

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 4, No. 3

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

May 1998

Which Groups Teach That There Will Be A Millennium on Earth?

by Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

Many members of the various "Church of God" groups believe that they have a unique understanding of the Millennial Reign of Christ on Earth. Many believe that Herbert Armstrong was divinely inspired to understand and preach the prophetic events leading to the Great Tribulation, the return of Christ and his thousand-year reign as king on Earth. This belief is partly caused by brethren who never read any religious teaching other than that of their own group. It was also caused by the Worldwide Church of God teaching that they were the only group with such understanding.

During the WCG "heyday" (the 1960's and 1970's) Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong would frequently mock what they implied was the standard view of all other Protestant teachers—that the "reward of the saved" was to get a harp and a halo and float around on a cloud in heaven for all eternity. Or they would single out the Seventh Day Adventist teaching regarding the Millennium, mocking Ellen White (Adventist "prophetess" of the 1800's) for declaring the Earth would be desolate during the thousand years. Thus, they would proclaim only the "few" in the Worldwide Church of God understood the "wonderful world tomorrow" that was to be on this Earth, with the saints ruling here on the earth for a thousand years after the Second Coming of Christ.

Both Armstrongs also strongly implied that only their students would know what to watch for as signs of the end—only they would know to be looking for a "revived Roman Empire" in Europe, made up of ten nations, and ruled over by a dictator called "The Beast" and the "Antichrist". They also implied only they were expecting the regathering of the Jews to the land of Palestine, and that the Beast would make a treaty with the restored nation of Israel, and then break that treaty in the midst of the "Great Tribulation".

But were the Armstrongs being honest in this portrayal? Did no one else have a clue about these matters? Consider these quotations:

[1] "...the Book of Revelation appears to point to a successor kingdom to the Roman Empire that could

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Which Groups Teach That Man Can Become God?

This doctrine has been taught for centuries, though it has usually been presented in theological terms such as: *divinisation, deification, or theosis.*

I might disagree with a few minor points in the article below, but the vast majority of information in it is valid and vital to understanding the history of this teaching.

—NSE

The Glory That Shall Be— The Incredible Divinisation of Humans!

by Craig Martin White

To a Christian, the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs possessed a corrupt belief in the afterlife. In their belief system they became stars after death, dwelling in the constellation of Orion with their god and father, Osiris. It may be that this belief stemmed from the early truths which were expounded by God's servants. The Egyptians may well have corrupted the truth as other religions have done. This reminds me of the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15:

"There are also celestial [i.e., heavenly or divine] bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the **glory** of the celestial is one, and the **glory** of the terrestrial is another.

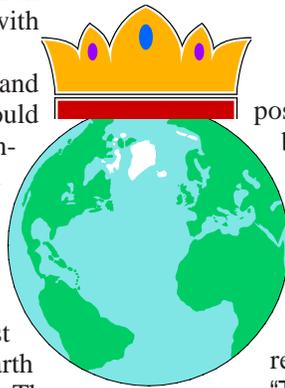
There is one **glory** of the sun, and another **glory** of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

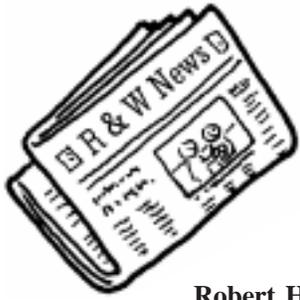
So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

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Religious and World News

A summary of various newswire sources by
Angel R. Oyola

Religious Front

Robert H. Schuller, well-known TV evangelist and pastor of the 9,400 member **Crystal Cathedral** in Garden Grove, California, the largest Reformed Church in America congregation, has been fined \$1,100 for disrupting a June 28 United Airlines Los Angeles to New York flight. According to a misdemeanor complaint, which was dropped when Schuller apologized and agreed to pay the fine, the Hour of Power preacher "made numerous negative comments" about the quality of the in-flight service and shook a flight attendant "back and forth a number of times, causing [his] head to move up and down in a vigorous manner." Schuller, 70, apologized August 13 for inconveniencing passengers and crew, but said, "I am a hands-on person." The attendant, 33 year old Khaleb Elabiad, filed a \$5 million lawsuit August 22, saying he has suffered neck and back pain, and he has been too traumatized to return to work.

[Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (1Tim 3:2-3, NIV).]

The **Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN)** reached an agreement with the **IRS** in order to preserve the ministry's **tax-exempt status**.

CBN spokesperson Patty Silverman says the ministry, founded by Pat Robertson, and the IRS disagreed over the "tax significance of CBN activities." However, CBN lost its tax-exempt status for 1986 and 1987 due to an IRS ruling that three affiliate organizations were involved in political activities during those years. "CBN made a significant payment to the IRS to settle the dispute," reported Silverman.

[As Servants' News has explained in previous issues, church organizations that receive IRS 501c(3) tax exempt status have agreed to abide by all IRS regulations, one of which is refraining from political activity. The definition of political activity seems to be broader as the years go by. The constitutional protection of freedom of religion does not apply when a church group requests IRS 501c(3) status and voluntarily puts itself under IRS regulation. —NSE]

For sexually assaulting altar boys, suspended Roman Catholic priest Rudolph Kos, 52, was sentenced on April 1 to life in prison. A jury in a civil suit ordered the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas to pay a record \$119.6 million in damages for sexual abuse caused by Kos the year before.

In **Bolivia**, the **National Bolivian Evangelical Association** has filed suit to stop the government from enforcing a resolution issued by the vice minister of Foreign Relations and Worship. The resolution stipulates churches "cannot carry out **unauthorized** acts geared toward **proselytism, propaganda, or collecting funds**."

After Public Minister Rafael Arias Salgado ordered the closing of Trinity Broadcasting Network's Tu Pueblo Television station in **Madrid, Spain**, along with nine of the sixteen evangelical radio stations of the Radio TV Amistad chain linked with the Church of God of Spain [Pentecostals], Protestants have raised an outcry of **religious persecution** following government orders to shut down evangelical radio and television stations. Spanish authorities say they are enforcing new regulations, not engaging in religious discrimination.

Religious broadcaster **John Hagee**, pastor of the 16,000-member

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Servants' News is a ministry to help others understand the Creator's will, obey Him, and teach others. 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 the 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 organizations, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS accepts some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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Local Congregations



Dr. Rick Sherrod in Australia

Dr Rick Sherrod, Ph.D., a scholar and long-time “Church of God” minister will be making a very interesting series of historical presentations (some with slides) in Australia in mid-June. All presentations are free, and some free literature will be available. We highly encourage brethren living in this area to check the schedule below and ring the number to get details on the ones nearest them.

Sydney: June 13 (Sat) 2:00 PM, June 14 (Sun) 11:00 AM & 2:00 PM at Burwood RSL, Shaftesbury Road, Burwood. Telephone (02) 9745 2964

Canberra: June 16 (Tue) 7:30 PM at Hayden Allen Theatre, Australian National University. Phone (02) 6292 2672

Coffs Harbour: June 17 (Wed) 7:30 PM at The Norm Jordan Pavillion, Coffs Harbour Showground Pacific Highway. Telephone (02) 9745 2964

Brisbane: June 20 (Sat) 2:00 PM at Auditorium, Queensland Cultural Centre, Southbank, South Brisbane. Telephone (07) 3807 6087

Toowoomba: June 21 (Sun) 2:00 PM, Toowoomba State High School,

Cnr Stuart and North Streets, Mt Lofty, Toowoomba. Telephone (07) 3807 6087.

Melbourne: June 22 (Mon) 7:30 PM, June 23 (Tue) 7:30 PM. For venue & details telephone (03) 9737 1150

Sabbatarian Singles Info

The free Sabbath singles pen-pal service formerly maintained by Janet McMillen has now been passed to Carol Smith. Janet is engaged to be married. Although Janet did not meet her husband-to-be from her singles service, at least one couple has met and married as a result of this service. About 200 people have participated in it so far. If you would like to participate, write to: **Carol Smith, 3711 Corla Dr., Tampa, FL 33619**

Another completely separate but more sophisticated service is provided by Mike Kawasaki. His service provides interest and background information (and a picture if you want), but allows you to remain anonymous unless you decide you want to respond to a person’s letter. A monthly subscription costs \$10 per year (\$12 for Canada and Mexico, \$14 for other countries). There is also an

option to be listed in the service for free. Send US funds payable to Mike Kawasaki, or write for more information to: **Sabbath Singles Connection, 3229 Larkin Road, Biggs, California 95917.**

Big Sandy Congregations Separate

The Attendance at the UCG-IA Big Sandy congregation was 150 and 115 for the weeks for May 16th and 23rd. The new independent congregation’s attendance was 254 and 198 respectively. See pages 11-15 for some details, there will be more the next issue of *Servants’ News*.

Church of God (Hulme)

The Church of God (started by David Hulme) is moving right along. Hulme has been to China, John Anderson has been put on the payroll and Marc Masterson will be employed to live in Salem, Oregon and be the Northwest area pastor (covers Oregon, Washington and a few B.C.) Most other congregations are receiving tapes of Hulme’s services. He plans a live audio feed for Pentecost services. 

this as an open invitation to try to acquire this technology. We have a real proliferation problem that’s taking place globally. This is only going to contribute to that. It’s going to cause other countries to find a rationale,” he added. Cohen said the best response for the United States was to impose tough sanctions on India, to try to persuade other countries to impose sanctions and to press other countries not to follow India’s example. “Hopefully we can encourage and be successful in encouraging the Pakistanis not to follow suit. We can continue to urge the Russians not to transfer nuclear technology to the Iranians, for example.” **Cohen quoted a Pentagon report last year as saying about 25 countries now either have or are acquiring nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.**

[During the “cold-war” era of the 50’s and 60’s, people regularly prac-

“R & W News” from page 2

Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, and the **U.S. Postal Service** are involved in a bitter dispute because it has **“delayed, held, and even censored”** his ministry’s mailings. Hagee also decreed that for ten months last year the Postal Service denied use of the nonprofit standard mail rate and charged higher rates.

[The above three stories are real reminders that religious persecution is not a thing of the past. There is still some freedom in most of the world, and still a lot in the USA, but it is gradually diminishing. —NSE]

World News

In the face of strong global criticism of its three nuclear tests Monday, **India detonated two more underground nuclear devices today (5/13).** The two

new devices were exploded at 12:21 p.m. local time today in Pokharan, in the northwestern state of Rajasthan—the same site as the earlier tests, the government said. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said in a statement issued in Hindi, “Atomic energy and science and technology are not the preserve of any one nation and for the establishment of a just world order it is important that all nations must feel secure and satisfied.”

The United States’ inability to foresee or forestall India’s nuclear tests, despite ample warnings, was a failure of both the CIA and U.S. foreign policy-makers, government officials said.

Referring to **India’s nuclear testing, U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen said,** “There will be a chain reaction ...There will be other countries that see

ticed streaming to fallout shelters in case of attack. An attack never came, and today almost no one has any idea what to do. The above story shows that we live in a far more dangerous world than that of the 50's and 60's.—NSE]

U.S. President Bill Clinton called for **India** to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and said he's imposing economic sanctions on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's government for resuming nuclear testing near its border with Pakistan. The tests were "a terrible mistake" and "clearly create a dangerous new instability in the region," Clinton said, in a joint news conference with Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The testing "demands an unambiguous response from the United States," Clinton said, adding he'll urge other countries to do the same.

Britain said recently it **would not impose sanctions on India** despite its condemnation of New Delhi's nuclear tests. Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov made clear Russia would not follow the United States in imposing sanctions against India in retaliation for its nuclear tests, Interfax news agency said. **France**, widely condemned for conducting a series of nuclear blasts in 1995-96, said Wednesday that it disapproved of India's nuclear tests but **opposed U.S. sanctions and would not impose its own.**

[It is unlikely that countries or individuals will become serious about stopping the spread of dangerous weapons until they are used in some terrible way. —NSE]

Pakistan's foreign minister said recently his country will test a nuclear device in response to India's recent tests, but he did not immediately say when **Islamabad would conduct the test.** Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan told The Associated Press, "It's a matter of when, not if, Pakistan will test....The decision has already been taken by Cabinet."

Nearly 100 were injured in **Israeli-Palestinian clashes in the West Bank.** Palestinians protested to commemorate the anniversary of what Arabs call the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe" of Israel's creation in 1948. Eight Palestinians were killed Thursday (5/14) in the bloodiest clashes with Israeli troops to

come across the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 20 months, Palestinian police said. The protests marked the exile and dispossession of Palestinians on the 50th anniversary of Israel's founding. It was the bloodiest day since an outbreak of Palestinian rage over Israel's opening of an entrance to an archeological tunnel near Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City in September 1996. Sixty-one Palestinians and 15 Israeli soldiers lost their lives in several days of clashes and gun battles between Palestinian and Israeli forces. Chief of public security in the Gaza Strip, Abdel-Raziq al-Mujaideh, told Reuters, "The number of killed reached eight martyrs." He said the number of wounded in Gaza alone was around 80.

Palestinian president **Yasser Arafat urged his people to overcome their bitter history and forge an independent state.** As the street battles flared with protests over the "Catastrophe", he said "we have a place under the sun", in a radio broadcast heard by hundreds of thousands in the West Bank and Gaza. "We are asking for the return of the exiled to the homeland and to build an independent Palestinian state on our land [in other words, war on Israel!], on our land, on our land, as all humans do and to celebrate in our eternal capital al-Quds al-Sharif (Jerusalem)," he said. Palestinians stood in silence for two minutes just after noon (0900 GMT) when the recorded wail of sirens, reminiscent of Israel's own commemoration of Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust, sounded across the West Bank and Gaza. "The killings of innocent citizens and the peace process by the occupation forces uncovers the true criminal face of the organized terrorist government led by Benjamin Netanyahu," the Palestinian Information Ministry said.

These past few days were marked by heavy **incitement to violence against the Jews by The Palestinian Television** which repeatedly screened scenes from the intifada [uprising], and played a jingle featuring the refrain, "Netanyahu, Netanyahu, we will burn the ground from under your feet." Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was sent a fax recently while he was in Washington, urging him to return home immediately. "The ground is burning,"

it said. Many believe his presence in Israel is crucial during a time of such upheaval. The last time there were riots of this sort, he was in Germany. NRP Knesset Member Tzvi Hendel said that there is nothing as ridiculous as the negotiation of additional transfer of territory to Arafat who, at the same time, is sponsoring and arranging this violence. Top IDF [Israeli Defense Force] officials are studying the developing situation in many territories. Defense Minister Yitzchak Mordechai instructed IDF commanders there to stay in contact with PA (Palestinian Authority) representatives, to reinforce positions as needed, and to act to prevent a deterioration of the situation in the field.

[This is paradoxical because during the upheaval in September 1996, the Palestinian Authority turned their machine guns and artillery on the IDF! —ARO]

Referring to the Palestinian diaspora, **Israeli acting-Prime Minister Moshe Katsav** told news reporters, "One can show understanding and sensitivity to the Palestinians' plight, but under no circumstances am I ready to assume responsibility for this suffering. **The Arab leadership is responsible for it, having declared war in 1948 on the 600,000 Jews (who lived here then).** They recruited 20 Arab states to bring about Israel's destruction." The war ended in a series of armistice agreements in 1949 with Israel controlling areas the 1947 U.N. partition plan had earmarked for the Arab state. According to Palestinian accounts, 700,000 landed in refugee camps.

Daimler Benz of Berlin, Germany emerged with Chrysler as a new superpower in the automobile industry. Daimler Benz (manufacturers of Mercedes Benz) was the same company to make Nazi weapons, tanks, trucks, etc. during the **Nazi Hitler Regime.**

[This merger will have severe long-term consequences for Americans. Suppose there is a coup in Germany and the new leader/s confiscate all assets, domestic and foreign, which they previously had under the capitalist regime (see The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, 1960, p. 258). Do you think this can never happen? So far, it has: with Stalin, Mussolini, and Germany—in this century! —ARO]

Feast of Tabernacles 1998: More Sites

See the last two issues of Servants' news (Jan-Feb & Mar-Apr) for many other Feast sites.

All of the sites below use the Hebrew Calendar—meeting from Sunday night, Oct 4 to Monday Oct 12.

Feast at Carberry Tower, Scotland

Carberry is a stately home near Musselburgh, Scotland, which has been made into a Conference Centre in recent years. The home has a long history dating back to the 11th century. There is limited accommodation available at Carberry, accommodation is allocated on a "first come, first served basis". The special rates per person per day for those attending the Church of God Festival/Conference are:

Bed & breakfast: GBP 19.90; Bed, breakfast and evening meal: GBP 23.00; Full board: GBP 28.35. Discounts apply to the following ages & groups: under 3: free; 3 to 7: 50%; 8 to 11: 40%; 12 to 17: 30%; registered unemployed: 30%; pensioners and students: 20%. There are surcharges of GBP 4.00 per day for single occupancy and GBP 8.00 per person per day for a private bathroom (en suite facilities). Advance payment should be made direct to Carberry, preferably before the 10th July. Checks and some credit cards may be used. Contact: Carberry Tower Residential Conference Centre / Musselburgh / Midlothian / Scotland EH21 8PY. telephone: 011 44 131 665 3135

But in order to obtain these rates, Carberry requires that we forward the names of people who wish to make use of this offer. Please send your name and address to: Anthony & Margaretha Miles / Linderudveien 57 / 1353 Bærums Verk / Norway. Telephone: 011 47 67 56 22 75. E-mail: anthom@online.no

However, there is no requirement to stay at Carberry. You can book your own accommodation at either Edinburgh, which is only about 10 miles from Carberry, or Musselburgh which is the nearest town. Two accommodations are: Travel Inn, Carberry Road, Musselburgh, telephone: 011 44 131 6653005, GBP 38.00 per room per night; Granada Lodge, Old Craig Hall, Musselburgh, telephone: 011 44 131 6536070, GBP 49.95 per night.

Coffee/tea and sandwiches will be served in the cafeteria. Individual meals

are also available, but advance notice is required for the evening meal (preferably 3 days). They will be avoiding unclean meats during the Feast, and are willing to cater to special diets.

Carberry is less than a 30 minute drive away from either Edinburgh airport or Edinburgh main railway station. For people who do not have a car, arrangements can be made to collect them from either the airport or the railway station.

Scotland tourist information is available from: Scottish Tourist Board, 23 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, SCOTLAND, EH4 3EU, telephone: 011 44 131 3322433.

Sunriver, Oregon

Sunriver, Oregon is a non-aligned Feast of Tabernacles site. It is not sponsored by any corporate organization.

Sunriver is a recreational and retirement community located about 15 miles south of Bend, off of US Highway 97 in south central Oregon. The elevation of Sunriver is approximately 4,000 feet. The climate is mild with generally warm days and cool nights. With the Mt. Bachelor ski area located nearby, the area is beautiful and has hiking, fishing, whitewater rafting, and sightseeing activities available to all.

Meetings are held at the Thousand Trails campground Lodge located a few miles south of Sunriver. Some of the brethren choose to stay at the campground in their RV's. Most, however, rent homes and condos in Sunriver. A couple of rental agencies have reduced rates due to the off-season period (4 nights for the cost of 2 nights). One such agency is Sunset Realty. Their phone number is 1-800-541-1756. There are many motels located in near-by Bend.

We meet in Sunriver: to worship our Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ, through celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, to learn to fear Almighty God, and come to a greater understanding of His way of life and Plan for mankind. We welcome all who choose

to join us. For more information, please write to Al Murrey, 2160 SW 2nd Ave., Ontario, OR 97914; or call (541) 881-8600.

So. Calif. Feast Plans Canceled

The Church of God, Southern California regrets to have to inform you that we have to cancel plans for a feast site this year, 1998, in beautiful, idyllic Arrowhead Springs Conference Center. We were late in making plans for 1998 and Arrowhead Springs was already booked to near full capacity in the main hotel on the weekends. Nevertheless, the manager thought he would be able to give us all rooms in the main hotel during the week days—from Sunday to Friday.

However, we now find out that there are only a very few rooms available (10) during the weekdays and only 2 during the weekend. The accommodations in the "Village" area where we would have to move are decent except that the rooms all have been made for a youth camp and have a king size bed surrounded with three sets of bunk beds which the manager is not sure he would be able to move at feast time.

Considering the lateness of our plans, and the changes from Arrowhead Springs Conference Center, we decided to plan now for 1999! So, we would like to invite all of you to join us for a most marvelous feast of Tabernacles in 1999 here in Southern California at the Arrowhead Springs Christian Conference Center with all its beauty and seclusion from the world.

We apologize for the disappointment so many will feel but we want this festival to be very special, edifying, relaxing and enjoyable to all. We feel that by starting now for 1999 we will have our pick of the best rooms and facilities.

Thank you for your encouragement and understanding in this venture. Please let us hear from you what you think.

—David L. Antion,
Church of God,
Southern California 

Do You Care to Preach the Gospel?

Many *Servants' News* readers have been baptised for 10, 20, 30, 40 or more years. Some have kept the Sabbath all of their lives. Nearly all of them understand that they are now in training to be kings, priests, and teachers in the Millennium. But how many are striving now to learn how to preach the Gospel to others?

Servants' News receives many articles on doctrinal subjects from individuals. Are these writings from people who are practicing preaching the Gospel to others—hoping to get better at proclaiming the basic truths of scripture? Unfortunately, only a very few are. We have presented some of those this issue. **But most of the papers we receive are on rather complex technical issues.** Too many writers seem to take this approach: “Since I understand this doctrine and nobody else does, God must be working with me and people ought to be coming to me for their spiritual understanding.”

We realize that writing is not everyone's gift, but of those who are writers, it seems that not enough are interested in basic subjects. We also realize that there are many people who do not consider themselves writers, but whom the Eternal might use. (If this example will help anyone: when Norman Edwards was in school, writing and related subjects—especially spelling—were his least favorite and, with the possible exception of “Physical Education,” were the area in which he received the worst school grades.) This writer believes there are many people whom the Eternal could use to write and teach, but they simply have never believed that He could use them (possibly because they were not “ordained.”).

We must also realize that the ability to do research, the ability to explain an idea once it is researched, and the ability to write with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling can be separate gifts. Producing attractive booklets or tracts from already-written articles is yet another skill. Some people can do it all, but many more can do only one or two well. *Servants' News* would like to help individuals with diverse gifts work together. We will serve to print and distribute literature that appears worthwhile.

Obviously, the research must come first. If you need someone to help you

in the latter stages of production, we will try to help you. We would love to receive research, rough manuscripts, polished manuscripts, or finished booklets on these subjects:

What is Sin?
Repentance
The Golden Rule
The Ten commandments
Faith
Grace
Baptism
Salvation
The Holy Spirit
What Is the Gospel?
What Is Love?
What Is the Kingdom of God?
What Is the Law of God?
What Is the Sabbath?
What Are the Biblical Holy Days?
The Purpose for Man's Existence
What Was Jesus' Purpose?
What Happens at Death?
Why God Allows Human Suffering?
Is This the Only Time of Salvation?
Should We Try to Live a “Good Life”?
Is There a Real Devil?
What Do Demons Do?
How Do We Know There Is a God?
Is the Bible True?
What Is the Difference Between the Old and New Testaments?
How to Study the Bible
What Is the Church?
How Can I know God's Will for My Life?
What Does the Bible Teach about Marriage?
What Does the Bible Teach about Child-rearing?
What Does the Bible Teach about Money?
What Does the Bible Teach about Health?
What Does the Bible Teach about Being Successful?
How Do I Overcome an Addiction?
Fundamentals of Prophecy
Prophecies already fulfilled
How Should Christians Prepare for the Great Tribulation?
Where are the English-speaking People in Prophecy?
What is the Millennium?
How Do I Teach the Bible to Others?

Why do we need all new booklets on these subjects? Why can we not simply

use the basic literature already produced by other groups? In some cases, we can. But unfortunately, this literature often points people to a specific organization. Other literature contains references to unusual doctrines, which we may consider inaccurate or certainly inappropriate to teach in introductory material. Also, most literature like this is copyrighted and the right-holder will not allow someone else to copy it and remove the references to their organization or distinctive doctrines.

We hope some of our readers (soon to be writers) will take this challenge to heart and begin doing research or writing on some of these basic subjects. Specific points to keep in mind are:

1. Stick to basic subjects (see above list). Resist the temptation to explain the Sabbath and Holy Days in a book about Marriage.

2. Use today's language and examples. Avoid King James English, Church of God examples, or references to radio/TV programs that are more than 10 years old.

3. Do not promote a specific church organization or ministry. Leave a place for a local group to put its own name/address stamp.

4. Include the name, and preferably contact information (address, phone, or e-mail) of the person(s) who wrote the item. People often do not feel comfortable reading an anonymous work, even though they will make no effort to contact the author.

5. Make sure the items says it can be freely copied.

If two people write a booklet on the same subject, that is not necessarily bad. Not everyone is going to agree with every piece of literature that everyone writes. Also, an approach that works well for one person might not work well for someone with a different background, that is why Paul had to be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks. Two or three different approaches to the same topic are not too many.

We believe that such booklets would be used in many places. *Shelter in the Word* readers would like them. They would be useful in numerous other evangelism projects. May the Eternal guide many in this! —Norman S. Edwards

Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Missouri, Part 2

The first article about this study appeared on page 2 of the Mar-Apr 1998 Servants' News.

One of the questions that we often face is the tension between law and grace. Without question we are saved by grace, but people often fall into the trap of talking in terms of "grace alone", assuming that this means the law is done away. This theology implies we need do nothing in our walk with God, although I doubt many proponents of this doctrine would put it that way.

The "grace alone" doctrine comes up time and time again. The truth of course is that we are indeed saved by grace. It is the gift of God, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, and a gift is something you can't earn. On the other hand, Paul also said that we are rewarded according to our works, and a reward is something that one definitely does earn. So salvation is a gift, but our reward (which we earn) is either going to be death (Rom. 6:23) or a better resurrection (Heb. 11). Or perhaps we should say a better room or place (or position) in God's mansion (John 14).

A rich man once came to Jesus and asked, "What good thing should I do to gain eternal life?" He was told that to enter into life, he should keep the commandments. Those who subscribe to the "grace alone" theology find it difficult to explain this scripture.

In dealing with this theology, we find that their position, when boiled down to its essence, is not what we think it is. The trucker in today's study does not really believe he can do anything he wants. God does have certain standards for his people. Surely he would agree that murder and lying and adultery are wrong. He is trying to say that God's forgiveness and salvation are gifts, but even our fathers after the flesh give us good gifts at the same time requiring us to live a life that is worthy of the family name.

The key to me is Genesis 2, where God made man in His image. In other words, we are to become like God and be the way God is. This implies that we have to change our lives and live a certain way, i.e., live by his laws. In today's study I was hoping to take this scripture and show that indeed God's purpose for man

is to become like God and to rule the universe (my favorite subject: "Why did God create the human race?") but we ended up going in lots of other directions.

Another challenge we face in the trucker's study is talking with people who have studied their entire lives at the same time we are talking with those who are very new to the scriptures. It is hard to strike a balance in that setting. We also have people from different denominational backgrounds and perspectives, and it is so easy to give offense. One gentleman today made a comment about the Catholic Church, and the woman meeting with us stormed out, having taken great offense, and rightly so. She is not a Catholic, but is tired of denomination bashing.

She came back in a couple of minutes obviously distressed and expressed her feelings. Fortunately, one of the other men (who had just come in and whom I'll discuss again in a minute) stood up and said it was time to pray for God's spirit to come back, for reconciliation, and so forth. I asked him to lead the prayer, and it was a wonderful, moving prayer, followed by hugs and apologies. The incident illustrates the care we must take to avoid offense.

We see also a growing anti-denominational bias among many, who perceive that organizational boundaries are man made and serve only to divide people. People are moving away from organized religion and are searching the Bible and the Bible alone. Once I asked a trucker what denomination he was, and he grinned and said, "God". Since then, my rule is to avoid questions of denominational affiliation.

This week we had a repeat visitor. A few weeks ago a young man came who is a former drug dealer and addict, and related to us his history and his own ministry among his former drug running friends and to other truck drivers in general. (He is the same one who came in late today and offered the prayer of reconciliation). He asked me after today's study where Arlo was because he had some questions (Arlo had to leave early). The questions had to do with the Sabbath day, specifically, hasn't the order of the week been altered since creation, and



therefore how can we know when the Sabbath is? We discussed it a bit, and I told him I could get him a booklet on the subject. After returning home I e-mailed Church of God Seventh Day and asked them to send him a booklet entitled "The Weekly Cycle" and, if it is still in print, the original "Has Time Been Lost?". I also had a copy of my World Ahead magazine, which he was leafing through, and he took a subscription card.

As a side note, all the Born to Win tapes and most of the Bibles that were put out last week disappeared. I was reading in Ron Dart's latest newsletter that they are hearing from truck drivers. Wonder if there is any connection?

—Lenny Cacchio

If we seriously believe that we will be teaching people about Christ and his way of life in the Millennium, this is the kind of experience that we need now. We do not all need to give Trucker's studies, but we need to reach the many people who want to learn outside of church organizations wherever they may be. These studies may occur at night in a rented hall, during the lunch-hour at our job, or among women getting together in a home.

A comment on one important item mentioned above: How do you teach people when some have much Bible knowledge and others have very little? WCG members may have never heard this topic discussed in 30 years of services, but most kindergarten teachers probably have an idea. Our suggestions:

1) *When a novice asks a basic question, ask one of the other more advanced students to give the answer, rather than give it yourself. When the more advanced students hear other simple questions in the future, they will begin to think, "Now how would I explain that?" rather than "Boring... I already know that."*

2) *Give messages that have both a simple and deep meaning. Many of Christ's parables and other parts of the Bible do this. It is not easy to give this kind of message, but with practice and the Holy Spirit, we can!*

—NSE

SIMPLE LOCAL EVANGELISM

The Church of God Sabbath Day has reprinted several of Herbert Armstrong's old basic booklets (though they do not contain his name). They have been using these booklets in local evangelism. Other congregations have also used their methods. They would like to make their methods and their literature available to others. You can use both their methods and literature, or use their methods with your own literature. Here is their basic plan:

1. Order a self-inking rubber stamp with the name, address, and phone number of your local group. (Office supply stores and catalogs will have these.) If you meet in a variety of halls or houses, you may need to rent a mail box and/or have a second line put into someone's house to use for responses. Stamp each literature item that you plan to mail.
2. Choose a piece of literature that you believe will bring the most response in your area.

3. Place a coupon ad (similar to the one one shown at bottom, right) in a local paper. The Church of God Sabbath Day has used "ad papers" such as *The Thrifty Nickel* and *The Penny Pincher*. Make sure that you include your own address in the ad.

4. Glue each returned coupon to a 3x5 index card. Write the date you mailed your literature and booklet to that person. File the cards by date.

5. After one month, mail the follow-up letter (shown at right), maybe with a return postcard (not shown) where the person can request more literature.

6. If they return the postcard, write the date on the returned card and file it. Mail the literature that they request. You may wish to include another postcard offering still

other literature.

7. After they have received several booklets, invite them to a Bible study.

Booklets, postcards, and a packet of sample ads are available from:

**The Church of God Sabbath Day,
PO Box 1645, Springdale AR, 72765.
Phone: 501-756-3545.** 

Church of God, Sabbath Day

P.O. Box 1645 • Springdale, Arkansas 72765
Tom Justus, Pastor

October 22, 1996

Dear Friend,

We hope you enjoyed the booklet, "Key To The Book Of Revelation." We now have more booklets available.

If you would like to receive free any of the booklets listed on the enclosed card, please check and mail it to us.

If you have any questions, call me at 751-9535 or 756-3345.

Sincerely,



Tom Justus, Pastor

**Follow-Up
Letter Offering
New Booklets**

YOUR
LETTERHEAD



The TULSA CHURCH OF GOD

P.O. Box 54621
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74155-0621
(918) 622-3448

Dear Friend,

Thank you for responding to our recent offer. We have enclosed the literature you requested and trust you will find it interesting and helpful.

We are an independent congregation in Tulsa associating with other Churches of God in America, Canada and several other countries.

Our supreme and motivating aim is to make the Lord Jesus Christ known to all persons as the Divine Saviour and to persuade them to become His disciples; and to teach our fellow man the Truth of God that in them might be developed the Spirit and principles of Jesus Christ, that they also might enter the Kingdom of God.

If you have any questions about this material or our church, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
In Christ's Service,

YOUR
SIGNATURE



Lawrence Gregory
Pastor

YOUR
CITY

The Book Of Revelation

- Apocalypse Of Mystery?
- What Is The Meaning Of This Book?



- What Are: The Seven Seals, The 4 Horsemen, The Mark Of The Beast, The Image Of The Beast, Armageddon, The 7 Last Plagues? *For answers to these questions, request your FREE booklet, "The Key To The Book Of Revelation."

From The Tulsa Church Of God, PO Box 54621,
Tulsa, OK 74155.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

YOUR
ADDRESS
HERE

Sabbatarians: Whom Will Your Children Marry?

This article is written to church of God members with older children, but it applies equally well to grandparents of older children and to young people out on their own. The basic issue should be important to anyone who is interested in the long-term survival of "Church of God" organizations.

Most long-time Church of God brethren have always taught their children to "marry in the Church". In many ways, that was probably good advice. It may have seemed difficult, at times, for single people when there were only a dozen or so people their age in their extended "church area" and they knew that they did not want to marry any of them. Nevertheless, there were Feasts, colleges, camps, sporting events, and other events that allowed young people to meet possible spouses "in the Church". But with the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, there are now much smaller congregations. A young person interested in marrying may find that there two, one, or zero persons to choose from in their "church area". Attending a much smaller Feast of Tabernacles, there may be only a dozen or so people that they would consider for marriage. There is no "Church of God" college now.

Now for the big question: **Is it acceptable for young people in the "Church of God" groups to date, and possibly marry people who attend with other groups?**

Many people with whom I have spoken have never really stopped to think about what all of the different Sabbatarian groups mean to young people. Most young people really are not concerned about whether the gospel is preached via TV, radio, magazines or local lectures. They might be willing to help out with any effort that their local group is involved in, but most know that they are not going to be personally starting any such work themselves. Young people generally are not concerned with the form of church government; they are just now learning to establish an identity separate from their parents. If unreasonable requirements are placed on them, they probably will not want to reform their church government, but will simply give up on it and stop attending. They are not concerned about the fine points of doctrine; they are

more interested in deciding if they will or will not observe the basics.

Young people are rightly interested in how they will be able to get a job, go to college, and/or find a mate. One of their biggest trials is "can they do these things and still be able to keep the Sabbath, holy days, and other Bible teachings?" They know that these practices put them at a disadvantage sometimes in today's schools and jobs. **Asking and trusting the Eternal to work out these things is a major step of faith.** So what does a young person do if they are accepted for a job or college, but the only nearby congregation is a different Church of God group? Must

they stay home and listen to tapes? What does a young person do if they are very interested in someone as a potential mate, but they attend a slightly different group?

I recently attended a very interesting wedding. The bride and groom had known each other since they were babies. Their fathers had both been WCG ministers and the families were still good friends. Both men officiated together in the wedding ceremony. Many friends from the home congregations of both bride and groom attended. However, one father of the couple is now a UCG minister and the other father is a GCG minister. Everyone got along

Comics With a Cause

by Norman Edwards

Susan, I can still remember how surprised I was when I first met you. I didn't think there was another Sabbath-keeper on the whole campus!

I was surprised to meet a Sabbath-keeping guy, but I was shocked when I found I really liked you, James. I was so excited to talk to Mom and Dad about you, but then came the downer: they think we are compatible, but our church organizations are not!



So then I came up with this brilliant idea of comparing our two organization's doctrinal statements so we could work out our "doctrinal" differences—sort of like we have had to work out our personal differences.



And I got excited again when we found that there were only three doctrines that seemed to be different, and those really were not very different!

Then I had my next brilliant idea of writing the organizations and asking if they could resolve their doctrinal differences so we could get married—or at least give us permission to tiptoe around those doctrines until they could work them out. But I knew this was a lost cause when my parents' church wrote that we would have to wait until their doctrinal committee had time to study all of those doctrines in detail.

And so I finally heard from my parent's organization, today! Do you know what they said? I am so embarrassed! They said they no longer have time to answer member's complex doctrinal questions, but that I should "consider going where the work is being done." Come on! I'm not trying to marry a 70-year old evangelist!

marvelously at the wedding. But where will the couple attend services? They plan to travel back and forth occasionally between the cities where each set of parents lives. This brings up a number of interesting, but very real questions. **We challenge you to ask your hierarchical pastor these questions:**

#1) Should the couple be allowed to attend UCG when they are with one set of parents, and GCG when they are with the other?

#2) If the answer to question #1 is "no", then are these ministers responsible for disfellowshipping their children when they find out that they attend the other group's service?

#3) If the answer to question #1 is "yes," then how do the organizations justify their "double standard"? What is the exact reason why this couple would be allowed to attend both groups, but many other individuals have been "disfellowshipped" for attending another group?

#4) Will the UCG and/or GCG insist that the couple declare themselves "members" of one organization or the other?

#5) Would the couple be better off declaring themselves members of some third group that they never attend, so they could always be welcome as "visitors" in the UCG and GCG?

#6) Should the UCG and GCG ministers be fired for performing this "confusing" marriage, or allowing their children to marry, or letting them date in the first place?

I hope you can see that this is all very ridiculous. It is becoming rare enough that children of "Church of God" families want to remain Sabbatharians. They had nothing to do with the WCG breakup. They had nothing to do with the organization their parents joined. Cannot we all be happy that they have chosen God's way rather than the world's? Is there any reason for them, at this state in their life, to try to evaluate these human organizations and choose one? Is there a compelling reason not to attend services with their parents and friends—the ones who taught them most of what they know about God and the Bible?

Now of course, some people today can relate stories of how they personally struggled during their teen and young adult years, being the only WCG members for miles, and only being able to

meet others their own age on Holy Days or a few Sabbaths during the year. But they did this to be a part of the only group of people they knew of that understood many Bible truths. Also, the organization was growing, and there were excellent chances that a new WCG congregation might be started nearby. But should people be expected to be lone Sabbatharians to support one organization whose leaders do not get along with other organizations? How encouraged can singles be when it looks like there is a greater chance that their organization's existing congregations will break up than there is of their organization forming new congregations?

Has anyone ever thought that this couple's marriage may long outlast the two church organizations? The couple is young; many UCG and GCG ministers are quite old. If you study Sabbatharian history, lots of organizations have died out completely. What are the chances that those organizations will merge or become defunct before the couple dies? Will God fault them for not joining one of them?

This writer did not speak with the newly married couple on this subject, and hopes that this writing will have no personal impact upon them. However, it **is hoped** that people in these organizations will take a long look at organization policies and say "what kind of sense are we making for our children's future?" Some parents taught their children to "stay in the WCG and marry someone in the WCG no matter what". So the children, knowing little about biblical doctrine did exactly that, and were dismayed when their parents "fell away" to join the GCG or UCG. So what should parents teach their children? To stay in the "one true Church of God Organization", the name of which changes every few years? Rather than teach our children to "marry someone from the XYZ Church Organization", **is it not better to teach them to marry someone who is personally convicted to live by the Bible and the teaching of the Holy Spirit?**

These questions raised at the wedding did not end with the married couple. There were many other "Church of God" brethren at the wedding who were longtime friends, but had not seen each other in years. Why? Because they were in different Church organizations. Does anyone believe that it would be possible to go through this crowd, and by observing

the fruits of the people, determine who was a UCG member and who was a GCG member? Would all the nice, diligent, and clean people be in one organization and all of the yucky, ugly, and disgusting people be in the other? No, if one did not already know the group that each person was in, it was impossible to tell.

Organization leaders really need to think about what they are doing when they order members not to attend the services of other groups. If they believe that they are "teaching the people" and "doing the work" in a much more powerful way than the other groups, then they should not be afraid to let their members visit other groups and spread the word about their own group. If their members are being taught solid doctrine, their leaders should not worry about them being deceived if they visit elsewhere.

It seems like the main reason why one group would forbid its members to visit other groups, is because **they are afraid that they might find other groups better in some way.** Trying to stop members from visiting other groups stops comparisons and questions that ministers would rather not deal with. It would be better if ministers would see their responsibility to the Eternal and the Bible, not to a particular church organization. If their work is of God, He will make sure that it will have the money it needs. Church leaders do not need to divide families and brethren in the hopes that they can maintain their membership and income.

Brethren need to think about what they, their children, their grandchildren, and their friends are going to do. If you are in an organization, ask your minister or headquarters about their policy or opinion on these matters. If they do not have a solution, the problem will not go away.

There is no doubt that the Eternal allowed the Worldwide Church of God (and other organizations in the past) to teach much truth to many people, while also teaching the error that their organization was the one true church. But the Eternal has allowed that organization to be broken up. It is time for His people to learn the lesson of treating others as brethren who believe the Bible and seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. We need to stop creating artificial lines of division that make little sense to us and no sense to our children.

—Norman S. Edwards

UCGIA Letter to Big Sandy Shows True Colors

There are several approaches that church organizations take toward other church organizations. We list the most common ones from the "point of view" of the organization:

1. We are the one true church organization led by God; all other organizations are false and not led by God.
2. We are the main church organization that God is using. God may work with other church organizations, but they are apostate, decadent, or Laodicean. They do not have as much truth as we do. What God really wants is for the people in the other organizations to recognize their error and join our organization so the true Gospel can be proclaimed with sufficient power.
3. We are one of many church organizations that God is using. We do not claim that God is working only or primarily through us—we recognize other organizations with which God works. However, we primarily serve the members committed to our own organization. We serve other believers only as a part of our outreach programs to the rest of the world. We believe brethren should want to join our organization because we have good programs serving our brethren and effective Gospel preaching.
4. We are one of many church organizations that God is using to accomplish His purposes. We will cooperate with other groups and serve others as much as our resources and human nature will allow. We recognize that each person will be judged by their relationship with Christ and their individual works. Organizations are **not** the Church, but merely tools to serve the Church.

Most of our readers will recognize that the WCG for many years was in category #1. Some of the split-off groups from the WCG tried to remain in this category, but it is somehow very difficult to convince a few hundred people on a mailing list, or a few dozen people meeting in a back yard, that they are the **only** people on Earth with whom God is working. Also, organizations find it very hard to get WCG members to join them if they have made previous pronouncements that anyone not in their organization was unconverted.

Therefore, most of the WCG-split groups have taken the category #2 approach, at least to the outside world. (They may try to convince members internally that they could lose their salvation for leaving the group.) The PCG and GCG are two examples. Revelation 2&3 clearly show that some congregations are "doing better" than others, and these groups **stretch** this scripture to apply to church organizations (about which the Bible actually says nothing). Even if we overlook that mistake, how does a group prove that it is the "main group" God is using? By number of people, annual income, magazine circulation, megawatts of media, or some other factor? Where is this in Scripture? Though not as badly as category #1, category #2 also "turns off" former-WCG members who might join these groups. Who wants to think they have been in a "Laodicean" group for several years?

Category #3 is indeed much friendlier, and is the most common approach among Protestant churches. But it is the most difficult to defend from Scripture. If an organization recognizes other organizations as a similar group of believers, then how can they justify intentionally dividing the Body of Christ (1 Cor 1 & 3)? It seems best to go all the way to category #4, and to treat other groups like brethren and be willing to serve them, let them come to activities, etc.

If the UCGIA sticks to their declaration in the letter to Big Sandy brethren at right, they are clearly in category #3. Please read the letter at right, and the comments we have inserted (**SN**). —NSE

*The Council of Elders of the United Church of God an International Association has apparently agreed to start using the initials **UCGIA** instead of UCG-AIA or UCGaia. —NSE*

United Church of God an International Association
P.O. Box 661780, Arcadia, California 91066-1780
Les McCullough, President
Bob Dick, Chairman of the Council of Elders
May 13, 1998

Dear Brethren,

The purpose of this letter is to apprise you of the situation that has developed regarding the governance of the congregation of the United Church of God in Big Sandy. It covers the historical perspective leading to the current situation along with a discussion of the Rules of Association.

The status of the congregation with regard to its relationship to the United Church of God, an International Association, (UCGIA) has not been clearly understood by many, perhaps even by most, in the congregation. It is important that all members understand as fully as possible the situation facing them, and the implications of the decisions they must make regarding the future of the Big Sandy congregation.

In brief, the local church is incorporated as a Texas corporation with its own governing board. The corporation and board consist of seven members with the pastor serving as the chairman. They view themselves as an independent church that has merely chosen to affiliate with UCGIA. The local board states that it is under the Constitution of UCGIA, since the Constitution deals principally with ecclesiastical matters. However, the local corporation has its own Bylaws and does not recognize the authority of UCGIA Bylaws.

A similar situation to the one in Big Sandy developed in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1995. The Transitional Board of Directors of UCGIA was forced to make a decision regarding the status of the Birmingham congregation, thereby setting a precedent with respect to the status of local congregations within each nation in UCGIA.

The situation that developed in Birmingham stemmed from discussions that began in Indianapolis concerning how UCGIA would be structured. One member of the Transitional Board, Ray Wooten, who also served as the pastor of the Birmingham congregation, consistently argued for a structure that allowed for an association of independent and locally governed churches. This structure would have reduced the role of the central office and administration to service functions only.

This type of structure would have had far reaching implications. Under this formation, the Board (later the Council of Elders) would have had no authority to govern any local congregations. Moreover, under such a plan, it would be difficult to coordinate a unified effort for preaching the gospel and feeding the flock. Also, it would be difficult to provide resources for the development of the ministry, and the education of the youth and membership of the Church.

SN: The letter fails to note that a number of elders were in favor of the service approach that Ray Wooten was proposing. It also fails to note that the Indianapolis conference specifically gave authority for local UCGIA congregations to have their own boards.

It is false to claim that the UCGIA needs to control local congre-

gations in order to provide centralized Gospel preaching, education of ministry, etc. Numerous protestant denominations have locally autonomous congregations, but centralized media, literature, education, etc. If those groups can make it work, should not the UCG, with claims of so much more of God's spirit, be able to make it work? The Apostle Paul was able to conduct his ministry without support from some groups, such as the Corinthians (2Cor 9:11-12) because the Eternal was behind it. Furthermore, some of UCG's best efforts, such as the Good News magazine and Howard Davis's TV program are not produced by the home office, but by gifted people in local areas. Whereas the UCG council was totally unable to review and monitor the production of the one TV program produced by its own president in the space of over one year and at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Historical Perspective

Letter: To understand the approach of UCGIA toward governance, we must return to Indianapolis in the spring of 1995. Upon arriving in Indianapolis, it became clear that there was much agreement on the major issues, even though only limited discussions had taken place to that point in time. The following thoughts reflect the consensus of those present:

- We left WCG because of doctrine. There is no question that the structure of the organization facilitated the introduction of heresy, yet how we would be governed was not the primary issue which brought us together.
- We agreed that we believed in a central governmental structure. There was no desire on the part of the majority to be independent or autonomous.
- We were not interested in a structure which promoted a loose affiliation of congregations.

Our discussions in Indianapolis centered around how we could work together, and not how we could be independent or separate, which was foreign to us.

It is a matter of record that, after a presentation by Ray Wooten which encouraged a more autonomous role, Dennis Luker stood up and publicly denounced the idea. The presentation given by Mr. Wooten during the Indianapolis meetings has given rise to a number of ideas which were not a part of the planning in April 1995.

Unfortunately, some in Indianapolis left with a more independent view and equated local boards, local collection of tithes, and local corporations as the encouragement for locally autonomous congregations. This was never the view of the vast majority of the group which attended the Indianapolis meetings.

SN: The idea of a group of men voting for church leaders was also **foreign** to the UCGIA ministers, but they did it. It was obvious to many that the Eternal was blessing these congregations that emerged from the WCG on their own. The concluding statements of the Indianapolis conference permitted local boards, local collection of tithes, local incorporation, etc. Several local congregations were already in existence **before** the first meeting at Indianapolis.

Letter: The Transitional Board, which was established in Indianapolis, consistently maintained the position of a central authority when controversy arose during the months following the conference. As a result of questions which were addressed to the board in the summer of 1995, a statement was issued in August from Denver, Colorado. This statement was adopted unanimously by the entire nine member Transitional Board:

"We affirm that Jesus Christ is the living head of the Church, and that He sets apart some for the service of the ministry. The ministry, organized as a conference of elders to serve the needs of the local membership, being led by the Holy Spirit, chooses from amongst its numbers a governing board of directors whom God has demonstrated have the fruits consistent with senior leadership positions.

"The general conference of elders recognizes the board of directors under the leadership of Jesus Christ to provide direction and oversight in the affairs of the Church according to its established bylaws, including but not limited to the areas of doctrine, ministerial duties and responsibilities, the preaching of the gospel, and financial management.

"The governing board in turn elects a chairman and appoints a president. Each is accountable to the board. The chairman nominates officers of the board, subject to the approval of the board. The president nominates operations managers, subject to the approval of the board, for the functioning of a home office. The home office is responsible for the administration of the policies and procedures established

by the board for the day-to-day management and care of the Church.

"We recognize that each local congregation is guided and shepherded by a pastor, assisted by elders, deacons, and others constituting advisory committees and/or boards governed by published rules of association. The local congregations work in conjunction with the board of directors and the home office in carrying out the policies and procedures that have been established by the board. Local congregations work together with the ministry in serving and caring for the needs of the Church and its membership and being an example in the community."

SN: The above was called a "carefully crafted statement" by David Hulme, UCGIA president at the time. It was analyzed on page 10 of the Sept-Oct 1995 *Servants' News*. That analysis proved correct. The statement appears to support continuing local boards and some kind of "rules of association" for local congregations. But in reality, it only guarantees the right of the council to control local pastors and local pastors to guide and shepherd (control) local congregations.

Letter: The situation in Birmingham became acute with some members requesting full relationship with UCGIA, and not some loose confederation. Finally, on September 16, 1995, a "Formal Statement Regarding Fellowship And Affiliation" was published in the local congregation by the Birmingham pastor and the local board. Here are some quotes from this document:

"It is important to note that the United Church of God-Birmingham is a separate corporate entity established to serve a spiritual ministry. It is not now under the governance of any other corporate entity, nor does it plan to be so governed in the future.

"It is our desire at this time to remain affiliated with the United Church of God, an International Association after the December conference. But the ministry supported by the United Church of God-Birmingham supports the concept of an International Association which serves locally administered congregations but does not govern them.

"We have recently come to see that a few are under the impression that we are now or soon will be under the governance of the United Church of God, an International Association. This is not so.

"Those who don't wish to worship in this way or oppose this kind of worship

should be reminded that everyone is here voluntarily. No one is coerced into this fellowship. If one does not agree with this form of worship then the best thing for that person would simply be to leave.

"If anyone continues to display open disagreement and hostility or if one continues to secretly try to convince others against this form of worship, then that person will be asked to leave."

SN: The above selected quotations make it sound like the UCG Birmingham church sought out people who disagreed and forced them to leave. In reality, there were a few individuals who were in direct contact with the UCGIA home office and who continually tried to stir up others against the idea of local governance. Eventually, the UCGIA started a home-office-controlled service in Birmingham, and those loyal to Arcadia left to attend there. After attending the Arcadia-sponsored congregation for a while, some brethren left and returned to the UCG- Birmingham congregation. **No one was ever asked to leave! Ray Wooten never refused to let anyone participate in Passover services, Sabbath services, or church programs of any kind.**

Letter: It was after the distribution of this document in September 1995 that a local congregation for the United Church of God, an International Association, was established in Birmingham to serve the needs of those who desired a full relationship with UCGIA. The Transitional Board did not agree with the concept of loose affiliation among congregations in the US, nor has it ever agreed with this concept.

SN: Yet at this time in the UCG history, there were no clear policies stating exactly what kinds of decisions, if any, could be made by local boards. Policies requiring home office review of local media and evangelism were not issued until the last couple of months by the UCGIA.

Rules of Association

Letter: Some in Big Sandy have stated that they have been waiting on the Rules of Association, which would determine how the local congregation should "associate" with UCGIA.

A proposed set of Rules of Association was recently sent to the ministry for their review and input. However, it should be understood that any Rules of Association that are adopted cannot be in conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws. Therefore, all congregations are

required to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws. The Council also must govern according to the Constitution and Bylaws that were ratified by the General Conference of Elders.

SN: There is nothing in the UCGIA Constitution and Bylaws that **defines** the congregations to which the rules of association can apply. The UCGIA documents neither specifically include nor exclude USA congregations. There is no conflict in having some churches operated by the UCGIA constitution and bylaws, and others operated by under rules of association.

Letter: Although Rules of Association were discussed in Denver, in August 1995, as having a place in local congregations, by October 1995, when drafts of the Constitution and Bylaws were being organized, the idea of Rules of Association was almost exclusively applied to international areas. It was understood that the Constitution and Bylaws would provide the framework for the organization. Any Rules of Association would be subservient to the Constitution and Bylaws. A draft of proposed Rules of Association was actually circulated among the ministry in December of 1995, immediately after the Cincinnati conference. This document was incomplete and was circulated for the purpose of getting input. The current draft, which has been sent to the ministry, reflects that input.

It was also during the Cincinnati conference that a delegation of international ministers requested a change in the Constitution to clarify the role of a national council. The original document contained no reference to national councils. To address these concerns, an emergency meeting of the Transitional Board was convened the evening before the official ballot in Cincinnati. The result of this meeting was the inclusion of Article 3.2.2.1 in the Constitution under the title "National Councils":

"A council or board that is established to meet the requirements for legal recognition of the United Church of God, an International Association, or serve the administrative needs of the Church in nations other than the United States of America, are national councils. The national councils shall conduct themselves in accordance with the scripture, this Constitution, their local bylaws, the rules of association and applicable law."

The name selected for the organiza-

tion in Indianapolis was United Church of God, an International Association. There was no intent to have a "national association" but an international one. Congregations within each nation are expected to respond to their national council. Of course, in the US there is no national council. The management team from the Home Office is entrusted with the day-to-day responsibility of the US ministry and the congregations within the US. This is consistent with the structure as outlined in the Constitution and Bylaws. Any Rules of Association will have to correspond to these existing documents.

SN: These concepts may have been clear in the minds of some members of the Council of Elders, but they were not clearly set down on paper. There seemed to be some effort to court the good will of some who wanted more local autonomy. The claim that the word "international association" was used because everyone knew that they did not want a "national association" is silly. "International" implies within the nation as well. An international soccer association will often consist of leagues in different countries as well as several leagues in the same country.

Letter: Since the conference in Cincinnati and the adoption of the Constitution and Bylaws, questions and concerns have come up from time to time regarding governance and local congregations. It has always been made clear, by the Council and the Home Office management team, that the idea of independent, loosely affiliated congregations was not the consensus of those gathered in Indianapolis, nor is it consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of God, an International Association. In our short history we have consistently confirmed our belief in a central authority within the Church. The Rules of Association will reflect this understanding and will hopefully bring closure to the questions that have arisen on this topic.

SN: The UCGIA has been **anything but consistent** in their belief in central authority! No one disputes that Christ is the central divine authority, so they must be talking about human authority. How can the election of the governing council by over 400 elders from all over the world be considered "central authority"? How can congregations with local boards and separately accounted funds be considered "central authority"? Even this document is not consistent. It speaks of "central

authority within the Church" (we assume the capital "C" means the spiritual Body of Christ), yet later says: "We believe there are spirit-led Christians in other organizations." If there are multiple, completely separate groups that are part of the Body of Christ, then there is no central human authority!

The Current Situation

Letter: It is our belief that most of us assumed that the Big Sandy congregation was fully a part of UCGIA, not just affiliated with it. It is obvious, from the question and answer session last Sabbath, that several in the congregation do not wish to be fully a part of UCGIA, but rather wish to be either a totally independent congregation, or an independent congregation only associated or affiliated with UCGIA. At the same time, others clearly do not wish to be a part of a congregation independent of UCGIA.

The decision regarding which way you decide to go will have far-reaching consequences for all concerned. We do not wish to make spiritual judgments concerning the decision you make. We believe that there are spirit-led Christians in other organizations. This is not the time for vocal minorities (or majorities) to be making accusations and judgments concerning who is responsible for these decisions. There are always two sides to every equation. No matter what happens, no matter what decisions are made, let us act peacefully and not apportion blame. Let us make our decisions and determine to live as Christians one with another.

SN: The above paragraph is excellent! It is almost like it is written by a different author. It states the way relationships should be among believers, even when their opinions on a specific issue may differ.

Letter: Perhaps one could say that UCGIA should make an exception to its governing documents and permit the Big Sandy corporation to associate with UCGIA without being under its governing documents. We believe that such an exception would set a far reaching precedent that would seriously jeopardize the integrity of UCGIA. And, as we have previously explained, a precedent has already been established. As deeply as the Council desires to see unity in the Big Sandy congregation, it must consider the unity and well-being of all the congregations of UCGIA.

SN: The first part of this letter was all about how everyone wanted central gover-

nance, and no one wanted a loose association! Yet, the underlined statement above says that allowing one UCGIA congregation to simply "associate" could threaten the whole group. What danger could there be if the whole organization wants central control anyway? **Or is it possible that the UCGIA leaders know that a lot of people really want local control, but are concerned about being disfellowshipped or fired if they ask for it?** Is it possible that central leaders are the greatest proponents of central control?

Letter: Some feel that there are three alternatives for local congregations:

1. To be fully a part of UCGIA
2. To be totally independent
3. To be independent, but associated with UCGIA.

It is important that all realize that the third alternative is not an option under the Constitution and Bylaws of UCGIA. The Constitution has no provision for independent local congregations merely affiliated with, or associated with UCGIA. Therefore, if congregations do not wish to be fully a part of UCGIA and wish to have any kind of independent status, they must realize that an associated or affiliated status will not be recognized by UCGIA.

SN: As stated previously, the UCGIA Constitution and Bylaws do not say what congregations the Rules of Association refer to. The rules could be written to include multiple USA congregations. If the UCGIA leaders see the Biblical need to treat all brethren as brethren, then they should just leave the Big Sandy congregation alone until they can amend the Constitution and Bylaws into conformity with the scriptures.

Letter: It is clear that the membership of the Big Sandy congregation will choose between the two alternatives available. It is important that everyone consider carefully and prayerfully the choice they will make and the implications of their choice. These are some of the implications for each alternative:

SN: We commend the UCGIA for acknowledging that this decision is up to the Big Sandy congregation. At least they did not "command them in the name of God", when God has not commanded them to speak.

Letter: To be fully a part of UCGIA means:

1. Being subject not only to the Constitution, but also the Bylaws of UCGIA.
2. Being fully a part of preaching the gospel to the world and taking care of the

flock of a national and international work.

3. Being fully a part of the administrative structure of UCGIA.

SN: Does the Eternal and the Bible fit into this anywhere? But, apparently the above three points are what the UCGIA considered most important.

Letter: To be totally independent means:

1. Being subject only to the Bylaws of the local corporation.

SN: Nearly every independent group we know would put being subject to our Savior and His Word as point #1.

Letter: 2. The "work" that is done will necessarily be mainly a local one. The congregation may contribute to other local efforts and some international ones, but it will not be able to be a part of the worldwide work and centrally administered media efforts.

SN: We see nothing wrong with working locally, especially if that is the work that the Eternal has given one to do. But there are numerous ways that a single congregation can be heavily involved in national and international works. Many single congregations throughout history have sent ministers to other areas to teach and eventually raise up a congregation. Also, CEM, GCG and numerous other ministries will accept donations for their international broadcasts (giving money is about the extent of most member involvement in gospel preaching anyway). Does the UCGIA statement here mean that they will refuse Big Sandy donations toward their gospel preaching efforts?

3. The congregation will have to develop its own governing structure, which probably will be different from the one that now exists.

4. The congregation will have to assume all pastoral expenses. These will include not only salary, but also health and life insurance, business mileage expenses, and all other expenses now covered by the Home Office. Health and life insurance can be obtained, but at much higher premiums than under the group rates covered by UCGIA. The congregation will also need to consider the important human factor of providing for the pastor's retirement, should age or health require that he retire.

SN: We wonder what problems the apostle Paul had obtaining health and life insurance, as often as he was beat up, shipwrecked, etc. But even if we throw our faith out the window for a moment and forget about Christ's promises to take care of those

who serve Him, it seems that the UCGIA is the group that should be most concerned about salaries and retirement. People will almost always physically take care of an aged local pastor who has served them for many years. But the UCGIA relies largely on current income to pay retired persons. In about ten years, over half of their ministers will be old enough to retire. The UCGIA has barely enough money to pay salaries now, and it is continuing to shrink in size. How can it survive when over half of its payroll is retirees?

Letter: 5. For all practical purposes, the pastor will be the pastor for life. If the pastor should wish to transfer at some time in the future, where will he go? If the congregation wishes to have a change at some time in the future, where will they send him? Where will they go for a replacement?

SN: All Big Sandy has to go on here is the Eternal's promises to provide those people with the spiritual gifts necessary to nourish his body (Eph 4, 1Cor 12). If the people ask and a local pastor needs to leave or a new one needs to come, the Eternal will provide. If the local pastor ceases serving, those who see it can leave the local congregation and form a new one elsewhere. On the other hand, a local congregation in a centrally controlled congregation can either accept the pastor given to them, or do as the Big Sandy congregation is doing...and leave.

Letter: 6. This choice inevitably accepts that a split will occur in the congregation. There are many who wish to be part of UCGIA, and do not wish to be an independent congregation.

It is the earnest hope of the Council of Elders that the membership in Big Sandy will choose to remain fully a part of UCGIA. At the same time we understand that some may not choose to do so. This is sad and we regret very much that some do not wish to be fully a part of UCGIA. However, we respect the wishes of all concerned. While we regret the possible departure of some from UCGIA, as stated earlier, we in no way condemn them nor do we consider them to be anything but our brothers in the faith. We hope that whatever the outcome of this situation is, it will be done peacefully and that we remain friends and brethren.

At the same time we want to assure you that UCGIA is fully committed to serving the needs of the brethren in the Big Sandy area who choose to be fully associated with us. May God be with all of us as we hope and pray for a peace-

May 1998

David Havar's Summary of the Big Sandy Church "Split"

This "split" was **not** initiated by the people in Big Sandy. This split was **not** initiated by the UCG Big Sandy. It was initiated by the UCGIA Council of Elders (hereafter "the Council").

Here are the facts.

1. The Council decided to discuss a transfer with me.
2. UCG-AIA Ministerial Services Department wrote a letter announcing a new pastor—without any discussion with me as some Council members anticipated.
3. Ministerial Services faxed a copy of the letter to me—unprofessional and unchristian.
4. The Council had a meeting on Friday, May 8—without any official discussion with me. (Gary Antion did call.)
5. The Council decided to have a Q & A on Saturday, May 9—without seeking input about the wisdom of such a decision.
6. The Council had a meeting on Monday, May 11—without any official discussion with me.
7. The Council decided to write a letter dated May 13—without seeking input about the wisdom of such a decision.
8. The May 13 letter explained that UCG Big Sandy could not be associated according to their interpreta-

ful resolution to this situation.

For the Council of Elders,
Robert Dick

SN: The above two statements make the UCGIA a category #3 organization (according to the definitions at the beginning of this article). They believe there are converted people in other organizations, but that it is their job to serve only those who decide to come under their control.

We are happy with the UCGIA's decision not to claim that they are the only or main "True Church". But this writer believes that **their clear decision to have no affiliation with a group rather than a loose affiliation essentially spells the end of the UCGIA in its present form.** The UCGIA has stopped more evangelism projects (mostly local) than it has started. There is very little to show for

tion of the by-laws. People would have to make a decision.

9. On May 14, Jim Franks and Leon Walker came to my house to discuss the letter that had already been mailed. In fact, the letter was being received by the congregation on this very day of the meeting. This letter had caused the "split".
10. On May 16, UCG Big Sandy met at its normal place at its normal time (with 254 people). UCGIA held a separate service at a different location [with 150 people present].
11. The split happened without proper communication and without the exploration of better options.

Now, what was my objective? I was **not** initiating any action. I was **not** involved in any early dialogue. My objectives were **not** a part of this scenario.

Now, what did I want? I wanted someone to talk about this, before rushing into decisions that would hurt this particular congregation and the corporation. However, my wants were **not** a part of this scenario.

I am sorry if these facts are unpleasant to your eyes. But, we must never be afraid of the light and the truth.

David Havar,
Pastor, Big Sandy

the millions of dollars poured into the home office. Their best evangelism tool, the Good News magazine, is largely an independent effort. Now, more Feast sites, literature and gospel preaching opportunities exist in the independent Sabbatarian community than in the UCGIA. Congregations that really want to let their light shine, and make a difference in their community and elsewhere, will have a hard time justifying staying with the UCG.

We realize that these are hard sayings for people who wish that they could all remain together and be friends. But when people believe they know the will of the Eternal for their life and their congregation, and a group of distant "leaders" who never asked about their situation say "you must either let us control you or leave our group", can they do anything but become independent? 

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.

Big Sandy Minister Respects *SN* and *Shelter in the Word*

LETTER: May 24, 1998:
Hi Norm!

Hearty congratulations on your new publication, *Shelter in the Word*. I much appreciate and respect the work you and your small staff have been doing these last few years. I don't always agree with your arguments or conclusions, but I'm certainly stimulated to think about what I believe and practice and why. I believe such dialogue and openness can only be to the good. Keep up the good work!

Thank you!

Reg

P.S. Please say "hi" to the Whiteman's in England for me next time you're in touch (if you remember). Leicester used to be my home town.

—Reginald Killingley

Voice/fax: (903) 636-5506

Rt 2 Box 443D, Big Sandy, TX 75755

rkv-clk@swbell.net

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your e-mail. We hope you will find *Shelter in the Word* useful. We would appreciate any writing that you might care to do for it, as time permits.

Is my understanding correct that you are serving the independent Big Sandy group, and therefore no longer a part of the UCGIA? If so, I wish you and Dave Havir well in your service to this now organizationally independent congregation.

If it is all right with you, I would like to publish your name, address, and telephone number as there are many brethren who would like to contact independent ministers who are truly interested in serving the brethren.

Unfortunately, many independent ministers seem to quickly turn into a "one-man Work." Once they leave an organization, they begin to study other teachings, some

of which make sense to them (which I think is good). But then, they preach these new teachings to their congregation(s), and then tell them that they really shouldn't fellowship with other groups that do not have the new teachings.

Finally, they begin to make tapes and write papers and try to convince others that they **must** believe these teachings, also.

I think some do this out of a genuine desire to teach truth, and I think some is done in order to try to keep their membership so they can be financially supported. (When ministers see members of their congregation begin to "try out" other groups, they have a tendency to try to "scare them into staying" rather than "serve them into staying.")

I would appreciate and publish well-thought-out alternative views to *Servants' News* articles.

—NSE

Likes Servant's News Format

LETTER: December 22, 1997

I appreciate receiving your magazine and especially since it is free (I have little funds). Please continue the following which I find most useful:

- 1) pre-punched paper
- 2) colored last page

Although the above sounds trivial, they are a great help to this pensioner.

Thanks,

—Bill Storey, Alberta, Canada

RESPONSE: Not everyone has been as happy with the format as you have, but it seems to be fulfilling its function. As we have not had any suggestions that would be both more economical and more functional, we plan to keep this format for now.

—NSE

Church of God Seventh Day Bigger than Worldwide Church of God

LETTER: May 16, 1998

"I am going to end all comment about that group here, with the epitaph that—like a dead tree—they have since split and resplit into so many little tiny groups, all hating one another, that no one seems to know where all of them are" (Autobiography of HWA, p. 530).

That comment was intended for the Church of God (Seventh Day), but may also apply to us today in principle.

Yet the Church of God (Seventh Day) has 130,000 members today and there has

been some reunification and co-operation amongst some of their branches. Yet we have split and resplit. And now with UCG shrinking from 19,000 to about 16,000 going down even further—due to the situation in Big Sandy (and who knows where else soon), we don't seem to be co-operating amongst even ourselves. GCG, UCG etc. should be co-operating, but refuse to even talk to each other. Is that Christian?

This constant self-devouring and cannibalising is just destroying us and will prevent us from undertaking a Work. It is interesting to see the class of person and the names who are doing so. It is not the Roman Catholic Church, not infiltrators, not the members, not conspiracies. It is ...

—Craig White, Sydney, Australia

craig@triode.net.au

RESPONSE: I have heard estimates of the size of the Church of God, Seventh day as high as 300,000. The vast majority of those people do not live in the USA, Britain, Canada or Australia, but that does not make them somehow "less valuable" to the Eternal. Because they are composed of many groups, usually with a very loose central organization, it is hard to know exactly how many people are there. It is possible that the combined Church of God Seventh Day groups have always had more people than the WCG. But since we have no way of knowing exactly how many people really had the Spirit of God in either organization, comparisons prove little.

But twelve years after Herbert Armstrong's death, the Church of God, Seventh Day is larger than the WCG, PCG, UCG, GCG, and CGI combined. **That fact should teach us that decentralized government with local evangelism can produce more stable, long-term growth than an HWA-type hierarchy.** There is no doubt that Herbert Armstrong did reach much of the world with a "warning message" in a way that the Church or God Seventh Day never has. **But if the Eternal gave that job to Armstrong, and not to us, then we will not be able to do it.** I think it is unfortunate, but I think many COG leaders today covet the **money** that is necessary to do a massive media work. (I am not saying they want it all for themselves, but a few percent of a 10-million dollar budget goes a long way.) It is possible to show that the WCG spent the most money on evangelism, but where does money fit into Revelation 3:17? Should any leader want a lot of money, or want to be close to the Eternal?

I really appreciate your last paragraph. It appears that the Eternal allowed the Tkach's to gain control of the WCG and to

change most of the doctrines—slowly and sometimes deceitfully—to see what His people would do. Far too many of the ministry simply preached what they were told to preach. Some quit rather than stand for the truth. Some stood up as leaders to oppose the changes, but usually turned out to be more concerned with justifying their position as “head of the work” and ensuring loyalty to themselves, rather than simply helping others.

I remember being amazed in 1992 how silent all of the WCG “leaders” were about the changes there. It was private conversations and electronic forums, such as Compuserve, where those of us who were puzzled by the changes were strengthened by the counsel of friends. My wife and I finally wrote an anonymous letter expressing these concerns and mailed it, signed “Friends in Pasadena”. I also remember you, Craig, as probably the first contact I had with someone in Australia who was trying to make sense of the changes there, and to “wake up” others to what was happening. I believe you used an e-mail pseudonym to begin with. Both of us felt that it was vitally important not to be “put out” of a human organization.

Looking back in retrospect, it does not even seem to matter to me whether I decided to leave on my own or whether I was “put out” of the WCG. The Holy Spirit is available to those who believe and obey. We are judged by what we do, not by the group to which we belong.

Thanks for your letter and let me encourage you to keep writing.

—NSE

Stone Cut Out Without Hands

LETTER: October 25, 1997
Dear Servants' News,

I would like to touch on a subject of the vision that Nebuchadnezzar had of a large statue, as mentioned in the 2nd chapter of Daniel. I know we can all agree on the meaning of the vision revealed to Daniel—namely four world ruling empires: that of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. But if we look closely enough, they are successive empires, and a stone smashes the fourth empire there and then (Daniel 2:40-45). The verses go on to say that God would set up a kingdom in the days of those kings—namely Roman.

If we look closely enough, perhaps God did set up a kingdom—and that kingdom was in the midst of them in the form of Christ and his embryonic church. Perhaps this is the true meaning of these passages in Daniel, for God does not lie. I believe this

is a truly possible interpretation that we have overlooked due to misinterpretation and a lack of a genuine desire to know and learn the truth. I hope you will publish these thoughts for the benefit of the readers and perhaps get more input from them in the process. Thank you.

Paul Christophy, England

RESPONSE: When one looks at the New Testament use of Old Testament prophecy, it is clear that it may have multiple meanings. Joel 2 clearly seems to be about the “day of the Lord” and the restoration in the Millennium, yet Peter quotes two verses from the middle of it to refer to the Holy Spirit being poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-29).

Your understanding is certainly possible, though it is not complete. The Babylonian, Persian, and Greek kingdoms are gone, but the Roman Empire has apparently lived on in various forms—and is becoming stronger by the day. Today, the church is a scattered group which has essentially no influence on the world compared to the “Roman” kingdom. In the future, we believe that both the Church, and a physical government under the Messiah will replace the Roman kingdom.

—NSE

Questions on Predestination

LETTER: December 30, 1997
Dear Norman,

Have you ever considered the fact that God knows all things, and how it relates to predestination, and free moral agency? We have always found the explanations of our former association somewhat unsatisfactory, with explanations like “God chooses not to know” and “we would have no choice” if He knows the outcome. It seems to us, that as long as **we** don't know the outcome, it doesn't really make any difference. And regardless, just because we can't wrap **our** puny little minds around it, surely that doesn't mean that it is not possible? After all, His ways are far beyond ours, and scripture indicates plainly that He knows all things, and the end from the beginning.

And would it not also clarify and simplify a lot of questions about ages past, God's plan and predestination, as well as the age to come and the judgement period?

We would be very interested in your opinion about this, if you are not too busy.

Greetings from Canada's West coast, and may the Almighty bless you.

—Henk & Gina Vander Geest, BC Canada

RESPONSE: Consider the following

scriptures:

And the LORD **was sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart (Gen 6:6).

And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for **now I know** that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me”(Gen 22:12).

And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, **to know what was in your heart**, whether you would keep His commandments or not (Deut 8:2).

You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD **your God is testing you to know** whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut 13:3).

However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him [Hezekiah] to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, **in order to test him**, that He might know all that was in his heart (2Chr 32:31).

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone (James 1:13).

These Scriptures show that the Eternal tests people and then learns what they will do in their trial. He tells us what will happen if we follow him, and what happens if we disobey, then tells us to choose Him. None of this makes any sense if the universe is on a fixed course and the Eternal knows what we will do ahead of time. There are times when the Eternal and Jesus express amazement and sorrow at how individuals behaved, both good and bad.

There are Scriptures that show that the Eternal gives certain men certain jobs, but they still have a choice. Saul had the chance to have his kingdom established forever, but because of his bad choices, he was replaced (1Sam 13:13-14). Jehu did his job, but still did not care to follow the Eternal (2Kng 10:30-31). Isaiah was called from birth and willingly did his job (Isa 49:5;6:8). Jonah tried to get out of his job, but the Eternal compelled him to do it anyway (Jonah 1-4).

Does the Eternal know about every person who will be born hundreds of years before they are born? If so, how can He consider adultery a sin? If all of the babies born out of wedlock had to be born to fulfill the Eternal's plan, then how can the Eternal hold anyone accountable for adul-

tery that produces a baby? If the Eternal willed it, they had to do it! We must realize the difference between knowing what every person is going to do before they do it, and knowing in general how people behave, and then having the ability to make specific things happen.

Think about it! If the Eternal knew how each person was going to turn out before he made the universe, then why did he even make the universe? He could have simply made only the people whom he knows are going to have eternal life, and just skipped making all those who will not be saved, and spared everyone all of the suffering! But if we understand that the universe is a place where physical people can make, as well as learn from, real decisions that affect the physical realm (but cannot pollute eternity), then it all has a purpose.

There are other scriptures that explain how the Eternal **knows** the beginning from the end, He knows our hearts, He knows our thoughts as we think them, etc. But I can find no scripture that says God knows exactly what you are going to think and pray about tomorrow. Why don't you try surprising Him? Don't think about it today (because He'll know), but tomorrow try to pray about something that you have never prayed about before. You might politely ask for a simple, but confirmable answer. **Our Father might appreciate being treated like He is really there and cares about what we say, instead of hearing the same, routine prayers again.**

—NSE

Why Do I Read *Servants' News*?

LETTER: August 15, 1997
Dear Mr. Edwards,

Today, at last, I finish reading Vol. 3 No. 3 of *Servants' News*, May 1997, which I received on July 17. The June issue came in the mailbox on August 9, of which I already read half of the articles so far. The fact that it takes a rather long time to get here, is no problem for me. I am so busy reading the many papers among which is your *Servants News*, and doing my Bible studies, that I don't mind your paper coming in so late. I still have to read all the back issues that you send me a few months ago!

In April 1995 you published the first issue of your informative publication. In May 1995 the first issue of *In Transition* was published, and in February 1997 continued as *The Journal*. These papers have not been able to make yours redundant. There is a place for both publications, because they complement each other.

There is at least one difference:

One has to pay a subscription price for *The Journal*, due to their way of gathering news, and making a profit; whereas the *Servants' News* is gratis, though one is free to support your publication financially whenever possible.

Why should I, so far, keep on reading *Servants' News*?

There are at least 4 reasons:

because your understanding of the Truth is not always in agreement with mine which, among other things, keeps me alert and awake.

because it is encouraging to see that we agree on what is the Truth on many subjects.

because I have not (yet) discovered a change in the Editor's attitude on VITAL issues, as I did with regard to the Editor of *The Plain Truth* magazine published by WCG.

because the circulation of *Servants' News* is relatively small, i.e. 2000 copies, not millions or tens of thousands. Before the Second Coming, it is quality, not quantity that is of importance; after the so-called Millennium has started it is both quality and quantity that counts.

I am aware of the fact that you and I do not have all knowledge of the **truth**, if ever. I may have discontinued reading 12 to 15 papers that are issued on a regular basis. Why do I still read *Servant's News*? It is mainly because of your approach in viewing the Bible with an open mind, in a sympathetic and realistic way, unlike so many others who are so pedantic, not knowing that **love** is more important than knowledge and that, instead of man, only the Creator can give us understanding of the knowledge of His Truth via revelation through His Holy Spirit into each person's human spirit.

[Literature request omitted.]

Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Edwards and others who help us.

—Frans Louwinger, Netherlands

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter. We very much appreciate the fact that many *Servants' News* readers do not believe everything that we write. We are always happy to print other opinions that are well-thought-out. We try to study the scriptures and avoid writing articles with major errors, but we realize that we are human and it is still quite possible for us to make mistakes. We pray for understanding, but do **not** believe that every thought that we write is divinely inspired.

—NSE

What To Do With KJV Mistakes

LETTER: July 16, 1997
Dear Sir,

Thank you for the literature which we find very interesting.

I would appreciate your comments on how one can arrive at truth when there are so many mistakes in the King James Version of the Bible and in other translations. Thanking you in advance.

—TR, Australia

RESPONSE: Your question is a fair one. I think the answer to it is found in Luke 12:47-48:

“And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

In the above, and other scriptures, the Eternal promises to judge us based on what we know. For the first 1600 years after Christ's death, most believers probably did not own a Bible at all. Of all believers who had owned a Bible, probably only a small fraction have had access to multiple translations or to books that would help them learn directly from the Hebrew and Greek. It would be extremely unfair for the Eternal to judge us on absolute truth because a lot of truth has simply not been available to many people.

This is not to say that doctrine doesn't matter. The scripture above shows that there is a penalty for doing wrong, even when we do not know what we are doing. **However, the greatest penalties come from not doing what we know to do.** Too often, I find that “Church of God” people seem to be more interested in studying and learning “the last ounce of truth”, but seem to have little interest in doing the truth that they know.

Are we helping the poor, the sick, and the people who need comforting? Are we truthful and just in our dealings with others? Do we try to help others with the knowledge we have, or do we judge them for not having our knowledge? If we sin against our friends, do we go apologize and reconcile, or do we say “they did something wrong, too—they have to apologize to me first”? Do we hold our tongue when we should? Do we look to Christ for guidance, and speak and act like Him in all circumstances? The Eternal can try our hearts in these basic issues even if we

have gaps in our doctrinal understanding.

Christ has promised to shepherd His people and teach them through the Holy Spirit. We need to ask Him, then have the confidence that He will show us the truth we need to know as we need to know it. That truth may come through a KJV Bible, another translation, a Hebrew/Greek Bible help, or a good article. Sometimes, the Eternal lets people believe error for a long time. I don't know of anyone who I think had "all the truth" just before he or she died.

We simply have to be diligent to study and to let the Father show us more truth as we are able to bear it (John 16:12).

—NSE

Only Under God's Authority

LETTER: November 23, 1997
Hi Norm,

Thanks for the back issues of Servants' News. I've almost finished studying them, and I feel as if I know you, so let me introduce my wife Loretta and myself.

We began with the WCG in 1973. We made it to November 1992 and coming to a crossroads. The WCG did not represent my beliefs concerning "major" doctrines, doctrines that (because of the knowledge God has allowed us), to compromise with these teachings would cost us life eternal

Then it was out of the frying pan and into the fire for about 6 months with PCG.

We have been studying widely and we're currently of the LRCG. The third part of our trio is Joe Hewitt of Beaufort, SC.

By the very (nature) of organized religion, anyone that becomes associated with it will always be limited, very limited, in understanding or able to grow in understanding.

We received a great quantity of understanding in the WCG, but the quantity and the "quality" of understanding that we've been given since leaving WCG overshadows greatly the former.

Anyone who puts themselves under any "authority", other than God (through Jesus the Christ) will not be spiritually free to receive the gifts that God would give.

We were purchased, redeemed from bondage to Satan and thereby we are now bond-slaves to Jesus.

For anyone then, willfully putting themselves under any other authority than their Master (Lord) is rebellion. And those who do (sorrowfully) then can't receive this saying, that He has the power to redeem them over again.

Jack Pye, Georgia

RESPONSE: We can submit to human

authority as long as we do not let it replace the authority of the Eternal. Wives can submit to husbands, workers can submit to bosses, members can submit to the leaders of their congregations, and people can submit to duly constituted civil authority—provided these authorities are not in conflict with the Eternal.

But problems often do occur when people let these physical relationships get in the way of their relationship with the Eternal. If a person relies only on a church organization or leader for new spiritual knowledge, it may appear to work for a time if the leaders are diligently studying and teaching what they have learned. However, human leaders always either eventually stop studying or die. They are often replaced by less competent leaders or bureaucracies. The person who relies on such an organization is in trouble. Once an organization writes an extensive doctrinal statement, it is often very difficult for anyone in the organization to study and teach anything that is not already in the doctrinal statement. But often, a major crisis in the organization is required to change the doctrinal statement.

The best way to allow the Holy Spirit to teach individuals while maintaining peace in a congregation is to recognize that there will be a diversity of beliefs, without tolerating the obvious heresies shown in Scripture to be unacceptable.

—NSE

Working Toward Shared Ministry

LETTER: December 1997

The latest news here is that a number of us who meet every Sabbath have decided not to have the minister who met with us on a regular basis. We have felt that he has become somewhat of a dictator. He calls all the shots. No one else speaks unless he's away. He has been condescending to different points of view when challenged. He does have a very deep knowledge of the Bible. However, when he conducts services, he pulls out his recorder and fills a 90 minute tape (not including songs and his general comments). This leaves very little time for any input from the brethren. It also stifles comment, because the more you try to add something to the service the longer services go (some 3plus hours). Therefore, who wants services to go 3plus hours? When we first started with this minister, it was very open, no recorder, it was great! Now, it has evolved into the type of service I dread. Come to service, sit down, be quiet, and listen. Then when you disagree, which I did 2 weeks ago, "you have a hang-up". That is what I was told. You

see, it's the same old thing, if you study your Bible, and have a different understanding, you have the problem.

I do understand we all have our short comings, however, they must not affect the growing understanding that we all need. This system creates a stagnant environment conducive to frustration and dread.

—Internet Post.

RESPONSE: Simply leaving hierarchical government does not "solve" the problems of a congregation. When one has been in a hierarchical group for years, it is just a tendency to look to one person to have all the spiritual gifts, rather than developing them throughout the body. There is still a tendency for one individual (especially a former CoG minister) to dominate a group. There is also a tendency for people to look to one person to do most of the speaking, most of the visiting of the sick, most of the anointing, most of the counseling, most of the casting out of demons, etc. Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 indicate that gifts are normally distributed among the believers. That is where we should look for them and pray for them to be granted.

We should not expect local fellowships to be smooth and cheerful all of the time. People learn a lot by working through difficulties. The history of the nation of Israel (a forerunner of the Church), the book of Acts, and the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 indicate a lot of struggle. That is why we need to be "anchored" on our Savior, not organizations of men, be they large or small.

—NSE

Think Big While You Fellowship

LETTER: April 15, 1998
Servants' News,

My wife and I went to services with an independent group several weeks ago, with some old friends from Worldwide. They gave us a warm welcome and were glad to see us, as we were them. Their attendance was about twelve, they had not grown for over a year. They left the WCG in 1993 starting with the Global Church of God. As Global grew, they decided to put two groups together, and rented a hall. Things went rather well for a short time, then trouble began. I don't know all the details, but it seems that each group wanted to give announcements, sermonettes and lead songs.

So they took their grievances to "head-quarters." Several of the top men came in to settle the dispute. They did not settle the dispute the biblical way going to each other and hashing it out...So the hierarchy settled

the dispute by putting one group out of the church...to the satisfaction of one group and sour grapes for the other. Later, the group that was put out affiliated with the Christian Biblical Church of God, things went along smoothly for awhile. Then there was something said on a tape that they didn't like. So they called California to get clarification of the tape. Well the CBCG would not change, or qualify their position. I don't know who is right or who is wrong. They appear to be satisfied, but they are still looking.

Most of our family is still looking. Will we ever be happy with our own little group? There are a lot of us still hunting for someplace to fellowship with like minds... Will we still be looking when our Savior returns?

Well, as long as we are looking for that sweet someplace in never-never land, where we all live happily ever after, with the same doctrines, with no deviations, same calendar, same sacred names, and we all love vanilla ice cream, (happy days). Well dream on! We are going to have to learn there are other ways of thinking and doing things. Maybe not just exactly as we would do them, but close enough that we feel we are not putting our eternal life on the line. Nowhere are we going to find the perfect church group, assembly, or ecclesia that we can agree with straight down the line on every point. Brethren when you find this independent group, let us all know. All it takes is one rotten apple to detour us, and lose sight of our goal. Hebrews 13:9 "do not be carried away with false doctrine." As long as the doctrines being taught are not erroneous, try to stay put, no church is going to be perfect. On the other hand, never again do we want to sit in a chair half asleep, while false doctrine is being preached. Most of us thought if it came from headquarters, and was preached in local congregations that it was infallible. **(Shame on us)**. It boils down to this, **do not give up fellowship with the brethren because of a few minor points**. How did the old joke go? Everybody has to be some place.

—Houston Holland, Indiana

RESPONSE: We find your experience to be very helpful. If we read the list of the "people of faith" in Hebrews 11, we do not find very many who lived peaceful lives among their friends. The next chapter gives us a clue: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb 12:5-6).

If we are young and in need of learning, we need to assemble at the place we can

learn the most. As we mature, we need to go where we can participate and practice what we know. The more mature we are, the more carnality we should be able to put up with. (As far as we can tell, Jesus almost never preached to people with the Holy Spirit.) If we leave groups every time we find something wrong with somebody, it is a sign of our own weakness.

Do not be discouraged!

—NSE

Moved On From the "CoG's"

LETTER:

December 7, 1997

Dear Norman,

Thank you for all of your Servants' News issues and the hard work you and others have put into it in order to bring us the latest news regarding the "churches of God" and other relevant articles for those of us who are originally from Worldwide Church of God. I like a lot of what you have to say and your publication is among the few in these circles which I've found palatable.

I am writing because I wish to discontinue receiving the *Servants' News*. After five years since I left Worldwide Church of God, I am growing ever tired of hearing about them. Like many, I grew up in "Worldwide." I have many memories—some good, some bad. Even the "good" times weren't really all that good but merely delusions of a healthy, happy life which never existed. There is virtually nothing left now in my life which connects me to my former years nor does my life resemble the one I once lived. Thanks be to God alone (and my husband too!). I've had to learn how to kick some of the "bad habits" I picked up through my years as a "Worldwide" slave. In all honesty, any of us who have spent a number of years there could truly benefit from introspection—to recognize within ourselves the weaknesses that brought or kept us in the bondage of a cult. Refusal to do so will simply enslave us into "new" cults and/or extremely damaging ideas and belief systems. It is apparent that our growth-hindering characteristics include pride and arrogance. We have it in abundance. (Proverbs 11:2, 16:18-19, 29:23.) Pride disallows us the necessary introspection. It is this introspection which will hopefully bring about humility—the realization that our sins have taken us on a whirlwind of debris for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 or more years. Our Lifeless example reflects on God and impacts other lives, oftentimes, even severely and with devastating consequences. (Matthew 12:33-37.)

There is a desperate need for serious and substantial change within our lives, not just an organizational or doctrinal change,

but a **transformation** possible, of course, only through Messiah...if we *let* Him.

Although the Servants' News has a very useful purpose to those still impacted by the loss of their individual "Church of God," I am happy to say that I'm no longer interested in what any of the "Churches of God" are doing or not doing. I am ready to move on.

May God bless you and all of your readers!

Sincerely,

—T. S., Austin, Texas

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter.

Being younger, you are more flexible and able to change quickly. We agree with your basic premise: little will be accomplished if people continue to think of themselves as "former members of the Worldwide Church of God". The Bible teaches us not to align ourselves with leaders or groups (1 Cor 3), how much worse is it to align ourselves with former leaders and groups. We need to begin thinking in terms of what we will **be** and what we will **do** in the future.

Nevertheless, many former Worldwide Church of God members need to come to grips with and recover from the mistakes made in the past. Not everyone recognizes or recovers at the same rate. It is not possible to suddenly erase many years of previous life. Hence, Servants' News continues to deal with issues that are of concern to its largely Church-of-God readership. When the Eternal shows us that it is time to stop serving in this way, and to move on to something else—we will be ready to do it.

We agree that introspection—in the light of the Bible—is very good for us. We should be able to see the truth that we learned, and what the Eternal did in our lives. We should also be able to see the mistakes we made. It should not be hard to see how we respected people more than we respected the Biblical standards of justice and fairness. We should know, better than nearly everyone else on earth, why religion should not be based around trust in a single person or organization. We agree that there is now a need for transformation in our lives. There is a need to teach this to others also.

One thing you might help us with: now that you are moving on, where are you going? Are you serving others? Are you meeting with others that hold similar views? One thing the Worldwide Church of God did right is teach more Bible truth than the average religious organization. We simply cannot join our local Sunday-keeping church and take a part in their Christmas play—even if they have good programs helping the poor and distributing Bibles.

I hope eventually that the Eternal will use us to reach out to our own communi-

ties—not to build organizations, but to teach truth and to do good. I also hope we will be able to provide training and literature to our readers so that they can do the same thing. We believe that people do not need a central group to look to, but to know that the power of the Eternal can be among them.

Please, even if it is just a short note, let us know where you are “moving on” to.

—NSE

Dragged Back Into Study

LETTER:

March 22, 1998

I attend no service right now. Except, on-line. I was with the Christian COG in Lantana from about 1983 to 86 or so. Other than that with the old WCOG from 1965 till 1972. Been about 12 years now. Lately, and suddenly, I have been dragged back into study!

Left the WCOG just about the time GTA left. Left and watched from a distance as the organization disintegrated! Most of the 7th dayers seem to have branched out and are still Sabbath keepers. Actually, the divisions seem to prevent any easy take over by satanic forces I think. God said the gates of hell shall not prevail—I see this as one way to prevent it. Just my observation.

While at the Lantana CCOG I wrote the booklet *New Moons v The Sacred Jewish Calendar* which we sent around the world....My only claim to fame!

Again, thanks.

—Gary W. Geiser, KeepThe7th@aol.com.

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your letter. I am glad that you are studying again. It seems that the Spirit of God has a way to do things even when people are removed from brethren.

I agree with your understanding of the break-up of the WCG. Christ has no trouble working with hundreds of groups or millions of individuals. It is now impossible for one man to corrupt all of former WCG members.

—NSE

Hierarchical Organizations: Ticket To Place of Safety?

LETTER:

May 1998

Dear Norman and Marleen,

I would like to say something about one of the reasons why a lot of people are in these hierarchical organizations. People are taught that the group with the truth or the most truth and resources “wins a trip to the place of safety”. I don’t find this being the fate or goal of the saints in scripture. Instead of earning protection by our righteousness, I

see the saints who know their God working exploits (Dan 11:32) and being martyred for their faith (Dan 11:35; Rev 6:5-11; 12:11; 14:12,13).

We have been taught that the woman who flies into the wilderness to be protected is the church. (The Philadelphian era who had more truth and wealth than the others). Some organizations still teach that the wilderness is somewhere out in the Jordanian desert (Petra). **But I would like to point out that John the Baptist (Matt 3:1) was preaching in the wilderness of Judea. (Wilderness being the same word used in Rev 12:14).**

Then who is the woman who gave birth to the male child (Jesus Christ) and flies into the wilderness to be nourished from the face of the serpent? It has been taught that this woman is the church at the end time (because of all her knowledge and righteousness) and that her children are somehow not measuring up. (They are Laodiceans).

I would like to point out again that the woman cannot be the church as these scriptures (Rev 22:16; 5:5) and many others say that Jesus Christ is the root and offspring of the house of David. And also that this woman’s children keep the commandments and also have the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17) and that the testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy (15:10). I think the scriptures in Zech 12:5 through 14:21 might describe the two witnesses (mentioned as governors in Jerusalem) and the house of David, Nathan, Levi and the others in the last 3 and ½ years before Christ returns. Satan has been trying to destroy the house of David and the Jews since David took the throne. The generations have been carefully preserved as shown in Matt 1:17 through all time and I believe they still are. It’s the time of Purim, and I think that the book of Esther has more significance than we realize.

There has been so many false concepts taught that are still around and need to be rooted out. If we are in the church to save our necks or doing righteous deeds or keeping the commandments so we can be protected—then I think that is the wrong motivation.

We really appreciate all you do and the trouble you go through to print your newsletter. Keep it up, OK?

Cherie Zimmerman, Alberta, Canada

RESPONSE: Very interesting points! So much of Revelation is symbolic—I do not know anyone who believes that the Eternal will make a literal animal (“beast”) with seven heads and ten horns. On the other hand, some verses seem to be literal—such

as the letters that John was told to deliver to seven real cities in Asia. But there are a number of things where we pick and choose. Your idea that “woman in the wilderness” symbolizes the church preaching the Gospel message amid a religiously desolate people seems reasonable. If the woman is a symbol, why not the wilderness?

I do not see any conflict in saying the “woman who gave birth to the man-child” is the Church. The nation of Israel is referred to as the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38, KJV). If one sees the New Testament congregation as a continuation of the Old Testament congregation, it fits all right.

However, I have not had time to study these verses extensively, nor have I asked for (or received) divine revelation on this matter, so I refuse to make any definite pronouncements on their meaning.

—NSE

Don't Forget To Read The Bible

LETTER:

December 10, 1997

Dear Norm,

Just a short note to say thank you. Since receiving *Servants' News* about a year now. It's made me more aware of what's going on in many areas.

People saw my letters that you printed in *Servants' News* and I've received feedback in the form of newsletters, magazines, and articles.

You can see many of us are learning from the present experience of being scattered the way we are. But some of the publications have made me also aware (the ones people sent me) that there's a disturbing trend among some. They want to look to the latest “prophet” for the latest “prophecy”; it seems like they get into a “dial a prophet” attitude.

Yes, I know God has His true teachers and prophets around. Eph 4 tells us this is how God's people are brought along in the faith through the work of His leaders with different gifts.

But the danger I see in a lot of it is once again it's looking to man and it avoids the discipline where God says each Christian should “seek him diligently” (Jer 29:13) in their own prayer life.

By looking so much to the latest “prophecy” it offers a way to “pick the lock”—a quick and easy way that avoids the discipline that each should have in their own personal prayer and Bible study to stay in focus—instead some are once again depending on man.

The only way we can discern the difference between God's true teachers and the false ones is if we are having enough con-

tact with God ourselves. So these "prophets" offer a way to "pick the lock" by following them.

There are no shortcuts—each must seek God diligently. We must get our marching orders from the boss—Jesus Christ—and follow the lead of his Spirit (John 10:27) so we can discern his voice.

In the urgency of the times we are living in, Jesus gave us instructions of what to do to stay in focus and endure, (Luke 21:36) "to watch and pray always".

I've noticed those who want the latest "prophecy" from the latest "prophet" avoid this discipline of praying diligently as Jesus told us to do.

Here's a promise from Jesus that ties in with John 29:13—whether we happen to be around one of God's true prophets or not—God will keep us in focus through seeking Him diligently in our own individual lives, and that's the bottom line and foundation—look to Jesus—with the tons of articles and material that's out there, many can get distracted. There's nothing wrong with reading other material for sure. But let's make sure we're spending enough time in the Bible.

—Tommy Willis, Louisiana

RESPONSE: Thank you for your insight. I agree that there are too many so-called "prophets" essentially preaching a message of physical salvation. They claim to understand prophecy and know exactly what we need to do to escape the tribulation, Beast, etc. However, almost none have any proof of divine inspiration of their claims—they simply believe their interpretation is better than anyone else's interpretation.

There certainly are scriptures that promise physical deliverance to the obedient. But I know of no scripture that says deliverance will come to those who spend most of their time looking for it. And some scriptures promise a reward for suffering:

"Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb 11:35).

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35).

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

—NSE

Feels Positive About The Scattering

LETTER:

August 10, 1997

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I have recently begun receiving the

Servants' News and am generally pleased. I am a former WCG member (since 1986) and have been a SAHCOG member for a little over three years. I subscribe to several types of informative material. In Transition/The Journal, the IBLC, The History Research Project, Origin of Nations, and have recently corresponded with Mr. Nickels at Giving and Sharing over a mistranslation of Revelation 11:18.

Since the recent "Diaspora", I am finding a wealth of information, ideas, opinions, etc., that were not available before. I think it is just great. It increasingly becomes more clear to me why God either caused or has allowed this scattering. It is now time for the free exchange of information and ideas between those called to The Truth. In this way I believe we will be better prepared to do whatever it is we are going to be called upon to do. I think that when the time comes we will all know what we are to do. As Patton told his green troops before battle "When...You'll know what to do." Until then we must grow in knowledge, understanding and wisdom in the Truth. There is so much information available now that at times it seems that I'll never get caught up. But this abundance is truly great (as long as we use discernment). I notice that you do print articles by members or put them in Q & A format. When I was with WCG I wrote up many of my personal Bible studies as did others. However, about two years I wrote a short thesis on the Born again/ Begotten again controversy. It is slightly different from what was commonly taught by the WCG and of course was radically different from what they teach now.

In any event, I sent a copy to Rod Meredith/GCG, asking for some solid Biblical input and also asking if I was indeed correct, as I believe *from the scriptures* that I am. No response. Next I sent a copy to Donald Ward, IBLC asking for the same input. No response. I have sent a copy to the Journal. To date no response. Keep in mind that **I am not pushing my ideas**, I am asking for an honest Biblical review. If I am wrong I want to know from the Bible and be proven wrong. Of course I think I am correct. But I am **only interested in the Truth**. In any case, it is not a matter that would affect someone's salvation. This is one of those points at which we can be at a small variance and not stumble. I therefore must conclude that the lack of response is due to either the fact that the conclusion I came to cannot be refuted and is therefore ignored by those who seal their doctrines in granite or that a simple lay-member ought not pose alternative point of view. If I don't receive any responses soon I may send you a copy. It

seems that you at least try and address such items.

I am grateful for the diverse areas that we of the new "Diaspora" can obtain information. We must gather all the knowledge that we can now while it is available. It is really only now that I believe that I understand the parable of the ten virgins. I can barely keep up myself at this time. When things start to happen I am not going to be able to re-educate those who want a synopsis to internalize in a hurry. They will have to buy their own oil. I hope this doesn't sound selfish. But we have to tie our own shoes so to speak. We can ask for and expect help from others, but we must do it ourselves.

Enclosed you will find a small donation and a small list of items that I would like to order. Keep up the work.

—RM, Illinois

RESPONSE: I agree that the average "independent" has **hundreds of times more information** available to him than someone who sticks to one organization. Even if only 12% of this available information is good stuff, the independent still has **dozens of times more good information** available to him than the one-organization person.

Most hierarchical organizations are not interested at reading member's doctrinal papers at all. The theory of top-down government implies that if God is going to reveal anything, it would be to the man or men at the top. Can you see the difficulty they would have publicly stating that "we are changing our teaching on 'born again' because Joe Member saw this wonderful thing in the scripture"?

We at Servant's News receive more papers than we can read, but would like to read and answer them all if we had time. We have certainly read and responded to a large number. I would encourage you to share your paper with other serious brethren. You will probably get a more honest evaluation from them than from leaders in a group who would rather not "rock the boat" by changing their doctrinal statement.

—NSE

Day and Night Article

LETTER:

August 1997

Dear Norman,

Howdy from Texas! I do hope things are well with you and your family.

I just finished reading Herb's article in the latest SN [July 1997] and basically agree with what he brought out, with the exception of the part about the first three days of the re-creation. As you know, my study on the calendar has focused on the role of the stars

in determining time—specifically the year. As I studied this issue, I was also beginning to see the role of stars in determining the beginning and ending of the “day.” It puts more focus on the stars (that “declare the glory of God”) instead of “ol’ Sol” which has such a prominent role in the other religions. Just as Herb points out, “Gen 1:14-16 does not mention the words ‘sun’ or ‘moon’...”, I believe it is showing us the stars’ superior role in time-keeping. Remember, astronomers use star-time (sidereal) in all their calculations—everything is in relation to the stars.

Knowing that “the moon determines the (festival) seasons”, the moon is next in line of authority. So that would put the sun at the end of the line in determining time—the time of day is all it’s good for. It appears then, that we’re supposed to be looking up to the heavens as soon as it’s dark enough to see what time it is— whether it’s a new day, a new month or even a new year. So I see Herb’s article as a first step on the road to understanding the prominent role the stars play in keeping track of time.

Since time is a matter that must be established, and knowing that “every matter must be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses”.

{Formula: witness + witness = established matter}

Please consider the following:

The sun is dropping on the horizon. You either have finished work or are taking a break. You watch as the beautiful colors paint the sky, the shadows rolling across the mountains/hills/ocean/river/etc., and you can’t help but to reflect and meditate on the beautiful creation and its Creator. It grows darker and one by one the little lights appear, first the planets (reflecting the suns light), and then the closer/bigger stars (their own light). Ah, the beginning of a new day!

{Formula: planets(sunlight) + stars(ownlight) = night/day divide}

Now there just happens to be a thin sliver crescent of the moon lit by sunshine and the rest of it lit by earthshine giving it an awesome 3-D effect and appearing “full”. Ah, the beginning of a new month!

{Formula: crescent(sunlight) + remainder(earthlight) = new month}

Now the Winter Milky Way—the “one end of the heavens” from which the sun starts its “circuit” (tquphah) in Psa 19:6—just happens to be above this new moon—which itself is somewhere in Taurus, and sometimes “hitting the bull’s eye” (Aldebran). Ah, the beginning of a new year!

{Formula: certain stars + new moon = new year}

Just think of the simplicity: no instru-

ments (poles in the ground = obelisks), no complicated calculations, no “rules”, no guessing. It’s just there—to be read like a watch, and from every part of the world! It’s so simple you will even be able to hear: “Look daddy, the stars are appearing, a new day has started...oh, look at the new moon isn’t it neat, it must be a new month!...oh, and I see the stars of Taurus behind the moon and the Milky Way above it, it must be the beginning of a new year!”

Well, that’s it for now. Just wanted to send a little something to you on this issue. Take care.

Philia,

—Michael Turner, Texas

RESPONSE: Thanks for the letter.

Your calendar system looks straight-forward and simple, using primarily the stars. It is a system that certainly could work. My question about your system is still this: how can we be sure that it was the system that the Eternal prescribed? Have you discovered any historical or biblical proof that the calendar was **ever** determined this way in the past?

—NSE

“New Moon = Full Moon” Calendar

LETTER: Jan-May, 1998
[Servants’ News has received several letters and phone calls asking about Psalm 81:3. Does it say that each month should begin with the full moon?]

RESPONSE: The primary scripture used to justify this Calendar system is Psalm 81:3:

Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.

The NKJV used above is one possible meaning of the Hebrew. (The KJV and a few other translations say “time appointed” instead of “full moon,” which is wrong.) Because there is no “and” connecting the three phrases separated by commas, some people conclude that they are all equivalent—that the trumpet should be blown on the new moon, which is the full moon, which is the Feast (of Trumpets)—therefore, all months should begin with a full moon. **But this scripture does not say all of that.** We must realize that this is a Psalm, and connecting words are sometimes left out in order to preserve the rhythm. This literary technique can be found in other Psalms. Since there are no connecting words between the phrases, we cannot be sure exactly what the writer intended from this verse alone. The NIV translators understood these three phrases to be a progressive time sequence:

Sound the ram’s horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast;

Some people understand this to be a blowing of the trumpet on the first day of Nisan to mark the new religious year, and then again on the first day of unleavened bread (which is usually a full moon). This makes much sense in context as the Psalm seems to have a Days of Unleavened Bread message—putting out false gods and coming out of Egypt. Others understand this scripture to refer to blowing the trumpet on the Feast of Trumpets (the start of a month) and again on the Feast of Tabernacles (usually a full moon).

Everyone must acknowledge that this chapter’s purpose is to tell us to praise the Eternal and to have nothing to do with false gods. It is not an explanation of calendars or feast days. Studying the use of the Hebrew words for “trumpet” in the Bible will show that trumpets were blown at many times.

There are other scriptures that full-moon advocates use, but all are **less** definite than this one. It is also important to realize that historical evidence is strongly against this calendar. Historical records show that the Babylonians started the month with the first visible crescent moon. When the Jews left Babylon to return to Israel, it appears that their calendar was the same as Babylon’s—they used the same month names.” It appears this calendar continued to the time of Christ and beyond. The “full moon” calendar will **always be between 12 and 18 days off** from the “first visible crescent” calendar. The New Testament records Jesus keeping Holy Days at the same time as the other Jews in his day. If the full-moon calendar is right, then Christ almost certainly kept the Holy Days on the wrong days. If it was O.K. for Him to do that , it is probably O.K. for us to do it.

Nevertheless, if a person is convicted that this is the calendar that the Eternal has given, then they should observe it. “...for whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23).

—NSE

John’s Miracles and Revelation’s Seven Churches

LETTER: December 31, 1997
Dear People at Servants’ News,

My wife and I really appreciate your ministry. [Literature request omitted.]

We have done some research in comparing the miracles listed in the Gospel of John with the seven churches listed in Revelation. Do you know of anything published about this subject? If so, please let

us know. Thank you and keep up the good work!

Could you send me an explanation of the meaning of Romans 14:5?

—D & D O'Neill, Tennessee

RESPONSE: Within the last few years, we believe we have heard of some study comparing the seven churches of Revelation to various parables. However, we cannot recall who did it, nor is it in the partially-complete index to our files. **If some of our readers know about such a study, we hope they will write and we will publish their letter.**

Romans 14:5 states: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." It is often used as a proof that there is no need to keep the Sabbath or any other day. Obviously, it does not mention the Sabbath at all. The subject of Romans 14 is stated in verse 1: "Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things." The Sabbath could not have been a "doubtful thing." Either they believed they needed to keep it, or they didn't. To me, Biblical and historical evidence indicates that the early Church kept the Sabbath.

However, the question of whether or not one should eat meat (verse 2), can become doubtful. There are many Bible examples of meat eating, but some will go to Genesis 1:29 and say that originally the Eternal intended for people to eat only plants. Also, much of the meat sold in the markets at that time was often sacrificed to idols (1Cor 8). These and other factors can be put together to make an argument not to eat meat. To this day, many Seventh Day Adventists do not eat meat—though most do it for health reasons, some will claim biblical reasons. There is no command in the Bible requiring people to eat meat. (The requirement to eat of the various sacrifices does not apply to the Romans who lived too far from the temple to sacrifice.)

The "esteeming one day above another" is the same type of thing as deciding not to eat meat. They are both mentioned together (Rom 14:6). We do not have any details in the Bible, but this practice sounds exactly like the modern day Jewish practice of trying to move into a new house (or perform other major events) on a Tuesday or a Friday. Why do they do this? Because on the third and sixth creation days, the Eternal said "it was good" twice (Gen 1:10,12,25,31), so they believe those days are more blessed than others. This practice, like the eating of only vegetables, is based on the Bible, but it is not a direct command. Yet it is not specifically forbidden in the Bible, either.

Are such practices idolatry? Are they sin

simply because they might be wrong? Paul makes our role in such things clear: "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom 14:10).

—NSE

More on Sacred Names

LETTER: December 6, 1997
Dear Norm:

I received the invitation that you sent to me regarding the "Special Sabbath Service" that you are sponsoring on December 6, 1997 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.. I thank you for it, but I will not attend. You see, once a person passes a certain point of understanding, such as knowing the true name of our Heavenly Father and His Son our Messiah, one cannot go back and worship them in error. I have been given understanding, which few in this world wish to have. The facts are there for all to study, but few wish to go there since many will not and you will have to leave them behind.

I can no longer sing songs which do not contain the True names since singing the false names are prohibited in scripture and would be disrespectful of the True Mighty Ones of Israel. The word "god" is a generic term actually derived from the name given to Baal, "Lord Baal God". It in no way honors our Heavenly Father whose name is Yahweh. Likewise, the name Jesus Christ is a derivation of "Zeus". It in no way honors our Messiah whose name is Yahshua.

If you are brave and sincere in wanting to maintain your position as "One of the Elect, or Called Out Ones", then you will have to look into this issue and study it with an open heart and mind.

I will continue to pray for you and the other Elect who have not come to the knowledge of the correct names of the True Elohim of Israel. We must never think that we have arrived. We must plod on.

—Michigan

RESPONSE: We appreciate your diligence to do what is right, but it appears that your understanding has now taken you to the point where you can fellowship with almost no-one in our area. If your beliefs have given you a closeness to the Eternal that is producing great fruit—healings, miracles, peace among the quarrelsome, etc., then you should be out among others so that they can see your light shine. But if you do not have great fruits, then maybe there is still more that you need to learn. If songs are a problem, most independent congregations will be quite happy for you to substitute the divine

names that you understand into songs and scriptures that you would sing and read.

In the first century, the Jews at the time would not commonly say the Father's name, and the recently-converted Gentiles certainly did not know it. Why, then, does the New Testament make no effort to teach converts to say the name and how to pronounce it? We realize that some people claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, but even so, there is no section that says: "This is His name and make sure you pronounce it correctly." If these things were "edited out" of the New Testament, how can the Eternal hold people responsible for not knowing them?

We have seen several books and papers attempting to prove many of the points that you make, but find that they too often make statements like: "early English dictionaries say..." or "historic evidence indicates..." We would feel much better if they would quote the exact dictionary, or give the source of their historic evidence. Also, we have seen some evidence that the books of Matthew and Revelation may have originally been written in Hebrew. But does that mean that all of the rest of the New Testament was? It is hard to imagine that Paul would have written to largely Gentile congregations in Hebrew—how could they read it?

Servants' News would be very interested in receiving conclusive answers to any of the following:

- 1) Was all or most of the New Testament originally written in Hebrew?
- 2) Does the word "God" come from a pagan deity, rather than being a general term for a divine being—like the Greek word *theos* used throughout the New Testament?
- 3) Does the word "Jesus" come from the Greek *Zeus* (a mythological god) rather than the Greek *Iesous*—which is also used to translate the name of "Joshua" from the Old Testament?

We would be interested in reading and publishing such evidence. We would hope that anyone sending such evidence would clearly mark the pages that contain it. (If we receive an unmarked book, it may be a long time before we can read it.)

We would agree with your last two sentences. But in which direction do we "plod on"? Nearly all of the scriptures about judgment are concerned with how we have treated our spiritual brethren and the world in general. How can we be judged on these things if we are almost never in contact with such people?

We pray that the Eternal will help you to continue to grow in the understanding of all that He has for you.

—NSE

“Divinisation” from page 1

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in **glory**: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body [see John 3:5; 12:24; Rom 6:5; Mark 4:30-32]

“... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (verses 42-44, 49).

As Christians are destined to inherit, as offspring, the Father’s very glory, we shall be filled with holiness, brightness, cleanliness, perfection, righteousness and radiant light. As such we will fulfill what it means to be glorified. As the Psalmist writes:

“At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11).

And in 1Cor 2:9: “But as it is written, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him’ ” (cp Rom 8:18).

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house;

And Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.

For with Thee is the fountain of life: [cp Rev 22:1; 21:6; John 7: 37-39; 4:10; Is 12:2-3]

“In Thy light shall we see light” (Ps 38:8-9)

Christians—literal descendants of God!

As Christ dwells in us via the holy spirit, He is our life (Col 3:3-4; Eph 5:30; 1Cor 6:15; 12:12-14), and as such, we become a part of God and become an extension of His being or life because the holy spirit is joined with the human spirit—we inherit the very life of God Himself! When the physical dies, the “spirit in man” essence remains with God, either at the spot where we have been buried, or a place where He chooses to place it which is in heaven. He will re-issue our essence, memory and character which is stored in the miniscule substance known as the “spirit in man” mentioned in several scriptures (1Cor 2:11; Ezra 1:1; Job 32:8; Eccl 12:7; Zech 12:1).

The brain enables the mind to operate—it consumes a disproportionate amount of the body’s energy (20%)

and produces a disproportionate amount of the body’s heat. But it is this human spirit that gives man ‘understanding’ or mind (Job 32:8,18; Prov 20:24,27), placing him on a plane far greater than the animals and enabling him to have a relationship with God—a relationship, by the way, which God outlines, not something which we may derive and offer to Him.

“If we are not careful, we can very quickly begin to think that the spirit in man possesses conscious sensation, thought and awareness independent from the brain. This is wholly wrong! The spirit in man, of itself, cannot sense, cannot think, cannot reason, cannot know. The brain performs these tasks. But to engender the exquisite qualities which constitute the human mind, the spirit in man must be added”. (“Why the vast difference between animal brain and human mind? Part V”, *Plain Truth*, June 1972:42).

Perhaps the Hindi belief in the ‘third eye’ (symbolised by the painted red dot on their foreheads) is a corruption of ancient knowledge. The Bible has a lot to say about our minds and the forehead. In fact, the frontal area of the brain is the most complex of all parts of the brain, being responsible for intellect, learning and personality, reasoning, consciousness and judgment. Some have gone so far as to state that the pineal gland, residing deep within the brain, may have something to do with this “third eye”. Because it responds to light and alerts the body to whether it is light or dark (controls our biological clock) and is the regulator or regulators (e.g., it has certain control over the thyroid gland), it is thought by some to be the heart of the brain and an aid in stimulating the human mind. Further, it controls the sleep, reproduction, growth, temperature, blood pressure, tumour growth, mood, the immune system and may even be a factor in longevity.

“Named after a French psychologist, Philippe Pinel, who first described the gland in the human brain, it is only slowly beginning to be understood in its functions. It has both neural and endocrine properties, and in simple vertebrates such as the lamprey the organ is mounted on a stalk close to an opening in

the skull and functions as a photoreceptive organ. Photoreceptive structures linked with the pineal body are still observed in higher vertebrates such as reptiles and even some species of birds. In mammals the pineal body is not light-sensitive, but a neural connection remains between the eyes and the gland. Thus the functions of the pineal body in an animal are linked with surrounding light levels.” (“Pineal Body,” Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Copyright (c) 1994 Funk & Wagnall’s Corporation.)

We may never know exactly where the “spirit in man” essence exactly resides within our brains at this time, but we do know that the chemical and electrical impulses which the brain produces are not all there are to the ‘mind’. Recently I came across the following fascinating article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (3 November 1997) on “How our brains are set for signals from God”:

“United States researchers believe that they have discovered a “God spot” in the brain—a circuit of nerves which could explain humanity’s almost universal belief in a deity.

“A study of epileptics [and the deeply religious] who said they had experienced spiritual states revealed that a spot in the front of the brain appeared to become electrically active, when they thought about God ...

“... Research is at an early stage, but the scientists said the results appeared to show that the phenomenon of religious belief could be inbuilt in humans.”

Is it possible that the “spirit in man” resides somewhere near the forehead and that is where (and how) God inspired the prophets and apostles; where the holy spirit fuses with our “spirit in man” essence; and where Satan and the demons influence people, by radiating their evil impulses into human minds?

He, the God Who is called our Father, is therefore literally the Father, and we literally the unborn children. When we die our unconscious “spirit in man” essence remains joined with the

eternal holy spirit—the very life of God Himself (“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit”—1Cor 6:17). As such, we are assured of eternal life, because when God awakens or regenerates us in the resurrection, it will be with a new body. A body that will actually be composed of the holy spirit having put on Christ and bearing the image of the Father, which will contain your character and memory, to continue our relationship with God for eternity. As the holy spirit fills the universe (but is not necessarily in everything—it is not in Satan for instance), it doesn’t matter where one dies: in the deepest ocean, on the highest peak, blown to pieces by a bomb or as an astronaut in outer space! God will provide a new body for you from His spirit essence which will be filled with light, energy and power—shining with brilliance and radiating rays of beauty.

We will inherit God’s life and have life inherent within ourselves, exactly as Christ was given life in Himself (John 5:26; Rom 8:29-30. See also other scriptures on this life that God is offering us: Eph 4:18; 2:21; 1Jn 1:2; Rom 8:11,16-17; 12:4; 1Cor 6:7; John 15:5).

Currently our human body, the brain specifically, is the “temple” or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:22). It becomes part of us and connects us directly with God, being His children, but as yet not born. But at our birth, in the resurrection, we will be given new bodies similar to Christ’s (Phil 3:21; 1Cor 15:42-53). It will be, as it were, the fused human spirit/holy spirit that grows to form the new body, which will be fully composed of God’s spirit, and will have no fleshly components (1Cor 15:44-45), a separate personality from God, yet joined to God because the holy spirit fills the universe and beyond.

It should also be noted here that according to the scriptures we are yet to inherit a new body. This should tell us two things. First, we do not have an immortal soul which floats off to heaven (whether it be out there somewhere or another dimension); and second, we are not yet “born again” nor have we experienced the “new birth”. If we already had the new body, we would be born again. Instead a new babe is in

formation in our minds, which resides in our brains and as such the new birth is yet future (John 3:6; 1Cor 15:50-51).

God is the “ground of all being” – the fountain and sustainer of life; the source of existence; the centre of everything. Therefore He is the only One with the power to resurrect and to create. None else can. In His wisdom He has created us for a purpose. And in His mercy He allows us to die and to lie “asleep” for a little while, waiting for the breaking of a new day, when light will be shed across the globe, and Christ, with awesome power, and according to His promise, will resurrect us to eternal life, joy and glory. How wonderful are His ways; and how sure and faithful He is to adhere to His promise.

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. **Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead**” (Is 26:19).

This is why the Gospel message is primarily future oriented—it is about the return of Christ the Messiah, the setting up of His millennial reign and the resurrection of the saints. Most other Christian groups largely avoid any detail about the future because they believe the saved go to heaven—a doctrine with very little support in the scripture. But the true Gospel is primarily future oriented and one which focuses on the end-time prophecies, the second coming of Christ, the millennial reign of the Messiah, the setting up of the Kingdom of God and Christian glorification.

Divinisation in Early Christianity

Perhaps some early “Christian” writings reflect beliefs of primitive true Sabbatarian Christianity in terms of Christian destiny and human purpose upon the earth. Following this are some quotes from the early “Church fathers” teachings concerning human destiny. These men wrote in the first few centuries A.D. While most Sabbatarians agree that they had departed significantly from the truth of the Bible in some areas, some true teaching from the apostles still remained:

“For we cast blame on Him, because we have not been made

gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, **then at length gods**” (Irenaeus (AD c125-203), *Against Heresies*, Book IV, Chapter XXXVII; ANF, Vol. I, pg 522)

Irenaeus further said that we are empty receptacles designed to be filled by God for: “God shall be glorified in His handiwork ... for the perfect man consists in the comingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father...For this is why the Word became flesh, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and **thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.**”

Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-220): “Christians, with whom has been mingled the regal gold, the Holy Spirit Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man” and for man to inherit immortality: “to be imperishable is to **share in Divinity**” (Strom. V.10.63).

“in order that the human, by communion with the divine, **might rise to divine**, not in Jesus only, but in all those who believe, but enter on the life that Jesus taught” (Origen (cAD 185-254). *Origen Against Celsus The Anti-Nicea Fathers* volume 4 Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James ed. T & T Clark Edinburgh 1989 page 475)

“And thou shalt be a companion of Deity, and a co-heir with Christ, no longer enslaved by disease., For thou hast become God ... For the Deity (by condescension,) does not diminish aught from the dignity of His divine perfection; **having made thee even God unto His glory!**” (Hippolytus (cAD 170-236) *The Refutation Of All Heresies*, chapter XXX; ANF, Vol. V, pg 153)

“**If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God.** And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection of the dead” (Hippolytus, Discourse On The Holy Theiphany, (section) 8; ANF, Vol. V. pg 237).

"thy body shall be immortal and incorruptible as well as thy soul. **For thou hast become God.** All the things that follow upon the divine nature God has promised to supply to thee, for thou was deified in being born to immortality" (Hippolytus, Philos. X.34)

Cyprian (AD 200-260): "He is the power of God, He is the reason, He is His wisdom and glory; He enters into a virgin; being the Holy Spirit, He is endued with the flesh; God is mingled with man. **This is our God, this is Christ, who, as the mediator of the two, puts on man that He may lead them to the Father. What man is, Christ was willing to be, that man also may be what Christ is.**"

Athanasius (AD 29-373): "For the Son of God became man so **that we might become God.**" (De inc., 54, 3:PG 25, 192B) and "The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, **that we might be deified**" (De Dec. para.14). "He was God, and then became man, and **that to deify us**" (Orat.I. para.39).

Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-395) stated: that Christ's fleshly presence on the earth "**deified** everything kindred and related to mankind".

"There is nothing remarkable in man being the image and likeness of the universe: for the earth passes away, the sky changes, and all that is contained therein is as transient as that which contained it. (Lossky, Vladimir *Orthodox Theology* Translated By Kesarcodi-Watson, Ian and Ihita St. Vlachimir's Seminary Press Crestwood, NY 1989 page70)

Pseudo-Dionysus (5th/6th centuries) stated that salvation "can only happen with divinization of the saved. **And divinization consists of being as much as possible like God**"... as much as possible in union with God. (ibid. page 198 *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chapter 1 :3)

"The Word of God [Christ] is now God as He had been man, **in order to deify mankind together with himself**" (Eusebius (cAD 267-339), *Demonstratio Evangelica* iv.14).

"Christ came to us, and took upon him our nature and **deified it**" (Chrysostom—AD 347-407).

"... a man, by keeping the directions of God, may receive from him immortality as a reward and **become God**" (Theophilus (cAD 115-181, *ad Autol.* 11.27).

"**God became man that you might become gods**" stated Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430).

Athanasius, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa were amongst those who laid the foundations of the Eastern Church. That Church was initially without icons, great liturgies and canonical regulations for governing the church's life which took hundreds of years to develop and be accepted. But in contrast with Rome, the Eastern Churches permit their ministry to marry, reject the primacy of the Papacy (their approach is more collegial), do not accept transubstantiation (the doctrine that "communion wafers" actually turn into the physical body of Christ when the priest blesses them) and believe that they are the true church. They originally believed in the 7,000 year plan and that man is mortal, without an immortal soul.

The Eastern Orthodox Church was originally Sabbatarian!

What is the Eastern Orthodox Church that it should still retain a semblance of the truth about divinisation? The eastern churches participated in the first seven ecumenical councils which ended with the Second Council of Nicaea in 787AD. Their differences with Rome mounted after that time, with the official split eventuating in 1054AD. But originally, the Church of God had scattered for a time in 33AD according to Acts 8:1. Later, after the Roman sacking of Jerusalem 69-70AD, the Church at Jerusalem known as the Nazarenes, fled to Pella (or Petra as some suggest), and remnants were left in Britain, and others may have scattered to all sorts of sects. A certain number continued in the eastern congregations in Asia Minor, which observed the Sabbath alongside Sunday observers in the same churches—for a long time. Of these Christians in the second century it was written:

"The primitive Christians had a

great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to that purpose." (*Dialogue on the Lord's Day*, p.189. London: 1701. By Dr. T.H. Morer (Church of England).

In the third and fourth centuries we have this witness:

"The ancient Christians were very careful in the observation of Saturday, or the seventh day ... It is plain that all the **Oriental [Eastern] Churches**, and the greatest part of the world, observed the Sabbath as a festival ... Athanasius likewise tells us that they held religious assemblies on the Sabbath, not because they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath; Epiphanius says the same." (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. II. Book XX, chap 3, Sec. 1 66.1137, 1138.)

"The observance of the Sabbath among the Jewish Christians gradually ceased. **Yet the Eastern Church to this day marks the seventh day of the week** (excepting only the Easter Sabbath) by omitting fasting, and standing in prayer; the Latin Church, in direct opposition to Judaism, made Saturday a fast day. The controversy on this point began as early as the end of the second century" (*History of the Church*, p.372, 1864 edition; p.205 1952 edition. Quoted in *A History of the Sabbath & Sunday* by John Kiesz, page 17).

Concerning the Council of Laodicea: "From the apostles' time until the council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observation of the Jews' Sabbath continued, as may be proved out of many authors; yea, notwithstanding the decree of the council against it." (*Sunday a Sabbath*, John Ley, p. 163. London:1640.)

This is what the Council of Laodicea actually stated: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaiz-

ers, let them be anathema from Christ" (Canon 29).

In the fifth century it was written:

"Likewise some meet both upon the Sabbath and upon the day after the Sabbath, as at **Constantinople [i.e., the Eastern Church]**, and among almost all others. At Rome and Alexandria they do not" (*Ecclesiastical History*, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Book 7, Chapter 19).

"Alexandrian Christianity, too, had early adopted Sunday observance. However, in harmony with **Eastern Christianity**, it had also kept the Sabbath as a day of worship and a festival" (*The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, pages 171-2).

One final quote:

"The Eastern Orthodox Church is perhaps the best example of this evolution in the practice of Sabbath observance. Even as late as the seventeenth century Samuel Purchas (c. 1577-1626), listing the beliefs and practices of the Greek Church of the Constantinople patriarchate, states that "they solemnize Saturday (the old Sabbath) festively" (*The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, page 152).

Gradually the Sabbath and other truths were lost, but divinisation continued in the East and has been a component of their theology for a very long time. To early Christians, being given immortality was equivalent to being ascribed or granted godhead or a relationship with God that is so close and so akin to the life He experiences, that it is divine or godly: we become deified or divinised.

This concept continued in a limited undercurrent over the centuries. The *New Dictionary of Theology* states that Calvin taught that "Christians are admitted, through the Holy Spirit, to **participation in the inner life of the Godhead**" (page 694).

"The passage which Christ quotes [ie John 10:34] is in Ps. lxxxii.6 ... Christ applies this to the case in hand, **that they receive the name of gods**, because they are God's ministers for governing the world. For the same reason Scripture calls angels gods, because by them the glory of God

beams forth on the world"—John Calvin, in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, vol. 1, pg 419.

One wonders whether we may deduce from these quotes how close to the truth on this issue these people were. Note that even famous modern-day researcher and trinitarian, Spiros Zodhiates, wrote the following concerning John 1:18:

"The word *monogenees* actually is a compound of the *monos*, 'alone', and the word *genos*, 'race, stock, family'. Here we are told that He who came to reveal God—Jesus Christ—is of the same **family**, of the same stock, of the same race as God. There is ample evidence in the Scriptures that **the Godhead is a family ...**" (*Was Jesus God?*, page 21).

We are destined to have a very close family relationship with God. God is indeed our Father. A father is a member of his family. Thus those in God's family are in the very family of God—the God Family if you wish. Peter Toon, a Protestant, in *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* writes:

"... Paul ... speaks of believers as being changed to bear the image and likeness of God that Christ himself perfectly bears and reflects .. we are to bear the true image of God ... [Christians] **are able to have an intimate communion with their heavenly Father**, just as a child might address his or her earthly father by a familiar term like the Aramaic *Abba* or the English *Daddy* ... **Birth from above is birth into a family** ... Growth in new life is growth into Christ within his body, the church" (page 44-45, 65).

In 1899 an academic book appeared on deification as salvation by WR Inge, *Christian Mysticism*. In it he quotes from the church historian, Professor Harnack:

"After Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, the idea of **deification** is found in all the Fathers of the ancient Church, and that in a primary position. We have it in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Apollinaris, Ephraem Syrus, and others, as also in Cyril, Sophronius,

and later Greek and Russian theologians. In proof of it, Ps 82:6 ("I said, Ye are gods") is very often quoted" (Inge, p. 358).

To this day, the Eastern Orthodox Church still teaches divinisation or deification:

"Eastern Orthodox theological thought regarding humanity, sin, and redemption has always revolved around the concept of theosis. The doctrine is also called deification or divinization Simply put, theosis means being deified or becoming like God. Theosis connotes participation in God's nature while maintaining a distinct human nature ... Theosis is held by the Orthodox to be the chief end of Humanity. Humans were created for deification" (Clendenin, Daniel B. "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis", *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994, 120).

The Orthodox view is that the gospel is not primarily the solution to man's problem with personal sin. It is God's provision of divine life in Christ, the beginning of theosis. A residual benefit of beginning the process of deification is the remission of sins. Baptism is the means by which the believer enters into this new life. John Meyendorff summarizes the idea of redemption in Eastern Orthodox theology well. He says:

"Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates the humanity and restores it to its 'natural' state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt—these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel" (Meyendorff, John. "Man", *Byzantine Theology Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1979, 145-146).

Even the Roman Catholic Church appears to recall a little of this great truth. In the most up-to-date version of the official Catechism of the Catholic Church, released in 1992, Article 460 addresses the question: Why did the Word become flesh? In response, the Catechism uses the quotes from

Irenaeus and Athanasius above, as well as this from Saint Thomas Aquinas:

"The word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature' (2Peter 1:4). 'For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the son of man; so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship might become a son of God' (Irenaeus Adv. haeres. 3,19, 1 PG 7/1,939). 'For the Son of God became man so that we might become God' (Athanasius, De Inc 54, 3:PG 25, 1923). The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."

Although it seems to say little about divinisation these days, and its own members do not seem to be taught much about it, nevertheless it lurks there deep within its theology.

What is the Purpose of Salvation?

To the Eastern Orthodox theologians, salvation and redemption, baptism and the life of Christ were not events brought about by God as a result of a need to save man as such. Rather, salvation and associated concepts were subject to God's plan to incorporate man into the Godhead! While in contrast, the Western (Roman and Protestant) view is that salvation is involved with the remission of sins and heaven is the reward of the saved. The evangelicals in particular, are heavily into the idea that salvation is God saving man from a fallen state and being reconciled to God via loving Jesus. But the Eastern Church radically differs with the belief that the Gospel is not focused solely upon man's sins being expunged, but rather that Christ's mission was to grant us divine life or theosis. The Orthodox view is that the gospel is not primarily the solution to man's problem with personal sin. It is God's provision of divine life in Christ, the beginning of theosis, because God's Spirit mingles with humans. The remission of sins—salvation—is residual to the true plan for man: man was created to be made divine (Clendenin, "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis," 120). Remission of sins is to purify man to make him like his

Creator. The following is written by John Meyendorff:

"Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates the humanity and restores it to its 'natura' state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt—these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel" (Meyendorff, "Man," 145-146.)

This doctrine is called theosis, deification or divinisation: it is shrouded in mystery and their theologians are very cautious about entering into great examination or analysis of the true depth of this teaching. Perhaps they are a little embarrassed by the teaching, as human destiny is far greater than ending up in a heaven somewhere. But observers state that the teaching simply means to become very much like God—participating in God's nature whilst remaining distinct.

And their version of the Fall of man is quite different from the West: Adam and Eve's sin brought universal mortality to mankind, not guilt, because each and every one of us are responsible for our own sins. We make the choice whether to sin or not; our sin is not the direct result of Adam's choice (Clendenin, "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis," 132-133., 120-123).

Divinisation not Compatible with Eastern or Trinitarian Religions

It should be explained here that their idea of man being divinised is not associated with the "universal bliss" idea found amongst so much of eastern Asian religious thought and New Age thought. In such socialistic thinking, you would lose your identity and individuality and become part of the universal love—some say you will be conscious and others say unconscious forever. They may explain it like this: when a drop of water falls into a pool, the drop becomes part of the water, absorbed into it and part of it, yet remaining conscious—so it will be with humans. Their immortal souls supposedly become absorbed into god which is the universal consciousness. Such a perversion of the truth!

That is why it is so dangerous to speak of God not having shape or form. If He does not, then if we become part of the God Family, we would also not have shape or form. Instead we are promised a new body and to look just like Him. Nor is He the universal consciousness; He instead has universal consciousness via His Spirit which fills the universe and beyond. You can see why there are so many variants to God's truth: Romanism, evangelicalism, New Age, Buddhism and so on. Even the Eastern Orthodox variant, whilst much closer to the truth than the others, is not willing to discuss it much and certainly does not have the sharp focus and depth of understanding that HWA and the old WCG had. Nor does it specifically state that God is a Family which we can be born into at the resurrection. Rather, Satan has cleverly shrouded the truth in a dark cloud of mystical terminology and paganistic rituals and twisted doctrines.

In addition, the Eastern tradition appears to have represented in its understanding of the nature of God and Christology, a small residue of its original unitarian or binitarian belief because, unlike the Roman Catholic definition of the Trinity which emphasises God's oneness, the Eastern tradition speaks of the Son as being eternally generated by the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father—here we seem to have a faint glimpse of their ancient unitarian or binitarian doctrine. In this teaching the distinctness of the personalities within the unity of the Godhead are emphasised as opposed to the mystical unity of God which is emphasised by Rome. In turn, the Protestants even further define the personages of the trinitarian Godhead as separate entities.

"The Orthodox put the primary stress on the persons of the Godhead, and tend to regard the Father as the hypostatization of the divine essence. He is the unique fountainhead of Deity ..., which explains why the Orthodox cannot accept that the Holy Spirit derives his being from the Son as well as from the Father [as taught by Rome] ... The believer is called to a life of deification, which means transfiguration into the image and likeness of God ... Deification is based on the

statement in Gn. 1:26, that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God ..." but who after the fall lost this likeness. The holy spirit assists us in redemption by communicating to us "the energies of God himself, so that we may become partakers of the divine nature (2Pet. 1:4). The energies of God radiate from his essence and share its nature; but it must be understood that the deified person retains his personal identity and is not absorbed into the essence of God" (*New Dictionary of Theology*, pages 217-218, 189).

"... In Orthodox theology, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father rests on the Son and becomes his energies. We who are called to the imitation of Christ are likewise called to manifest the energies of the Holy Spirit ... those redeemed by Christ will be like gods (*cf. e.g. Ps. 82:6*)" (page 189).

Residues of the view that the Bible expresses primarily the centrality of God the Father rather than the Son Who is in His image, may be seen forthrightly in the Orthodox doctrine.

Many Evangelicals and Protestants Reject Divinisation

Today, when most evangelicals and protestants talk about being in the likeness of God or being made like God by taking on the divine nature, they do not mean anything remotely like the "born into the God Family" as taught by HWA or the divinisation as taught by the Eastern Orthodox churches. They merely mean that one takes upon themselves divine characteristics in similitude to the angels, but that a human can never be part of the Godhead in the slightest sense. To most of them, that is utterly heretical—even discussing the subject of divinisation would be considered blasphemy. Instead, some believe that the saved will be flesh for eternity, requiring replenishment by eating of the tree of life; others believe that the saved become a "low-level" spirit being, like the myriads of angels. Some evangelicals in particular find many of our teachings to be abominable, preferring to cohabit with Rome, as they do so snugly in North America.

Postscript

I came across a paper at the finalisation of this study titled *Heresy Hunters* by Dennis De Jarnette. I would like to highlight some of the interesting items he raises, in point form, while maintaining his wording:

The Greek Orthodox Church liturgy states: "In My Kingdom, says Christ, I shall be God with you as gods." (From the Canon for Matins of Holy Thursday, Ode 4, Troparion 3 as quoted in Ware, Timothy (Bishop) *The Orthodox Church* Penguin Books New York 1993 page 231).

A whole group of Faith Preachers on Television's Trinity Broadcasting Company advocate the doctrine of Deification in a very liberal form. These TV preachers include Paul Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, and Fred Price. Fred Price Comments:

Man is the only creation of God that is in God's class ... I believe that through these scriptures we can very clearly see that God made man a god. (as quoted in Horton, Michael ed. *Agony of Deceit* Moody Press Chicago 1990 page 264.)

This is almost identical to Herbert Armstrong's idea that Man is, or will be, of the God kind. Or Kenneth Hagin:

"Physically we are born of human parents and partake of their nature. Spiritually, we are born of God and partake of his nature. (Ibid. Why this troubled the editor of *Agony* is beyond me, this is a rewording of 2 Pet 1:14!)

Or Earl Paulk: "Just as dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so God has little gods" (Ibid.).

Maximus the Confessor:

"Mysterious self-abasement of the only begotten son with a view to the deification of our nature" (*Maximus the Confessor Classics* of Western Spirituality Ed John Farina Translated by George Berthold. Paulist Press New York 1985 page 102 Commentary on Our Father Prologue.)

"... in the process of deification through virtue" (i.e., character development) (Ibid. page 197 *The Church's Mystagogy* Chapter 7).

I included Maximus because what he is saying here is similar to what the Church of God has always taught, that the purpose of life in the here and now is to build character. Or as Maximus puts it—deification through virtue.

Augustine more than anyone else fine-tuned Christian Theology. He is one of the most radical of those who believe in the deification of man. Augustine said, "Let us rejoice and give thanks: we are not only made Christians, but made Christ" (*Underhill Op Cited* page 251 Hom Jn 21.8). This is very similar to the most radical advocates of Deification today, the "Faith Preachers" who were talked about earlier. Not only this, but we are to "eat" God, probably through communion. This "eating of God" has an interesting effect on people:

I heard thy voice from on high crying unto me, 'I am Food of the full-grown: grow, and then thou shalt feed on me. Nor shalt thou change me into thy substance as thou changest the food of thy flesh, but thou shalt be changed into Mine.' (Augustine *Confessions The Nicea and Post Nicea Fathers* Ed. Schaff, Philip T & T Clark vol. 1 1989 page 109 Confessions bk. vii cap x).

Augustine is referring to this life. The Christian is deified by God in this life. In an echo of Irenaeus and Athanasius:

"The Son of God was made a partaker of mortality, so that mortal man might partake of divinity" (*Underhill Op Cited* page 251 Hom on Ps 52:6 36:646)

St. Thomas Aquinas:

"For Dionysus teaches that the height of understanding is for man to become conjoined to God as the wholly unknown. He agrees but limits it and qualifies it. Although he uses not the term energy, he says that he can't see God's essence." (Aquinas, Thomas *Summa Theologiate* Black Friars/ Mc Graw Hill Gilby, Thomas O.P. translator vol.16 page 83 from question 3 article 8 "What Happiness is.")

Thomas is agreeing with deification as a concept, but limits it and qualifies it to such an extent that he does not really believe it. Thomas's position is precisely what Bowman said when I quoted him earlier in this article.

I have several secondary sources which state that Thomas believes in deification. A good example is the O'Brien's article on "Deification" in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*. (O'Brien, T. C. O.P. "Deification" in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion* Ed Meagher O.P.S., Kevin Paul et al Corpus Publication Washington, DC.1970). He lists Th Aq ST 1a 103.4 1a2ae 110 as a source for the Aquinas's belief in Deification. Aquinas says that "...all things become like absolute Good ... creatures are guided toward a likeness of God." (Ibid. vol. 3 103.4 translator of this volume T. C. O'Brien!) Aquinas here is referring to this life. But while this approaches Deification, it does not arrive there fully. O'Brien is here overstating his case. What makes this overstatement so interesting is that O'Brien was the translator of this volume of *Summa Theologia*! He is obviously a Thomist scholar. Thomas Aquinas does believe in Deification but in a very limited way.

What is blasphemy? To Symeon the New Theologian it is to deny that the Holy Spirit can be experienced today and that the Holy Spirit can Deify believers. I would not go that far, but Symeon does have a point. Today we have cheap grace. The Holy Spirit, assuming these nominal Christians have it, seems to have no effect on their lives. I heard one of these "Easter Christians" suggest that all regular Church-goers stay home on Easter so he could get better parking! My church has it's share of what I call "Passover Christians" too! The Holy Spirit should be more powerful than that, Symeon comments:

"As it [the Holy Spirit] regenerates you, it changes you from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal, from sons of men into sons of God and gods by adoption and grace."

There are some differences such as Symeon's emphasis on deification in this life. But his concept of deification is similar to what the Church of God teaches.

If you had to pick one modern theologian who best expresses the Orthodox Church you would probably choose Vladimir Lossky. His *Orthodox Theology* is a short summation of

Orthodox Theology. Is deification, to the Greek Orthodox, the fact the Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian? Lossky comments:

"... instead of becoming 'disindividualized' to become 'cosmic' and to merge thus in a divine impersonal ... God allows him to 'personalize' the world" (Lossky, Vladimir *Orthodox Theology* Translated By Kesarcodi-Watson, Ian and Ihita St. Vlachimir's Seminary Press Crestwood, NY 1989 page 70-71)

The premier theologian of the twentieth century was probably C. S. Lewis. This has always struck me as odd since his training was in English Literature. Surely C. S. Lewis did not believe in deification, did he?

"God looks at you as if you were a little Christ: Christ stands beside you to turn you into one. I daresay this idea of a divine make-believe sounds rather strange at first. But, is it so strange really? Is that not how the higher thing always raises the lower? A mother teaches her baby to talk by talking to it as if it understood long before it really does. We treat our dogs as if they were 'almost human': that is why they really become 'almost human' in the end." (Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity* Macmillan Co. New York 1972 page 165-166)

Even C. S. Lewis believed in deification!

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Editor's Ending Comment:

Congratulations on finishing this rather lengthy and detailed article! We found it fascinating! When the WCG tried to represent itself as the **one** true church, it was an advantage to them to claim that most of their doctrines were not taught anywhere else. They led most people to believe that if they wanted to hear those doctrines, they had to go to the WCG.

As we conduct more evangelism at local levels, we, and everybody else will know that a little local group is not the "One True Church". It then becomes an advantage to be able to tell others that: "We did not invent this teaching ourselves, it is in the Bible and has been understood by a great variety of people both present and past. The reason truth has been lost and found over and over again throughout history is because the theology taught was usually controlled by hierarchical church leaders, not by people studying the scriptures seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

We do not need to know all theological history to be able to teach truth from the Bible. But if you find yourself teaching a Protestant about men becoming literal sons of God, and he claims that is blasphemous, it might be helpful to show that it was a common belief of the Church in the first and second centuries—and that it is also a belief held by an evangelical church in his home town!

—NSE

"Millennium on Earth" from page 1 roughly parallel the current European Economic Community. It is a ten-nation confederation... Presumably this group will make a league with Israel and then turn on her and begin to oppress her."

[2] "The prophetic scriptures tell us that the Roman Empire will be revived shortly before the return of Christ to the earth... the kingdom will be in the form of a ten-nation confederacy... We believe that the Common Market and the trend toward unification of Europe may well be the beginning of the ten-nation confederacy predicted by Daniel and the Book of Revelation."

[3] "...Rome would be revived in a ten-fold form. The Antichrist would then be invited by the ten kings, possibly "democratic kings," to rule the world as Prince of Rome... Making a seven-year treaty with Israel, he would break it after 3 1/2 years and turn upon her, initiating the Great Tribulation."

Do the passages above sound familiar to you? Could they easily be quotations from an old Plain Truth Magazine?

The Armstrongs were like many dogmatic prophecy teachers, who imply strongly in their writings that their group is the "only one" that understands prophecy—that their interpretations are somehow uniquely inspired by God, rather than as a result of their study of the writings of others who preceded them in the study of "eschatology" (study of "last things"). They also strongly imply that other, "false" teachers are blinded to these "true" interpretations. The not-so-subtle message: "Therefore follow me and support my ministry."

Consider the quotes just given above...

Quote #[1] is from Pat Robertson in his 1982 book *The Secret Kingdom*.

Quote #[2] is from Hal Lindsey in his 1970 book *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

Is it possible that Pat Robertson and Hal Lindsey were just copying the ideas of Armstrong?

Quote # [3] **It is a summary of a sermon given during the First World War by Baptist minister Isaac Haldeman**, quoted in a book called *Armageddon Now* by Dwight Wilson, an Assemblies of God minister. As Herbert Armstrong didn't even begin his Biblical studies until the 1920's, he could hardly have claimed that Haldeman was merely copying his scenario!

In this article, we will be sharing quotations from a variety of sources that establish conclusively that much of

the teaching of Herbert Armstrong about End-Time events and the Millennium was not at all unique to him. Why is this important?

1. Many people will accept a Biblical teacher as inspired, particularly because they are impressed with the teacher's "amazing" ability to sort through the maze of Biblical prophetic passages and propound a fascinating system of integrating it all. If they believe such a teacher got all this "knowledge" by direct inspiration from God, they may tend to accept this as "credentials" for the teacher, affirming **all** his teachings are thus inspired. Many such students do **not** compare

their teacher's speculations with the teachings of others. Unfortunately, leaders of many organizations (like Herbert Armstrong) often strongly advise **against** reading the writings of other teachers. We thus wish to provide our readers with some information to **compare to the teachings they may have accepted blindly in the past as being unique to their own group**.

2. If Christians wish to use "prophetic teachings" as part of a package of preaching the Gospel, it is important not to misrepresent the teachings of others in the process. If you try to tell someone your group is the only one with certain knowledge about prophecy, and your listener knows for a fact that you are in error in your assumption, you have effectively eliminated your listener's trust in you as a truthful witness. Thus we wish to provide our readers with a clear perspective on what a fairly large minority of Protestant prophecy teachers actually **do** teach.

Are we thus saying that the teachers whose material we quote here have the same "truths" as the Sabbatarian COGs in other areas of doctrine? No! We are merely pointing out that, in some areas, they were not so "clueless" as the Armstrongs indicated. And that if we wish to reach out with that "truth in other areas" which we

How Much About Prophecy Do You Really Know?

For a long time I thought I understood the Bible outline of world events for the end time. But what was my understanding based on? Was it from a careful reading of the scriptures and comparing them to world history and news events? Was it from fervent prayer and miraculous revelation by the Eternal? Or was it largely based on the teachings of one man—a man who had a good track record teaching the purpose for man, baptism, the Sabbath, holy days, and other doctrines? I have come to realize it was the latter. My teacher, in this case, was Herbert Armstrong and his associates. But what kind of "track record" did Herbert Armstrong have in fortelling the world events in his day from the Bible? Not a very good one (we will cover this in a future issue).

I have come to see that there is a diversity of gifts in the Church, and a person who is a good Bible teacher may not have the "gift of prophecy" (1Cor 12). Once a person prophesies falsely in the name of the Eternal, we should recognize that the Eternal has not sent them to prophesy (Deut 18:22). We, as humans, just have too much of a tendency to want to follow a person and not our Savior (1Cor 3). This is not to say that Herbert Armstrong did not teach many truths regarding the prophetic portions of the Bible. As the article on this page shows, much of what Armstrong taught was also taught by other serious Bible students. We do not need a complete understanding of prophecy to know that the Eternal will take care of those who seek Him and love and encourage others (1Cor 13, Mal 3:16-17). But before we claim that we "understand prophecy", or before we begin to teach it to others, we should consider the source of our understanding and ask:

- 1) How much is really clear from the Bible and History?
- 2) How much do we believe the Eternal has revealed to us?
- 3) How much is based on the teachings of a man with no apparent prophetic gift—a man who cannot or will not answer questions about his teaching?

—NSE

do have, we need to do it from a position of honesty, not misrepresenting the teachings of others to make ourselves look "special". We can only hinder our cause by attacking "straw men" in the area of prophecy.

The following representative quotations are from the book *Armageddon Now—The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917* by Dwight Wilson (c. 1977, Baker Book House). The author has carefully documented the writings of over 100 prophecy teachers, many of them espousing scenarios very similar to that of the Armstrongs. It is much more likely that Hal Lindsey and Pat Robertson were "borrowing" their ideas from these Protestant writers rather than from Herbert Armstrong.

When reading these quotes, it is important to understand the theological terms used: "**Premillennialism**" refers to the belief that Christ will return to the earth **before** the beginning of the Millennium. "**Postmillennialism**" declares that man's efforts will result in a Millennium of peace on the earth, and only then will Christ return. A third doctrine, "**A-Millennialism**" declares that there will be no actual thousand year period called the Millennium, and that all ideas of it are to be accepted only as metaphors for a heavenly existence.

If you want to investigate these teachings in-depth, you can probably obtain Dwight Wilson's book from a local book store. However, by reading the following pages of quotes, below, you should be able to see that **many groups have had teachings similar to the "Church of God" groups in regard to the Millennium**. In order to save space, we will leave the quotes in this type style, with no extra quotation marks or indentations. Sometimes, the book quotes other books—those "sub-quotes" will be indented. We have **boldfaced** many of the dates to make it easy to see the time-span of these teachings. Here we go:

[p.17] According to Peter Toon in his study of Puritan eschatology, the belief in the restoration of Israel was widely held even among the Puritans of the seventeenth century. Most Puritans subscribed to the idea of a large-scale conversion of Jews to Christianity

before the end of time, and in turn believed that there would also be a return of the Jews to Palestine. Sir Henry Finch in "The World's Great Restoration, or The Calling of the Jews" (1621) explained that the Euphrates River would dry up for the Jews to pass through on their return to Palestine, and that they would be opposed by Gog and Magog (equated with the Turks), but the Jews would win as God fought for them. This interest in the restoration of the Jews was reinforced by the horrors of the Thirty Years War in Germany, which led men to imagine that they were living in the last days. Toon cited the great jurist Hugo Grotius for the observation that **eighty books concerned with the millennium had been published in England by 1649**. A writer of the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Joseph Mede, Professor of Greek at Cambridge, is designated by Toon as the "father of premillennialism," and John Milton and Isaac Newton are listed among his indebted successors.

[p. 18] The American, Increase Mather [a prominent theologian], in a 1669 work entitled *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation Explained and Applied*, affirmed the following beliefs:

That after the Jews are brought into their own land again, and there disturbed with Gog and Magog (Not John's, but Ezekiel's Gog and Magog, at the battle of Armageddon) who shall think with great fury to destroy the converted Jews...

The Jews who have been trampled upon by all nations, shall shortly become the most glorious nation in the whole world, and all other nations shall have them in great esteem and honor. Isa. 60:1,3....

That the time will surely come, when the body of the twelve Tribes of Israel shall be brought out of their present condition of bondage and misery, into a glorious and wonderful state of salvation, **not only spiritual but temporal**.

[p. 19] It is difficult to show a direct continuity from the seventeenth-century Puritan radicals to the present-day premillennialists, but Ernest R. Sandeen has magnificently demonstrated the developments since the

Napoleonic era in his ground-breaking work, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*. Sandeen describes the significance of that early era:

The identification of the events of the **1790s** with those prophesied in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 provided biblical commentators with a prophetic Rosetta stone. At last a key had been found with which to crack the code. There could now be general agreement upon one fixed point of correlation between prophecy and history. After **1799**, in Egyptology as in prophecy, it seemed as though there were no limits to the possibility of discovery.

As the unbelievable events of the **1790s** unfolded, students of ... apocalyptic literature became convinced (in a rare display of unanimity) that they were witnessing the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. The Revolution brought the cheering sight of the destruction of papal power in France, the confiscation of church property, and eventually the establishment of a "religion of reason". The final act occurred in **1798** when French troops under Berthier marched on Rome, established a republic, and sent the pope into banishment. Commentators were quick to point out that this "deadly wound" received by the papacy had been explicitly described and dated in Revelation 13. Although prophetic scholars had previously been unable to agree on what dates to assign to the rise and fall of papal power, it now became clear, after the fact, that the papacy had come into power in 538 AD.

This interpretation assumes that the two beasts in Daniel and Revelation are identical and that the forty-two months of Revelation 13 figuratively represent 1,260 years, 538-1798. This is an example of one of those necessary shifts to symbolism—days equal years—an uncomfortable equation for literalists.

[p. 23] A variety of millennial groups developed in the United States in the early nineteenth century [**1800's**]. "America in the early nineteenth century was drunk on the millennium." [Sandeen]

[p. 24] In the 1850's premillennialism recovered from the setback suffered as a result of Miller's errors—and accordingly, writers began to risk works on prophetic themes again. Jacob J. Janeway, a theology professor at the Presbyterian's Western Seminary, published in 1853 "Hope for the Jews: or The Jews Will be Converted to the Christian Faith; and Settled and Reorganized as a Nation in the Land of Palestine." Janeway believed the Jews would be restored "under the reign of the promised Messiah". The issue of the preconditions for the restoration was to become an item for discussion over the years. Janeway contended that if the Jews returned in their present state of unbelief they would have no peace or security. He discussed their historical persecution, and then by way of contrast the renewed interest in returning, mentioning that "a society of the Jews has been formed in London, with the view of stirring up their countrymen, in all lands, to seek a re-possession of the land".

[p. 24-25] A preacher of the Scottish National Church, John Cumming, published in 1855 two works which became the seedbed for many premillenarian volumes. One bibliographer claims that Cummings' works "outsold those of any other writer of his day."... [Cumming] cited the prediction of the church father Lactantius that the world would come to an end after 6000 years of existence, supported the idea from Jewish traditions, and offered calculations that terminated the 6000 years at 1862, saying, **"Just as the six days have their seventh, the 6000 years will have their seventh thousand, or what we call the millenium."**

[p. 26] ...After the fall of the Moslems, the "drying up of the Euphrates," the Jews would emigrate from all nations, including the "land of Sin"—China. Cumming predicted [in 1855] the nations would assist the Jews:

We may expect that the nations of the earth will begin, on the eve of that movement among the Jews, to discuss in their cabinets the restoration of the Jews. There are books recently written, which urge the nations to help them to their own land. The Jews in London are col-

lecting money in order to purchase Palestine at this moment: the Jews in America have collected enormous sums to build the temple again in Jerusalem. All these things are signs of the times, and indications of the approaching change.

Rumors of the rebuilding of the temple are a recurring theme in popular prophetic writings down to the present. Cumming did not divulge his source, but assured his readers that an American, a Mr. Noah, was collecting a million dollars for the purpose.

Lecture VII of *The End* was entitled "The Russian and Northern Confederacy" and began with a quotation of the entire thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. At great length Cumming established the identity of the great northern power that was "doomed to perish ultimately in Palestine amid tremendous scenes." **His argument is particularly significant because it is evidently the source for a multitude of later writers on the subject.**

[p. 27] [Cumming asserted that] Caucasus is derived from the words Gog and chasan and means "Gog's fortified place".... It was claimed that the Araxes River was called Rosh in Arabic and that *Russian* was derived from Rosh.... [And Cumming stated] "We arrive at the conclusion that Rosh, Meshech, Tubal find their descendants at this moment in the northern and southern parts of Russia."

[p. 29] Except for his inclination to set dates, John Cumming is probably the best nineteenth-century example of the kind of writer that developed the ideas which contributed to the mind-set of the twentieth-century premillennialist. His failures in date-setting may account for the preference of later writers for terms such as *imminent* and *soon* rather than specific dates. The most infamous date-setter of all was Michael Baxter, a British preacher who also toured the United States. From 1861 to 1908 he made various errors, including identifying Louis Napoleon as the Antichrist and predicting the second advent between 2:30 and 3:00 PM, March 12, 1903.

[p. 31] James H. Brookes was also president of the Niagara Bible Conference, which was the beginning of the extensive prophecy and Bible conference movement which flourished

in America through World War I and has survived down through the present. In 1878, Brookes drew up a fourteen-point creed for the conference; the last item of this creed dealt with the Jews:

We believe that the world will not be converted during the present dispensation, but is fast ripening for judgment, while there will be a fearful apostasy in the professing Christian body; and hence **the Lord Jesus will come in person to introduce the millennial age, when Israel shall be restored to their own land, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; and that this personal and premillennial advent it is the blessed hope set before us in the Gospel for which we should be constantly looking...**

[p. 51] ...he [Arno C. Gabelein, writer for the prophetic magazine *Our Hope*] had speculated in his 1917 commentary on Ezekiel that Germany might "become united to Russia and march under the prince of Rosh into the land of Israel". Gabelein predicted also a **revived Roman Empire** which would be opposed to the alliance.

The idea of a revived Roman Empire was not new, but it was given new interest and impetus in the 1920s and 1930s by the ascendancy of Mussolini and Italy (and also in the 1950s and 1960s by the development of the Common Market.) Leadership of this great future power was supposedly to fall to a personality known, among other things, as the *Antichrist*.

[p. 51] During the war [WWI] Dr. Isaac M. Haldeman, pastor of the First Baptist Church, New York City, had developed this theme [the revived Roman Empire] in a sermon, "The Falling Stone, or the Overthrow of the last Kaiser." According to Haldeman, Rome would be revived in a tenfold form. The Antichrist would then be invited by the ten kings, possibly "democratic kings," to rule the world as Prince of Rome. He was to be from Babylon, originally a military leader who became king. Foreseeing that Germany and Russian would combine to advance in the east, the Antichrist would set up a Zionist state as a buffer. Making a seven-year treaty with Israel, he would break it after three-and-a-half years and turn upon her, initiating the

Great Tribulation. He would then be faced with rebellions in Egypt, but eventually return from there to meet the forces from the north and east at Armageddon.

[p. 70] ... rumors of the impending destruction of the Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock) or the Mosque el-Aksa and the rebuilding of the Temple continued to crop up. The Biola journal reported [in 1921] the publication of a Jewish catechism in London which said that whenever the Jews returned to their land and again constituted a state a temple would be built and the sacrificial laws restored. The reporter commented that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Jews will return in unbelief, but that they will have a new temple and re-establish temple sacrifices. The necessary destruction of the Arab center of worship, the Mosque of Omar, was referred to in classic understatement as "a delicate problem." It was noted that "the Jews can hardly be expected to take steps to restore the temple on the chosen site until they have a majority in Palestine."...

Chief Rabbi Kook [Kuk?] of Jerusalem has announced that a new Yeshibah [school] will be founded in the Holy City for the purpose of instructing men of priestly and Levitic parentage in their duties in the Temple. This includes formulas of sacrifices, etc. The rabbi believes this to be an urgent necessity since he perceives the rebuilding of the Temple as near at hand [quote from the *King's Business* prophetic magazine reported in 1923].

[p. 71] *The Evangel* prophetic magazine reported in 1928, a rabbi as saying, "The Mosque of Omar will be torn down soon, and a wonderful temple, like Solomon's, will be built there." A Jewish writer was quoted on the significance of rebuilding the Temple: "The Jewish National Home cannot be complete without it, and I would go even further and say that Palestine will never be flourishing until the temple building is fully established in ancient glory." Another article, "The Sure Word of Prophecy," cited press dispatches from Jerusalem reporting that permission was being sought by zealous Jews to build altars at the Temple site and restore the sacrifices, and that prospective priests were already suspected of

practicing ritual sacrifice.

That concludes our quotes from the book *Armageddon Now—The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917* by Dwight Wilson (c. 1977, Baker Book House). Obviously, we do not agree with every prediction made by these quotes or with some of the modern-day countries that were supposedly identified in the Bible. But we must also realize that Herbert Armstrong once identified Benito Musollini as "the Beast," and also published a book called *1975 in Prophecy*—almost none of which was fulfilled in the time predicted. The important thing to realize is that there were many others who understood a 7000-year plan, and a tribulation followed by the Millennium.

A more recent book along the same line is: *WHEN TIME SHALL BE NO MORE: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* by Paul Boyer (c. 1992, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press). This book is a highly detailed, unbiased review of the history of the books, printed materials, preachers, and movements predicting "The End" which have flooded America in the past 100 years and more. And although this book, like the previous one, includes many quotations from sources promulgating quite a similar scenario to that proposed by Herbert Armstrong, **it contains absolutely nothing about the teachings of Armstrong and the WCG!** It talks about the writings of other smaller groups and cults, but not the WCG! Is that surprising? We have tended to think that the World Tomorrow program and the Plain Truth magazine were so powerful that they would have a prominent place in such a book by an unbiased sociologist/historian.

But we tend to forget that the message was tied so closely to the institution of the WCG itself that the associated literature never made its way into most "mainstream" sources of knowledge. Old WCG broadcasts are available only to those who taped them and saved a copy—there is simply no public index or availability. The few books that the Armstrongs commercially published never came close to being any type of "best seller" and are found in very few libraries. The Plain Truth used

to be in many libraries, but was never listed in *The Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. The back issues have been thrown out of most libraries. Armstrong had an "all or nothing" approach to others accepting his doctrine. After his organization grew large, he virtually never spoke to other colleges, churches, or religious organizations. He never wrote articles for other's newspapers or magazines, or appeared on other radio or TV programs. Consequently, little of his teaching ever made inroads into mainstream religious publications, schools, conferences, etc. And thus, when the WCG turned its back on Armstrong's teaching after his death, his material became "invisible" to the world. For a fleeting time in American history the World Tomorrow blanketed the radio and television airwaves. But just like other radio and TV shows, such as "The Shadow" and "Gunsmoke," once its "run" was over, it was only a vague memory.

Here are a few representative quotations from pages 322-325 of *WHEN TIME SHALL BE NO MORE*. Again, to save space and keep it simple, we will not use any quote marks, and use indents only to indicate quotations within the quotation:

Prophecy writers stressed the absolute break between the present age and the next. The new order will be entirely God's doing; human endeavor will count for nothing as Christ "take[s] care of the mess that man has made of his world." Indeed, as Chuck Smith emphasized, before the Millennium must come Armageddon, when "the systems of the world" will be "rooted out, pulled down, and destroyed." Not only institutions, but masses of evildoers must perish to make way for the coming era of blessedness. As Arthur Bloomfield put it, "The rubbish has to be cleaned up and burned before the garden can be planted."

A key motif in this outpouring of writing about the Millennium is an emphasis on order and harmony, often explicitly contrasted with the disorder and disharmony of contemporary social existence.

The uncertainties, distractions, and unpleasant surprises of today's world will vanish. Everyone will have a role to

fill in this "perfect environment where righteousness can settle down and be at home." With "no more starvation, wars, pollution, or wasted billions on armaments the world shall be a virtual Garden of Eden, and men shall live in harmony." Indeed, "the universe itself will run more harmoniously than at any time since creation." Enforcing this unity and harmony will be Christ himself. As Scofield insisted, the "tranquility, blessedness, and peace" of the Kingdom Age will be possible only because "the government will be a theocracy" committed to "instant destruction of the insubordinate or rebellious." Scofield's post-World War II followers reiterated the point, Walvoord, citing the prophet Isaiah ("He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked"), wrote in stark terms of the nature of Christ's reign: "The millennial rule of Christ... will be absolute in its authority and power; He [will be] supreme over the entire earth." Only thus, said Walvoord, could the "golden age" dreamed of by "social reformists through the ages" be realized.

...In contrast to all the failed schemes of human self-rule, including democracy, wrote Chuck Smith, **Christ will introduce "a new form of government: a monarchy that will embrace the entire world..."** The Kingdom of God [will] cover the earth as the water covers the sea." These authors did not shrink from the implications of their belief. "Jesus will be an absolute dictator," wrote Herbert Vander Lugt. "He will displace one of our cherished freedoms—that of religion. He will not permit the practice or propagation of false religion in any form."

...But Christ will need help in ruling the world. Faithful Christians, mocked and maligned in this age, will come into their own in the Millennium. "Have you ever been a king?" asks Paul Lee Tan in "Jesus Is Coming" (1982). "If not, do not despair. Someday you will be a king. **You will reign with Christ over the millennial earth.**"... A 1974 author put the matter in the nonsense vocabulary of a motivational seminar as he described the "high 'management' openings for can-do Christians" that the Millennium will

bring:

Jesus is now silently recruiting those demonstrating capability as over-comers. He needs saints who develop success patterns in this present real-life testing ground ... **Many leaders will be needed to reign over cities, nations, territories and millennium projects** ... Don't be surprised when, during the Kingdom Age, we find some little-known Christians reigning in positions of great honor and scope.

Frustrated hopes and unrealized dreams will be gloriously fulfilled in the Millennium, as the thwarted and the exploited at last enjoy parity with the great of the earth. S. Maxwell Coder, writing of the saints' physical transformation, captured something of this psychological dimension as well: "Our new bodies will be incapable of ruin and decay. They will be glorious rather than dishonored and lacking in dignity, and powerful rather than weak." ... Millennial belief, declared a prophecy-conference speaker in 1956, spoke to "the deathless urge in the heart of humanity for a better world" and the longing of men and women for "a corporate ordered life; a life not for the few powerful and fortunate, but for all a life that shall be rich in truth, justice, power and love." A 1973 author agreed: "In nobler moments, people have ideals in their minds which they would like to see realized. The millennium will see them brought to fruition." Often criticized as pessimists, premillennialists insisted that the opposite was true. "Every true believer is an optimistic futurist," agreed John Wesley White; **"he is looking for Jesus Christ to come and set up His kingdom of peace and plenty."** The soaring Utopian rhetoric of the prophecy popularizers' descriptions of the Millennium highlighted with harsh if unconscious clarity the depth of their rejection of the

present order, and the intensity of their longing for a radically different form of society. At a time when nuclear war threatened, the Cold War rumbled on, materialism and self-indulgence seemed all-pervasive, and an impersonal, computerized economic order threatened human autonomy, the Millennium shimmered on the horizon as an alternative future—an **age of peace, justice, and rich human fulfillment under the absolute but righteous rule of an all-wise leader.**

That was the end of our quotations from *WHEN TIME SHALL BE NO MORE: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* by Paul Boyer (c. 1992, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press). While we may disagree with many of the writers who have been quoted in this article on serious theological issues, we can surely see that they share many of our hopes and desires for a Millennium. How do we know who is going to be in the Millennium and who is not? Well, we do not know. That judgement has been given to the Messiah, our Savior.

We can simply go along with Paul when he said "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Phil 1:18). We are still responsible for living and obeying the truth that we understand from the scriptures. **But if someone from another religious background wants to join us in praying "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven", why not let them do it?!!** ☐

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Our new looseleaf magazine, *Shelter In the Word*, will be again included with the June *Servants' News*. We have already received many positive comments about this magazine designed for people with no "Church of God" background.