, dispassionate spectators outside the forest, so to speak.

What is the big picture of **the Church** that the world out there sees? Serious-looking adult Christian **leaders and disciples behaving like rowdy, unruly little children**: wanting to be leaders or the leader. Wanting leaders or a leader. Not wanting leaders, etc., etc.

This muddled picture I can quite confirm.

Where are the true servants of God who would be servants to the brethren? Who would prove by their fruits **first** what *God* would ordain them to be, or who they really are?

Satan the Adversary, that master super schemer, must be quite deliriously intrigued.

Is the **Lord Jesus Christ, our Leader**, pleased? Is He weeping for us?

What Shall We Do?

Let us (can we?) pause a little bit and think. Better let us pause to earnestly pray and ask our Heavenly Father to enlighten us ever so kindly and mercifully. We are not too far gone, are we?

What **three things** do we have in common?

1. We are called (or we all call ourselves) Churches of God (called-out ones, assembly/ies, congrega-

tion/s—ekklesia 1577 Strong's).

2. We were all common fruits of the historic ministry of one mortal (who lived and worked among us, fulfilling his part) called Herbert W. Armstrong (93 years of age when he left us. Quite ancient, indeed! And does not the Bible tell us to honor and respect the ancient?)
3. Moreover, we are all historic living remnants of the apostasy of the Worldwide Church of God, instigated by Satan, the devil using those treacherous mortals who took over the WCG with cunning craftiness, after the death of HWA.

We are, therefore, the scattered, separated (from one another) brotherhood. The end-time true remnants of the last days who keep the Commandments of God and bear the Testimony of Jesus Christ.

Have we become the tired, the weary; the confused, stressed-out, broken-hearted, heavy-laden? (Like the world out there? If so, then what an irony!)

It would be good then to review that passage of scripture. Perhaps an answer awaits us:

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**. For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰ for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt 11:28-30).

Could Remnants of the End-time Work in Unity?

Brethren, as historic, end-time remnants of the fulfilled prophesied apostasy, we have only each other on this Earth.

Can we remind ourselves that we have: One Father. One Lord. One Body. One Spirit. One Baptism. One Faith. One Hope. One Name: Church of God. One ultimate destiny: **to be immortal sons of god, in god's divine family?** (1Co. 8:6; 12:13, Eph 4:4-6; Phil 1:27.)

That we have One **Captain** of our Salvation. One Author of our Faith.

One Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20). One Teacher? Calling upon us now to come to him in our present spiritually discombobulated state, our Teacher says to us again:

"Learn from Me"!

Our Teacher points us to the beginning, when the New Testament Church first began. On that day of Pentecost recorded for us in the Book of Acts Chapter 2:

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

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

³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire and one sat upon each of them.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance

¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying one to another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Let Bygones Be Bygones

Now, therefore, before we can proceed, our **Teacher**, who knows all our present predicaments and disagreements, tells us to lay them aside (Heb. 12:1). Thru the apostle Paul in Phil. 3:13-15, He admonishes us:

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this in mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Our **Teacher** now brings us back to the prophecy of Joel for the last days.

We take note:

Apostle Peter spoke more than 1900 years ago—confirming then that it was the last days. Almost 2000 years later we are here. If those near 2000 years of

days are the last days, (or the last 2 days on God's time scale) then could we conclude or see then:

We are in the last part (or last days) of the last days?

Looking back thru nearly 2,000 years of the New Testament Church of God, thru what is possibly the only window of Biblical history we can look thru (the 7 churches of Asia), and with the scant available secular written records gathered till now, each church generation fulfilled its assigned historic and prophesied or prophetic role in the world of sinful men ruled by Satan, the devil.

We lived in true church history!

The RCG/WCG fulfilled its role till the apostasy came. And so it is gone. (Such has been the pattern for each generation of the Church. Historical evidence and now our own experience proves that.) Metamorphosed into a Protestant one. And here, at this point in history, we are. In the **last days** or *last of the last days*?

We all believe (hopefully) and know that we know that we are the prophesied remnant of the Church of God. (in the end time?)—is this not enough reason to rejoice?

With that full conscious knowingness of our spiritual identity, let us listen/ read the prophecy once more:

¹⁷ "And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, says God, that I will **pour out my spirit upon all flesh**

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

¹⁸ Your young men shall see visions

Your old men shall dream dreams

And on my menservants and on my maidservants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days;

And they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:18-19).

How? Acts 10:44-45 discloses:

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the Word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been passed out to the Gentiles also.

The prophecy continues, proclaiming and describing events foretold by Christ in Matthew 24:29 right before

His return and arrival on Earth. **Is God doing something new in the final days thru his remnant churches?** Is He intimating this in Isaiah 43:10-21?; 48:6-8?

Yes, indeed, I believe **He** does. Now, after 35 years of being in the **body**.

Remnant Churches Must Do It Afresh—Christ's Way

As travellers together, he wants us to travel light.

And can we believe that He would, if we lay aside our every hurt? Our every imagined, real, even undeserved loss? The betrayal of our trust? The insidious attempt to unravel our beginning faith? If we delete our carryover baggage?

Brethren let us travel light. Take out every chip on our shoulder. Every thorn in the flesh. Every root of bitterness. Our hang-ups. Our superiority complexes. Our inferiority complexes. Our fixations on little points of doctrine, which we think are **big**. Let us travel light on our journey to God's Kingdom of Divine Immortal Sons of God. Lest we forget each of us will be one of them.

If for that very reason and the most wonderful reason we have heard, believed the *Gospel of the Kingdom of God*—and were thus called, chosen, elected. After the apostasy, did we not become **the very elect**? The **remnant little flock** keeping faith in the end part of our long journey to God the Father's Kingdom? For the very blessing and privilege of being one of the end-time remnants **who keep the commandments of God and bear the testimony of Jesus Christ**—can we be of good cheer??

If we can be thankful. If we can appreciate this. If we can be grateful. (not hung-up on the heavy weights of ranks, titles, etc, etc. **For are we not all brethren, servants, friends of the Lord Jesus Christ?** There are no ranks in the spiritual organism called Church of God, the *ekklesia*. Are there?)

Christ (the Vine) Leads Remnant Churches (the Branches) To Rise To Spirit-Filled Tomorrows (John 15:1,5)

Then the floodgates for the outpouring of God's Spirit will be unlocked. Unlatched. Opened wide. Let loose. The devil and demons will flee. All hindering

bitterness in our hearts will melt away. The airwaves and the spiritual corridors for the receiving of the Spirit of God will be cleared. We will be attuned. The Spirit of transcending forgiveness will fill all our hearts and being.

The peace of God spoken by the Apostle Paul—the peace that passes all understanding—will all come upon us. All our repressed anger. Every bit of our root of bitterness. Every milliounce of our memory burdens—will finally dissolve into the forgiven yesterday.

Now, then, we can truly dream godly dreams. Experience true visions from God. Then we can prophesy.

Yes. We. The handmaidens and menservants of God.

And yes, our young women. And our young men as foretold.

"Greater Works than These..."

And yes, we can prophesy again. Before many peoples. Nations. Languages. Kings (Rev. 10:11).

And yes. With the spiritual power and authority to lay hands on the sick. And they shall be made well.

To see the crippled and lame walk again. The dumb speak. Articulate scripture. The deaf hear the gospel preached. The blind see the wonders of God. And even, raise the dead!

To have the spiritual power and authority to cast out demons. And evil spirits.

To **preach and publish the gospel** to the poor, the rich, and the mighty, alike—before kings and leaders of nations. To all these—with the deepest compassion Christ had for the leaderless masses, the sick people in their midst.

To be the light of the world.

To be the salt of the earth.

To love the brotherhood.

Not anyone seeking to be lord. Ruler. Master. Big Chief. But to minister to each other. And to serve one another. Thereby no modern Pharisees and Sadducees arising. No more halfway Samaritans. Neither even moles/spies nor "sleeper agents" of Satan in our midst.

To give, even of our lives, to the brethren. Not to get from them using scripture to justify. **To move to higher ground.** To the life of the Spirit. **To be truly spiritual. Having the mind of Christ.**

Not to oppress. Suppress. With airs to impress. Compress. Depress. The truth humbles and makes us all truly meek.

Instead, to edify. To help everyone to excel. To grow. To bloom and blossom. To develop. Inspire truly. Bend over backwards to help. Console. Comfort. Assist. Care. Reach out to them for whom Christ died.

Then we altogether can **do the will of God and finish the work God gave His church thru Christ to do.**

For was this not **the meat of Christ's life (John 4:34)?** The secret of His victory and glorious triumph?

Thereby emulating the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be doing it with *God's* Formula for Success.

That we, the last day remnants will **only live on to do the will of God and finish the work Christ has commissioned us to do.**

"Do true great deeds..."

The ancient prophet Daniel, beloved of God, prophesied: "...but the people that **do know** their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many" (Dan. 11:32-33, NKJV).

"Know" came from the Hebrew word *yada* (pronounced yaw-dah): get acquainted, discover, observe, recognize, comprehend, understand, perceive; instructed by, regarded by, blessed by, cared for by; intimate with, to obey, adore, revere, respect, praise, worship, thank, love with all our heart, soul and mind; attuned with his wavelength.

If we begin to really know and understand our God in the true sense of the word **know**, most certainly He would be pleased with us. Then He could use us in the last days to carry out great exploits.

Great exploits of what? On top and beyond what has been outlined previously?

- **Peacemakers** we must also be.
- Servants filled with **mercy**.
- In His service with **pure hearts**.
- Reaching out to others yet grieving and **mourning** that all these miseries all around are brought and caused to our fellowmen by themselves, by unrepented and continuing sins and disobedience against their Creator.
- Consistence in **humility** and **meekness** coupled with all the

blessedness of the life we live in His name and Way.

- To demonstrate **equanimity of spirit** in the face of **persecutions** and **reviling for Christ's sake**, and to manifest rejoicing and exceeding gladness in spite of it all.
- **Steadfastness in righteousness** in the midst of a carnal, Law-hating, and hostile world, with its preponderance for deceit and wickedness.
- Manifestation of the **inner spiritual fortitude** and unremitting courage that comes with putting on the **whole armor of God** in the **warfare** against that wicked spirit Satan the Devil and his legions of demons.
- Consistent **demonstration** and **practice** of the **pure religion**, undefiled, by **visiting** and **car-ing** for **widows, orphans, and the fatherless**.
- Manifest the fruits of truly growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ without discontinuity neither cutting off.
- With continuing understanding through constant learning from the **Lord Jesus Christ**, endeavor to teach others all that Christ has commanded us to do wherever we may be at any given time without fear and timidity, albeit with enthusiasm and joy.
- And finally, if there be any more virtue and if there be any more praise, to think, to live, to practice these things all to the glory of the **Great God of Heaven**.

Christ Roots For His Other Sheep In the Far East

In our beloved country, **The Philippines**, of 7,000 emerald isles of some 75 million people, bound by the Orient Sea and the Pacific Ocean, we are, and will be doing our part.

Here, we are learning, and will ever continue to learn from Christ. And we are quite open to know what you brethren, have learned, and will learn, from the Lord if you can, transmit, send, or post them to us.

The Work They Must Yet Do
As God wills and provides, we will

be reaching out to the tired, the laboring, the weary, the stressed, the confused, the heavy-laden, spiritual captives and spiritual prisoners, the not-so-many-nobles, the base, the poor, the simple of this dearly beloved land of our native birth.

We will proclaim before them, in this part of the world:

"Arise, Shine! For thy light is come" (Isa. 60:1).

Yes, we will bring the glorious, wondrous light of the **True Gospel of the Kingdom of God!** This time, alongside with the English language we will be using the national language and major dialects as well.

Remember to pray for our people—will you, dear brethren from the West and North and South? Yes, please do pray for us as we labor in God's vineyard in the East.

And yes, we are praying, and will ever pray for you.

To Recapitulate:

In sobering hindsight and now dawning realization, it may well be that our own walk, our pilgrimage, **our journey's first phase** which is **"toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21) **was over.**

It was signalled by the bizarre apostasy of recent years. When those that we used to walk with together went back (sliding?) to the wide way, the subways, side-roads, and circuitous alleys of that counterfeit religion from which most of us, if not all, originally came.

From Whence Cometh this Proverb?

Moreover, in retrospect, were we unwittingly, albeit willingly, made into a **"pay-and-pray people"**, as derisively called by some, then mindlessly parroted by others, too? These self-serving **"leaders"** and **"historians"** who originated this derogatory saying which have spread abroad to this day forgot something. They forgot the incalculable amount of unremitting faith and believing prayers that we, the lowly members, their humble brethren, offered with good cheer for the Church and Work of God, together with our freely-given tithes and offerings.

Hebrews 6:10 reveals:

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which

you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints..."

We are quite at peace and happy to wait on God in that regard.

What Was Missing?

Looking farther back, however, was the **2-3 hour time capsule of Sabbath service and fellowship, its format and content**, bereft of **worshipful spirit, reverent feeling, and real depth**? Pray tell, did we or were we able to honor, adore, praise, thank, worship, love God our Father, even Jesus Christ our Lord in those 2-3 hours of fellowship with the Godhead? In the manner we did?

Was it a major culprit? A somewhat frosty, flawed spiritual culture that may have produced half-baked, half-hearted, doubting-in-the-inside, almost-converted-but-not-quite, spiritual disciples? Was it, maybe? Was true love (*agape*) ever given? Was it ever lost?

Go, Go, Go?

Did the **continual gun-lap, rush mode, the final hours approach** prevent, hence slow down, the fruition of truly, deeply, profoundly converted lives? For us who are older, younger ones must concede and realize, we now know it **takes the process of time, unrushed**, to build, to form, and to establish **holy, righteous character**. Yes, it does, to take on the mind and character of God.

Is This Form of Government Heathen?

Finally, looking back to the root: **The hierarchical form of church government**, as structured and as we all saw and knew, provided vast opportunities for ego trips. Of built-in, ready-made irresistible temptations to abuse, to oppress and suppress. This for men who were not ready, neither were internally equipped with the mature mind. Nor with the character to handle authority and power from Christ for their brethren. Not just yet.

The fruits in the offshoots and splits who adapted the same are self-evident. Need we say more?

Dilemmas?

Our Real Authority to Resolve

What then?

Why—the **Bible holds the answer!**

Again, let us learn from our Lord.

In the here and now, we who were scattered must remain faithfully, to endure to the end, in the faith once delivered.

Now more than we ever did, we realize with full awareness, that we must truly, truly, **always** walk by Christ's faith and not by our dim wit and mortal sight.

Spiritual Walk With God

We have now carried on in the second phase: **the walk, the journey**, of the fellowship of the mystery, of the last day pilgrims, **into God**, (Eph. 3:15-21), even of His deep things (1 Cor. 2:10). Of being able to do all things thru Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

State of Being That Really Matters

Of becoming filled with the mind of God.

Of being quickened by God's Spirit with the living faith of Christ.

Of being now equipped with the true knowledge of God.

Of having grown in the innermost, until wondrously full, in the spiritual mold of the divine breadth, length, depth, and height of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of being filled marvelously in the fullness of God.

Of being able finally to testify that we used to hear of God, but now our eyes, even our mind's eye, see God!

Untangling the Spiritual "Gordian Knot"

Of being finally enlightened on the **key issue of the Law of God**. Now beyond its letter exposition. Definition. Numerical points and boundaries, as codified. Grown beyond strict A-Z keeping. Way beyond mere rote obedience.

Now beyond memorized, rehearsed, routinized, repeated compulsory works.

Now seeing behind and beyond its natural positive do's and negative-positive don'ts. Confidently past carnal reasoning and hostile escapist reactions.

Now into its absolutely fulfilling, totally enriching magnification, both physically and spiritually.

Now into its whole, all-encompass-

ing spiritual intent, over and above, and then some.

For indeed, the Law is perfect, holy, just and good. For it springs from the invisible, divine, Lord God Almighty. As He has written, engraved and encoded the Law, in all its divine link-set of God-breathed words which are spirit and are life—in our hearts in this phase of our spiritual journey.

Dispelling The Cobwebs Of Millennia

The Law we now know. Learn. Understand. Sense. Experience. Discern. Perceive: As, first and foremost, the perfect expression, demonstration, and manifestation of reverent, perfect love (*agape*), by imperfect man towards our Perfect God (such men, after the process of time, living God's way, take on the mind of God and shine in righteousness).

Thereafter, God, being pleased, turns us around and enables us to express, demonstrate, and manifest balanced, voluntary, unconditional, selfless perfect love (*agape*, beyond *philia* and *eros*) towards our imperfect, visible, mortal neighbors (fellowmen). Even so, we must have the same balanced perfect love for our imperfect, yet God-becoming selves. The Law indeed is Love At Work!

All this by the living faith of the Living Christ. And the quickening power and presence of the Holy Spirit in us. In our innermost being.

Now we can exclaim with the psalmist King David, the man after God's own heart, as he expressed it in Psalms 119:97, "O how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day!"

Wondrous things revealed out of God's Law when God opens our eyes! (verse 18)

The Master Key: The Godhead In Us

Of now truly perceiving and experiencing consistently in our whole being God's indwelling presence in us. Thus mightily fulfilling in us the **most powerful scripture of all**: "**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him,**" (John 14:23).

For is this not what finally being truly converted and spiritual is all

about? Thus, the Lord says to us, as He said to the apostle Peter, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." To the world: "Be the light and salt of it".

"Even now," we could declare with the apostle Paul, "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face..." (1Cor. 13:12).

If this be so, and indeed it is, then we can be truly afire and quickened with undying zeal and anticipation.

The End Leads To Forever

For this phase truly will soon be over. Then we will arrive, together at our foreordained destination. When we will literally, **in substance and spirit**, be **one in God** (John 17:21) to all forever!

Let us then go forth onward together to carry on our God-given roles, whether or both, in word or deed, in the continuing chapter of the Book Acts after that 1st Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17).

We believe, for as much as we have seen: there is no discontinuity to those who truly love God and live for Him and His glory.

Farewell and Hello!

May then **God our Father** in Heaven be with all of us **remnants** in those last of the last days, and keep us united together in the hollow of His gentle hand!

Let us reach out to communicate with one another as our manner of holding hands together across all time zones throughout the globe.

Your serving brother in Christ,



Jesus M. Cardona
Church of God, Philippines
Coordinator

**Transglobal Federation of the Open
Circles of Commitment of the 21st
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Comments by Norman Edwards on the Previous Letter

This is obviously a heartfelt, emotional plea for "Church of God" members everywhere to stop fighting with one another and to treat each other like brothers and sisters in Christ. The leaders in these groups today bear little resemblance to the first century apostles who mostly fought persecution from Romans, Jews and others who were against Christ. Today, the "Church of God" leaders are mostly persecuted by each other.

This letter clearly shows that Jesus Christ is still our leader and that we should be looking to Him to lead, rather than looking to so many human leaders. I cannot help but agree. It also says that there is so much that we can do now, even as small congregations, and I agree with that. We need to communicate with each other, to reach out to each other, and to accept each other no matter what kind of leadership another group may have.

The goal of this letter is good, but I must take some exception to "who we are" and "how we will get there". The beginning of the letter gave three points of things we have in common:


1. *We are the "church of God"*. I think it would be better to say "we were a part of the Church of God along with an unknown number of others". The December 1998 *Servants' News* showed many other groups that also keep the Sabbath and Holy Days. There are many other groups that call themselves "Church of God". Christ said people would know His disciples by their love for one another (John 13:35). The Bible gives other signs elsewhere. But no where does it say that God's people would be known by a corporate name of "Church of God". We must remember that "church" is a translation of the Greek *ekklesia*. The name "Assembly of God" is an equally valid translation—and there are many times more people in that group than all "Church of God" groups combined.

2. *We are the fruits of Herbert Armstrong's ministry--we should honor the aged*. We can be thankful for the many people who were taught truth by Herbert Armstrong. But we must realize that (especially in his later years) he took credit for many things that did not belong to him. Many other ministers and brethren in the WCG taught, counseled and prayed for others. People within the

WCG were forbidden to publicly write or teach if they were not approved by "headquarters". If they felt Christ was leading them to do it, they had to be ready to be cut off from all of their church brethren. Is it possible that this policy *stopped* more gospel preaching than "headquarters" *started*? We should honor age, but we must honor truth more. Many kings of Israel lived a long time, but we should not follow anyone who departs from God.

3. *We are the remnants of the WCG apostasy*. This is becoming less and less true. Our congregation has brethren who were put out of the WCG in the 70's—for discussing another Sabbatarian group. Others who attend with us **never** attended the WCG. The teens in our congregation have only vague memories of HWA as toddlers. The pre-teens were all born after he died. Members of the first century church were formerly Pharisees, priests, Zealots, common people, etc. They did not try to organize to preach the gospel on the basis of their former affiliation. HWA would have accomplished little if he would have first tried to rally the Church of God 7th Day from its splits and apostacies before preaching the Gospel. Nearly all movements that have brought people back to the Bible and Christ have been begun by somebody who started doing and preaching the right thing, and others followed.

Organizations, constitutions, group names, collection of funds, accounts, and those sorts of things all have their place. But they are to be subservient to feeding the flock and preaching the Gospel. Neither Christ nor the apostles left an "organization" plan. But they taught a lot about prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit and doing good to others.

The solution for the scattered "Church of God" groups is not finding the "right leader", "right organization" or right "federation of organizations", but for each member and group to ask God, "what should I do?", and then begin doing it. It may be teaching in a group, teaching one-on-one, writing, helping others in need or something else. **When** we have been successful in a small thing, **then** the Eternal may give us something bigger to do—where we may need more organization. As this letter pleads, let us encourage one another, and let us *simply* follow our leader Jesus Christ! 

Letters & Responses

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

Read Ambassador Report?

LETTER: February 20, 1999
Dear Sir,

Some of us long time WCG former members who live a long way from Pasadena have never seen Ambassador Reports.

Do you recommend it? Is it worthwhile to get all the old back copies?

—Canada

RESPONSE: I never read Ambassador Report while in the WCG because of the negative things so many Church of God ministers said about it. Some of its stories were the testimony of one person, so it was hard to confirm or deny them. But to this day I do not know of a case where anybody has shown that Ambassador Report printed a story that was provably untrue. I do know of cases where the Worldwide News did this.

A good percentage of Ambassador report is unquestionably true—the WCG would just rather not admit it. Ambassador Report publisher, John Trechak passed away on September 2, 1999, but others are trying to continue copying his back-issues. You can still write them at Ambassador Report; P.O. Box 60068; Pasadena, CA 91116. An index to all Ambassador Report issues is available at:

<http://cybergate.com/~birone/arindex.html>

—NSE

Worship Without a Minister

LETTER: April 21, 1999
Dear Norman Edwards,

I've been in the Church of God for many years, but I haven't attended for years. Your articles and the *Servants' News* have brought up many questions I was hesitant to ask many times. I would like a personal reply if you wouldn't mind.

If ordination isn't in the Scriptures, how does one know who is to teach or preach

or give spiritual help to the believers? Can anyone take it upon themselves to do these things? Things such as baptize, lay on of hands, anoint with oil if they are not a minister, elder, servant. Wouldn't this be confusion?

What about anointing with oil, or anointed cloths? This should be done by the elders of the church. But isn't this in a way something like the Catholics would do with their holy water?

There is no way (explanation) in the Bible that a church service should be. Are any of the Church of God services doing anything right in their services? What is the right way to hold an assembly?

This question is from one of your articles "Vacation with sermons". Then why go such long distances when you could keep the Feast at home with Bible study and prayer. Why is it necessary to take your person from one place to another long distance if you are not financially and physically unable to do this? Is this wrong? Does it make a person better in God's eyes and holier than those who don't?

I quit going to WCG in 1978 because I had a terrible time with fasting and keeping the Day of Atonement. (It seemed Mr. Armstrong was calling for a fast for one reason or another). I just couldn't do this thing, it upset me terribly. I left the church thinking I would lose my salvation. Because of this belief, I never wanted to go back. I find this day a most depressing, down, "Holy Day". How can I feel any different?

If you have any articles that could clear up any questions, I would appreciate it.

—Anonymous

RESPONSE: Your questions are very good. Many people have similar questions.

It seems like there is confusion if we don't know who are God's ministers and who are not. But look at the example of the Old Testament kings. They were all kings over Israel, God's nation. The Bible evaluates their deeds, but these kings did not walk around with banners saying "Good King" or "Bad King". The people, if they were reading the law and praying to God, had to determine for themselves if the kings were following the Eternal or not.

It is very much the same for the prophets. The Bible records the words of the good prophets, but also records many false prophets. Again, the people had to decide.

Today, if we look at all the many church organizations, nearly all have an ordained ministry. But are all these ministers representing God? Are the ministers of just some organizations representing God? But look at

the one organization, the Worldwide Church of God. Nearly all of its ministers were trained and ordained by a similar process. Yet, they have followed nearly every conceivable line of doctrine and practice when that organization broke up. Some stayed, some became Protestant ministers, some joined other COG's, some became independent and some gave up religion entirely. Some of these ministers, in nearly all the categories, are known for their love and kindness toward the brethren. Others are known for abusiveness.

The point should be simple: Ordination by some group is no proof that a person is a minister of God. The situation is in confusion. But many people think it is not confused because there are men with an "ordination certificate", and the people think that God is bound to "back them up".

Consider another perspective. No one needs permission to feed a hungry person or give money to someone who is poor. They may not know if they are helping a person who is really in need or a con-artist or a run-away criminal. It is bad to help the latter two, and hopefully the person will ask for and receive some discernment from the Eternal so they will not continue to help people live in their sins.

Similarly, there may be people who are teaching, anointing, counseling, etc in the name of the Eternal who are doing the wrong thing. Even in the New Testament, Apollos preached for a while not knowing to baptize in the name of Jesus (Acts 18:24-28). Each believer needs to look to Christ to guide them—to help them know which other believers will help them and which will hurt them. It is far better for people to do this in the "independent" or non-aligned congregations, than it is for people to blindly trust a minister "assigned to them".

Is anointing oil like holy water? To some people it might be, but that is a mistake. The Catholics actually believe that there is a certain holiness to certain water or other objects. The New Testament does not say anything about "holy oil" or "water". Laying on of hands and anointing with oil are outward symbols of action requested of the Eternal. The Eternal knows what we need and think before we pray it, but He wants us to pray so we know what we ask and know how He answers. Similarly, we lay hands and anoint with oil so we can remember that we asked the Eternal. Hopefully, we will learn from when and how we answer. It is not the actions that "do" the healing. We should not worry about "stopping people" from anointing for silly reasons any more than we should worry about "stopping people" from pray-

ing for silly things. The Eternal knows which requests to answer.

Those people who attend more Feasts or fast more often are not somehow automatically "more holy" than those who do not. The Pharisees fasted twice per week. The Eternal looks on the heart and knows what struggles each of us have. From other communication with you, you seem to have great trouble fasting—far more than almost anyone else.

It is important for all of us to overcome our fears. We can rejoice that we will be judged by Christ, who is perfectly righteous and who has the experience of being flesh and blood.

—NSE

Organizational Chart of Govt

LETTER: September 6, 1999
Dear Friends,

Believe it or not, I neglected to read the final page of the Jan/Feb 1999 Servants' News until just recently (that is, the colored page).

I was astounded at the list of new items that you offered which deal with the history of the WCG in one way or another. [Literature requests deleted.]

I have seen the May 2, 1974 letter before, but it was 30 pages long, as I recall. I am interested in both re-reading it, as well as your (retrospective) comments.

Another interesting article that I remember reading (in either the *Worldwide News*, or the *Good News*) contained an "organizational chart" of Elohim's Government (back in 1978 or 1979, I believe). I can only describe it as showing all authority descending from Elohim, the Father, through Elohim, the Son; then solely to HWA! From him, it was then disseminated to any, and all others. (At his discretion, naturally).

If you can locate that chart, I'm certain that many of your readers would truly enjoy (?) it. I know that I wouldn't mind having a copy of it again!

Who can now doubt that we (as members of the pre-1990 WCG) were indeed loyal adherents of a diabolical cult? With all kidding aside, I can paraphrase a statement from Carl McNair a few years ago; oh, and he was only quoting HWA:

"Carl, if someone gives you a piece of pie, and it's 95% good, but contains 5% poison, is it still okay to eat? Of course not! The whole thing has become poison".

That is my view of my 20-odd years with the WCG and its off-shoot—the GCG. Maybe only 5% of their teaching was poison, but one was just as surely poisoned as if they had taken an unadulterated dose!

Sept/Oct 1999

"Come out of her, My people!"

Keep up the good work, everybody! I enjoy your publication very much.

—Richard Heath, New York

RESPONSE: Thank you for your comments. We printed the organization chart with HWA directly under Christ on page 34 of the November 1998 *Servants' News*. We are sending you another copy. The chart makes absolutely clear that Herbert Armstrong thought he was in charge under Christ of both the spiritual Church and the physical corporations of his work. The role of Christ in that chart is essentially one of communicating from the Father to Herbert Armstrong. This is especially hard to accept when Herbert Armstrong virtually never claimed to hear directly from Christ—not even in a dream or a vision.

—NSE

Like Truckers Study, Literature

LETTER: September 29, 1999
Hello in the Name of the Lord!!!

I just want to take a minute to write and ask you if the July/August 1999 issue that I just received yesterday is the very latest issue? For some reason I feel like I am behind in my issues.

Also, I want to let you know how much I am still enjoying your publication. There are still some things that I don't understand concerning the churches that you talk about, but I can see that you are truly striving for the faith. I guess I would have to say my favorite part is "Trucker's Bible Study". It's the first section that I read first. Mr. Cacchio is a very brave servant of the Lord. I look forward to future issues.

I don't know if I have asked you about this before or not, but I was wondering if you have any kind of Bible Studies, other publications, books, pamphlets, etc. that you send out free of charge. I think as you remember, I do not attend a church at this time and I don't have the necessary financial funds to buy study materials. Please let me know. May God Bless You!!

In Christ's Name,

—Melissa Barker, Tennessee

RESPONSE: We are sorry to take so long with the September/October issue. Please see the article on page 1 of that issue for reasons why. We are glad that you like the Truckers Study. We have received so many favorable comments, that we will try to publish as many of them as we can.

We do have a complete literature list that we will send you. We also have a scattered brethren contact list that gives all of the cities where Servants' News Subscribers live. With this information, you can send us

letters which we will forward to the brethren who live in cities that you choose.

—NSE

Truckers Study—How to Dress?

LETTER: September 29, 1999
Hi Lenny,

I read your "Trucker's Bible Study" and wanted to comment on your conclusions.

Are you aware that the Two Witnesses are prophesied to be in "sackcloth"? (Rev.11)-and I don't think Christ ever wore a tie. His coat may have been a little worn—and His sandals probably would not have gotten Him anywhere—even in the casual dress churches. He may have even been a little dusty at times—even sweaty-don't you think?

We need to not put emphasis on physical appearance—because we limit God by saying someone in what we consider -inappropriate dress cannot have access to Christ. Consider what the appearance of those around Him in the crowds of poor that followed Him. Do we not know that God is too great to limit Him in such petty ways?

In love,

—Myra McQueen, Texas

RESPONSE: I once asked a "leading Church of God evangelist" what he thought would happen if Christ physically returned to this earth, and came to a Church of God service. We both agreed, that if the person came dressed as Christ did in the first century, that He would probably not be let into the service. But the evangelist assured me He would dress like we do today and that he would be immediately recognized and accepted by the ministry. I went on to ask him if he would even get past the deacon at the door? Would not they stop someone from teaching people or claiming to heal them in the parking lot? Would they listen to someone for one minute who claimed to be Christ? Or would they simply "kick him out?" The "evangelist" did not answer me.

I personally know a woman who had attended the Pasadena Auditorium service for years. Her unbaptized husband, after years of encouragement, finally decided to attend with her one day. Her husband did not own a suit, so he showed up in the best clothes that he had. The doorman would not let him in, but directed him to a building about a quarter mile away where he could see a video feed of the service. The man did not come back to a service again for as long as I know him. James 2 clearly explains that we must not let clothing influence who can come into a service.

—NSE

Learned, But Never Joined

LETTER: December 2, 1999

My religious background was based on a lot of the teachings of HWA, however, we were never "members" of the WCG. Our pastpr used much of HWA's literature as study tools for our group, but we were always an independent group of Sabbath keepers here in south Georgia. Thanks for asking.

—Judy Croft, Georgia

RESPONSE: Thank you for responding to our "query" about your religious background. It helps many long time Church of God members to realize that there were many who benefitted from Herbert Armstrong's teachings without ever joining the group.

—NSE

Greek or Roman Time in John?

LETTER: November 19, 1999
Hello Servants' News:

Are you guys still publishing, or did my subscription expire? I haven't received a copy of Servants' News since the May-June issue. Please send me the back issues as soon as possible, and if my subscription did expire, or if I owe you monies, then please let me know so that I can send it to you. I would also like for Norman Edwards to answer the letter and article I sent him around the 1st of Sept., that proved that it was impossible for the Apostle John to have used Roman Times in his writings. Norman keeps avoiding this issue, so would you please bring it to his attention again? I asked Norman to prove me wrong on my writings, but so far I haven't heard a word from him. Did he take a long vacation or something? Also, please notice that I have a new e-mail address. I allowed a friend of mine to mess with my computer, and he lost my e-mail address along with some good information.

My new E-mail address is;
wolffhunter4u2@yahoo.com

Sincerely W/ Love,

—Glen W. Myers

RESPONSE: I'm sorry that you missed your July/August issue, we will send you another one. I have not been on a long vacation, but have moved and had to take care of many other things as the next Servants' News issue will explain. I looked at your article and disagreed with your assessment. Some of the points you bring up make it possible to understand John's writings as **Hebrew time**, but I do not believe that they "prove" it as you say. (The issue is John 19:14—the 6th hour in

Hebrew is noon, and this scripture would indicate that Jesus must have been condemned nearly a whole day before he was actually put on the cross, but if it is Roman time, then it is 6 AM and fits acceptable with other scriptures.)

I do not print your writings because your approach tends to stir up strife among people rather than calmly help them search for the truth. Your writings make the chronology of the last week of Christ's life a "salvation" issue. I have been studying Eternal judgment in the scriptures during the last few months, and I am convinced that almost no-one, upon being raised from the dead, will be given a reward/punishment based on how well they do on a test about Christ's last-week chronology. (Since we will be judged with the judgment that we judge others, the only person who might be given such a test is one who teaches that "this chronology must be properly understood to be saved". That person may well be given a test on the subject, and if they get **anything** wrong....) The Bible makes it clear that we will be judged by how we treat others and how we judge others, and what we do with what we know—not by how much knowledge we have.

Nevertheless, I and others have done some additional study and found other reasons to believe that John probably used Roman time. **John tends to use other Roman weights and measures more often other Bible writers.** Notice:

A woman came to Him having an **alabaster flask** of very costly fragrant oil, (Matt 26:7).

...a woman came having an **alabaster flask** of very costly oil of spikenard... (Mark 14:3).

Then Mary took a **pound** of very costly oil of spikenard, (John 12:3).

The word used for "alabaster flask" in Matthew and Mark is *alabastron*, a Greek word approximately equivalent to the Hebrew *tsallachath* (Rahlf's Septuagint—an ancient Greek "Old Testament" translates *tsallachath* to *alabastron* in 2Kngs 21:13). However, John does not use a Hebrew or Greek word, but uses the word "litra" (Strong's #3046) which is clearly a Roman measure. Our modern Latin word "liter" is comes from *litra*. If John were writing for people most familiar with the Roman system, it make sense that he choose this word—otherwise he would have written the same as the other Gospels.

Also notice that John uses the Roman *litra* again in the following verse to **estimate** the amount of spices brought by Nicodemus, a Jew. Since this was clearly a Jewish burial, the quantities of spices used

would have been according to Jewish measure, but John uses a Roman measure to tell the story to his readers.

And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury (John 19:39-40).

Also, consider Jesus turning the water into wine. John does not use a transliterated Hebrew word to measure the wine (there are several in the old testament), but the Greek *metretes* (Strong's #3355) which is from the same basic root as the modern Latin words "metrics" and "meter".

Other Greek measures of weight (neither Roman nor Jewish) are also found in the Bible. The Greek *talantaios* (Strong's #5006—"the weight of a talent") is used in Revelation 16:21.

Other books of the Bible do use Hebrew measurements. The Greek *batos* and *koros* (Strong's #943 and #2884, taken directly from the Hebrew) are used for measuring in Luke 16:6-7. The Greek *pechus* (Strong's #4083—meaning "cubit") used in Matthew 6:27 and Luke 12:25 is a direct translation of the Hebrew *ammah* (Strong's #0520) used many times in the Old Testament, and translated *pechus* in the Septuagint.

But even with the above evidence, it is not possible to say that certain writers always use a particular system of measure. Writers use varying systems depending what they are talking about. When Matthew 5:41 mentions soldiers forcing Jews to go with them, it uses the Roman word *milion* (Strong's #3400, from which we get our word "mile"). The Greek word *stadion* (Strong's #4712) derives its meaning from the length of a foot-racing track with seats around it (from which we get our word "stadium"). Luke and John used this measure three times to estimate distances between Jewish places—they easily could have used a Hebrew term, but they did not (Luke 24:13; John 6:19; 11:18) Yet, the writer of Acts used the completely Jewish expression, "a Sabbath day's journey" (Acts 1:12) to give the distances between two towns.

People often loudly proclaim that, "God is not the author of confusion and His Scriptures must use a consistent system of measuring." That is denying the reality of the scripture we have. The truth is that the Eternal did not design multiple confusing measuring systems, but people did—and the Eternal works through imperfect people, their languages and their measuring systems.

While it is good to study the entire Bible and seek to understand every word as the Eternal meant it, Roman versus Hebrew time is not one of the "weightier matters of the law".

Nevertheless, I do not wish to withhold information from anyone. They may obtain it from you directly: Glen Myers; 1047 Iroquois St; Clearwater, FL 33755-1831.

—NSE

More Hebrew vs Roman Time

LETTER:

November 21, 1999

Hello Norman:

Thanks for responding to my 'Hebrew time vs. Roman time' article, and the e-mail I sent you. I am saddened to hear that you disagreed with my article, and that you are not going to publish it, but I am more saddened by your answers you gave in response to it. The article dealt with whether or not the apostle John used Hebrew or Roman Times in his writings, and Was Not About John's Use Of 'Weights and Measures'!

You used up over 2 pages of e-mail trying to explain something that had nothing at all to do with my article. 'Weights and Measures' are an entirely different subject than what I wrote to you about. They have nothing at all to do with the 'times of day' that were used every-day by the apostles of Christ, so please quit tap-dancing and going to other issues, and just answer the questions directly that I proposed to everyone in the article. (as they are written)

Maybe you think that John 19:14 is at 6 o'clock in the a.m., but I don't. As I explained in the article, it would have been totally impossible for Christ to have been thru 3 previous trials 'before' 6 a.m. ! Maybe you think that Governors and Kings stay up all night to conduct trials, but I don't! The 3 scriptures I gave everyone, (Luke 22:66, Matt.27:1-2, Mark 15:1) all show (and prove) that it was 'day-time' or 'morning-time' before Christ was even brought before the 'whole Sanhedrin' for his death sentence by them. This 'morning-time' meeting of the Sanhedrin was only his '1st trial'!— John 19:14 is his '4th trial' or 'final trial' by Pilate, and it is at 12 noon or at the '6th hour'! It is impossible for 4 Trials to commence at the very same time Norman! (Anyone who thinks that, needs to get a brain scan)

I'm not going to argue with you about whether or not the understanding of time-frames will affect a person's salvation or not, (because only the God's can determine that) but what I will argue with you over is your statement about this subject not being

one of the 'weightier matters of the Law'. The 'Hebrew Time vs. Roman Time' article has everything to do with the 'weightier matters of the Law', because when a person really studies into those time-frames, he will come to realize that the Last Supper was no Passover Meal, and that Christ never passed around a Matzo or an Un-Leavened Bread for his body, and that Christ was not taken captive on a Tuesday night, and then crucified the following

morning at 9 a.m., but was captured days earlier and kept over-night by both Jews and Romans, and he will also realize that Christ went thru at least 4 different trials being he was sentenced to be crucified etc., etc.— (I could go on and on) If a person is eating the wrong kind of bread for the body of Christ, is that not a weighty matter Norman? If a person is taught that the Last Supper was a Passover Meal, and the Scriptures prove that it wasn't, is that not a weighty matter Norman? If a person goes against the commandments by eating the un-leavened bread for 8 days, rather than the commanded 7 days, is that not a weightier matter Norman? These are only a few of the many 'weightier matters' of the New Testament that you are keeping from people by not publishing the article. Your refusal to publish this valuable information, will not win you any brownie points with Christ Norman! A true journalist publishes all sides of an issue, and lets their readership decide whether something is true or false, without putting their own spins or opinions with it. You need to learn from them! If you are afraid to publish the articles that create strife, and only want to publish the feel good, then I suggest that you get out of the publishing business, and open up a nursery! Crying Aloud Is Part Of Being A Christian! If You Refuse Us Who Cry Aloud, Then Christ Will Refuse You Later On! We Work For Him Also Don't Forget!! I Hope You Change Your Mind !

Sincerely W/ Love,

Glen W. Myers; 1047 Iroquois St;
Clearwater, Fla. 33755 e-mail:
wolfhunter4U2@yahoo.com

RESPONSE: Well, Glenn. That is where we disagree.

My Bible says the weightier matters of the law are "justice and mercy and faith" (Matt 23:23). You say that they are time frames, whether or not the Last Supper was a Passover meal, the type of bread one uses to represent Christ, and how many days one eats it. I think these things are important, but they are not the weightier matters of the law. If an angel loudly declared these things from Heaven, all of the believers in Christ could learn and begin doing them

immediately. If an angel told all believers in Christ to begin living their entire lives by "justice and mercy and faith", it would take years to learn how to do it.

Time is a measure, just like the Roman, Greek, and Hebrew length and weight measures I showed you. But will you add a line to your paper indicating that "it is possible that John could be using Roman time because he uses other Roman measures"?

Do kings stay up in the middle of the night for trials? When there are claims that another "the King of the Jews" has come with miracle-working power, you better believe they stay up and pay attention. Even today, judges get up in the middle of the night to grant warrants and issue orders for high-profile cases. Janet Reno was up in the middle of the night with the Waco stand-off issue. Jesus was considered for one of the three prisoners that the Romans annually released to the Jews at Passover—the politically most delicate time of the year because so many Jews were in Jerusalem. **Jesus was the one to be paid attention to.** I wrote these things in Servants' News over a year ago.

You can read aloud all that was said at the trials of Christ in about 10 minutes. Some of this reading is summary—it does not tell us what each of the false witnesses said. These things may have taken another 10 or 20 minutes. All of the places mentioned in these trials are a 10-minute fast walk from each other. But with the highest of profile cases, why would the soldiers fiddle around? They could run—and make the prisoner run. They could tie a prisoner onto a horse and then lead his horse to the king—cutting the travel time down to a few minutes. These are things that Roman guards were expected to be able to do—and do quickly. Travel time could be a few minutes.

You insist that Christ was beaten by soldiers for many hours. A Roman scourging, takes a few minutes and was known as a "half-way death" because so many never fully recovered from it. If they would have beaten someone for hours in this manner, any normal person certainly would have been dead. While Christ may have had a miraculously strong body, the Romans didn't know or believe that he was anything special. Would the soldiers have taken it upon themselves to kill a high-profile prisoner whom the governor had not condemned to death? Remember, Pilate wanted to **release** Jesus. This is not the way armies work. Soldiers kill prisoners only in self defense or if they are trying to get away.

But since you continually insist on an unreasonable view of history in order to

make the Bible say what you want, I see no need to publish your papers.

Finally, you said: "If You Refuse Us Who Cry Aloud, Then Christ Will Refuse You Later On!" Do you have a scripture for this? If the Eternal wants your papers to be read and your voice to be heard, then I pray that his sheep will see your address in this paper and write to you. But just in case the Eternal wants my writing on the subject to be read, are you including the *Servants' News* address and issue numbers with future versions of your paper?

After spending nearly five years studying many doctrines, and realizing that I will not be able to thoroughly study all of the papers that have been sent to me before I die, I have seen the need to study "eternal judgement"—what does Christ expect from us while we are here and how will we be judged. While we should not knowingly disobey Him, I found very little about doctrinal perfection. Please read the next issue.

—NSE

Elijah to Proclaim the Name?

LETTER:
Norm,

May 20, 1999

Thank you for the literature. We really appreciate your effort in studying both the issues of ecclesiastical government and financial support.

Where are you in studying how we can best praise and proclaim "the name" of our Father? I'm convinced that the Catholics and the Protestants fall short and that many in the "sacred names movement" have gone too far. I am concerned that our Anglicized versions of the Greek transcriptions from the fifth century and later may not provide an accurate portrayal of how the apostles related to the heavenly Father, any more than they are authoritative on the issue of ordination. We know that by that time the Jews refused to pronounce His Name, claiming it was too sacred and the Greek philosophers preferred the general term *theos* to the name of the god of any nation.

Is part of the end-time Elijah work the proclaiming to both physical and spiritual Israel that their "El is Yah", as the name implies? Is it true to say that our Elohim is Yahweh? Is it the same as saying "our God is the Eternal"? One thing that concerns me is that we try to transliterate the other proper names in scripture except the most important, which we insist on translating. Why is that?

I really respect your objectivity and attention to detail and would appreciate your insight on this matter.

Thanks

—Dave, Indiana

RESPONSE: When I read all of the Scriptures saying that YHWH is His Name, I thought it was very important to pronounce it the right way. Then I read so many different papers on how to pronounce it, many appearing credible, I realized that it would take me months to sift through the evidence and come to a conclusion. Since the Greek New Testament that has been preserved does not attempt to reproduce this name at all, but does have transliterations of other Hebrew words (Abba-Father, etc.), it is hard for me to believe that maintaining the exact pronunciation was of major importance to the Eternal.

Was their a conspiracy to destroy all manuscripts that used the Hebrew version of the name? If so, who did it? There was no centralized "Catholic church" in the second and third century. If someone had that much control over what people wrote in manuscripts, then why were they not able to suppress the many minor variations that exist in the various manuscripts? Why were they unable to add "Catholic Doctrines"?

Furthermore, if proclaiming the exact pronunciation of the Eternal's name were a very important thing, why does the issue never come up in any of the letters instructing the Gentiles? If the Jews did not speak the name, they would have to learn it from the Christians. When Paul spoke to the Greek philosophers at the Areopagus, he described to them who their "Unknown God" really was (Acts 17:22-32). He did not give them a name. He described Him as the Creator and told about many other things that He does. When we use the term "God" to the mainstream Christian world, they think of the creator God of the Bible.

Nevertheless, I am very comfortable with various pronunciations of the of the Hebrew names for the Eternal and I use some of them when I pray or when I talk to others who use them.

My guess is that the KJV translators liked the symmetry of using "Lord" for YHVH in the Old Testament and for Kurios in the New Testament, and then "God" for Elohim in the OT and Theos in the NT. This probably fit their concept of the Trinity. I think we would be a lot better off if separate words were used to translate YHVH in the OT and Kurios in the NT.

When I write to an audience that might include "Sacred Name" people, I use "the Eternal" for YHWH and Christ (which means "anointed") for Jesus. Yes, I am avoiding their names, but I am speaking a language that nearly everyone understands, but is offensive only to a very few.

—NSE

Would Like Electronic Literature

LETTER:

June 9, 1999

Dear Norman,

PS. Greetings to the SN staff and to your family.

With great attention I read every SN issue.

The last issue Jan/Febr. 99 was very interesting. Especially the article from Will Blair (Why I will no longer affiliate...) I found very good. Also the HWA series was illuminating. In the last years I have learned more as an ex worldwider as in three years when I was a member in the WCG (79-82) in Bonn/Cologne Germany.

Sorry that I have no answer given in the last month but my job is very hard and often is no time for a short e-mail note.

The SN I think is a quite objective source for good information like also background information for people who are searching for the Truth.

Norman, I'm also interest for the **new items** you offer. Can you send me all articles as ZIP files? It's cheaper and faster, I think.

Sincerely,

—Alexander Gonska
Cologne, Germany

e-mail: 101465.56@CompuServe.com

RESPONSE: Thanks for the e-mail. It is **not** really easy at this point to send out all of the literature electronically. Some of it is in Quark express which is not possible to view unless you have a copy of the over-600-dollar program. Also, there are some literature items that we do not have electronic copies of—we fed them directly to our printer. I will send items electronically if someone has a special need—like they want to put an article in their own publication or they need a copy for a meeting "tonight". But when I do this, I find that I frequently have trouble—some people's e-mail does not work well with a binary file, some cannot read the latest version of MS-Word, etc., etc.

It is easiest for people to simply ask for the literature from the nearest office. Belgium would be the easiest for you, I am sure that the mail is only a few days there. In the US, we have an automated system for literature mailing which is very efficient.

Ultimately, I would like to have all of our articles available in various formats on a web-site, but I do not have time for that right now.

Thank you for your interest. If you have a special need for e-mail, please let me know. Otherwise, please write or e-mail the Belgium address. E-mail: m.hodiamont@euronet.be.

—NSE

"Feast 1999" from page 1
the Feast was like "one big family". (We did the same thing two years ago in Burr Oak State Park, Ohio, and found it equally successful.) We encourage other smaller sites to do this in the future.

The background of the people attending Butler State Park was quite varied. Some had been in home fellowships for fifteen years, others were attending corporate churches. Some had just recently left the Worldwide Church of God. Some used Hebrew Names for God and Christ; others did not. When we prayed, some looked up toward heaven (John 17:1) or held up their hands (1Tim 2:8); others did not (Luke 18:13). But the wonderful thing was that there was no condemnation of these different understandings and practices between the brethren attending. Brethren seemed to grasp that we will be according to the parts of the Bible and the teaching of the Holy Spirit that **each of us understands**—not by what a human leader declares or the people around us do (Luke 12:47-48).

The Feast included a number of interesting messages, studies and discussions. Children's classes were held, in which children were asked to draw a picture of a miracle that God performed in their lives. Later, the children's drawings were displayed on an overhead projector and discussed by the congregation. Adults also discussed miracles that the Eternal had worked in their own lives. Experiences were related about miraculous weather changes, deliverance from death, protection in auto accidents, etc.

Do such discussions take valuable time away from teaching the Bible? Paul said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1Cor 4:20, NIV). It is very encouraging to see that the power of the Eternal is still here and working. Miracles are not only things we read about that happened 2000 years ago. Many of the brethren also commented that it is important for children to be involved in services in some way. Traditionally, Church of God children have had little involvement, and frequently stopped attending when they left home.

The brethren attending were extremely cooperative—there was no difficulty finding people to volunteer to do the work necessary for the scheduled activities. Several activities were spontaneously added. The Feast music was inspiring, consisting of solos, ensembles

and a Feast choir. Most of the brethren met together for five meals during the Feast, two "sports days", an evening variety show and a concert. Young and old brethren spent hours answering questions in a "Bible Bowl". —NSE

Ludington, Michigan

Over 60 people enjoyed the Feast at Ludington. This Feast site was not aligned with any corporate organization. We welcomed all that wanted to attend God's Feast. Not all were able to stay the entire time. The average daily attendance at the services was 35. Scripture readings or short presentations were given by several individuals. These were followed by opportunities for comments, questions and discussions. All had the chance to share what they had learned from their study of God's Word. Of course there was also opportunity to praise and worship God through group singing and special music. With only one service per day, the afternoon and evenings were available for family and group activities. The activities included various sports and recreation. Several times small groups met to view videos about Mt. Sinai and scientific proof of the Creation. One evening we met for a hotdog roast and singing. Another evening we were treated to a dinner at a restaurant with a view of the Ludington Marina. Thanks to God, all went well and we were greatly blessed.

—Darrell West; PO Box 26; Webberville, MI 48892; 517-521-3630

Glenwood Springs, Colorado

The 1999 Feast of Tabernacles was held in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, hosted by a Church of God from Grand Junction, Colorado. It was held from September 25 thru Saturday October 2. Harold Cormany from a Church of God in Arizona was guest speaker. Services were held every day and attendance varied from 70+ on the Holy Days to 50+ during the week. During the feast there was a picnic and after services on the Last Great Day a luncheon was served to all who attended. Glenwood Springs offered a variety of activities, from swimming in the pools fed by the hot springs or visiting the vapor steam caves, to climbing up a rocky trail to Hanging Lake or trekking up to the now

closed marble quarry in Marble, Colorado. Aspen, Colorado as well as the ghost town of Ashcroft are within driving distance to Glenwood. But the best part was the spiritual fellowship we all experienced because of the smaller numbers in attendance. Making new friends from New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Illinois, Ohio and discussing God's Great Plan was a highlight for this writer. Did you get lost in the shuffle at one of the larger feast sites? Then try a smaller size feast site next year.

—Ed Schneider, Akron, Ohio
ets@hotmail.com

Omega Praise Fellowship

Gift upon gift. This is what our Loving Father gave to those who came to the foothills of the Cascades in Southern Oregon to "celebrate the Feast to the Lord". He gathered over 50 brethren (63 for the Erev Shabbat Banquet) from Michigan to Missouri, from Seattle to Salem, and various points in between. He gave us wonderful weather. He gave us a wonderful camp in which to meet—Fir Point Bible Conference Camp. He gave us a patient, kind staff and cooks that created "oooh" and "ahhh" meals—they went the "extra mile" for us and we bless them for that!

He gave us His messages—about kingship and holiness, about freedom in Christ and being His slave—bought and paid for with the blood of the Lamb. He gave us inspiring music—we sang and sang and danced and danced! Old and young, men, women, and children—all were touched by the wonders of His Word as revealed through music. He gave us opportunities to visualize, by way of "show and tell" how He pours out His spirit upon those whom He is calling. He gave us family-like fun—wholesome activities such as volleyball, picnics, sight-seeing, boating/fishing opportunities and a rousing auction that everyone enjoyed.

And just when we thought our Loving Father had ended His giving to us, He gave us 6 baptisms! Four brethren began their walk before the Lord and two "re-dedicated" themselves to the King of the Universe. What an **awesome** way to wind up the Feast of Tabernacles!

I don't know about how your Feast was, but ours? Comments from those

attending were so glowing that it is obvious Who was directing things at Fir Point—Baruch HaShem Adonai!

Feast tapes available from: Omega Praise Fellowship of Southern Oregon, 1720-A Redwood Ave, PMB 48, Grants Pass, OR 95727-6075.

—Omega Praise News

Congregation of Yahweh

Close to 150 folks from the Congregations of Yahweh celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles at beautiful Navarre Beach, FL last month. This was, for many of us, the first Feast celebrated at the later time after having rejected the Jew's calendar. People came from CA, IA, KY, FL, TX, NC, MO, OH, LA, AL, GA, CO, Puerto Rico and a whole group from St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands. The spirit of love, openness, warmth and enthusiasm was felt by all. We had excellent seminars, sermons, special music and classes for the children and teenagers. There were several baptisms during the week. Fellowshiping was high on the checklist of everyone. Upon request, a special seminar was held for "women only." We discussed ways in which we can stay in touch with each other as well as outreaching and service in our respective communities and church areas.

We also studied the question of head-coverings for women. An unforgettable fun show was held on Thursday evening. Some were practically "rolling on the floor" with laughter. The weather co-operated beautifully the entire week—blue skies and gentle breezes—which allowed many to golf, swim, bike ride, and fly with Bob Widmer in a private plane. We had a catered meal the Last Great Day in the convention center. It was hard to say good-bye after the final service—tears were freely flowing. Yahweh did indeed let his face shine upon us and bring us peace. The Feast was most joyous.

—Renetta Wilson

Ocean Shores, Washington

Wow!! What an incredible Sukkot [Feast of Tabernacles] we experienced in Ocean Shores, Washington this year! We learned; we were inspired; but most of all, we rejoiced before Adonai [the Lord]. We had about 225 [207 registered] in attendance and 25% of those had never observed the Feast before. Most of

the attendees were from independent congregations. I am not aware of any attendees from the larger church organizations this year, with the exception of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Tapes are available from the Ocean Shores Festival. If you write or email me, I will send you the tape list and ordering details.

Our speakers/teachers (in alphabetical order) were: Steven Berkowitz, Robert Bodkin, Suzanne Bond-Girard, Dale Carmean, Eddie Chumney, Doug Dolly, Randy Felton, Dr John Garr, Ken Mullican, Lenore Mullican, Rick Richardson, Robert Somerville, Dean Wheelock, Dr Brad Young

Next year in Jerusalem!!!

—Gregory Richardson,

Christian Renewal Ministries International; P.O. Box 111; Auburn, WA 98071-0111; 800-333-5208; e-mail: Gregory@Shalom-CRMI.org

Seventh Day Adventists Attend

[This report is the experience of Seventh Day Adventists at the Ocean Shores site--complete with quotes from Ellen G. White, founder of the SDA church. It contains a coding system for referring to her books—I do not understand it, but I am sure that other SDA's do. The reaction of the Church of God member might be: "why do they need all of this Ellen White stuff to keep the Feast?" It is a good question and there are two very important lessons to learn. 1) They need Ellen White's approval of Feast keeping just like some WCG members needed HWA's 1939 article to know that hierarchical government was from Babylon—we should give the SDAs space to learn just like we needed it. 2) Both SDA and WCG members need to realize that if they are to share their teaching with other Sabbatarians and take it to the rest of the world, they need to teach from the Bible and not from their long-dead leaders. —NSE]

This was our first Sukkot (also called Feast of Tabernacles) and I cannot begin to tell you how fantastic it was!! The only thing I have to compare it against, is camp meeting which I've always loved, but camp meeting is a very poor comparison against the spiritual richness that awaits you when you attend FOT. We had begun to study the Feasts approximately 2 years ago and when we got to

Leviticus 23, as far as we were concerned, there was simply no question but that the Word said, "**Do it.**" Even though our church had been teaching that they were "just for the Jews", it seemed pretty plain to us when we read: "it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." It was kind of like what others must feel when they read that the Sabbath is the seventh not the first day, and that Yahweh commands we keep the Sabbath holy.

[Lev 13 text removed for space]

We had tried to talk to our previous Pastor about this but he was far more interested in gathering some bags of feathers to go with the pot of tar he wanted to use on us, than to engage in a serious study so we just sort of "fumbled" along. Thanks to Merwin, Stephen and Sidney, we were also pointed toward Ellen White. When we turned to her writings, we found that she recommended that we all keep the Feasts of Tabernacles:

-BC- PP-TI- Patriarchs and Prophets-CN- 52-CT- The Annual Feasts-PR- 06 -PG- 540:

At these yearly assemblies the hearts of old and young would be encouraged in the service of God, while the association of the people from the different quarters of the land would strengthen the ties that bound them to God and to one another. Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth.

So why wasn't the church doing this? And did it really matter what the church was doing or not doing when we had a plain "Thus sayeth the Lord"? We couldn't see any difference in the law and we certainly couldn't see any place where the law had been divided into some designation called "moral law" and "ceremonial law".

-BC- PP-TI- Patriarchs and Prophets-CN- 46-CT- The Blessings

and the Curses -PR- 02-PG- 503:

Every seventh year the whole law was to be read in the assembly of all Israel, as Moses commanded: "At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

So there we were; we could either follow the traditions of men which our church was teaching with this artificial designation of "moral" and "ceremonial" law or we could accept our Yahweh at **His** Word when **He** began to teach **His** children that **He** had just led our of **their** Egypt how to live with **His** Holy law. Yes there are laws that don't apply to me if I'm not living in Jerusalem and there are laws that can't be followed since there is no longer a temple. You'll see those divided by category at <http://www.sabbathmorefully.org/613.html>. But we were convicted by the plain "Thus sayeth the Lord" "It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." and so we decided we would go.

Since we **definitely** are not Feast-Keepers in our local SDA Church, we attended one put on by Christian Renewal Ministries that I had heard about through a Messianic friend (Eddie Chumney) at Ocean Shores. You can see their "ad" by going to <http://www.megsinet.net/~sidneydavis/PACBEACH.html> We really didn't know what to expect but we made our arrangements, packed the car and drove for the next 5.25 hours. We met Barb Baker who had driven over from Cheney, WA with her friend Ken. None of us had any idea what to expect but here we were. The first night, we found approximately 400 people of all assorted flavors. Some Messianic Jews, some Worldwide Church of God, some Church of God 7th Day, a few Chairsmatic "sunday-keepers" and quite a few SDAs. We

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met in the main auditorium of the Ocean Shores Convention Center and there on the stage, they had built a sukkot. They used the 4 X 8 sheets of trellis stuff you get at Home Depot, and branches off trees are **no** problem in Washington state. We all assumed that our Father did not want any of **his** children to get ill sleeping in a sukkot in Ocean Shores, WA, with the frost on the morning windshields so we were comfortable making a sukkot, learning about it and the significance of the different branches but sleeping in the cast-iron beds in a motel.

-BC- MH -TI- The Ministry of Healing -CN- 21-CT- Hygiene Among the Israelites -PR- 04-PG- 281:

The journey made three times a year to the annual feasts at Jerusalem, the week's sojourn in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles, were opportunities for outdoor recreation and social life. These feasts were occasions of rejoicing, made sweeter and more tender by the hospitable welcome given to the stranger, the Levite, and the poor.

Unlike "camp-meeting", had we elected to stay in a "sukkot" or tent, we would not even have incurred the motel cost. Every family brought plenty of food and food was furnished to all at tables in the back where one could munch. There was no charge for the conference and although we were reminded once at the beginning and once at the end of the conference, that there were costs involved that had to be met, each sermon was **not** an opportunity to make an appeal for funds.

-BC- PP-TI- Patriarchs and Prophets-CN- 52-CT- The Annual Feasts -PR- 04-PG- 540:

Like the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles was commemorative. In memory of their pilgrim life in the wilderness the people were to leave their houses and dwell in booths, or arbors, formed from the green branches "of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook." Leviticus 23:40, 42, 43.

I don't remember all we learned and I haven't yet sorted out my notes but there is a real significance in the different branches our Father had **his** people build these sukkot from. For instance, the date palm bears fruit but is apparently insignificant because it has no smell.

(Sound like any of the folk you've known who are found in every church; quiet, unassuming lives of dedicated service that bear much fruit for the Kingdom?) The willow as most everyone knows is **the** sign of water because it is found along (**both visible and invisible**) stream beds drinking deeply of the "water of life". It was quite obvious to us that the significance of the materials to build the Sukkot were significant for us today and "not just for the Jews".

-BC- DA-TI- The Desire of Ages-CN- 49-CT- At the Feast of Tabernacles -PR- 02-PG- 447:

The Feast of Tabernacles was the closing gathering of the year. It was God's design that at this time the people should reflect on His goodness and mercy. The whole land had been under His guidance, receiving His blessing. Day and night His watch-care had continued. The sun and rain had caused the earth to produce her fruits. From the valleys and plains of Palestine the harvest had been gathered. The olive berries had been picked, and the precious oil stored in bottles. The palm had yielded her store. The purple clusters of the vine had been trodden in the wine press.

-BC- DA-TI- The Desire of Ages-CN- 49-CT- At the Feast of Tabernacles-PR- 02 -PG- 448:

This feast was not only the harvest thanksgiving, but the memorial of God's protecting care over Israel in the wilderness. In commemoration of their tent life, the Israelites during the feast dwelt in booths or tabernacles of green boughs. These were erected in the streets, in the courts of the temple, or on the housetops. The hills and valleys surrounding Jerusalem were also dotted with these leafy dwellings, and seemed to be alive with people.

There was also quite a bit of teaching about the significance of each day's "wave offering" (don't know if that's the right term or not, but that's what we all did....we "waved"); representatives of different blessings before our Father and thanked **him**. But one of our (boy, it's hard to sort out what was **the** greatest blessing we received) greatest joys was in the dance. That's right; the **dance!** I can just hear that sharp intake of SDA breath now and the gasp "**dance?!?!!**" Bill and I personally believe that couples holding

each other on the dance floor is not an appropriate venue for physicality and yet we've been really torn because it is so **obvious** to us that dance was designed by Yahweh to be a part of worship. We read all through the Word, how various "men of Yahweh" danced before **him** and that it was pleasing to Yahweh.

-BC- DA-TI- The Desire of Ages- CN- 51-CT- "The Light of Life"-PR-02 -PG- 463:

When He spoke these words, Jesus was in the court of the temple specially connected with the services of the Feast of Tabernacles. In the center of this court rose two lofty standards, supporting lampstands of great size. After the evening sacrifice, all the lamps were kindled, shedding their light over Jerusalem. This ceremony was in commemoration of the pillar of light that guided Israel in the desert, and was also regarded as pointing to the coming of the Messiah. At evening when the lamps were lighted, the court was a scene of great rejoicing. Gray-haired men, the priests of the temple and the rulers of the people, united in the festive dances to the sound of instrumental music and the chants of the Levites.

There was a young man that acted and danced the entire 1st and second Samuel and what an impact to **see** and hear at the same time, the story of David and Saul and their respective relationships to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Every heart there was uplifted in praise! We had a chance to really see what's called "Davidic dancing" and it was **wonderful!!** First of all, it is a **group** dance; children, young, old, middle-aged; fat; skinny; awkward; graceless; graceful, men and women move in circles....sometimes, circles inside of circles with hand motions and words specifically designed to praise and honor the Creator of the Universe. It was so interesting. Bill and I have always known that music can often reach inside a heart and touch it where no words ever can and this is what we saw with the "Davidic dance".

How we wish our SDA churches would awaken to Yahweh's way as opposed to "man's way" and incorporate motion, music and color into the worship service to **Him**, the Creator, instead of making them worship services that too often wind up being almost worship services to the men in grey suits up

on the podium in the front of the church.

Well, that's all of my report for now. If you have an opportunity to attend any Feasts of Tabernacles some September/October, be sure you do; you will be incredibly blessed!

—Bill and Jo Kuhlmeier
e-mail: Billnjok@mail.com
<http://www.sabbathmorefully.org/>

Ocho Rios, Jamaica

With a high attendance of 211, the Church of God, International Feast of Tabernacles in Ocho Rios, Jamaica featured both powerful sermons and enjoyable activities for those attending. Speakers from the U.S. included Bronson James, Fred Redd, and Wayne Hendricks while local talent included the newly ordained deacon George Ramocan and Jamaican CGI Pastor Ian Boyne. Major points made in sermons included a general emphasis on the ultimate destiny of man as part of God's Family, the need to praise God, the origin and fate of Satan, and the need to sacrifice for the next life in this present life.

The many activities scheduled during the Feast included a barbecue and dance on the beach at night, a singles mingle (a guided discussion followed by dancing to Jamaican Reggae music), a youth debate over whether women should be ordained, the annual Herbert W. Armstrong speaking contest (over the doctrine of the so-called "second chance,") and a trip to climb Dunn's River Falls. The purpose of both the youth debate as well as the speaking contest was to develop the local church's talent, in keeping with Pastor Boyne's vision of having both strong church government while still keeping the local laymembers active and helping to develop their talents.

A remarkable aspect of the Feast was on the Last Great Day when 12 new members were baptized. Since eight more were baptized earlier this year near the Passover, this group has undergone a nearly 10% growth rate in one year already. Part of this comes from an assertive program of local and personal evangelism. Even during the Feast, one afternoon was slated for handing out on the streets tracts defending the Sabbath truth. Since the COG in the U.S. and elsewhere is mostly passing members back and forth between different church organizations and independent groups,

and little net growth is occurring from people called out of the world, it behooves us to consider investigating the "Jamaican model" to see what we can learn from it and emulate.

—Eric Snow, a UCG laymember who attended the CGI Feast in Ocho Rios, Jamaica; 480 East Lewiston Ave.; Ferndale, MI 48220; 248-548-9380; e-mail: snoweric@pilot.msu.edu.

[I think Mr. Boyne is setting a good example by involving his local congregation and reaching out to new people. But with his authoritarian government and emphasis on Herbert Armstrong, he is not pointing these people directly to Christ and the Bible, but to one man who is now dead and to another one who will be in so many years. I consider his group brethren: I would not mind attending with his group, and I hope he would not mind attending with us. But I am sad that he is bringing more people in to repeat the mistakes of the WCG. —NSE]

Baguio City, Philippines

The brethren of the Church of God Internationally Affiliated Associates kept the Feast of Booths in this summer capital of the Philippines on the night of September 24 up to October 2. Our theme for this year is "Holding Forth the Word of Life." Messages revolve around the "living up and living our lives as examples to others in our pilgrimage in this life to let others find God and glorify Him." We had an aggregate attendance of 25 people with 4 first-timers in keeping this Feast who incidentally were baptized during this year. Also, we have an individual, a long-time member in the Church of God, who kept this Feast with us after a 6-year absence due to the confusion in WCG since 1992.

We had everyday services and interactive Bible studies. After the Feast, we had raised up a new fellowship group for those who attended the Bible study and who are in our regular mailing list. Video messages from various ministers of Churches of God were viewed for eight days with live sermons from Mr. Raul Hipe that described about the millennium under Christ's rulership as compared to man's idea of globalization.

Mr. Rodel Carating essayed the history of the Church of God, its triumphs and perseverance just to bring the truth alive to future generations as they

sojourn in this life and as an example to always carry the torch of zeal in bringing God's message of hope in this dying world. I delivered a message about the lesson of Booths in the Book of Job that shows the reality of the cost we had counted in baptism, our loyalty to God, and the Christian priority of not putting root in this world but on the world to come. The other message is the saints' goal of looking for the New Heavens and New Earth and that we can only be there if we are practicing today to live righteously. I also expounded on the reason why God commanded us to gather together and assemble which has a prophetic significance.

We also balanced the Feast with activities. The traditional Bible Bowl was enhanced by a puzzle game on the Books of the Bible. We also conducted tours for the first-timers in this place. We conducted for the first time ballroom dance clinic for one night and a bowling tournament. We were treated by a children's choir on the Last Great Day under the tutelage of Mrs. Vivian Hipe. In concluding the Feast, we always keep the traditional potluck dinner on the eve of the eighth day as a get-together meal.

The spirit and zeal of the brethren are very high after the Feast to bring the lessons they have learned in their daily lives. We hope some of you can find time to keep this Feast with us next year also in Baguio City.

—Enrique M. Gabuyo
Church of God—

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First Feast Ever

Dear brethren,

I am back from my first FOT [Bagio City, Philippines]. It was so nice and inspiring that I am already looking forward to the next feast. During the duration of the feast, I was able to learn the blue print of God's Plan for mankind. I was elated to know what the New Heavens and Earth will be in the future.

It was also during the feast that I bought a new Bible and also Strong's Concordance. It's funny that it's only now that I have learned to use a concordance. I didn't know that it is such a wonderful tool for bible study.

I was able to fellowship with brethren from different Churches of God. It was truly a wonderful experience. So glad that I was able to spend it with my family.

—Herbert Chua & Family

Asian Feast with Sexton Family

[This article is from Leon Sexton who did much of the "foot work" for many Thai projects and visits on behalf of the WCG and its affiliated corporations. I was personally acquainted with him in the early 1980's when I considered volunteering for one of the projects —NSE]

October 21, 1999

Dear Friends,

The Feast of Tabernacles this year was not what we expected. My wife Gloria and I originally planned to spend the holy days with our Kachinland brethren. We wanted to participate in the very first ever Feast in northern Burma, (Myanmar.) But this area of the world can sometimes be a dangerous and politically volatile place to be. Circumstances and conditions can change rapidly. If one spends any length of time in this part of the world, one must learn to be flexible.

On August 8, 1988 (8-8-88), there was a pro-democracy uprising in Burma. Many people were killed or jailed. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Gyi, leader of the opposition, was placed under house arrest and has remained there ever since. This year, on September 9, 1999 (9-9-99) a nationwide "strike" was planned by the pro-democracy movement. This caused the military government of Burma to take pre-emptive action to stop their plan. Burma closed its borders and we were unable to obtain visas.

However, just before Trumpets, I received a telephone call from Lazum Brang. He was calling me from the border town of Mae Sot in Thailand and asked me to come there to see him. He had traveled for 4 days from Kachinland by train, vehicle and foot to meet me and also to become acquainted with the Karen members of the Church of God. I left as soon as I could for Mae Sot.

I traveled by bus so I could take along a mountain bicycle purchased for Lazum Brang's evangelistic journeys. We spent a very encouraging Sabbath together with the Karen church members in Mae Sot and discussed Pastor Brang's plans

for future evangelistic efforts in Burma, China and India. Pastor Brang had no trouble communicating with the Karen members as he speaks 24 languages including several Karen dialects.

It turned out that Brang could not get back across the border. It was still closed and Burmese soldiers patrolled the area with automatic weapons. So he had to stay in Thailand for Trumpets. We all spent a very interesting Feast of Trumpets together as brethren from 4 different COG fellowships, as well as several SDA's and even a couple of Baptist guests observed the Day with sermons, prayers, songs of praise to God and fellowship. And, of course, feasting! This was an unplanned experiment in COG "ecumenism", and it worked. We all came from various fellowships and had some differences in doctrine. But we came together on God's Holy Day and worshiped in peace and Christian harmony. Maybe this can be an example to others?

When Gloria and I returned to Bangkok, we tried again to get visas for our trip to Burma. But the Embassy was still closed. After Atonement in Chiang Mai, we contacted them again with no success. It was now apparent that the Burma trip was off. So now what were we supposed to do? Many times we do not see as God sees. We had planned on Burma, but God had other plans for us.

The Karen people are refugees and cannot travel outside the country, and there was no local FOT planned for the 7 or so Karen church families living on the border. Unless someone was willing to organize a Feast for them, they would not have one. But this year they had one. At least on the first and last day, because Gloria and I decided to stay in Thailand and hold a Feast together with them.

If we stand back from the trees, sometimes we can see the forest. The Kachin already had a feast set up as Pastor Brang was returning to take care of them. But, the Karen had no one to help them. God made this our assignment. So, Gloria and I were enthusiastically welcomed back to the border where we gathered with our Karen church brothers and sisters to keep the first day of the Feast.

The Last Great Day didn't work out as planned, either. While we were getting ready on Friday to go to the border again for the last day of the Feast, we received an urgent call from Jack, a church member in Bangkok. He asked if he could come over

right away and told us to turn on our TV. The whole city was in an uproar. Dissident Burmese students had taken over the Burmese Embassy and were holding 86 people hostage with AK-47's and grenades! Thai police with sharpshooters, armored cars and barricades closed down the streets in downtown Bangkok where the embassy is located. Every local station was tuned into the drama.

Jack had to come and stay with us for 2 nights because the immigration police were looking for anyone that might be from Burma. We decided to call over to the border to see what the situation was like. Was it wise to go over to Mae Sot under the circumstances? It was decided that it was not a good idea because it would draw police attention to the Karen, some of whom are still connected by family with the Karen national Liberation Army, at war with the military dictatorship in Burma. So we remained in Bangkok on the Last Great Day and spent the day in bible study and in fellowship with Jack at our apartment. Moolah Shi, the elder on the border, decided to go ahead and have a service anyway without us in the home of one of the members.

What a Feast it turned out to be! It certainly turned out differently than we ever expected, but it was for the best. We were happy to have the chance to spend more time with the Karen people. They were able to have at least a partial feast, which meant so much to them. I later received a letter from Lazum Brang. The Kachin had a wonderful **first** Feast of Tabernacles **ever**—and he wrote, "Many people from far-distant places came to Na Mawn to keep the feast." Gloria and I feel it turned out according to God's will. Through it all, God worked it out so that His people were able to keep the feast.

Karen Language Booklets

Legacy Institute wants to announce the completion of the first ever booklet on the annual Holy days written in the Karen language and script. The Karen brethren are quite excited about it because, not only can it be used to explain these days to their Karen families, friends and neighbors, but, it even helps the brethren themselves to learn more about the plan of God.

What is really special about this booklet is that the Karen brethren did everything themselves. Thaw Thi Ko translated the material from English; Jack typeset it into Karen script on the computer and

Davidson Lebey has done the proofreading. All we did was facilitate and provide funds for making copies. The Karen will distribute the booklets themselves. They are black and white booklets, which fit letter-size envelopes, and will be sent by the lowest postal rate.

The booklet will also be translated into Kachin and Burmese. Later, maybe Thai as well. I have asked the Karen to tell me what booklets or information should be translated next. They know their people and they will know better than me what is needed. This is all very exciting and shows what "ordinary" church members can do if they are empowered and encouraged to exercise faith and use their God-given talents to further the Gospel.

Festival Tragedy

During this Feast season we lost one of our Karen children. 15 year old Olivia, niece of Thaw Thi Ko and Ester, was anointed for fainting spells. At first the family thought it was just temporary dizziness or weakness of some kind. But the problem got worse each day until she could no longer walk, talk or feed herself. When Gloria and I heard the news about her deteriorating situation, we told them to get her to the hospital right away. Going to the hospital for the Karen is quite different than what we experience. It is not just down the road. It took over 24 hours to get her there. First, they had to find a vehicle to take her and then the journey was over 8 hours long to Chiang Mai, the closest hospital that had the facilities and staff to handle this sort of situation.

She was finally admitted and given medication. The doctors changed the medicine several times and did every test they could think of to try to find out what it was. They never did diagnose the disease. But, it was some sort of virus that destroyed the left side of her brain. She finally went into a coma and never woke up. Olivia was the youngest child in the family and the only daughter. Her father was in a refugee camp somewhere along the border and never did make it to see his daughter before she died.

Cards or email notes to the family can be sent via the Legacy Institute address. Olivia's mother's name is Margaret. She is the sister of Ester, Elizabeth and Juliana.

Lazum Brang's Bible School Plan

Pastor Brang wants to begin construction of a teak and bamboo classroom

building in his village right away after the monsoon rains end. He plans to build a modest building to use as classrooms to teach bible courses to interested young Kachin people. The building will also double as a meeting hall for services.

There are now over 20 young Kachin people who want him to teach them the "bible truth". Several have already graduated from Bible College in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachinland, but desire to learn the true doctrines of the bible. They want to be useful to God and someday hope to be sent out to help Pastor Brang teach the bible truth to others.

Lazum Brang feels this part of the world is ripe for God's harvest. He has received many letters from individuals as well as groups of people in China, Assam and different parts of Burma inviting him to come to their area and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. So, he has been praying to the Lord of the Harvest to supply workers.

Starting a small bible school to teach young people is an important step in preparing harvesters to help teach those God may be calling in the remote mountain borderlands of Kachinland and surrounding countries.

FOT in Thailand

Once again, we want to find out what the level of interest for attending a Feast of Tabernacles site in Thailand in the fall of 2000. Please respond by letter or e-mail if you are seriously interested in attending an 8-day festival in exotic Thailand. If there is enough interest, we will formally let everyone know the itinerary and costs. The more people we have signing up, the less it costs for each individual because of price breaks on air tickets and accommodations. Please let us know of your interest as soon as possible.

Note: Legacy Institute is not a church. Nor is it affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. May God continue to bless you all.

In Christian service,

—Leon Sexton, Legacy Institute
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Public Bible Study Experience

by Dale Heslin

Inspired by the Truckers Bible-study in SN I thought I might submit the following account of a Bible-study which I conducted over the last several years. I have recently discontinued this Bible-study, so I thought it might be a good time to relate my recollections of this episode. I don't claim to have made any great "earth-shaking" advances for the good news message, or any miraculous conversions to the truth. It's just an account of one person's experiences of person-to-person evangelism which your readers may find of some interest.

I started up the Bible-study back in about 1996. With the collapse of WCG as an effective channel of evangelism of gospel truth, I thought it intolerable that someone with knowledge of the Kingdom (such knowledge as I possessed) should not be actively spreading the word within one's own community. I rented a local community house, placed ads in the papers, and hung a big sign on the outside of the house to attract passers-by. The Bible-study was definitely not intended as an in-house, inward looking gathering of ex-WCG types, but was aimed at the general public, with the hope and expectation that those who attended would have at least a passing knowledge of scripture.

I scheduled the Bible-study for Sabbath afternoons in the hope that acceptance of the Sabbath might constitute a point of common ground upon which other truths could be explored. My thought was that someone who accepts the Sabbath should also be able to comprehend the basic thrust of what I term messianic "Christianity". (Since I reject the term "Christian" as essentially meaningless these days, "messianic" is how I refer to myself.) The result was that the Bible-study quickly became infested with Seventh-Day Adventists of various stripes. On several occasions an otherwise small group of five to ten people was swamped by a visitation of twenty to thirty SDA's who belonged to an off-shoot group called the "Reformed SDA's". They carried with them the full load of SDA theology replete with references to Ellen G. White, probationary time, replacement theology, the investigatory judgment, and a phrase which was constantly invoked—the "Great

Controversy". These Bible-studies were inevitably fiery affairs given the conflict between doctrinal truth on the one hand, pitted against overwhelming strength of numbers on the other.

As far as I was concerned anyone could attend so long as they brought their Bibles and left their egos at the front door. The issue of whether to welcome Sunday-keepers was one which occupied my mind. One man in particular did not expressly accept the Sabbath but was an avid and very diligent Bible student who seemed able to receive the truth of the Sabbath. He brought with him a man who understood Israel's modern identity, but who was also a Sunday-keeper. Another genuine truth seeker was an SDA man who accepted in principle God's holy days. He was accompanied by a real SDA fire-brand who obviously saw it as his mission to convert we poor misled people to the truth of Ellen G. White, et al, with, predictably, many references to "The Great Controversy".

Regardless of what subject we were discussing, the Bible-study tended to return to certain basic themes. The studious Sunday-keeper and myself argued strongly that Israel had not been rejected by God. We were supported in this by one of the SDA's, but this really inflamed the SDA "firebrand". He was fully convicted that "the Jews" had been replaced by the "New Testament church". When we spoke of modern Israel being the fulfilment of prophecy he kept repeating that Israel had been established by military conquest. When we mentioned that this is precisely what happened in the Old Testament this comment was brushed aside. This man's approach was that all references to the re-establishment of Israel and the continuing role of "the Jews" as God's people were simply cancelled out by the New Testament. Of course this made meaningful discussion of scripture on these points practically impossible. At any point he could simply declare that a key scripture just no longer applied.

In the same manner he discounted prophecies of God's reign on earth. Interestingly, SDA's believe that God's kingdom will eventually be established over a renewed earth, yet they always

speak of "going to Heaven". We argued that a great plan was being worked out which made necessary the blinding of Israel in part until God's purposes be revealed. The counter argument was that "the Jews" had their chance and blew it, and were now fully rejected. This led to the inescapable conclusion that in today's world and down through history most people (Indians, Chinese, Babylonians, Romans, etc.) can't be saved as they have rejected the truth in this life. We stressed the fact that most people today and throughout history have never even heard, much less accepted, anything resembling biblical truth. Both the SDA's would claim that even without hearing the name of Christ such people could be saved if they had lived tolerably good lives. Acts 4:12 was completely ignored.

Incidentally, in passing, my wife and I observe that believers in Hell when they suffer the loss of a young child invariably claim that their child is now "in Heaven" even though they never "accepted Christ"! All this seems to render biblical revelation, repentance and conversion unnecessary and redundant. We would say to the SDA's what is the point of having a Bible study and studying scripture if it doesn't matter anyway in the end. This point of logic was brushed aside.

As for the avid Sunday-keeper, I vigorously challenged him on Sabbath observance. Unfortunately his reaction was entirely predictable if disappointing for someone so steeped in Bible research. His reaction might have been "Oh, that's very interesting. I will look into it". Instead, he just considered that I was being unnecessarily aggressive and difficult over an issue of no importance. This man—who lives in, would you believe, "Cataract Street"—often supported me when I argued that people are blinded to the truth until God reveals the truth to them. I concluded that he loves studying scripture much more than he loves the message it contains.

Another Sunday-keeper started coming along who had deeply studied scripture. He carried with him multitudinous Bibles and concordances, etc. in a big case. He believed that our Bibles have been systematically mistranslated, and he therefore subjected every text to minute examination in the original texts. If you disagreed with his view of things he would just pull out an alternative transla-

tion which supported his argument. I always felt that he should look at Acts 18:21 in the KJV and cease all study until he could explain how it was that the man who supposedly did away with the law could himself be keeping the holy days. Incidentally, a couple of SDA ladies who attended the Bible study claimed that Paul was a hypocrite in doing this. I would say "Why then study his words?"

This may be good point on which to end this report. Neither logic nor resort to the plain meaning of many Biblical texts ever got in the way of people's presuppositions about the meaning of scripture. The Bible study came to an end when the house proved difficult to rent and we did not have room to hold it at our house. Erratic attendance combined with repetitive discussions caused me to think that, at least for now, it might be time to call it quits.

Is this kind of face to face evangelism worth the effort? On the one hand we face entrenched theological dogmas which are almost impossible to overcome. On the other hand we are obligated to spread the truth as we have received it. In the end there is a fine line between casting your pearls before swine and not hiding your light under a bushell. But I still think it is better to do something then do nothing with such truth as we possess.

One happy piece of news I can relate is that in the final days of the Bible study I made contact with a couple of genuine messianic believers in our neighbourhood with whom we have since shared Holy Day observances. This is a good example of what I originally wanted to accomplish through the local Bible study.

—Dale Heslin

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[I think these studies were excellent experience for you as well as helpful to others. Former-WCG members should realize that they often impress others like the SDA members impressed you--always proving their doctrines from their founder's teaching rather than from the Bible. The non-WCG world has no more respect for HWA's writings than we have for Ellen White's. We need to teach from the Bible!]

A way to reduce endless doctrinal debate is to find people who really need help and focus on helping them. —NSE]

"Truckers Study" from page 2 *so many other groups. —NSE]*

They home school their 10-year old son, and he travels with them when they are on the road. This young man was impressive. He had a grasp of biblical concepts well beyond his years. For example, I asked the adults why God had four gospels instead of one. The adults hemmed and hawed, and the boy said, "That's easy. They were all written from different points of view so that we could get a better picture of Jesus." I knew then that we were not dealing with a normal ten-year old. He made several other comments along the way that were quite impressive.

Today we took action on a theory. It seems to me that the "Festivals of the Lord" (i.e., the Holy Days) can be a great tool in teaching the world at large, and I decided to present a synopsis of some of the Holy Days and show how they relate to the New Testament. Specifically, we talked about the Passover, unleavened bread, and the wave sheaf offering, and how they point directly to Jesus Christ and events surrounding salvation history. The emphasis was to show that the understanding of the Festivals can enhance one's understanding of the New Testament and God's plan in general. I would rate the response enthusiastic. They were quite interested in the concept that Christianity is more clearly seen through the lens of the Old Testament. I pointed out that all of the Feasts of Leviticus 23 have such parallels.

The discussion led from here to Psalm 22. They were surprised to see how this Psalm speaks directly of the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

The other attendee was the wife of a trucker. She and her husband travel together. They have committed to reading the Bible through together. As he drives, she reads. The scriptures are new to them. After the study she was speaking to the parents of the 10-year old, and said she was afraid to speak up during the study because she was embarrassed that this boy knew the scriptures better than she does. It was fascinating to watch this novice to the scriptures interact with a family that clearly knew their way around the scriptures. I sat back and just watched them mentor her and encourage her to continue her studies and her questions, which were all intel-

ligent questions and clearly revealed an inquiring and seeking mind to understand the things of God.

One question that I thought received a good answer: "In the Bible the Israelites were a bloody people. They kept abandoning God and rebelling. Why did God keep working with them? Wouldn't He just give up?"

John Curry answered one way and the family answered another, both of which hit on both aspects of the truth.

John Curry: "Why did the chicken cross the road? To show the possum it could be done." The point: God wants to show the world that He can take a cantankerous, stiffnecked people and still make them His own.

The family: "God promised Abraham that his descendants would be blessed. God does not break His promises. Loving parents don't give up on their children when they do something wrong."

After the study we stood around and talked for over an hour more. They took tapes with them, as well as a study lesson on the Holy Days. It was encouraging to see people sincerely seeking God's will and mind. We hope to run into them again some day soon.

October 24, 1999: This was an interesting day at the truck stop. We had four guests. Three were new to the scriptures and one was quite knowledgeable. In fact, this knowledgeable fellow intrigued me from comment number one. When he came into the lounge area, he said he just happened to be passing by and saw the sign, decided to detour, and come on in. We chatted privately beforehand and he talked about how Jesus influenced people through His obvious care for them. He did not take the approach of judging them, because He came to save them and not judge them. He said the Pharisees were the targets of Jesus anger because they were binding burdens on people that God never intended. Then he mentioned that Jeremiah 10 addresses that, as does Isaiah 1 ("**your** feasts and Sabbaths I hate"). I told him my take was that he didn't keep Christmas. He confirmed that. Well then, what days do you keep? He keeps the days that God authorizes in the scriptures: Rosh Hoshanna, Passover, Yom Kippur, etc.

At that point we joined Arlo and the others for the Bible Study, and it so happens I had a study planned on why Paul said that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." We related the events of Exodus 12 and the passover celebration and showed parallels to the life and work of Jesus. Again I was struck by the fellow's comments regarding the meaning of leaven, and that he nodded in agreement with what I was saying.

One of the men asked why God chose the Jews, and we talked about Abraham, and our knowledgeable friend pointed out that the word "Jew" is a derivation of the word "Judah", and that there were other tribes of Israel besides the Jews.

We also had a discussion about death (one of the truckers had a death in the family, and this concerned him). Our friend pointed out that death is like a sleep.

Needless to say, I was intrigued by this, so after the Bible Study, I ask the trucker how he had learned about the Holy Days, and he said that in 1984 or 1985, he began watching someone on television named Herbert W. Armstrong. He had written off for lots of literature, but managed to lose it in his travels, and that he had heard that the Worldwide Church of God had gone through a lot of turmoil after his death, although he was unclear on the details. In any case, he credited HWA with much of what had learned from the scriptures. I asked him if he went to any church, and he said his cab was his church.

[Only the Eternal knows how many thousands of brethren learned truth from the WCG's booklets and broadcasts, but also read their Bibles enough to know that true religion was doing what the Bible said, not joining the right organization. —NSE]

We talked for quite some time afterward, and I gave him copies of several reprint booklets written by HWA in the 1950s as well as an address where he could obtain more titles. I wanted him to understand that his "chance" coming across our study was clearly an act of God, which he understood. I happen to know someone in his hometown who used to be a WCG elder, and the trucker gave me his P.O. box and phone number, which he asked me to forward on. He appeared eager to have this contact.

Seeds sown by another were

watered today. It was both an honor and humbling to be a part of it.

November 7, 1999: It was an interesting and profitable study today.

We were visited by two men and a woman, two of whom were relatively new to the scriptures. The woman told me that she turns to the "armor of God" passage frequently, and I asked her what she liked about it, and she said she had some trouble understanding it. Under the theory that we should meet people where they are, we studied Ephesians 6. That chapter has Paul sounding like a football coach giving his team a pep talk, or perhaps more accurately, a general speaking to his troops before battle.

We touched on a number of other subjects in connection with this, including the Ten Commandments and God's expectations of us, preaching the gospel, that the gospel is "Good News", what is faith, the importance of knowing and using the word of God to battle Satan, etc. There is more to the "Armor of God" passage than one might think.

Since one of the truckers is new and is trying to read the Bible through, I pointed out that the Old and New Testaments fit together, and that the sacrifices and much of the Old Testament point to Jesus Christ and God's plan for man. I gave a brief talk on how Jesus was the passover, what the original passover meant from a Christological point of view, and how all the Holy Days of the Old Testament have a New Testament application.

They were interested in our tapes and literature, and took some with them.

November 14, 1999: What does it mean to be a friend of Jesus? That's the subject I discussed today with our two truck drivers. Generally, I like to talk about any subject that the drivers themselves bring up, but they came up dry today.

Before the opening prayer, I asked them if there were matters that they wished to have mentioned. Both mentioned things that they wanted to thank God for. Neither had a list of "I wants", and I expressed my appreciation for their unselfish and thankful attitudes.

We began in John 15, where Jesus told his disciples that he would no longer call them servants, but friends.

What does this imply about our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Practical Christianity—how one lives day by day—has an enormous appeal and often overshadows doctrinal discussions. That's what being a friend of Jesus is all about.

Without belaboring the issues and points discussed, it is interesting to me to see the dynamics of a small group of strangers who share the scriptures as a commonality. Typically, it's belabored and slow at first. As the study progresses, something might be said that hits someone's hot button, which stimulates conversation and thought. As people begin to reveal themselves and their experiences, others in the group begin to do the same. Disagreements might arise about some point of doctrine or the meaning of a scripture, but the differences are discussed cordially, and we often find that by listening and discussing, the differences are not as great as our initial (and somewhat emotionally charged) reactions had led us to believe. At the end of the Bible study, we realize that God has blessed the proceedings, and we are able to go our separate ways as friends.

Learn More About the Study:

You are all welcome to visit our study any time. We meet every Sunday morning at the I-70 Texaco, Exit 28 on Interstate 70 at Oak Grove, Missouri. If you are in the neighborhood, we would love to have you join us.

For the many of you who are not planning to travel near Kansas City, I want to offer of a free audiotape. I was assigned the sermon at our local fellowship and I used the time to discuss the Trucker's Bible Study. This 40-minute tape talks about some of the people we have met and a bit about our approach to them. If you would like to receive this tape, please let me know. We'll get it to you as fast as our duplicating machine can get it out.

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[Many subscribers have commented on how much they have learned from this series. They provide wonderful practical experience as to what one might expect when teaching the Word of God to those whom He sends. —NSE]

“Food or Poison” from page 1 recommend to others searching for sound Biblical teaching.

Most have come to realize that they cannot stick to “only Sabbatarian” teaching. Many of the Bible translations and helps that the Church of God groups have relied upon for years were written by non-Sabbatarians who had a certain area of expertise. Even commentary by authors like Scofield, Bullinger, Clarke and Halley was frequently used by Church of God ministers. By now, our horizons have expanded further, but how far should they go?

No one has the time to sample **all** the religious teachers competing for the attention of potential listeners, students and supporters. Thus it helps to have at least some basic criteria for sorting out the wheat from the chaff—and the wholesome from the harmful. The ultimate responsibility for choosing, recommending or promoting any given teacher surely falls on each individual adult believer. No one should try to be a “policeman” over the lives and minds of others, attempting to take away from them their free will and personal relationship with the Eternal.

Bible Warns Of False Leaders

The New Testament is full of admonitions against “false teachers”, “false prophets”, “wolves” and “heretics”. And both Old and New Testaments are full of admonitions to consider the wise advice and counsel of others rather than just totally rely on yourself to evaluate ideas. Many passages encourage those “elders” of sound mind and spiritual maturity to look out for the welfare of the spiritually immature, the naive, and the gullible. This is not a permission for individuals to take upon themselves the role of “censor”, attempting to physically stop others from listening to such a wolf or false teacher or heretic. It is rather a call for them to be “watchmen”, sounding a clear alarm of concern. They are to clearly show by reason the error of those who would gather a following by deceitful means and/or teaching full of dangerous error.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Matt 7:15, NIV in this article unless otherwise noted).

Know that after I leave, savage

wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears (Acts 20:29-31).

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2Cor 11:13-15).

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping (2Pet 2:1-3).

Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise (Prov 19:20).

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety (Prov 11:14, KJV).

It is a human tendency to want to hear God’s word from another person. People wanted to hear from the prophets in the Old Testament, they wanted to hear from apostles in the New Testament. There has always been a mixture of true and false prophets and apostles. It is much more difficult to read the Bible, ask God to show us what is important for us to do, and to do it—than it is to please a *man* who claims to be God’s appointed leader. If we adhere to his doctrinal statement, keep attending his group and keep contributing, the man will usually be happy. But God looks on our hearts. He is not fooled.

Nevertheless, if we have spent years following a person who claimed to be God’s appointed leader, there is still a

tendency to look for someone who seems to be a powerful “leader sent from God”, even if we don’t let them rule over our lives. A teacher who expounds the scriptures verse by verse and seems to have an answer for everything can be very attractive. But do they really have an answer for everything? Or do they just pretend like it? Most teachers who pretend to have an answer for everything will not accept questions in an open meeting from other knowledgeable people—they need to make sure they can stop questions from being asked that they cannot answer.

Evaluating teachers is not easy. Bible teachers try hard to put on a “credible” and/or “spiritual” image. (This was a problem in Jesus’ day—Matt 23.) The Bible mentions spiritual gifts of “wisdom”, “knowledge”, “prophecy” and “discerning of spirits” (1Cor 12:8-10), but also says that believers do not all have the same gifts. It is not too hard for most of us to look to our past and realize that we have made mistakes in evaluating leaders. James teaches us to pray for the wisdom we lack (James 1:5).

It is good to consider the counsel of others whom we consider to be mature believers. If they advise us to avoid a certain teacher, we at least ought to know why. It is a mistake to say, “I like this teacher, please don’t confuse me with the facts about him.” On the other hand, we should not reject a teacher because of unsubstantiated accusations.

None of us will likely ever find a teacher, speaker, or writer with whom we are in total agreement on all areas of religious doctrine and practice. But it would be good to have guidelines in mind for what amount of difference we find acceptable, and in what areas we are unwilling to compromise. At the end of this article we suggest some practical principles and guidelines for assisting you in developing your own standards regarding what religious material you will consider for your own study, as well as how to decide if you will recommend specific authors or speakers to others.

Watching Your Diet

A useful analogy in considering this general topic is that of a nutritious diet. Someone who has been in an organization that considered itself the One True Church has been used to getting all the

nutrients in their spiritual diet from one central source. (That source may be either “the leader”, a “doctrinal committee” or board of some kind—anything that a member can accept as an “authority”.) Once a believer lets go of that source, he may feel that he must go searching for an equally centralized source of spiritual food. And thus, he (or she) may find himself looking for another speaker on television, or one who has a booklet or magazine or Internet ministry, who seems to have “all the answers” to almost any Bible question. He may become frustrated when he finds himself constantly facing the fact that each one of these teachers has one or more areas with which he disagrees.

This dilemma can be solved by realizing that no one person or organization has “all the truth”, and thus none need be one’s only, or even primary, source of instruction and inspiration. Thus it is possible to consider learning *some* things from *some* teachers with whom one may not share a similar doctrinal background.

Sources of One Good Nutrient

There are a number of Bible-based teachers and ministries which specialize in one narrow area of interest. Their expertise in that area may not be at all affected by their opinions about other topics. For instance, James Dobson’s “Focus on the Family” ministry is not Sabbatarian, and Dobson himself may believe a number of doctrines with which the average Sabbatarian COG believer may not agree. But his organization does provide solid, Biblically-sound material which many Sabbatharians have found helpful on such topics as child-rearing and family relationships. Those areas of theology which Dobson and his ministry might be in disagreement with Sabbatarian COG believers (Sabbath, heaven, etc.) need not really affect at all the information which “Focus on the Family” provides on family matters.

And since “Focus on the Family” is not at all a “church” or a “denomination”, it makes no pretense of providing a complete spiritual diet for anyone. Such a source of “one nutrient” may be useful to us as we work to put together a healthful spiritual diet.

Another one-point ministry is that of Chuck Swindoll, a Protestant minister

who has an inspirational radio program called “Insight for Living”. On his program he consistently just uses stories from the Bible to emphasize “daily Christian living principles” and Biblical virtues such as patience, kindness, and self-sacrifice. There is never any emphasis on debatable areas of doctrinal issues, nor an attempt at “proselyting” listeners to a particular theological point of view.

In mentioning the ministries of Dobson and Swindoll, we are not indicating any specific endorsement or recommendation that others should listen to them or support them. We are merely using them as an example of sources of Biblical teaching that present very little spiritual “danger” to their listeners, even if one disagrees with certain doctrines which Dobson and Swindoll each may hold in their personal lives. We offer them in contrast to some other ministries which we will consider next, which may well present such a danger.

A Variety of Goodies With Some Serious Rot

Most “Church of God” brethren have likely never spent any time talking to Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness “evangelists” that may have come to their door. Who wants to join a “cult” with weird doctrines? But those who have listened to them were sometimes shocked to find that the door-to-door evangelists do not promote weird doctrines, but many solid, recognizable Bible principles.

For instance, the Mormon “evangelists” who come to your door and offer an in-home study with you will talk about God, his love, happy families, and other good things. He will **not** be covering (with you as a non-member) their stranger doctrines taught by their founder, Joseph Smith, which include:

1. A man with multiple wives will have a higher “position” in the after-life than men with one wife.
2. Wives will derive their satisfaction in “heaven” by continuing to give birth to celestial infants for all eternity, with a nine-month gestation for every one.
3. Adam was actually God Himself, come to earth with Eve, one of his celestial wives.

And the Jehovah’s Witness evangelists who come to your door with the

same offer to study the Bible with you will talk about prophecy, world news, and the need to be close to God in these difficult times. They will **not** be telling you about the authoritarian power of their church’s leadership. Nor the fact that, if you ever become a member—and then become disillusioned and leave—you will be marked as an out-cast by the organization, and everyone, including members of your own family who may be Witnesses, will be under strict orders never to have anything to do with you again.

Arnold Murray, Shepherd’s Chapel

A ministry which has become popular in some Sabbatarian COG circles in recent times is that of Arnold Murray of “Shepherd’s Chapel” which has headquarters in Arkansas. Murray has had a television and radio ministry for almost two decades, but only recently has it moved from late-night “cable access channels” to more prominent distribution across the country at prime times. Because he seems to agree in many areas with the doctrines of some Sabbatarian COGs—including rejection of such holidays as Christmas and Easter, and a brand of “British Israelism”—he seems to many like a “sound teacher”. His popularity also seems to be related to the fact that his programs feature “in depth” study of the Bible verse by verse, and the fact that he speaks with an air of confident authority in condemning the practices of many religious groups. His delivery style is one of dogmatic insistence, often with unusual harshness, that his “interpretation” of any debatable passages is the only possible interpretation”.

This in itself ought to send warning signals to the sincere Bible student. But it is not the only reason we are pointing out the ministry of Arnold Murray as one which may well be dangerous to the spiritual health of those who begin to look to him as a source of spiritual food. Our greater concern is that he does not present openly a number of doctrines which we feel cross the border from questionable to evil. Only when one has been studying his material for some time is one indoctrinated into these more serious matters. This is quite typical of authoritarian religious ministries. Their outreach to the public is often tempered to show a very benign facade on their system of beliefs. And

the topics covered in such public outreach are usually their most appealing... not their most bizarre.

So it is with the ministry of Arnold Murray. Those merely listening to his daily or weekly radio or TV program for a short time will not hear a hint of some of his more bizarre teachings—particularly the racist doctrines known as “Satan’s Seed”, or “Serpent’s Seed” (these are not two different doctrines, just two names for the same one) and the “pre-Adamic races”. For, just like many branches of the KKK and the Aryan Nations, Murray teaches that *only* the white northern European ethnic groups are actually descended from Adam. He teaches that all other races are part of a “pre-Adamic” creation, and are not “made in God’s image” in the same way Adam was. Nor do they have the promise of inheritance of the same blessings in the after-life as the so-called “White” race. In addition, he also teaches that the group of people viewed by most people as “Jews” today are not at all descended from the Israelite tribe of Judah. Rather, many or most of them are allegedly descended from Cain. And Cain, according to the “Satan’s Seed” doctrine, was **not** the offspring of Adam and Eve, but of a sexual relationship between Eve and the “serpent” in the garden, the Devil himself. Thus Cain and all his descendants, usually dubbed “Kenites” by such teachers, are alleged to have been half-human, half-evil-spirit-being!

This pair of doctrines is quite frequently connected in fringe religious circles with such Biblical doctrines as Sabbath and Holy Day observance. And many who hold these doctrines believe a brand of “British Israelism”, and may also use the Hebrew names for the Father and Son, variations on “Yahweh” and “Yahshua”. This makes these groups initially appealing to those who may hold such beliefs as important, and who thus look at these groups as likely “fellow believers”. In the case of the KKK and the Aryan Nations, the racist beliefs are quite blatantly promoted. But in a number of ministries such as Murray’s, they are reserved from introduction until the “student” has become “hooked” on Murray’s more general teachings, and begun looking to him as an all-wise authority figure.

Since most of Murray’s teaching is done by speaking, rather than in written

materials, it is not easy to acquire quotations for inclusion in an article such as this. But there are other groups on the Internet that promote almost identical teachings and who do have much written material posted to explain their beliefs.

Example of Satan’s Seed Doctrine

So here is a sample from the website of the “Kalifornia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan”. This material is regarding the “Pre-Adamic” races, in particular how they survived the Flood of Noah’s time. When the author below uses the word “Identity” he is referring to one of the major branches of the “British Israel” movement. This branch is referred to by both themselves and by critics as the “Identity” movement, sometimes also referred to as “Christian Identity”. These are typically the more radical racists, such as the Aryan Nations. The author considers himself and his KKK associates part of that “Identity” movement.

Also, when he refers to “the beasts of the field” he is referring to the “non-white” races, which he alleges to be part of a pre-Adamic creation by God, in some cases tens of thousands of years before Adam. These are just short, disconnected excerpts from a much longer article. *[[Our comments in the midst of his writing will be in double brackets like this.]]*

Greetings to you in YHVH/Yahshua! In this Bible study, it is my intent to clarify what the Scriptures say on the subject of “man and beast”. It is of the utmost importance that we make the distinction between man and beast, and learn how the Scriptures pertain to these two forms of beings, separately, as well as their relationship with each other. Those of you within the Identity community will readily accept what the Bible tells us of this subject, and you may have already found this knowledge on your own. On the other hand, those who do not study the Scriptures in the same detail as those of us whom “hold the Key of David” and call upon the name of our Father Yahweh may not be as receptive to this crucial understanding of the Scriptures. If this be the case for you, then I ask that you put aside the teachings and doc-

trines of men that you have been taught in the “Establishment Churches”, and open your heart and your mind to the Holy Spirit, and Word of Jesus Christ/ Yahshua (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all in one being)....

*[[Note that when he says “distinction between man and beast”, he is not talking about the distinction between man and four-footed animals... but between the “white” race and the other races! At this point, he goes into a long dissertation on the origin of these “less than human” people. Also notice that he describes himself and his compadres as studying the scriptures in “detail”. **Of course** we should “study the scriptures in detail”—if that means to diligently read all of the Bible and be open to all the spiritual understanding our Father would have us glean from the **clear** meaning of the written Word. But what this author, and most others like him, including Arnold Murray, means, is to extract doctrines from the scriptures that are never explained in the scriptures at all! They start with an idea, then tear apart the wording of numerous verses, analyze every related meaning of the Greek or Hebrew individual words rather than look at it all in context, and then they **assign to the words whatever meaning would best fit their perverted theories!** He finally reaches the Noah’s flood story—which he claims was not about a worldwide flood.]]*

At this point, you may be wondering about the Great Flood. Most pastors and ministers have been taught enough about the Scriptures, and have access to enough resources, to know that this “global flood theory” is based upon a mistranslation, and know full well how that mistranslation occurred. Is this to say that the Word of God is in error and cannot be trusted? God forbid! The error is not in the original divinely inspired text, but rather in the imperfection of the flesh. Hands of flesh translated these Hebrew and Greek documents; fallible flesh. This being said, let us remember that the Word of God is never in error, only the translations of the flesh. These pastors and ministers continue to teach the global flood, with little or no archeological evidence. Watch the Trinity Broadcasting Network, or one of the other fake Christian channels, and

observe their "amazing proof", and you will get the idea. There are even some circles of Identity which teach that both the serpent seed, and the beasts of the field from all over the world survived this "global flood" on board the ark. These so-called "Identity Teachers", as it is said in the Scriptures, heap coals upon their own heads...

As we read the following Scriptures, let us bear in mind that there is no evidence that the Adamic race has spread across the entire globe. They dwelt in a single nation, or land. This will be addressed a little later in this study. This verse of Scripture, and others like it are the one's used as primary evidence of a global flood.

Genesis 6; 17: "And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the 'erets {earth as in dirt or ground, most likely meaning a land, as we will see later}, to destroy all basar {flesh of people}, wherein is the breath of life, from under the heaven; and every thing that is in the 'erets shall die."

In this Adamic flesh is "the breath of life." Let us find the Biblical reference to who has the breath of life. Is it all creatures that draw air into their lungs? This is everything that the Scriptures have to say on what has the breath of life:

Genesis 2: 7: "And YHVH God formed man {'adam...blushing man} of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and 'adam became a living soul."

[[Elsewhere in the article he makes a big point that only the "white" race can "blush" .]]

There is no wiggle room here, brothers and sisters. Adam was given the breath of life. Neither the beast of the field, the fowl of the air, nor the fish of the sea were given the breath of life, nor were they made living souls. All Adamic flesh, which alone contains the breath of life, was destroyed. All of it under the heavens, because Yahweh had kept it contained in the 'erets. Yahweh kept it contained in that land. "...AND every thing that is the 'erets shall die." That is right. Every thing that was in this land where 'adam dwelt would perish in the deluge, along with the people that dwelt

there. However, it does not say every thing under the heavens.

Genesis 7: 4: "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the 'erets forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from of the face of the 'adamah."

That is correct, Yahweh destroyed every living thing that dwelt in that land. There are many verses saying this same thing, and they are all true, for there is no untruth in the Word...only misinterpretations. Allow the Holy Spirit that our Father instilled in each of us, to speak to you on this matter as we delve deeper into this subject...

[[To clearly reiterate... he is saying that "non-white" people do not have the "breath of life" in them. Then there is the issue of intermarriage of the races. Below is his take on that, in light of the passages in Leviticus about people "lying with animals". Perhaps you thought that this passage was about the perversion known as "bestiality"? Not according to this author!]]

Leviticus 18: 23-24: "Neither shall thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you."

Deuteronomy 23: 2: "A bastard (taken from the Hebrew word "mamzer" which means a mongrel or a half-breed) shall not enter into the congregation of YHVH; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter in to the congregation of YHVH."

"Well I thought Jesus came for everyone, regardless of race!" Certainly some of you are thinking this. Well, Yahshua did come for all men ('adam), but not for the beast of the field. Let us see where man and beast differ in the New Testament...

[[After some very creative twistings of the New Testament to make his point, he concludes by telling you what happens after death to "men" and the "beasts of the field"...]]

You see, the spirit of man, though we see it not, shall return to the celestial planes {upward} to be with Yahweh when his flesh taberna-

cle returns to dust, while the spirit of the beast shall go into the inner earth {downward}, where resides both the grave {Hades} and a chamber known as Paradise. Only Yahweh can say what becomes of the beast there, but only Israel shall reside in the Kingdom of Heaven, for this has been told to us over and over in the Scriptures. May our Father Yahweh/ Yahshua shower His blessings upon you, and may He open your eyes to these truths, if you are of the pure line of Adam.

[[Enough of this evil teaching! But please realize that the same authors teach many other solid Bible principles in ways we would probably find acceptable.]]

Variety of Bad Teachers

The issue of "racism" is dealt with in a number of different ways by individual teachers and ministries and groups that promote this sort of doctrine.

a. Some are blatantly and viciously racist and particularly anti-Semitic to the point of willing to perpetrate violence on any Kenites or sub-humans who get in their way. Some even advocate an all-white separatist nation.

b. Some are blatantly racist—mocking other races (particularly Blacks and Jews) for their inferiority—but condemn violence.

c. Some, including Arnold Murray and Dan Gayman, another teacher who has had some popularity in COG circles in recent years, are not **blatantly** racist—and even make a big public fuss about their lack of "prejudice" or "hatred" for other races. But the reality behind those statements is interesting, for of course they don't "hate" Blacks or Orientals or Native Americans. They just pity them for not being White! They look down on them as a British aristocrat might look down on his scullery maid. Not with hate or prejudice—just as a natural "inferior".

It is unclear, however, if Murray takes it as far as Gayman's group does. If you wish to attend with Gayman's group, and are not **totally** and **obviously** "lily white" you must prove your racial purity. First with the "blue blood" test. Yes, you roll up your sleeve and they check to see if your skin is light enough to see the veins! After that they do an extensive genealogical check on your reputed

ancestry, looking for family pictures of any questionable ancestors. They even claim that Hebrews 4:12 ("For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart") is **really** discussing physical genetics. That is, that the Holy Spirit will supernaturally reveal the **true** racial identity of anyone who might try to "pass" for white and thus pollute the congregation. For we are not talking here of just "general" divisions among folks who are obviously one race or another. We are talking, as the old saying goes, "one drop of (non-white) blood" being enough to contaminate someone so that they are ineligible for consideration as one of the "chosen".

Almost all such groups that we are aware of have **some** roots in the British Israelite movement, or at least have borrowed teachings from that movement. And therein is one of the added problems with someone like Murray. **Just because** they don't teach "racial hatred" among their inner circle, doesn't mean that their area of much wider influence doesn't include many folks who will take the aberrant doctrines they teach regarding these matters and run with it on their own. For this common thread of British Israelism gives their material wide appeal far outside their own little cultic group—without **any** balancing factor. For instance, Dan Gayman himself does not openly advocate racial hatred and/or violence. But, his writings show up for sale on **rabid** racist sites on the Internet such as that of the Aryan Nations, where they are used in support of their beliefs. And he certainly doesn't seem to be protesting their inclusion there.

As covered extensively in the May-June 1999 issue of *Servants' News*, we also have serious concerns about looking to the writings of **hyper-charismatic** and **Word-Faith** (see box for definitions) authors for spiritual nourishment. For even when such hyper-charismatic authors as Rick Joyner, Rod Parsley, and John Bevere are teaching about "inspirational" Biblical topics not specifically related to their more bizarre charismatic beliefs, the "doctrinal underpinnings" of their belief system, and those very bizarre beliefs, often color such teaching. But this may not easily be detected by the

reader unfamiliar with their other writings. The more of this material one reads without careful consideration of where the author may be headed doctrinally, the easier it is for a reader to get swept along into accepting all of their ideas. If the difficulties were presented by themselves and up-front, they would probably be easily spotted. If an author can get his readers into the "**Yes-Response**" mode (see box for definition) he can force conclusions that seem reasonable but are really based on logical fallacies.

To Whom Will You Listen?

No author or teacher out there will have the exact same set of beliefs as you. Nor will any have the exact same way of prioritizing the value of various doctrines (for instance, is belief in a particular prophetic scenario part of the "trunk of the tree" of Christianity, or merely a twig?) Thus we all must make some decisions on what level of differences we can accept, what we can overlook as not being a spiritual threat, and what we must insist is totally unacceptable and dangerous to the spiritual health of ourselves and others.

To assist you in this process, we offer six questions which you might ask yourself as you develop your own decisions of to whom you will listen and who you will recommend to others.

1 What do I know about the teacher's ministry as a whole?

- a. Do they have just a specialty that they share regularly, or do they have a complete system of theology that they try to proselyte listeners to?
- b. Is there any hint that there might be hidden topics or a hidden agenda in the person's teachings?
- c. Do they have a list of all of the material they distribute (or a doctrinal statement)?
- d. Do the leaders of this ministry fulfill the qualifications of leaders given in 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1?
- e. If the ministry appears to have a "good report", is it only from their own mouth or do "outsiders" (especially former members of the group) confirm it also?

2 What is the teacher's approach to his own group

versus other church groups. These approaches are common.

- a. "I am the one and only true Bible teacher and all other groups are false and the people in them are not converted."
- b. "I am the main teacher that God is using. God may be using others that I do not know about, but that is because God has not revealed me to them yet."
- c. "I am God's main teacher. There may be converted believers in other groups, but they are being deceived by false teachers. All teachers not in my group are false."
- d. "I am God's main teacher. God may be using teachers and brethren in other groups, but they would all be better off if they learned from me. Truly spiritual people would recognize me as God's leader."
- e. "God has revealed the truth of a particular doctrine to me, though He is working in many other groups. God does not require them to join my group, but in order to have the true understanding of my doctrine they need to hear or read my teaching."
- f. "I am one of many teachers whom God is using. I try to serve and teach the people who God brings to me. I learn from others and hope that others can learn from me."

The higher someone is on the above list, the less likely you should be to listen to them. While people in categories **a**, **b** and **c** may apparently have some truth that few if any other groups do, it is very difficult for a person to learn just "some things" from them. How can a student be "learning truth" from a teacher who believes that the student is unconverted because he has not embraced his entire theological package. Category **d** teachers are difficult but probably acceptable. Category **e** and **f** teachers are obviously much better. When recommending teachers to others, consider their maturity and try to avoid recommending teachers that might cause them to stumble.

3 If a certain teacher has at least one serious "aberrant" teaching (see "definitions" box) in their system of belief, is it...

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DEFINITIONS:

Charismatic is often used today to designate those types of teachers and groups which emphasize that the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" mentioned in the writings of Paul, such as the gift of speaking in tongues, gift of interpretation of tongues, or gift of prophecy are still available to Christians today. We believe this to be a sound conclusion from the scripture, for there is no indication in the writings of either Paul or other New Testament authors that the gifts were only intended for those who lived in the first century. There are individuals and groups who emphasize this belief in a wide variety of both Catholic and Protestant circles, including quite a number of Sabbatarian groups. Most *Charismatics* do not agree with the actions of *Hyper-Charismatics*.

Hyper-Charismatic describes groups that extend their concept of spiritual gifts to include "spiritual manifestations" beyond those described in the Bible. Hyper-charismatic teachers often describe their movement as a **great move of God, New Wave** or **Signs and Wonders** movement. A prominent example is Benny Hinn, who uses a wave of the hand, the pointing of a finger, or sometimes just a puff of his own breath to literally knock people off their feet and fling them backwards across a stage before audiences of thousands. Others groups claim that gold tooth fillings or gold dust miraculously appear during the preaching of certain "healing evangelists" in mass meetings. At other meetings many or most of the audience may find themselves laughing uncontrollably, rolling on the floor, barking like dogs, shaking uncontrollably, or running at breakneck speed around the perimeter of the meeting hall for no apparent reason.

Word-Faith refers to a doctrine promoted by some charismatic teachers that indicates that *words themselves* have inherent power. Thus when requesting a blessing from God, they insist that the issue is not really one of God's sovereign decision on whether to grant or deny the specific request (based on His far superior knowledge of what is best for His children). It is rather a function of the words themselves you use in the request. In fact, the request is actually not formed as a request at all—but rather as a "confession" or a "claim" that the thing you want really does belong to you. The theory behind this is that God **always** intends for every sick person to be healed immediately, and for every Christian to always be financially prosperous, and have "his heart's desire" in all areas of his life. Thus if you have prayed for something and not received it, the fault is not with God—it is with your own lack of faith, and perhaps failure to "word" your confession carefully according to some alleged "rules for prayer" in the Bible. This doctrine is often referred to by such teachers with the slogan *Confession Brings Possession*, and by detractors as *Name It and Claim It*.

The "Yes-Response" Technique is used by salesmen of everything from pots and pans to political candidates. They know that the average person has a certain built-in resistance to sales-pitches. So the salesman starts by talking about things that everyone might agree with: "You certainly would enjoy having more leisure time, wouldn't you?" The salesman then steers the conversation into a pattern that shifts subtly from the general to the specific. That is, from thoughts **not directly** related to the item he is selling, to thoughts **directly** related to the item he is selling.

And this pattern of questions and comments is constructed in such a way as to **seem** logically to lead to the conclusion that the very thing the client needs is the item or idea the salesman has to offer. "And so you can **certainly** see how my product will meet this very need we have been discussing, can't you?!"

People form opinions of salesmen, politicians and preachers as they hear them. If their initial statements are all positive and agreeable to the listener, that makes a positive impression. The longer the string of "yesses" to statements, the greater the "positive impression" and the less of a tendency there is to diligently think about the next statement. Somewhere along the way, listeners may begin to accept statements that they would not have agreed with, had the statement not been made in the "string of yesses".

The "yes-response" technique is just as effective in the realm of religious teaching as in any other situation. A teacher may start out with many statements and questions which give evidence that he is in total agreement with his listeners in most areas. He will get them nodding their heads and saying "Amen!" over and over. Once he is sure he has built up enough momentum, he will be ready to "slip in" a completely new idea they haven't thought of before. If he has crafted his series of questions and statements carefully, and if he has a strong personality that exudes self-confidence and an aura of great authority, he can often use this psychological ploy to mold his audience to accept almost anything he says, even irrational statements and aberrant, unbiblical teachings.

Aberrant Teachings are teachings that one would never derive by reading any commonly-used translation of the Bible. The teaching must be separately taught, then "read back into the Bible", finding and twisting scriptures to "support" it, but none that clearly expound the *aberrant teaching*.

It is true that the Bible is not written as a "systematic theology" with all doctrines clearly spelled out and no room for debate. One person may decide that a certain set of scriptures are "clear" to them and then interpret other related scriptures based on that understanding. Another person may study the same issue, but start with a different set of scriptures that are "clear" to them. Thus there is often considerable variation of understanding on even some doctrines near the "trunk of the tree" of Biblical truth. And when one begins to look into the "twigs" of doctrine, the possibilities for differences of opinion among sincere Bible students is even greater. Thus we need to be careful not to label honest differences in interpretation of debatable doctrines as unacceptable "heresy".

But when the basic explanation of a doctrine comes from "extra-Biblical" sources, it is an **aberrant teaching**. These sources may include apochryphal books like *Jasher* or *Enoch*, a claimed modern-day revelation, secret manuscripts, unpublished scientific research, or a creative translation of Bible verses that no unbiased Greek or Hebrew scholar would agree with. You can almost always detect an aberrant teacher by asking questions about how he interprets the scriptures supporting his doctrine. A sincere teacher will want to consider other possibilities of what a scripture might mean. An aberrant teacher will insist that there is no other possible meaning and may even use the circular-reasoning argument that the doctrine is true, so the scriptures have to agree with it!

—Pam Dewey & Norman Edwards

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- a. A minor point that they only mention in passing
- b. A point that they clearly state is their understanding of the Bible
- c. A doctrine that does not determine who is “saved” or in the “true church”
- d. A central theme in their teaching
- e. A hidden assumption that may color much of their other teaching
- f. A topic that they deliberately hide from the uninitiated, but hold as a hidden agenda they ultimately wish to “push.”

If **a**, **b** and/or **c** above are true, this teacher may still be a source of wholesome “nutrition” in areas unrelated to the doctrine you consider wrong. If **d**, **e**, or **f** are true, you may still decide you will study their material, but with eyes wide open to the possible unbiblical problems you may encounter. But you may not want to casually recommend such a teacher’s material to others without giving a strong warning to the unwary about the specific areas of their teaching you find questionable.

4 If someone were to “take in” much of the material presented by the teacher in question, as their main source of “spiritual nutrition”, would the result be merely a partial “deficiency” in some nutrients... or an actual poisoning?

Using the example of the teachings of Chuck Swindoll noted above—if someone were to listen to him on a regular basis, and not do much of their own Bible study, there are certainly many areas of doctrinal understanding that they would be limited in. But the basic teachings about Godly living principles would do them in good stead in their daily life. Such a person would be able to easily have their areas of deficiency improved by additional Bible study and sound teaching from other sources, without having to “unlearn” questionable doctrines. For, as noted above, Swindoll spends almost no time on debatable areas of doctrine but rather on application of simple Biblical principles.

What if, on the other hand, a person were to feed almost totally on the teachings of someone like Arnold Murray, who claims to have almost all the answers to any question you might have about any area of doctrinal under-

standing? After a certain amount of time they might be so steeped in some of the minutia of some of Murray’s more esoteric and non-Biblical doctrines that it could poison them spiritually. Once someone has begun to look to a teacher as a “teacher sent by God”, their teachings are no longer isolated bits of information to consider. Their teachings become a “whole package” which dedicated students tend to swallow—poison and all.

To get away from a dogmatic teacher, a “student” must not only be shown evidence against the teacher’s “poisonous” doctrines, but they must also be shown that the numerous other doctrines in the “entire package” are either not unique to this teacher, or also in error. When a person has spent a long time at the feet of one teacher, the effort required to “reconsider everything” can be overwhelming.

5 What would the result be in the daily life, and particularly in relationships with others, of a person who would accept the “total package” of that teacher? The teachings that some people are descended from God and others from Satan lead one to believe that salvation is largely a matter of who you are, not what you do, **which is contrary to Christ’s teaching**, and should be easily seen as obvious nonsense. Think about it. Many people who may have uncertain ancestry might be left wondering, “Can I be saved, or am I a ‘beast of the field’?” When believers think to help or share the gospel with others, they would always have to try to figure out the person’s race so they would know if they are helping a person who can be saved or just another “beast”. If one had a severe accident and received a blood transfusion or an organ transplant from someone of the wrong race, one would have to worry if his or her salvation had been altered. On a daily basis, whether one reads a newspaper article or a Bible commentary, one would have to wonder about each author’s ancestry—are the words from a “son of God” or a “beast of the field”?

Interracial marriage and uncertain parentage existed when the Bible was written. If only some people were eligible for salvation, determining who is and who is not would be one of the most critical topics covered in the scriptures—but the issue is never clearly covered at all.

Similarly, what would be the end


result of the *Word-Faith* movement if an entire community were successful at it? Who would work hard growing food, serving hamburgers, building houses, fixing appliances, or anything else if all they needed to do is utter the right prayer and God would give them what they needed? Does anyone really believe that God gave us our creative ability and the resources to use it, but He intended mankind not to work but to only pray anytime they needed a house, Honda or hamburger?

It is important to realize that some teachers provide very little help with an individual’s daily life. While it is good to see the “big picture” in life and the overall plan of how the Eternal works with His people throughout history, these things of themselves do not help us to “love our neighbor as ourself”. Some people spend so much time studying great “spiritual mysteries” and “hidden histories” that they have no time for healthy personal relationships and reaching out to others.

6 What do I know about the level of spiritual maturity, spiritual stability, Biblical knowledge base and intellectual maturity of the person to whom I am thinking about recommending a specific teacher’s material?

A spiritually mature, long-time Christian who has good powers of reasoning may be completely capable of handling even the most subtle fallacies in reasoning of a teacher’s aberrations. But a new Christian who has not been exposed much to principles of evaluating logical fallacies, and who is not grounded in the fundamental basics of the Christian faith and Bible study may be particularly vulnerable to the techniques of persuasion of someone with a hidden agenda.

Conclusion

We each must take responsibility for our own choices regarding to whom we will look as “teachers” in the area of Biblical understanding. And we must make responsible decisions regarding recommending such teachers to others. It is worth the time for each of us to give some careful consideration to just how we have been making such decisions in the past. And if we see that we may have not thought through the process before, the six questions above may be helpful in making such decisions in the future. 

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attempt to keep up with the publications of many other groups, but certainly cannot read everything. Brethren also send us news items and reports. Now that we have moved about 50 miles away, Pam Dewey is not able to help with this on a daily basis as she did before.

Send requested literature. We nearly always do this within three days of receiving a request. Requests come via e-mail, as well as some by fax and some by telephone. About 30,000 pieces of literature (including back issues, but not counting our main subscription) are been mailed since 1995.

Talk to people starting new services or studies. We feel it is our job to share experience and try to answer questions for people who call about these subjects. They teach us a lot in the process.

Help people find a service to attend. On average, we receive a request every few days. Some we can immediately suggest a place, but for others we send our *Scattered Brethren Contact List* and for others we need to do some research.

Help Individuals. Some people call with personal problems and/or ask us to pray for them. We encourage them to make friends of mature brethren locally and to seek counsel there, but in some cases this simply is not feasible. We will not turn them away. But if the same person calls about the same things over and over and does not change, then we explain that we cannot help them (some people just want to talk, they do not want help).

Communication with other groups and individuals. There are times when I believe that I can help someone—or many people—in a significant way outside of our publications. I occasionally call or write people (sometimes head of organizations) whom I have known in the past and urge or encourage them to do what is right. Hopefully, they will remember me as a practical individual and consider my words more than the words of a total stranger. On a few occasions, these letters have had an immediate result. In other cases, a "thank you" comes many years later. Most have not responded at all, yet, but I hope the Eternal sees them as being written in the spirit of Galatians 6:1-3. This month, I wrote another article for the Journal

about the way the "Church of God" groups appear to the outside world. We usually receive a number of comments from such articles.

Things That Caused Delays

We moved the office. Our family moved to our new home in Perry before the last issue. Moving the office to the basement of our home proved to take a lot more time than expected. Also, many things simply needed to be re-ordered and resorted. As we were anticipating moving for several months, most of our "clean-up and sort" simply stopped. Our literature shelves were at capacity, so we obtained new shelves that give us almost twice as much capacity. We needed to do some remodeling for our office: open up a wall, make a new door, put in electrical outlets, etc. In the old location, the computer networks, phone system, etc were set up a piece at a time over a period of weeks. Setting them all up in the new location was a whole day's work. Beside the physical moving, there is a great amount of paperwork: changing shipping and mailing addresses for vendors, updating all of the many masters we use for printing, etc. Not all of this is finished, yet.

Arranged for Feast 1999. A few days after our office move was complete, we had to pack all of the band, sound, lighting, and food serving equipment for the Feast. We packed everything that we needed and the Feast went very well. It took several days to get everything ready, then to put it away and make needed repairs.

Obtained new Transportation. On the way home from the Feast, the transmission went out on our 1988 Aerostar van. The vehicle is not designed to tow a trailer with a ton of equipment. The van had 170,000 miles on it and about 20 other known problems of varying degrees of severity, so we decided it was better to sell it to a junk yard than pay over \$1000 to fix it. Friends have loaned us a 1985 Ford van and a Geo Metro which needed a little work, but are now serving us well. Our travel needs are greatly reduced because I no longer need to drive to work everyday, and because our Sabbath Fellowship meets 10 miles away rather than 40 miles away.

Prepared for Y2K. We set up and tested some of our alternate energy

equipment for Y2K. An amazing number of extra trips to the hardware store were required. If any power rationing is to occur in the future, we have the ability to make enough power to continue our publications—though with much more spartan conditions. Some of this issue was printed using emergency power. People often turn to God in times of emergencies and we want to be there to help.

Recovering my e-mail database. Since 1994 I have written over 1000 e-mail messages and filed over 12,000 that have come to me. I had them filed in over 300 "electronic folders". These contain personal letters, articles, facts to be used in articles, pictures, charts and other useful information. I almost always used the latest version of Compuserve software. Compuserve has been providing on-line services before AOL or the Internet existed. Last summer, my e-mail database would give messages about "internal corruption.". Sometimes, I understood the reason for the corruption, other times I did not.

But Compuserve provided two computer programs to repair the database, and I successfully repaired it many times. But the incidences of failure kept increasing, then one repair program stopped working, then the mail-viewing program would not work even though the other repair program said the "database was O.K.". I had to save my "messed up" database and start a new one so I could still receive and send some messages on a daily basis. After several phone calls to the Compuserve staff, they told me that their database could fail with more than 100 "electronic folders" or more than 99 items in one folder. These limits were not published, nor did the computer program warn me when I exceeded them. But I exceeded each maximum by several times.

I attempted to restore previous versions of my e-mail database from my "backup tapes", but even those versions of the database would quickly become unusable if I tried to add or delete many messages from them. The Compuserve software just does not work with this large of a database and their technical staff would provide no help at all.

I searched the Internet for programs that would convert my e-mail database to some other system with more capacity. Several were available—some free, some

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with a price. Any one of them could have “solved” my problems. But after hours of work, all of them failed in some way—not because my database was “corrupt”, but because they would not handle the volume and variety of messages that I had. Fortunately, I found one software author who was willing to work with me to fix the problems. He has sent me eight different versions of the program over the space of a month, consuming about half of my time. Their program has processed my entire database with only a few problems and I believe they will fix the remaining problems soon.

Some of my e-mail is not valuable, but much of it is. People spent thousands of man-hours thinking it out and writing it. I do not want to have to tell the many people who have written that I “lost everything they have sent me” Some people might say, “why don’t you forget computers and go back to paper? The computer allows me to search all my messages for any word or phrase—something I cannot do with paper letters. This is extremely helpful when I am studying a certain subject. (Also, we already have 8 large file cabinets. If we printed all of this e-mail, we would need quite a few more.) With a few more days work I should have an e-mail system that can handle a much bigger capacity and be much less likely to fail.

Work on printing problems.
Servants' News and *Shelter in the Word* are printed on a Risograph. A Risograph

looks like a large copier, but it actually makes a wax-paper “master” on a drum pressurized with ink. Each piece of paper is rolled past the drum where it picks up its ink image. We purchased ours new for about \$5500 in 1995. It has produced 4.5 million copies (one side). The Risograph technician told me that they typically run for about 5 million copies, but with \$3000 to \$4000 worth of maintenance. I learned to do many of the routine maintenance items, and until a month ago, I had only spent about \$400 on maintenance. Last month, I had to buy a new drum (about \$700). The old one was leaking in several places and had spots where it would not always print clearly. The new drum did not fit right, so I had to learn more about fixing the machine. (We are a long way away from their technical offices, so they are quite willing to tell me what to do on the phone for free, rather than drive out and make a call.) The drum works fine, but something is wrong with the machine’s sensors—it gives false warnings about a wax paper “master” being stuck in the machine, so each time a new master is made, the operator has to open and close two covers on the machine so that it “thinks” that the problem has been cleared. It works, but we need to find a better solution.

Living life. In the process of trying to produce this issue, and deal with all of the sporadic problems, it was easy to become discouraged and depressed. Local brethren volunteered to help us, but how does one ask for help on a

problem that you don’t know in advance is coming and when it arrives has no clear solution? Nevertheless, discouragement makes accomplishment more difficult, which, if unchecked leads to more discouragement.

In my earlier years, I greatly looked up to the ministry and other leaders. “Wow, it must be wonderful to be like them, I would think.” When life’s problems come along, their knowledge of scripture gives them the answers. And if they don’t know the answers, all they have to do is pray, because they know that God is going to hear their prayers.” That was probably true for some leaders. But there were other leaders whose family and personal lives were a disaster. Also, there were non-leaders who had strong relationships with God, and also those who did not. **The truth of the matter is that leadership, position and responsibility have little to do with one’s personal relationship to the Eternal.** The Bible teaches that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), but it also teaches “not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified” (Rom 2:13).

We are all responsible to seek the Eternal in whatever situation our life leads us. Every day, we must let His marvelous creation remind us of His power and strength—and remember that whatever difficulties we face are so that we, like our elder brother Christ, can learn to follow the Eternal, no matter what! —Norman Edwards ☞

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 Rich-

ard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Biblical study of giving and tithing.

- How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?** by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today’s congregations.
- The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles** by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of “Church of God” history.

Study Resources and Information
Freedom Biblical Information Center

Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages. Free, mostly Sabbatarian literature & tapes sources.

- Giving and Sharing Order Form** by Richard Nickels, 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 16 pages.

- Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages.
- Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index**, 36 pages.

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