

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 1

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

Jan/Feb 2000

Passover 2000: Confessing the Sins of the Past & Moving On

When I was a senior in Ambassador College (1977), I joined a co-ed speaking club. One of my assignments was to “evaluate”—give a two-minute commentary on—a freshman woman giving her first speech. My previous three years of men’s club experience taught me not to “go easy” on evaluations, so I was not about to “let the club down”. I took the opportunity to deftly explain her few good points, then showed the great, vast areas where she needed improvement. I remember looking at her somewhat pained face as I spoke, but do not remember being concerned about what affect I was having on her. “I knew how to do evaluations and I was doing it right,” I thought. The club was large and met infrequently, and I don’t remember anyone saying anything about that evaluation—I no longer remember what her speech was about or if I ever saw the woman again.

Until 14 years later. She introduced herself to me at the Feast of Tabernacles in Wisconsin Dells. **She had not forgotten that speech or my evaluation.** Because of it, she never gave another

speech in college. She told me that she had forgiven me, but that it took nearly ten years for her to get over it.

At the time of the speech and for all those years, I really had never thought that I had done anything wrong. But the classes this woman took, the friends she

Continued on page 36

A Most Significant Passover

by Pam Dewey

In a time when people are discussing so many different timings for Passover, different calendars for Passover and different methods of celebrating Passover, it is often good to regain the central focus: Christ, Passover Lamb.

We certainly celebrated our “spiritual” deliverance two years ago in a rather different way. The very unusual setting helped emphasize that we can be spiritually free—even when physically in bondage. We celebrated with bread, the fruit of the vine, and foot-washing in a real prison.

Continued on page 34

SW & Eternal Judgment Appendices Later

We hope everyone had a chance to read *What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?*, included with the last issue. If you did not, please do so. We feel it is a very significant writing.

Shelter in the Word and the Eternal Judgment appendices will be included in a later issue. We want to take the time to do them right.

Have We Been Missing the Point of Unleavened Bread?

by Mike Hurst, England

In the past, the emphasis of the Feast of Unleavened Bread has been placed on de-leavening homes and putting sin out of our lives. But is that where God puts the emphasis?

Unleavened bread is mentioned for the first time in Ex 12:8—part of the “Passover” instructions:

And they shall eat the flesh in that night roast with fire and **unleavened bread** and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.... Seven days **shall you eat unleavened bread**; even

Continued on page 35

Also In This Issue:

- 2 Truckers’ Bible Study
- 3 News from Local Congregations
- 6 The Ultimate Family Feast!
- 8 Teaching Orphan Boys
- 9 Small Group & Evangelism Reports
- 11 How Biblical Is 2-Class System?
- 15 The Last Ambassador Report
- 16 WCG, As We Knew It, Is Over.

Continuing the Work of the WCG?

- 17 The Philadelphia Church of God?
- 17 The United Church of God—IA?
- 18 Global/Living/Restored CoGs + CoG, a Christian Fellowship?
- 23 Triumph Prophetic Ministries?
- 25 Could God Use “Other Groups” To Do His “End-time Work”?
- 26 Why Do So Many People Seem Blind to CoG Abuse and Error?
- 27 Letters & Responses

Servants’ News Feast Site 2000

In our last issue, we asked our reader’s preference for a Feast Site: West Branch, Michigan; Thermopolis, Wyoming; or a Rocky Mountain site. Most who responded wanted a Michigan site. Since then, we have found a Michigan site that is even better than West Branch and about the same distance away for most people.

If you are at all interested in spending the Feast with us, please see the article beginning on page 6! We will list other sites in our next issue.

Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., #36-40



Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 1

Jan/Feb 2000

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

December 5, 1999: We had a repeat customer today and a new fellow. I asked them if there were any subjects they wanted to talk about, and one of them said he was enjoying a study in Matthew's Gospel, and he found it especially interesting because it seemed to emphasize the Christian lifestyle—things Jesus expects us to do.

This led to a discussion on Matthew 25, the separation of the sheep from the goats. Interestingly enough, the sheep fed the hungry, clothed the naked, etc., and didn't even realize that the good works they were doing were gaining them treasure in heaven. The trucker pointed out that if a person who is truly walking in God's ways—truly walking with God—then he'll do what God requires without even thinking about it.

Once again we had an event where one trucker bared his soul regarding personal weaknesses, and it was gratifying to see the one interaction as the more mature Christian helped the other. It seems that studying the word in small groups has a way of binding people to one another. I gave the trucker the assignment of reading Romans 5-8 each day, in which Paul describes the struggle he himself faced with the pulls of sin—and how he overcame it.

This was a good study—not the most exciting, but good.

[This is why the ministry of Christ and His Apostles was called a "work". Serving is not always attending big meetings, making big decisions, doing big works and being praised by big crowds. Doing Christ's work involves many people taking care of small, often little-noticed things. "Consider the lilies..." (Matt 6:28-30) —NSE].

January 16, 2000: I am reminded of the incident in Corinth, where Paul was told, "Do not be afraid, but speak ... for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). If there is one lesson I have learned since being involved with the Trucker's project, it would have to be that God is working on some level with more people than what I could have imagined. There are "many people" in this city—indeed in any city—who have a love of the scriptures and some level of relationship with God. Although they might not have a depth of understanding of who God is and what He is doing, it is now hard for me to deny that the seeds of God's word have spread farther than just our modest efforts. God be praised that He can work through any venue He pleases.

Our guests this morning were two truck drivers (one of whom is a Vietnam war veteran with a debilitating wound) and a retired couple who were travelling through, and came up after hearing our announcement.

One trucker had just made an employment change and was uncertain on the direction his life was going to take, so we began by reviewing some biblical examples of people whose lives took strange turns (Joseph and Job) that seemed to be for the worse, but God was with them every step of the way. Hebrews 11 is a hall of fame for those who remained faithful, who doubted not God's promises even though the physical evidence was against them.

This was one of those instances where I am reminded of that old saying that God gave us two ears and one mouth because he wants us to listen twice as much as we talk. By this I mean that the trucker mentioned how much comfort he finds in the Book of Proverbs, and I think that the Bible study would have been better had I simply asked, "How so?" instead of sermonizing.

That said, the discussion turned to whether there is a revival of sorts going on in the country today, and once again they all expressed concern

Continued on page 32

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

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

Editor & Publisher: Norman S. Edwards

Small Group & Evangelism Editor: Arlean Kelley, 561-663-9417, e-mail: arleankelley@yahoo.com

Servants' News Staff: Bill Buckman, George & Pam Dewey, Marleen Edwards, Missi Lara, David Meidinger, Jon D. Pike, Charlotte Ruppert; Christine Yoos

Contributors: Many! Thanks to everyone!

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

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles, letters, and subscription, literature or change of address requests to:

**Servants' News
P O Box 107**

Perry, Michigan 48872-0107

Phone: 517-625-7480 Fax: 517-625-7481

E-Mail: Info@ServantsNews.com

Internet: www.servantsnews.com

Subscription and literature requests may be sent to the following addresses. Money received at these locations will be used for duplicating and mailing. Please make checks out to the name shown with the address:

Australia: Dale Heslin, 9 Alice Jackson Crescent, Gilmore, ACT 2905
e-mail: dale@pcug.org.au

Canada: Cherie Zimmerman, 268 Pennswood Way SE, Calgary, AB T2A 4T3

Europe: *Servants' News*, Gulpen 122, 4852 Hombourg, Belgium
e-mail: m.hodiamont@euronet.be

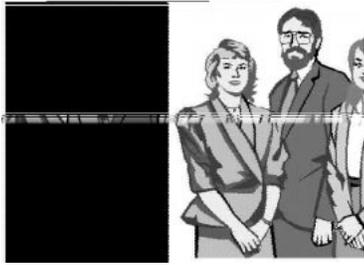
Philippines: Cesar Lumbuan; 2298 Florida St. Balagtas, Pandacan; Manila
e-mail: maxzen@skyinet.net

U.K.: Jenny Whiteman, 2 Warren Rd, Narborough, Leicester, LE9 5DR
e-mail: 100623.734@compuserve.com

Most scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Circulation: 2400

*Servants' News is published bimonthly (six times per year). Subscriptions are free to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. Servants' News is published by Norman S. Edwards (3690 Bath Rd; Perry, Michigan—this is not a mailing address). He reserves the right to refuse subscriptions for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Perry, Michigan, USPS 016-995. **Postmaster:** send address changes to *Servants' News*, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107.*



News from Local Congregations



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

Atlanta Christian Renewal Conf.

The Fifth Annual Greater Atlanta CRC will be held on April 22nd and 23rd at the beautiful rustic Red Top Mountain State Park and Conference Center in Cartersville, Georgia. It is sponsored by Christian Educational Ministries (CEM). The park is located on Lake Allatoona, just 1.5 Miles east of I-75, via exit #123. It is less than 30 miles north of Atlanta.

For reservations call: 770-975-0055 and when you call, be sure to mention that you are with CEM. There are private rooms and some cabins.

Speakers will include Ronald Dart, Steve Sanders and Larry Watkins. Sessions begin at 9:00 a.m. on April 22nd and April 23rd, and Sabbath services will be held at 2:30 p.m. Contact CEM at 888-242-5344 or adm@cemnetwork.com. Or, call Stan Denzinger at 770-502-8933 or call Steve Sanders at 770-844-8147.

Passover Week in Milwaukee

The Church of God, Berean Fellowship invites you to join us for *Passover Festival Week, a Celebration of Freedom*, April 18-26, 2000, in the Greater Milwaukee Area. This week's activities will include Holy Day and Sabbath services with guest speakers; daily evening fellowship and services; Seder/Passover services (with traditional Church of God services available), Bible study, feasting and fellowship throughout the week.

Calendar of Events:

Tuesday, April 18: Traditional Church of God Passover service

Wednesday, April 19: Passover Seder celebrations in designated homes

Thursday, April 20: First Day of Unleavened Bread services, 2:00 p.m., followed by Feast dinner and dance.

Friday, April 21: Evening fellowship, Feast meal and Bible study at

Eltrich's home.

Saturday, April 22: High Sabbath service, 2:00 p.m., followed by Feast dinner and social.

Sunday, April 23: Evening fellowship, Feast meal, and Bible study at Merritt's home.

Monday, April 24: Evening fellowship, Feast meal, and Bible study at Hagen's home.

Tuesday, April 25: Evening fellowship, Feast meal, and Bible study at Wales' home.

Wednesday, April 26: Last Day of Unleavened Bread services, 2:00 p.m., followed by Feast dinner.

Come and join us. Good local hotels/motels available with some space available in brethren's homes. Call or write for more information to:

Church of God, Berean Fellowship
P.O. Box 215; Dousman, WI 53118
cog-bereanfellowship@usa.com
www.geocities.com/berean_fellowship
or call toll free 877-444-4252

Dart to Speak, Last Day of UB

Services for the Last Day of Unleavened Bread will be held at the fellowship hall of the United Methodist Church in Terrell, Texas, at 1:00 pm. It is located at 503 West College. Ron

Send Us Your News!

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

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

Dart will be the speaker. A potluck meal will follow. Contact CEM at 888-242-5344 or adm@cemnetwork.com.

UB Feast in Richmond Indiana

Our home fellowship is hosting a **Feast** for the upcoming Unleavened Bread season. The Theme: "Giving

New Shelter in the Word and Servants' News E-mail & Websites

Sitegen, Inc. (<http://www.sitegen.net>) has volunteered to help us build new Internet websites for *Servants' News* and *Shelter in the Word*. In the past, I have not kept them up to date very well. We hope that they will be of much more service in the future. When we begin putting the issues on the net in a timely manner, we plan to offer a service to let readers know via e-mail when a new issue appears. The websites are far from complete at this time, but they are functioning. We will make another announcement when they are complete:

www.ServantsNews.com and **www.ShelterInTheWord.com**

Please begin sending e-mail to (upper/lower case does not matter):

info@ServantsNews.com and **info@ShelterInTheWord.com**

thanks and ingesting the living words". It will be a time focused on giving thanks to our gracious heavenly Father and His Son, for all "Their blessings", sharing those blessings with others, studying, learning, and practicing "Their way".

Music, prayer, fellowship, feasting and a variety of services, will promote this festive atmosphere. We will make an effort to accommodate all varieties of understanding, especially as to the observance of Passover/memorial/night to-be-observed. We will have services/activities every day April 17th-26th. There will be a festive meal on the evening of the 19th, possibly with some singing to celebrate the night to be much observed. The 20th will be the First Day of Unleavened Bread. All are welcome to attend a single service or the entire time.

Everyone is invited to participate, as you are comfortable; we welcome your contributions. We will try to give everyone opportunity to voice their ideas and understandings, etc, in an appropriate setting.

The format envisioned at this time will be varied, with all these options: 15-30 min. "sermonettes", 45-60 min. "sermons", 30-45 min. "split sermons". These may include question and answer sessions. Bible readings of different lengths, special music of varying types. Giving of testimonies of God's love. Bible studies on specific topics or verses/books in the Bible or on questions from the forms received. Also book reports, video reviews, lesson formats etc. that might be helpful to us. Some announcements may be included.

We are meeting in Quaker Hill Conference Center, Richmond, Indiana (765-962-5741). Room rates are approximately \$30 for a single and \$50 for two adults and up to 3 children. There are other hotels and restaurants in the area.

—Cliff Howard, 765-642-6070
902 E 29th; Anderson, In. 46016
E-mail: choward1@ameritech.net
or rfoust2@juno.com
Internet: <http://www.ameritech.net/users/choward1/LR-COG-In.html>

Help Line Started Dec. 1999

Like everything, it is a learning experience and, all in all, it's been fairly smooth. Help Line is a network of about 16 volunteers with a desire to help others. We are all brothers and sisters in

Christ willing to take time to talk, pray, study the Bible and, if necessary, find other help for a person in need. Some of us are professional counselors; some of us are not. We will try to help you find solutions to any of the following:

Addictions: alcohol, drugs, gambling, homosexuality, pornography, sex

Emotional problems: depression, discouragement, loneliness, rape victimization

Family: child rearing & discipline, divorce, domestic violence, education, marriage problems, teen problems (dating, etc.), family disharmony due to different doctrines or church organizations.

Personal needs: financial guidance, health (traditional & alternative), imprisonment, physical needs, spiritual needs

While we have been able to be of service in many aspects of people's lives, only one or two have requested help with addictions. Yet we have good reason to believe that the ratio of drug, homosexuality, pornography and other addictions is relatively high in the church. We hope those addicted are receiving help in their local community. If not we urge them to contact us.

It is encouraging to note that some of those requesting help are now signed on as volunteers.

We have several inmates requesting services. I have been referring some to Lisa Henderson who is starting up an inmate pen pal service.

Along this same line, there are two inmates in California upon whom I put a challenge to write articles based on their own experience and knowledge that would be of value to us, especially the youth. Our hope is that they will be of interest and profitable for various COG publications.

If you, or anyone you know needs our services, please contact us.

—Steven & Suzanne Kieler, 515-576-5743
2193 Sheker Dr; Fort Dodge, IA 50501
E-mail: sskielers@juno.com

HWA Web Site Info

The web site with old HWA and WCG writings (conveniently packed into PDF files), mentioned in the Nov/Dec *Servants' News* seems to be gone. If someone knows where it has

moved, please let us know and we will print it. The former address of the site was:

<http://www.crosswinds.net/~gwmatteson/index.htm>

Another site with downloadable "zip" files (not as convenient but usable) is:

<http://www.hwaonline.org/index.html>

Women's Conference 2000 Summary

The Women's Conference of March 10 through 12 was a special treat for those who attended. Linda Hardy White and the International Bible Learning Center sponsored this event in the Dallas area. Approximately 100 women were present from several states across the nation. Joy and enthusiasm filled the reception as we conversed together in the lobby of the Wyndham Garden Hotel on Friday evening.

Various speakers on Saturday shared their insights before and after a catered buffet lunch.

The morning speakers included Linda Hardy White (Carrollton, Texas) sharing her research on the historic role of women in the Church, Allie Dart (Whitehouse, Texas) on teaching our children, and Gillian Gully (Waco, Texas) on the biblical perspective of success.

After breaking for lunch, Dr. Jewell Cress (Tahlequah, Oklahoma) admonished us on our role as women and answering God's call for His service in our lives.

After a short break, a musical presentation of several vocalists and an "audience participation" session was enjoyed. During the "interactive" session, (moderated by Rosemary Crow of Katy, Texas), several women shared

Akron Ohio Fellowship E-mail Correction.

Ed Schneider's e-mail address should be ets124@hotmail.com (not ets123...). He was listed as one of the contact persons for the Akron-Cleveland-Canton-Youngstown, Ohio Fellowship on page 6, column 1 of the Nov/Dec 1999 *Servants' News*.

personal evangelism and community service experiences.

After dinner, we were given some choices. Four speaking sessions were provided, with two occurring at the same time. These included one for teens, by Carol Boyer (East Lansing, Michigan) and a time management lecture by Carolyn Scharpen (Mission Viejo, California). The final Saturday lectures were one for singles given by Marita Brooks (Carrollton, Texas) and one on home schooling by Tarcila Fox (Nashville, Tennessee). An ice cream social, a live country music band, and door prizes concluded the evening.

On Sunday morning, a continental breakfast was provided for everyone. Louisa Sandsmark (Simsbury, Connecticut) informed us on financial planning, Melodee Overton (Big Sandy, Texas) exhorted us on conflict resolution. Peggy Wooten (Birmingham, Alabama) and Linda Hardy White presented closing comments.

The conference provided opportunities for meeting new "sisters in Christ", visiting with old friends, and sharing knowledge and experiences. It is the hope of the conference sponsors that there will be regional conferences in as many states as there are women to sponsor them.

Tapes of all presentations (8 hours) are available for \$39, audio and \$59, video. Make checks payable to IBLC; 4021 Randall Lane; Carrollton, TX 75007; fax: 972-492-3851; email: info@iblc.org. Another conference on *Building the Next Church* is planned for the Dallas area sometime in July.

—Marleen Edwards

BSA Essay Scholarship Contest

The Bible Sabbath Association is conducting an essay scholarship contest for 2001. Those interested in scholarships should contact June Narber Harrison; PMB 193; 6325-9 Falls of Neuse Road; Raleigh, NC 27615; e-mail ejnarber@mindspring.com. Donations for the scholarship can be sent to the Bible Sabbath Association; 3316 Alberta Dr; Gillette, WY 82718.

Sabbath Services by Phone

I invite you to tune in. Virtual Church is a live and interactive phone-connected audience. Just dial in to our **Jan/Feb 2000**

conference center to be connected. It's free (You pay for your call at whatever your long distance provider charges—usually 10-cents-a-minute or less. I pay 5 cents using the discounter 10-10-636 prior to dialing our conference number. At that rate the one-hour call cost \$3.00.) Use a speaker phone if you have one and invite others to listen in.

Dial 918-222-7158 and at any time during the welcome message enter the code 0566# (# is the "pound" key).

Time: 11 AM Pacific Standard Time (Noon Mountain, 1 PM Central, 2 PM Eastern). We meet weekly at this same time. For coming topics check the schedule on our web site: www.godward.org.

Following the panel discussion, your comments and questions are welcomed. Please join us any Sabbath.

—Ken Westby

The Way & the Businesses

I invite everyone to have a look at the updated web site for *The WAY* Publications. The URL is:

www.jps.net/mjlane/theway

I ceased regular publication of *The WAY* some months back, for the simple reason that I didn't have the time to devote to publishing it. However, I have archived most of the articles on this web site, and I am adding more articles and transcripts as time permits, including some things that have been sitting around in my file cabinet for years, and presentations I have made more recently.

Which brings me to the main purpose of this item:

A number of us who have known each other in the past, and/or know each other now, who share the WCG as a common background, have businesses. Some of these businesses have web sites. I thought it might be a really nice thing if we would add a page of links on our web site to other church people's businesses and web sites. Wouldn't it be fun to know that, for many of the things we need, and might search for on the internet, there might be a church member or family out there who can supply it? I think it would be a wonderful service to have a page of links to those of us in the same family (we're all God's kids, right?), so we can stay in touch, and even do some business with each other.

I know about some of your web

sites, and I'm impressed with the quality and artistic design of these business sites. Would you like to be linked to our web site?

Do you know of some church people who are in business, and who have a web site, who might also like to take advantage of this service?

I know this amounts to free advertising. I just want to do this for the family. It might be fun, it might help bring in a few more sales—who knows? It's just one of those wild and crazy ideas I get once in awhile.

Suppose you need a little help in mounting a web site. I happen to know a really great commercial artist and advertising professional who just went out on her own and started her own company and a brand new web site. I'll bet, if you wanted to get some good help, you could become one of her customers.

Hey, know anybody who needs the finest stained glass windows or doors? I know who to call! She's another one who has a great web site.

So, let me know what you think. Does this sound like something you'd like to do? Do you know somebody in the church who might like to have a business link on our web site?

What an opportunity to network!

Take care, everybody. God loves us, so who can be against us?

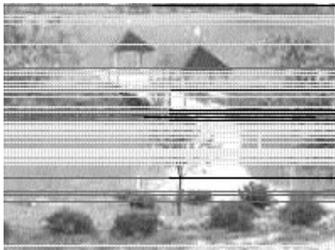
—Jack Lane

[Such a business link can work out fine as long as everyone understands it is based on offering a fair product or service for a fair price. Too many times, I have known people to do business with other believers in a less righteous way than they would do business with unbelievers. They would say things like: "He's a church member, so if we can't pay all we owe him, he'll understand." or "They are church members—they shouldn't get in a bad attitude if I'm late (over a year late) delivering the product they paid for."]

Finally, ministries and gospel preaching should never be influenced by profit-making motives. Paul did not decide to preach the gospel "where his tent-making business would be best", but where the Spirit led. He did not advertize his tents in his epistles. I am not saying that a gospel-preacher can never buy/sell anything from/to another believer, but profit-making businesses should be kept as separately as possible from a ministry.

—NSEJ 

Port Austin, Michigan— the Ultimate Family Feast



We believe the arrangements at Port Austin Center, Michigan will provide wonderful opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy and learn from the Feast of Tabernacles 2000. Its campus contains several meeting rooms, sleeping quarters, dining facilities and numerous recreational activities. All are available at a very reasonable price.

But that is not all. Within a very few miles, there are numerous quality motels and restaurants, and many other attractions and recreational opportuni-

ties. All of this comes in a beautiful, uncrowded area at the tip of the “thumb” of Michigan.

Port Austin has the capability for a close “big happy family” feast where brethren can eat nearly all their meals together and live within walking distance of each other. It also provides the dorm-atmosphere of a summer-camp for teens and singles. It also provides the hotel and restaurant environment of a traditional WCG Feast. **All of this is available in one site!**

How do we begin to describe it all?

When: Friday evening, October 13 to Saturday afternoon, October 21. These are the traditional Jewish calendar dates. (We will assist in making alternate arrangements for those keeping other calendar systems that are within a day or two.) When it is ready, a daily schedule of events will be mailed to people expressing an interest in attending.

Where: Port Austin Center is located less than a mile south of the city of Port Austin on State Highway M-53, at the tip of the “thumb” of Michigan. See the map, below. It is about two and a half hours from either downtown Detroit or Lansing. (From Detroit, take M-53 north or from Saginaw, take M-25 east from I-75.) Admittedly, Port Austin is not on the way to anywhere, but that is what helps to make it so uncrowded and unspoiled.

Services: We expect the services and music to be similar to the Feast last year in Butler State Park: Bible readings, short messages, prayer, discussion and a wide variety of music, with live (and a little recorded) accompaniment. We will devote a time to introduce everyone to everyone else. A few evening Bible studies on topics of interest will be offered. There will be some

What is Port Austin Center?

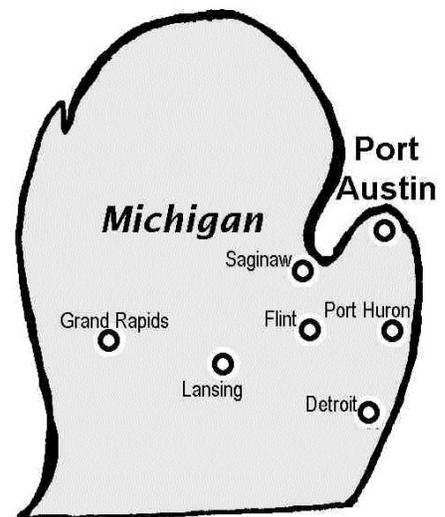
I first learned of Port Austin Center for Advanced Biblical Studies at our 1999 Feast of Trumpets service. A friend brought an article about a music concert being held there to celebrate the real 2000th birthday of Christ. The founders had spent over \$100,000 to take out ads in *USA Today*. While I was not convinced that it was exactly the 2000th birthday, I was interested in a Christian group that knew about the Feast of Trumpets—and was attempting to start a Bible study center—possibly even a college.

I did not have time to read the whole article during our service and it was not until several weeks later that the article was sent to me. It stayed in my “to read” pile for several months. A couple days before leaving to visit our intended West Branch Feast site, I called Port Austin Center. Here is what I found:

It was not teaching classes yet, but is a “college-in-the-making”. Five Christian men from the Detroit area were working together to start it. They all attend different Sunday-keeping churches. There is no group or denomination behind it—they are apparently funding it themselves. But their goal is to teach truth in a totally non-denominational manner. Hence, they have come across the Feast Days and other truths not commonly taught by Protestant groups.

Their proposed longer classes include: Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, Old Testament History, Pentateuch, Tabernacle, Prophets, Ancient History, Gospels, New Testament Epistles, Doctrines, Church History, Manners, Customs and Idioms of the Bible and Creation Science. Shorter classes include: Bible Astronomy, Numerology, Communications Skills, Psalms, Book of Hebrews. Graduates of Ambassador College will see a certain similarity, though some classes are clearly different. Port Austin Center clearly has a greater emphasis on the original languages of the Bible.

Port Austin Center campus used to be an Air Force base, primarily used as a radar tracking site to look for missiles coming over the North Pole. Its buildings, dormitories, kitchen, and numerous recreation facilities are now being remodeled in preparation for opening the school. A complete faculty and academic program may take another year or two to put into operation. For now, they are are renting out the facilities as a Christian retreat and conference center.



separate children's classes as well as parts of the main service specifically designed for young people.

The main meeting room holds 200 people and has several smaller rooms connected. If more people attend, a 400-person community center is available within walking distance.

Activities: Port Austin Center has a wonderful set of activities available on campus with no extra charge. **Outdoor facilities** include: volleyball, baseball, soccer, football, tennis and a playground. The sports fields have lights for evening use. If the weather is warm enough, we can use the outdoor heated pool. **Indoor facilities** include: basketball, volleyball, bowling (2 automatic lanes), racquetball, weight and exercise room, pool, ping-pong, video-room and a tanning bed. We also plan to make our Bible bowl buzzer system and board games available.

If all of these activities were not enough, only a few miles away are lake beaches, canoe rental, lake cruises, fishing, go-carts, horse-back riding, roller skating and a championship golf course. For each sport with sufficient interest, we will organize games and tournaments. Also, there are several museums and shops in the area. Major department stores are 20 minutes away. Everyone can be as busy as they want!

Accommodations: Port Austin Center has sleeping space for 66 people in a variety of suite-type of accommodations, and for 160 people in 4 dormitory buildings. The beds and furniture are new (not Air Force base leftovers). Towels and sheets are provided and laundromat is on the premises. (No maid service is provided; clean your own room and wash linens as often as you like). Post Austin Center charges a flat fee per person and request that the group renting the center allocate the rooms among the guests. The "per person" rates **for the entire 9 day package** are:

Room with 3 meals each day	\$149
Room/meals, age 8 and under	\$89
Room only	\$90
Meals only	\$99
Meals only, age 8 and under	\$69
Use of facilities only	\$49

(neither meals nor room)

Children 3 and under are free for everything.

Send a \$20 per person deposit to *Servant's News* to reserve room space. (We have already paid \$1000 to reserve the site). We will allocate the room space to best serve everyone—but in general, **it will be first-come, first served.** (We realize that many people will not want to stay all 9 nights, but will go home Saturday; but the Center wanted one set of prices.)

Each floor of the 4 two-story dormitory buildings has 20 beds and a large common bathroom. We will designate one building for men and one for women. We will make sure that there is a responsible adult on each floor among the teens. A large, extended family or other group may reserve a dorm floor for themselves.

The building containing the suites used to be a motel. Their various room arrangements are too numerous to describe here. They will go fast. Camping and RV-hookup facilities are also available by request. Please call or write *Servants' News* for information.

If you do not want to stay at Port Austin Center, see

the box, below. You are still welcome to join us for meals.

Meals: Port Austin Center will serve cafeteria-style meals according to the menus that we gave them (Breakfast on the 14th to dinner on the 21st). Their staff will cook breakfast and lunch, they will have local area restaurants cater the dinners. Our menus will be sent along with the rest of the Feast information. We encourage everyone to eat together and spend time with the brethren. We realize that some will not want to eat every meal at the Center, but it will be too complicated to pay for a meal at a time. At these prices, most people can afford to buy the meal plan, and still go to restaurants a time or two.

If you are interested, please contact us at 517-625-7480, fax: 517-625-7481, e-mail: info@servantsnews.com, or write *Servants' News*; PO Box 107; Perry, Michigan, 48872. ☺

Port Austin Accommodations

<u>Name</u>	<u>Per Night</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
Beachcomber Motel & Apts	\$74		2bdrm kit	6	517-738-8354
(lakefront location)	\$54		2bdrm	4	
Best Western Hotel & Resort	\$70-75		room	1	517-269-3930
(heated indoor pool)	\$80-85		room	2	
(17 miles away in Bad Axe)	\$100		room	4	
Blue Spruce Motel	\$40		room	4	517-738-8650
(6 mi. away in Grindstone city)	\$60		room, kit	4	810-781-8387
Breaker's On The Bay Resort	\$79		lakefacing	4	517-738-5101
(lakefront, 4 miles from site)	\$71		non-lake	4	
Captain Morgan's Cottages	\$40		room	2	517-738-7665
	\$50		2bd, kit	4	517-738-6783
Captain's Inn Bed & Breakfast	\$72-125		room	2	517-738-8321
Garfield Inn	\$95-110		room	2	800-373-5254
Krebs Beachside Cottages	\$57		1bdrm, kit	4	517-856-2876
(lakefront, accept pets)	\$72		2bdrm, kit	6	
	\$93		3bdrm, kit	8	
Lakefront Rental Cottages	\$86		cottage, kit	5	517-874-5181
(lakefront, call for other sizes)	\$142		home	10	
Lake Motor Lodge	\$48		room	2	888-200-4208
(various rooms/rates, call)	\$68		2bd, kit	10	517-738-5201
Lake Vista Motel & Cottages	\$64-68		room	2-4	517-738-8612
(lakefront)	\$100		penthouse	4	
	\$74-84		1-3bdrm, kit	6-7	
Parks Harborview Cottages	\$57		2bdrm, kit	6	517-738-5277
(lakefront, various rooms/rates)	\$86		3bdrm, kit	10	941-389-1444
Sand Castles on the Beach	\$49		1bdrm kit	4	517-738-4200
(lakefront)	\$59		2bdrm kit	6	
	\$69		3bdrm kit	7	
	\$49		room	4	
Sun-N-Sand Motel	\$45-49		room	2-4	517-738-7513
	\$55		large rm, kit	4	
Town Center Cottages	\$42		2bd, kit	6	517-738-7223

- All prices are **per night**. Many motels will offer a discount for longer stays. In only a few cases have these prices already been reduced to reflect a week-long stay. Feel free to negotiate a lower rate or find other housing.
- "Max" column gives the maximum number of people for that type of unit.
- Unless otherwise noted, all accommodations are about a mile from the site.
- Only the Best Western (17 miles away in Bad Axe) has a heated **indoor** pool. Others may have heated outdoor pools which may not be open in October.
- Other campgrounds in the area include Mel-O-Day Acres Motel/RV Park (517-738-8461) and Port Crescent State Park (800-543-2937).

Teaching Orphan Boys at the Harbor Home in La Porte, Texas

Do you remember Neil Diamond's song, "Turn on your Love Light"? Some of the words were running through my mind this weekend when I saw the Harbor Lights. If you are from the pre-baby boomer generation I am sure you will remember Patti Page's rendition of that.

What I am reporting on is the first Bible study with the young 7 to 12 year old boys who are orphans at the Harbor Home in La Porte, Texas. We are using Christian Educational Ministries *Youth Educational Adventures* (YEA) book for primary age children. We had them coloring while I read them the real story about the birth of Christ.

But what I first started out with was something that most boys are interested in: "Space Travel". I handed out a small rubber ball that had the continents on it. The ball represents the earth, and they were given to me by the Boeing public relations people. I told them that I was doing a workshop with orphan boys at the Harbor. I further mentioned that I was using the principles in the Bible (to let them know that I am a Christian that is concerned for the unfortunate) to teach them how to prepare their lives to work at a place like Boeing. The Public Relations person loved that idea and gave me some other things to take to the Harbor (which I will pass out at another time). I asked them if I could borrow a 5 minute promotional tape about the first anniversary of the space station. The boys loved the tape and said things like "wow", and "that is cool". The tape's theme was a new star in the sky. That was very easy for me to relate to God's Creation in the sky.

I reinforced the YEA lesson with the book on Values from the UCG-IA, written by Larry Greider. I read the lesson on compassion. I think the adult sponsors who were there were impressed with the way my wife and I made the boys feel that they were important to us and very important to God. I won't go into a lot of detail at this time, but let me say that the hugs the boys gave us were very uplifting to my wife, Debbie, and I. We ask for your prayers in our efforts to show these boys about how God loves them. Our goal is to try to emphasize the

personality of God with each lesson, and how they can get to walk with Him and think like Him. As God's Spirit moves us in this effort, we will continue to write about it so that you can see what it is like being active in preaching and acting out God's Way of Life with the Matthew 25 and James 1 people. An exciting aspect of this is that we try to employ God's Spirit as God leads us. It is apparent that we can't fool these children with phony sentiment or preaching down to them. So, when they warm up to us, it is because God is making our words genuine with His Wisdom regarding how to reach these children about Him. They don't always appreciate everything we say, but they can sense our desire to help them. We do tell them we want them to be successful in life as God wants them to be. It is this way of bringing God's knowledge to them that we think they respect us for.

It only took an hour of talking and laughing with the little boys and perhaps an hour of driving, but we felt it was two hours of Sabbath time that was very rewarding. We plan to do it twice a month to start. Who knows how many will show up from the other cottages, but those young boys in the cottage we were in are yearning for love and attention. I think it is time for more of God's people to start "Turning up their love light". This is a true sensation that "feels so right". Hope more on the Forum can share your love light with little ones like this. At the Harbor we saw their eyes light up with the truth of how God really loves them. I love to practice what we will be doing in the Kingdom.

—Rich Schulz
e-mail: richman21@juno.com

Send Info About Other Feasts to *Servants' News*

We plan to publish Feast information for other sites in the March/April *Servants' News* issue. We have already received information on a number of sites (don't send it again if you already have). Please try to keep it short. Give the location, who is sponsoring it, approximate cost, any particularly interesting or unique points about the site and contact information so people can find out more. See the back page for *Servants' News* contact information.

It is wonderful to see so many different groups and individuals sponsoring Feasts. Years ago, a few individuals were responsible for planning all of the "Church of God" Feasts throughout the country. Now, there are hundreds of individuals gaining experience planning Feasts.

We encourage everyone to pray, plan time away from work or school, and do whatever else is necessary to attend the Feast of Tabernacles this year. However, we realize that not everyone can attend a distant site. If anyone is keeping the Feast at home and would enjoy sharing a study or a meal with others nearby, we would be glad to list you in *Servants' News* as a "home Feast." All you need to do is give a way for people to contact you: phone, address or e-mail. We will clearly separate home Feasts from other sites.

We will not list Feasts sponsored by those whom we believe to be **unqualified as leaders** (1Tim 3, Titus 1) or who are teaching doctrines unacceptable to our readership (e.g. one organization is the only "True Church", only certain races can be saved, the Bible is false, etc.). However, we do not have time to extensively investigate every group. If we list a site that you believe falls into one of these categories, please contact us. 

Share Your Local Congregation & Evangelism!

We have a number of interviews planned with individuals in existing local congregations. But we are sure that there are many such congregations that we do not know about. We would like to hear about your group.

Often people discourage us from writing about their group, saying: "Our group is nothing great, it is struggling." That is probably true. But the Bible is not about great people and groups, it is a story about a great God and how He works with people who are struggling. Others are encouraged by seeing and knowing what the Eternal does. If you would like to share your story with others, contact our Small Group & Evangelism Editor: **Arlean Kelley**, 933 Frangi Pani Dr, Barefoot Bay, FL 32976; tel: 561-663-9417, e-mail: arleankelley@yahoo.com.

Small Group & Evangelism Reports

It was the Sabbath meeting of a home church in Vero Beach, Florida. Eight of us were seated in a circle on the hostess, Carolyn's, screened porch amidst Florida pines and palmettos.

The meeting began, as it always does, at 1:00 in the afternoon. This is definitely a family-type gathering, including a potluck meal in late afternoon. The format varies. On this particular Sabbath, one person presented a study, with plenty of questions and discussion interspersed by the group. Another week it may be scripture reading with everyone participating. Occasionally an appropriate video follows the meeting.

The obvious qualities that characterize this group are warmth and openness. There are no "politically incorrect" issues here. There is complete freedom of thought and speech. And always the scriptures—not a set doctrine or belief—are the deciding measuring stick.

The group has remained stable since its beginning in 1997. As a visitor, I was impressed by the mutual respect within the group. At first, there appears to be no human leadership. In true New Testament fashion, no one "lords it over" anyone else. Not even subtly. But as one continues to observe, one can detect that the group does, in fact, have mature leadership that maintains such low profile that one has to be especially observant to detect any leadership at all. That leadership includes most or all of the core members. The group believes in and maintains order. But their aim is that order should come from the Spirit of the Father rather than human intervention.

Cliff, who leads a Bible study in this same home during the week, thinks that this openness, along with mutual respect and equality of members, is the reason for the group's success. He says, "We were all captured by the organization at one time" and brought under the leadership of men. "When that happens, people do not have the opportunity to learn from the Spirit of the Father." Conversely, this group aims to give individual members the freedom they need to develop that relationship with the Father.

Here are some tenets held by this fellowship:

1. When another person sees something differently from the way we see it, we must recognize that no one of us has all knowledge and the other person may be the one that is right.

2. People must be given the flexibility to grow on an individual basis. You have to believe the Father is going to come into your life through the Spirit and deal with you as an individual—not all at once, but over time. That is the only way that genuine growth takes place.

3. To present a viewpoint in such a way that puts down the belief of another is unacceptable. What happens is that, as humans, we tend to become proud and when that happens, we present what we believe in a way that takes others down.

Cliff further expressed it this way: "Messiah said you have to humble yourself as a servant. He was talking about the servant in a Jewish household who washed the feet of others. This was the lowest of servant positions. I think what the Messiah was saying is we have to look on ourselves as absolutely nothing. Otherwise, the pride that is in us will rise up and destroy everything!"

4. We encourage all members—men, women, and young people—to take part equally, and we give everyone equal respect. There is neither male nor female, nor slave or free in the body of Messiah. Women can be inspired as much as men and can be used by the Father just as effectively.

Since inception, the group has faced two problems in particular:



Problem 1: Some people left because the small group was not fulfilling to them. They were used to the feel-good experience of being with a large group where all believe the same. Cliff says he understands that because he used to enjoy that experience in the larger group himself but, "Problem was, we all didn't believe the same; we just didn't know it because we didn't really know each other!" However, the perceived benefits of a large group are important for some people.

Solution: You have to just let them go with the knowledge that the Father said that once he has begun a work in someone he is going to work it out in their lives. You can't hold people; but trust them to the Father, and don't take it personally that they left.

Problem 2: People that bring a particular doctrine and are very dogmatic, almost saying, "If you don't believe like this, then you can't be right!" One man came into the group with great scriptural knowledge; but, along with that knowledge, he persistently claimed that the

Find People to Fellowship With—Near You!

Servants' News has just produced a completely new **Scattered Brethren Contact List** reflecting hundreds of new subscribers. If you have requested it before, you may want to request it again!

How does it work? The list contains all the cities where our subscribers live. You decide which cities are near enough to you that you might want to establish a friendship. You can then write as many cards or letters as will be required for the number of people in the cities of your interest. When you send them to *Servants' News*, we will add the complete name and address to your cards or envelopes, and mail them for you. This allows people to receive your correspondence without us giving away anyone's name and address. Most brethren respond to a sincere letter. Then, you will be able to write, call or fellowship with them.

If you are interested (we have over 300 international cities), please ask for the **Scattered Brethren Contact List**. Phone: 517-625-7480, fax: 517-625-7481, e-mail: Info@ServantsNews.com, or write: PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107 USA. —NSE

Messiah never came and that the entire New Testament must be discarded.

Solution: When all attempts to resolve the issue failed, the group decided that he must be asked not to attend. A selected member explained, "We are not condemning you at all; we just don't believe this."

Even in less serious matters, if a person consistently brings dogmatic doctrine or belief in such a way as to put other people down, we deal with that also, but humbly and in love. "You can't allow someone, who continues to bring hostility and dissension, to destroy the group," is the general viewpoint.

There is a growing number of churches meeting in living rooms—or if you live in Vero Beach—perhaps on Carolyn's back porch! As Cliff says, "We need to be aware that we are all linked together and that something is going on in the body of Messiah". He is calling us out into small, independent groups to search the scriptures and to seek a more direct relationship with Him. We don't know how big it's going to grow or where He is going to take us, but one thing we know for sure—it's going to be an exciting trip!

To attend, you may contact Carolyn Adreeser at 561-562-3089, e-mail: carolyn990@webtv.net or Cliff Rodriguez at 561-466-1690.

—Arlean Kelley, 561-663-9417

Fayetteville-Springdale, Arkansas

Many of our readers will remember **Tom Justus**. In the 1960's, he was head of all printing departments for the Worldwide Church of God. Leaving the WCG in 1978, he was a board member and active minister for many years in the Church of God International. Just a few weeks ago, Tom's fellowship merged with an independent Church of God Seventh Day congregation. Having rented their building from them for several years, the merger seemed to be of mutual benefit. The two groups have agreed to cooperate on their common beliefs and to respect the other group's beliefs that differ. Actually they agree on about everything except the 7th day group does not keep the Holy Days other than Passover.

The combined group totals about 60 members, of which 15 are teenagers. Their service format has one hour of interactive bible study, including partici-

pation by the ladies, and one hour of sermon and songs. The congregation is called the Church of God 7th Day/Sabbath Day and meets at 10:00 AM at 705 E Meadow, Springdale, AR 72764.

After leaving CGI in 1995, Tom and his fellowship group wanted to help with some form of evangelism. With a background in printing, and having built his business to be one of the larger printing establishments of its type in the state of Arkansas, Tom thought something that involved printing seemed appropriate.

He started to print some of the old WCG booklets (Yes, the same ones that brought so many of us into the Church). He started with seven booklets, gradually adding others until recently booklet number sixteen was completed, a condensed version of the old "Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days, Which?". A card is included with each booklet offering more booklets.

Tom points out one big advantage to booklets is that they have such a long shelf life. For example, return cards are still received that list only the seven original booklets, which means a response from efforts of several years ago.

In a normal week their group will mail out two to three thousand booklets. Last week, five thousand were mailed. Total booklets given out thus far is about 275,000. Forty thousand booklets are maintained in inventory.

Tom says the whole thrust and interest is getting people doing something themselves. Therefore, the booklets are given free to those who will distribute them. There is a blank space on each booklet for the local group's name and address. The same with the return cards, most of them are returned to the local group, not to Tom. The booklet program also includes ad "slicks" which is the term for camera-ready ads that can be placed in newspapers by just adding the local group's information.

Results thus far seem very encouraging. Over 60 groups receive the free booklets, as well as numerous individuals. Some have put whole booklets on their web page ready for downloading; others offer to mail booklets to those responding to a web page. About 8,000 booklets have been mailed from just the latter method. Recently, the God Cares/We Care Church of God in Little Rock, Arkansas started keeping the sabbath as a result of the booklets. It has about 100

members. Tom now has many of the booklets translated into Spanish. The Spanish editions have persuaded at least seven small groups in Mexico to start keeping the sabbath.

Perhaps the question asked most often is, "How about the copyright laws?". Tom responds that all of the booklets were published before 1953, the copyrights on most of them have lapsed. Even if there are some that have not lapsed, the reason for most copy-right lawsuits is lost revenue. Since all versions of the booklets have always been given away free, lost revenue is not an issue. Plagiarism is not an issue because Tom does not represent these booklets to be his own work.

Those interested in this congregation can contact Bill Myrick at 501-951-1724. Tom can be reached at 501 751-9535 or e-mail Justus4779@aol.com.

—"Onethird Century In-CoGs"

Nashville, Tennessee Area

An unnamed group of 12 to 25 people meet at 1 pm each Sabbath in Goodlettsville, a suburb of Nashville, Tennessee. They are able to meet for free (they make a donation however) in a charismatic church owned by Johnny Cash's brother in law. They do not play tapes. They have found that what works best for them is to have a strong song worship service, singing anywhere from six to twelve songs, then a short bible study—directed toward the children—then prayer requests and any special needs, followed by a round table bible discussion.

No one person is in charge and yet their fellowship has continued for over three years. Looking back on the experiences of their fellowship, Richard says it is probably better to not worry about numbers, if you have just one person to meet with and fellowship with on the Sabbath then that of itself is a good thing.

He also notes one of the first things their group decided was everyone has permission to disagree. For example, they do not all agree on the times for Passover, but they do not allow this to harm their fellowship. This goes along with the group's other agreement, and this may be the most important one, and that is to have respect for each other.

Those interested in this fellowship may contact Richard Fox at 800-228-2473 or Glenn Jarboe 270-529-9908.

—"Onethird Century In-CoGs" ☐

How Biblical is the Two-Class System?

Does God always make decisions and take action through a separate class of “ordained” individuals? Here are 18 examples of God using “ordinary” people.

Many of us have come out of the Worldwide Church of God or one of its off-shoots. We learned much truth from them. Unfortunately, we also learned some errors.

One error, I believe, is the practice that places those in the church on **two** different levels. The common members are treated as being on a low, **inferior** level—given only a passive role. On the other hand, the “ordained”, ranked by deacons, ministers, pastors, regional pastors, evangelists, etc., is considered to be on a second, and much **higher** level.

As one minister put it, “You have to follow me because I have a double measure of the Holy Spirit”. (This is not biblical, but it illustrates the attitude.) You may have heard similar examples. This article is not declaring every “ordained person” as “bad” or every “non-ordained” person as “good”. Good things and bad things have been done by both. Each person will be judged by what they say and do and the fruit they produce. The purpose of this article is to see if the Bible clearly teaches a “two-class” system where God works through one class.

We need to ask:

- 1) How biblical is the two-class system?
- 2) Are the members, the “sheep”, really inferior?
- 3) Should the members have more than just a passive role?

We will answer these three questions by looking at **17** Bible examples plus **1** more example from today. Moreover, I hope to show that God puts a lot of responsibility and power into the individual members when they **act as a collective body**. It seems something special happens when God’s spirit is working collectively in a group of His saints. It is as if the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. As Ecclesiastes 4:12 says: “a three fold cord is not easily broken”. Or, as Proverbs 24:6 says: “In a multitude of counselors is safety.” Also, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20).

Example #1: The Levites were “ordained” by the congregation.

A logical place for us to start is the first “ordination” service—when the Levites were put into their priestly positions. For sure the highest hierarchy available at the time would lay hands on the Levites, right? After all, authority comes from the top down, right? After all, the biblical laying on of hands more or less continues into our present day ministers, right? “thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together”...and thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord, and the **children of Israel** shall put their hands upon the Levites.”

As one who has witnessed many COG ordinations over the past 35 years, reading Numbers 8 was rather a shock. What a setback for the two-class (and for the hierarchical) system, the first “ordination” seems to have been from the bottom up and **not** from the “top down”.

Example #2: The congregation, Not the priest, was responsible to judge the slayer and the avenger.

These instructions are found in Numbers 35:24-25. Here is a matter of life *or* death. Yet the people, **not** the priests, are given the responsibility of deciding the matter between the slayer and the avenger of blood. Surely God would not give something of such importance to those of inferior ability or intelligence.

Example #3: A father, not the priest, had the responsibility to annul his daughter’s vow.

These instructions are found in Numbers 30:1-8. Surely a daughter (or

a wife) making a vow to God is a high spiritual matter. As one steeped for years in the two-class system, I was sure only a priest could annul such a vow. **Not so!** God gave this responsibility to the father or husband; to one of the “sheep”. Notice furthermore how this ties right in to Paul’s rank or structure in 1 Corinthians 1 (Example #13).

Example #4: The first “deacons” were selected by the congregation.

What about members in the New Testament? Let’s notice first Acts 6:1 where we are told the Grecians were murmuring against the Hebrews. In verse 2 we read “the twelve called the multitude of the disciples”. In verse 3 we read “brethren look among you for seven men”. Verse 5 says “and the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose....and.....” Verse continues “whom they set before the apostles”.

It has always seemed odd to me that of the Churches of God I know, none have the congregation select the deacons, as the Bible example seems to clearly illustrate. (Dave Havir and the Big Sandy church are moving that way.)

Sure, there is a danger that some men may be chosen more for popularity than ability. Has not the WCG past system been even worse? Many deacons were chosen more for their blind loyalty to the two-class system (and thus to the hierarchy) than for their abilities. Overall, I think the congregation would make wise choices. After all, it would be in their own best interest to select the most qualified and the most dedicated!

Another advantage to doing it the Biblical way is that it is only natural to feel an obligation to the person who selects you. It certainly seems to work that way in the business world. I for one have always felt an extra obligation to the person who hired me. If any such obligation or loyalty is just natural, is not it better that it be directed toward the congregation one serves rather than toward a church hierarchy? Unfortunately, it seems a hierarchy

What Is the Purpose of “Ordination”?

For a complete scriptural study of ordination and spiritual gifts, ask for our free paper, *How does the Eternal govern through humans?* Call 517-625-7480 or send e-mail to Info@ServantsNews.com.

whose main goal is control would rather not have the congregation involved in the selection of deacons, or other leaders.

Example #5: In the familiar Acts 15 meeting, the members were involved all the way through.

In Acts 15:4, Paul and Barnabas were received by the church, and the apostles and elders. Verse 7 says Peter addressed “men and brethren. Verse 12 says “then all the multitude kept silence”. In verse 13 James says “men and brethren”. Verse 22 says “then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church”. The letter they wrote in Verse 23 starts out “The apostles and elders and brethren”. Verses 24-25 then go on to use the words we, us, and to send, indicating the “sheep” were involved in the decision and in the sending. Verse 27 says “we have sent”.

Example #6: Two or three witnesses are not to go to the ministry.

Christ himself gives us instruction in Matthew 18 of how to handle a brother who has trespassed against us. In verse 17 we are told to first go alone to our brother, next Christ says we go with two or three witnesses, then, if still not settled,... we go to the ministry? **No!** We are instructed to go next to the whole church, to the collective body. “Then if the man who has trespasses refuses to hear the church, then let him be as a heathen man”.

Christ in these very clear instructions does not indicate a two-class system or that the members are inferior. Instead we can see the responsibility and power given here to the **collective body**.

Example #7: When an elder sins, the matter goes to the congregation, not the ministry.

1 Timothy 5:19-20 says “them” (the subject is elders) that sin rebuke before all. How many Churches of God follow this simple and clear instruction? It is interesting to note that Paul followed this instruction in Gal 2:14 when he rebuked Peter before all. We again see the responsibility given to the **collective body**.

Example #8: The Corinthian church, not the ministry, was told to put out the adulterer.

1 Corinthians is addressed to the church at Corinth—to the saints. In

chapter 5:4 the collective body is told when “you are gathered together” to put out the fornicator. The point again is the **collective body**, not the ministry, was given this responsibility.

Example #9: It is NOT the ministry that is told to judge two or three inspired speakers.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul gives some instruction to the church. Verse 29 says “Let the prophets speak (two or three), and let the others judge”. To make the point again, it is **not** the elders who are to judge, but the collective body; all of the members.

Example #10: Paul’s exasperation because the church hadn’t grasped they would judge angels.

This is found in 1 Corinthians 6:1-5, “Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to the law and not before the saints?”. Paul does **not** say go to the ministry. No, he says to go to the saints, the collective body, the “sheep”. He then **reinforces** his high regard for the members by saying, “the saints shall judge the world”. He **reinforces** this even further by saying “know you not that we shall judge angels”.

Example #11: Notice Paul’s instructions for the conduct of various gifts in the local church.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:23 to 33 gives instructions of how local churches are to be conducted. Verse 34 about women keeping silent was quoted many times in Worldwide, **but not** the preceding verses. Notice whole church in verse 23. This same verse says “and all speak”. Notice verse 26 that says “every one of you”. Notice “if any man speak” in verse 27. Notice verse 31 that says “you may all prophesy one by one”.

Paul’s instruction seems to be that many, if not all, the members should have part in the service. Please read verses 23 to 33 for yourself and notice this does not seem to be the Catholic model of a priest/laity service we have been accustomed to.

I am not sure of all the implications these verses picture. It does appear, however, that the members seem to be given more credit for their studies, and for their input, than has been practiced in our past traditions. If I counted right,

these verses indicate eleven to twelve different members taking part in the service. Hopefully, this study will help begin a re-thinking process.

Example #12: “Work out your own salvation”.

This verse was certainly **ignored** in the past by those Church of God organizations. While they preached individual salvation and individual relationships with Christ, the actual practice amounted to group salvation. A person was considered “probably saved” if he was a tithe-paying member of the church organization in good standing. Those out of the church organization were considered “probably lost”.

But notice in Philippians 2:12 that there is **no** intermediary mentioned here. There is no superior human hierarchy mentioned—none! Each of us has to work our **own** salvation. It is between us and God alone. It is obvious God must be confident each member has the ability, and the responsibility, and the power, to accomplish this on our own (with His help, of course), but **without** a human intermediary.

Example #13: “Be you followers of me” (1Cor 1:1).

Here Paul tells us to be followers of him. Is this verse a contradiction to working out our own salvation? **No**, because he clearly qualifies our following him, **not** to do it blindly, **not** to do it as part of group salvation, not a group blindly following the leader, but only “as he **follows Christ**”.

This verse also gives some instruction in the proper role of a ministry. Paul is teaching that an elder’s job is to lead, to set an example, **not** to dictate. (God’s leadership style appears not to be dictatorial, as so many teach, but more of “Leadership by Example”.)

In fact 1 Cor 11:1 reinforces my very point. Paul did **not** say: follow me if your local minister agrees, or follow if your church hierarchy agrees. **No**, the decision to continue following Paul obviously has to be made by each individual member and this personal decision has to be made on a continual basis. Paul evidently had the confidence in, and placed the responsibility **squarely** on, each member of the congregation.

Does following really mean being ruled over? Some have misused this and

similar scriptures to mean a lot more than mere following. They want *following* to become **being ruling over**. Is this right?

Let Paul himself answer.

Notice verse 1 where the subject is following Paul, *as* he follows Christ. Lest there be any misunderstanding as to where Paul (or any elder fits in) Paul **then** goes on to **explain** in verse 3 God's rank system, or structure.

Notice Paul starts out verse 3 with the word "but". Using "but" means verse 3 is a *continuation of*, and an *explanation* of what was said before. Paul is pointing out, in effect, lest you misunderstand what "following me" means. "**But** the head of every man is Christ (not Paul) and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God". Paul is not in this structure, nor should any other elder thrust himself into it. Could what "following" means be any plainer thanks to Paul's **extra effort** to make God's rank structure perfectly clear?

A Revealing Incident

An incident comes to mind regarding Herbert Armstrong. It happened sometime in the seventies. Garner Ted had been put of the church for some reason. Herbert Armstrong in a sermon thundered to the members a statement "Garner Ted has cut himself off from **me**, that means he has cut himself off from **God!**".

I am ashamed to admit it now, but I sat in the congregation and accepted his statement without questioning or analyzing it. Hopefully all of us have matured beyond this point and would no longer passively accept such statements.

Unfortunately the **attitude** behind Herbert Armstrong's statement still exists. It exists in a ministry that puts itself above the members. That attitude is what this article is all about.

One other point should be noted regarding a hierarchy that wants to stretch "follow" into "rule over" or to put themselves on a higher level between the members and God. Please note that the same Greek word for followers in 1 Corinthians is also used in Hebrews.

In Hebrews 6:12 we are told to "**be followers** of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises". The very next verse identifies one of those persons we are to follow. It is Abraham—who is **dead**. Further on in Hebrews 11 the great cloud of witnesses are identi-

fied—they are all **dead**. Thus those who want Paul's *follow* to mean being ruled over can't be right because these others we are told to follow are all **dead**. Can the dead **rule over** anyone? Obviously not! No, we can only *follow* these dead witnesses as they followed Christ.

Furthermore, these dead witnesses we are to follow made mistakes. This *reinforces* my very point. It is obviously up to each individual to follow them as they followed God, and to make an **individual decision** not to follow them as they made mistakes or as they sinned.

Some with the two-class attitude will say "I don't teach ruling over, I teach following". The New King James version and many other modern translations do not even use the word "following" in 1 Corinthians 11:1. The NKJV says "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." An "imitator" copies what he sees, not what he is "told to do". Today, many of the "sheep" are finally learning the lesson to look at the fruits—what people **do**—not what people say.

Example #14: Lessons from domineering Diotrephes.

This account has always been of special interest to me—it is an especially *timely lesson* for us today. 3 John verses 9 and 10 relate how Diotrephes wants to have the pre-eminence and thus would not receive John's letter. Further, Diotrephes actually cast true believers out of the local church. Surely, casting out believers has to be one of the worst things a local elder can do, right?

One way I find this account significant is in what John does not say. John does **not** say I am the high mucky-muck with all rule and power and I am dethroning Diotrephes right now! Neither does John say, "I have turned him into Ministerial Services. They will take care of it." Neither does he write to the "regional director".

No, John's first approach in verse 9 is to write to the church, the members. John's letter is then not well-received by Diotrephes so John tells the church if he comes, John will remember his deeds.

We don't know if John ever did get there.

What then in the meantime? The implication is the **collective body** has to take care of it. John certainly minces no words in reporting about Diotrephes, but takes **no** immediate action on his

own. I find that fascinating.

Notice how this example comes squarely back to our point—the high regard God has for each member's ability. What is John's instruction **in the very next verse**? "**Beloved, follow not** that which is evil, but that which is good." This is exactly what we have been discussing, *personal* responsibility, *personal* decision leading to Godly collective results.

Notice how after reporting Diotrephes, John's instruction to **follow** is much the same instruction as Paul gave us in 1 Corinthians 11! Indeed, the Greek is similar in both, and most modern translations say: "do not **imitate** what is evil but what is good."

John goes on to **reinforce** this by adding "He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God". Another way of saying "**look at the fruits**". (In the past few years, many members have certainly learned that!)

Each person is required to look, to decide, to act on what they **follow**, good or evil. In this example John **reports** the evil and in his very next verse puts the **responsibility**, not on the deacons and elders, but on each member to not follow that which is evil.

Could John have made the member's individual ability and responsibility any clearer?

Example #15: John says we need no man to teach.

It is generally accepted that John wrote 1, 2 & 3 John in about 90 to 95 AD, approximately 25 years after the other apostles had written their books.

Picture John in 90 to 95 AD. He had been an apostle for about 60 years. He had lived 3 1/2 years with Jesus, had witnessed His death and resurrection. He saw the Holy Spirit given on the day of Pentecost, the early church beginnings, the persecution and the scattering of those early Christians. He witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the utter destruction of it's magnificent temple. He knew all of the other apostles had died—most of them martyred. He saw grievous wolves enter the flocks. He saw elders, some even chosen personally by Paul, draw people away wanting their own followings. He looked at his present time and saw many deceivers at work.

Really, he had "seen it all"!

Thus, in 90 to 95 AD John looked

back over his long Christian journey, and considered all of his 60 or so years of experiences and observations, and gave us a marvelous summary in 1 John, 2 John and 3 John.

Now notice what this “elder statesman” said in 1 John 2:27: “**And you need not that any man teach you.**” Does John think the members are inferior? Does John think that they require a “minister” for spiritual success? Hardly!

Let me hasten to say, however, does this mean there should never be teachers? I don't think so, especially to bring babes to baptism and then to feed milk to those new babes. John is talking to Christians that have the Holy Spirit, in fact one of John's points is that the Holy Spirit is now our teacher. This whole matter should be dealt with in more depth, but for the purpose of this article it seems John certainly did not consider the members inferior or that he sponsored a two-class system.

Example #16: The brethren ought to be teachers

Chapter 3 of Hebrews reveals the writer is addressing the holy brethren—partakers of the heavenly calling. Then in chapter 5:12 these brethren are told they ought to be **teachers**. This certainly reinforces John's instructions in the above example and does not indicate a two-class system.

Example #17: The individual members have to learn to discern between good and evil.

I think most of us will agree we are attempting to become mature christians. Indeed, we are told that should be our objective. Fortunately, the Bible seems to give us a formula we can follow to accomplish this. Notice Hebrews 5:14 which says “solid food belongs to those of full age [maturity] who by reason of use have their senses **exercised** to discern both good and evil”.

So here it is yet again. Not inferior members, not group-salvation members, but the instruction is that each individual must use their own abilities guided by the Holy Spirit to make their own discernment between good and evil. They are the things we have been discussing: personal responsibility, personal capability and personal decisions. There is no minister or hierarchy in this formula.

Moreover this verse seems to go

beyond mere reinforcement of this article's theme. Indeed Hebrews 5:14 seems to say that each individual christian is **required** to use (practice) their own personal discernment between good and evil if they are going to become mature, of full age.

If so, now may be a good time for us to exercise personal discernment about the two-class system.

Example #18: It happened to us!

Several sources have said that the exodus from Worldwide was led in many cases by the members. The ministry followed only after many members had led the way. If so, this would certainly be another case of the members, the “sheep”, having both individual and collective discernment.

[Editors note: I worked for the Global Church of God during its first two years (1993-1994) and indeed most of its members left the WCG because of their own study. Most GCG Sabbath meetings were “video groups” run by unordained “hosts”. Other groups used similar techniques. Many ministers did leave the WCG to start the UCG-IA in 1995. Some of the members in their congregations simply “followed”. But there were also many congregations that started as a local board or by members who simply left—hoping that their ministers would follow their lead. —NSE]

Should There Be Elders?

Is this study saying the congregation should not have leaders? **Not at all!** Should there be elders? Yes. The New Testament indicates multiple elders were placed in each church. Many of our 17 Bible examples involve elders. Did these elders, however, rule over the people? I think not according to Christ's instruction in Matthew 20.

Moreover, I think the members had a role to play in the selection of their elders as well as the selection of deacons. Readers are urged to get Norm Edwards' [see back page] and Ernest Martin's studies [PO Box 25000; Portland, OR 97298; 503-292-4352; doctor@askelm.com] on the matter of church government to make this clearer.

This leads to the question: should elders be paid “full time” wages that are far higher than the wages of the average member? Paul accepted some limited offerings, but had an outside trade and

says that he gave us examples to follow.

My family spent nine years in CGI which had an unpaid local ministry. Ministers which moreover generally had the “handicap” of performing a full time secular job. Yet our experience was that an unpaid ministry worked very well. We saw many fine examples of real concern and zeal from unpaid ministers. Those examples put to shame some full time, full salaried, two-class ministers we have experienced. Furthermore, many of the best sermons my family has heard in the past thirteen years have been given by unpaid ministers. Another advantage to the unpaid system was local ministers were clearly **not** “in it for the money”.

Perhaps there is a middle ground, especially for large congregations of several hundred or more. Such middle ground may be that the **local congregation** set any wages and pay the local elder(s). Moreover the local congregation can decide on services desired from the central office and pay for those services from local funds. Before I was baptized in 1964 by the WCG, my Lutheran church background proved the local congregation method to work extremely well.

Did Jesus himself instruct us to have a two-class system?

After all, Jesus Christ should be our final authority, right? Let's notice his instruction in Matthew 23:8 “**But be not you called Rabbi; for one is your Master, Christ, and all you are brethren.**”

I recall years ago meeting numerous times with four Baptists selling them real estate investments. (They represented their church members in an investment club.) These four were always referring to “brother so and so” and “sister so and so”. This included calling their minister “brother so and so”. Good Armstrongite that I was at the that time, I smugly snickered to myself at such ignorant “Protestantism”.

However, I now feel these four Baptists were more biblical than I was about this matter. (And in other respects as well, I probably was the ignorant one.)

Indeed, I believe if COG members, and the hierarchy, had followed Jesus's instruction and simply addressed themselves as brothers (and sisters) it is quite likely the COG two-class system

The Last Ambassador Report

would not have developed nearly as much as it has. It is interesting in our Matthew 18 example that Christ says "if a **brother** trespasses".

Isn't it better that we follow Christ's clear instructions in Matthew 23 and eliminate completely anything that is not His "**all** brethren" system with Christ as our one and only master?

In Summary

The two-class system so well practiced by so many does not seem to have much support from the Bible. I believe these 18 examples show God **does** have a **very high** regard for the members' intelligence and abilities. And that **collectively** the members have a lot of responsibility and power. The passive role, therefore, given to the "lower class" members by the various COG's does not seem to be what the Bible teaches.

Rather than stifling and suppressing members talents and abilities, I have come to believe the assembly should be structured exactly the opposite: to encourage every member's talents and abilities to grow. Even more—to grow vigorously. How then should the "sheep" and their "shepherds" work together? I have some thoughts on it, but that is another study. What are your thoughts?

—"Onethird Century In-CoGs"

About the Author

The author, "Onethird Century Incogs", uses this pseudonym at the request of friends who believe they would lose certain friendships with those in hierarchical groups if it was commonly known that he was writing for *Servants' News*. The man has spent 36 years in various "Church of God" groups—as his pseudonym implies.

This article is not about being "sour grapes"—never having been given a "position" in the Church of God groups. The author enjoyed much of his time in the Church of God groups and had many responsibilities: Spokesman Club offices, (twice as president), Detroit area Administrator for various wills and estates, head usher for many years, sermonette lists for many years in three church areas, deacon for many years, deacon-in-charge of a church in the absences of the visiting minister. He was asked to become a Local Elder, but turned it down. Indeed, the author has seen both sides of the two-class structure.

John Trechak, founder and publisher of *Ambassador Report*, died of a heart attack on September 2, 1999. *Ambassador Report* was an "opposition paper" to the controlled press of the Worldwide Church of God. Sixty-nine issues were published, from June 1976 until July 1998. Although John accepted donations toward this, he always worked at his own job and had to subsidize his publishing efforts. He never started a competing "church".

According to Byron Sanders, a long time friend of John Trechak, his work will become public domain. Several people are already working to place all the back issues of *Ambassador Report* on the Internet. Byron already has a web page that indexes all of the issues and will link to the full-text pages when they are ready: www.cybergate.com/~birone/arindex.html

Also, *Servants' News* is offering a printed version of the Ambassador Report Index (see back page).

I never read *Ambassador Report* when I was a student at Ambassador College, Big Sandy because the administration said, "it contains lies and gossip and people who read it usually would leave the Church." I remember signing a form permitting the College mail department to throw it out rather than put it in my box. I had other friends who read it and told me that it was important that I read it. Yes, some of those friends left the WCG. But I never read *Ambassador Report* until after I left the WCG in 1992—after witnessing corruption and doctrinal dishonesty firsthand.

When I was working for the Global Church of God (1993-1994), I remember being a little bit shocked that several people found out about the GCG through *Ambassador Report* and became members. Later on, I heard other people in independent groups relate stories of people finding them through *Ambassador Report*. Still later, *Ambassador Report* ran a somewhat misleading article about *Servants' News*, and we obtained new subscribers from it.

Ambassador Report, unlike the WCG publications, was not afraid to mention exactly who they were talking about and would nearly always **print their address**. If a congregation or group of members departed from the WCG, the WCG would frequently not mention them by name (lest someone who did not know find out) and would almost never publish their address so a person could hear both sides of the story.

I know several brethren who believe that God led them to leave the WCG

through reading *Ambassador Report*. Some have started successful local congregations.

After reading several issues, I think the publication was written from a negative, sometimes sarcastic tone. Many accusations were written from the testimony of one witness, and that witness was sometimes anonymous. There was speculation about *why* various people did things that I am sure was wrong. **But there were also many well-documented facts: court documents, private letters, etc. These things the WCG tried to suppress even though members should have known them to decide which leaders they would accept** (1Cor 11:1, 1Tim 3, Titus 1, Rev 2:2). Furthermore, I could not find any *Ambassador Report* articles that are clearly lies (something they printed knowing it was false).

I personally think (but cannot prove) that God **raised up** Herbert Armstrong to teach the Sabbath, Holy Days and other truths to many people—but he added hierarchical government and other error to his teaching and **God let him do it**. Those following Mr. Armstrong, desirous of his position, often repeated the same errors, rather than recognizing them and correcting them. Similarly, God may have **raised up** John Trechak to document the errors of the Worldwide Church of God. (If you don't believe God documents errors of His people, read the Old Testament.) John may have written in a worse attitude or may have printed more unprovable things than God wanted, but **God let him do it**.

God will judge both Herbert Armstrong and John Trechak for the work they did. At my judgment, I have often thought that I would ask God why He allowed me (and so many other CoG members) to go on believing in hierarchical human government for so many years. Now, I am beginning to see that He may say: "I did warn you, but most of you refused to read *Ambassador Report*, did not have the diligence to find out what was true and what was not, and did not have the courage to share it with your friends or to confront those who were doing wrong."

Hierarchy teachers will tell us that we should ignore the sin of our leaders—that "God will take of it." Yet these same people cannot look at the WCG and its splinter groups and say, "**God has taken care of it.**" Instead, they hope God will resurrect the old WCG. Thanks to John Trechak and the Internet, there will always be a reminder for those who would build a new "work" based on the old WCG. —Norman Edwards

The Worldwide Church of God, As We Knew It, Is Over

On March 24, 2000, Bernie Schnippert, Chief Financial Officer for the Worldwide Church of God, announced that the former Ambassador College Campus in Big Sandy, Texas, had been “sold, for an undisclosed sum, to Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., a privately owned corporation headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, who in turn is leasing it to the Institute in Basic Life Principles (“IBLP”), a nonprofit educational and service organization based in Oak Brook, Illinois.”

A letter written by Schnippert went on to explain the proposed future use of the property:

The Buyers intend to use the property primarily for two important missions according to information released by the IBLP. The first is to train young men for local, national, and international emergency response. The second is for an international orphanage. The two programs will make good and full use of the entire campus with all of its facilities. Six years ago, Mr. Ron Fuhman, a leader with the IBLP and the one who will oversee day-to-day operations on the University site, saw a need to challenge and train young men to be givers rather than take. He designed the Air Land Emergency Resource Team (ALERT) to train qualified young men to effectively respond to disasters and emergency needs. The campus will now become a training center for this program.

Additionally, the IBLP has been deeply involved with orphanage work overseas, especially in Russia, where they were invited by education officials to teach character and English in their public schools, to work with orphans, to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, visit youth prisons, and assist pensioner teachers. IBLP anticipates the Ambassador campus can be an ideal place to expand their work with orphans from other nations as they continue serving the nations they represent.

It appears that the IBLP indeed does some good work. But it is similar to the WCG in that it is a one-man rule type of organization that often pries deep into the personal lives of its members. Bill Gothard is its founder, chief teacher, and hierarchical leader. Additional information may be found about the organization at these websites:

www.iblp.org/geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9575/goth_idx.html
newtimesbpb.com/1999/021899/feature1-2.html
members.tripod.com/Glenwood37/homepage.htm
www.pfo.org/evol-fad.htm
entrewave.com/freebooks/docs/a_pdfs/newslet/review/8606.pdf
www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Letter/v6n5-1.htm

No Special Use for the Funds

So what will the WCG do with the funds from the sale? Help the poor? Start a new gospel-preaching program? Apparently not. Presently, their income is about 15% below budget, and they have been disbanding congregations with less than 20 members. The Big Sandy campus that thousands of people sacrificed to build, on land donated to the WCG by Roy Hammer, will be used up by the WCG’s continuing administration. From Mr. Schnippert’s letter:

The proceeds, while measured of course in the millions of dollars, are in fact a modest sum when compared to the scope of the Church’s worldwide operations, and will not appreciably change our balance sheet. Rather than being used to fund some new enterprise, the monies will simply be added to our general fund and used to further the Church’s mission of preaching the Christian gospel and supporting its local and international congregations and ministry.”

How does the WCG preach the gospel now? Are they making many new converts? Why would someone want to join that organization rather than a local, independent Protestant Church? The WCG has attempted to answer that question in a number of their publications—giving completely different answers at times.

Contradictory Positions

To both the long-time members as well as outside visitors, the WCG doctrines and practice are incredibly confusing—especially if a traveler visits several congregations:

- The WCG proclaims there is no need to keep the Sabbath or worship on Saturday, yet most of its congregations

meet then. Others meet only on Sunday; some meet on both.

- The WCG claims there is no reason to keep the annual Holy Days, yet it still sponsors them in some areas.

- The WCG is the only Protestant denomination to celebrate “The Incarnation” and “Resurrection Sunday”. Every other Protestant group simply celebrates Christmas and Easter.

- The WCG talks a lot about spiritual gifts and participatory governance as is common in other protestant churches, but it is still a hierarchy—Joseph Tkach Jr. has nearly complete control over all the assets. The membership has no power over who becomes their minister or who is or is not allowed to be a member of a local congregation.

- The WCG seems to continue to praise Mr. Armstrong, even though he clearly labeled many of the WCG’s current teachings as deceptions of Satan. In a March Bible study, Joe Tkach, Jr. agreed with Jack Hayford’s comment that “Herbert Armstrong right now is in the Kingdom of Heaven...he’s **cheering** on the progress of the Worldwide Church of God.” If anyone considers the last 10 years of the WCG changes “progress”, they would have to consider most of Herbert Armstrong’s 50-year ministry as “regress”!

The theologians of the WCG are not stupid. There is a reason for these discrepancies. The purpose is clearly to provide a gradual change in doctrine from the old WCG teaching to common Protestant teaching, and to gradually change the thinking of as many members as possible. I have several friends who were personally told of this plan in the early 1990s. While my friends would not “go on record” saying, this past 10 years have proved them right. Most long-time members should remember the first *God Is...* booklet that essentially said “God is three” while claiming not to be “Trinitarian”. Now, the WCG is soundly Trinitarian—they got there one planned step at a time.

More and more people in the worldwide Church of God are figuring this out. Based on people who contact *Servants’ News*, there has been another upsurge of people leaving the Worldwide Church of God. They are leaving to attend other Sabbatarian congregations, as well as to

attend standard Protestant congregations.

The WCG congregations that seem to be the most stable and in some cases growing are those which have enthusiastically accepted the new Protestant teachings. Some local groups are now using new names. Even though they would still say their denomination is "Worldwide Church of God", their sign on the front might say "Park Street Church", and people walking in from the street might have no idea that it is related to the WCG. Even the WCG headquarters has considered new names, both for the church and its publications. If those changes take place this year, there will be virtually nothing recognizable left of the old WCG.

It Is All Over

The sale of the Pasadena campus to Legacy Corporation should be finished by the end of this year. Joe Tkach, Jr. has already moved off the campus. As of 2001, the WCG will no longer have its old properties (including its auditorium), its college, its media outreach, its doctrines or much of anything else that made it unique during 1950s through the 1980s.

Many individuals are still hoping and praying that God will miraculously intervene and restore the WCG to the way it was. *Servants' News* receives mail from them frequently. These people are probably worse off than the millions of Jews who lived their whole lives desperately hoping that the Eternal would cause His temple to be rebuilt in their lifetime. At least the Jews can point to many scriptures that prophecy the rebuilding of a physical temple. Christians ought to know that the spiritual temple is the people—the church—the body of Christ. But there is no clear prophecy of a building that is a "New Testament Temple". There is no promise that God will again use the Pasadena, Big Sandy or Bricklet Wood campuses.

Many other groups claim that their group is the one faithfully continuing the work of the WCG. But none of them are baptizing members or growing anywhere near like the WCG did in its early years. I would hope these groups all realize that if God has ended the Work of the WCG, they will not be able to make another WCG. Rather, each group and leader needs to look to the Eternal and say "show me what **You** want me to do."

—Norman Edwards

Continuing the Work of the Worldwide Church of God?

The Philadelphia Church of God?

Gerald Flurry founded the Philadelphia Church of God in 1988 and claimed to be Herbert Armstrong's successor. The PCG's *Philadelphia Trumpet* is very similar in design, content and acronym to the old *Plain Truth*. Indeed, some *Trumpet* articles are slightly rewritten old WCG articles.

The *Philadelphia Trumpet's* current circulation is 250,000. It continues to emphasize world events and prophecy. The world events articles are often well written and very informative. Many WCG-like groups would love to have a magazine like it. Nevertheless, in its 12 years of existence, it has failed to come remotely close to producing new members in the way that the old *Plain Truth* did. The reason is fairly obvious, but hard to see for those who are not looking:

People want a live prophet, not a dead one. Herbert Armstrong never claimed to be a prophet, but his writing and broadcasts claimed that he understood world events in the light of Bible prophecy. When he said "Russia would not attack America" or "the United States has won its last war", many people regarded this as "truth from God". People want a "prophet" when they do not have faith that the spirit of God in them will show them the future (John 16:13, Acts 2:17; 20:23).

Gerald Flurry has made a few attempts at prophesying world events, but they did not work out very well. His February 2000 *Philadelphia Trumpet* cover said "He Was Right! Remembering Five Decades of Accurate Forecasting by Herbert W. Armstrong." Mr. Flurry knows that he could have just as well filled his magazine with 50 years of Mr. Armstrong's prophetic error. Any person considering joining the PCG could easily search the Internet and find this out.

The PCG has had a number of groups split off and is now shrinking. Exact numbers are hard to find. Members who ask questions about the lack of growth are frequently disfellowshipped. The promise of "a place of safety" seems to keep many hanging on. What proof does anyone have that Gerald Flurry can deliver on that promise?

—Norman Edwards

The United Church of God—IA?

The United Church of God—*an International Association* started in 1995 to be like the WCG, but to **improve** upon its governance. It was started by elders who set out to produce a church government where one man could not take over, change doctrine and disfellowship all opposition even though the majority of elders opposed him. This plan actually worked! When the first UCG-IA president, David Hulme, began moving the organization back to one-man rule, the Council of Elders saw it happening and, in accordance with their constitutional authority, voted him out.

Beside giving the elders a voice in corporate policy and leadership, many felt that the members should have a voice in local policy and leadership. A number of the UCG-IA local congregations were run by local boards—not by the corporate ministry. Most of these local groups wanted to associate and work with the UCG-IA while making some changes to the running of their own local congregations. However, the UCG-IA "Church Administration" essentially told a number of these congregations to "follow corporate policy or leave", and a lot of them left (Big Sandy, Birmingham, Bloomington (Ill), Boston, Detroit, Lansing, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Toledo, Waco, etc.)

In many ways, the UCG-IA has been a half-way house between the WCG's central hierarchy and the independent congregations individually reporting to Christ. Brethren who left the WCG for the UCG-IA were usually able to keep many of their friends and continue similar religious practice, but at the same time realize that the one-man headquarters rule is not necessary. Realizing that one-man local rule is not necessary is the next logical step.

This writer believes the UCG-IA does good work by providing the Good News magazine, booklets, a correspondence course, a local television program, Feast sites, youth programs, etc. Find out more about this material from PO Box 541027; Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027; 513-576-9796. —Norman Edwards

Continuing the Work of the Worldwide Church of God?

The Global Church of God? The Living Church of God? The Restored Church of God? The Church of God, a Christian Fellowship?

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the goal of Roderick C. Meredith was to continue the work of the Worldwide Church of God when he began the Global Church of God at the close of 1992. I should know. I quit my job at the WCG to begin working for the Global Church of God—at that time, in Mr. Meredith's home. I ran the equipment to video tape his first services. After a couple of months, I became secretary of the board of directors.

Those first few months required a certain amount of faith. There were no other full-time ministers supporting Mr. Meredith. He took a cut in pay and went without health insurance for a while. We wanted to start a mailing list, a magazine, and a radio program—but we had no idea what resources we would have to do it. Money and volunteer help came from many people that Mr. Meredith did not even know. People who had been “nobodies” in the WCG wrote articles, organized services and did many other things that would have ordinarily been the work of “ordained” people.

Everyone who worked with the Global Church of God frequently ate lunch together. Nearly the entire Pasadena congregation would eat dinner together on Saturday night. In some ways, it was like one big happy family. Old doctrines were discussed, new teachings were discussed. Not only had the GCG rejected the Protestant teachings of Tkach, it seemed like it would address some of the old problems of the WCG as well. We began to find and read the Scriptures showing that God does not always correct bad leaders, and that believers are responsible for the leaders that they follow.

Our goal was to warn the world and teach truth through radio, TV, magazines and the spoken word. We expected to be a leaner, probably smaller, but possibly stronger work than the WCG.

To me, Rod Meredith seemed like the ideal person to lead this “new Work of God”. He had been with Mr. Armstrong for 40 years, had extensive writing and speaking experience, had a reputation for upholding “the law of God”, and had been the head of WCG Church Administration during the big growth years. He had a reputation as a moral man. Though he also had a reputation for being “harsh”, he seemed eager to change that—to hear people out and to be “slow to anger”.

Other WCG ministers began to take note and contact us. We thought that God was calling those faithful to Him to join the GCG, to help continue the work of the WCG. In some cases, that was probably true. But we were also acquiring people who simply wanted to get in on the “ground floor” of a new church organization that might “make it big” someday. Others came who had their own agendas.

After several months, and several more ministers joining, it began to be “business as usual”: The ministry was in charge, they would make the decisions, and we could be fairly sure those decisions were right because, after all, this was “God's Work”.

If there is anything that we can learn from Christ's letters to the “seven churches” in Revelation 2 & 3, it is that He still works with churches that are not perfect. Just because hierarchical government and other doctrines taught by the GCG and its off-shoots are not biblical, does not mean that He cannot work through them. These church organizations are providing Sabbath services, Feasts, teaching and many other things for their members. Yet, they are not growing rapidly and it would be very difficult for any one group to claim that they are “the one” that Christ is using to warn the world. **I think there are two reasons why the GCG and its off-shoots are not growing**

and accomplishing what they hoped to accomplish:

- 1) **The leaders are too eager to “protect the Work”, rather than do what is right when it appears that it might “hurt the Work”.** “If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked” (Deut 25:1). Two often in these groups, if there is a dispute between a big contributor and a small contributor, the “judge” justifies the big contributor. If there was a dispute between a minister and a member, the “judge” justifies the minister.
- 2) **They have little direct guidance from God.** Of the many board meetings I attended, Mr. Meredith usually did a good job of getting the counsel of many, but I almost never remember anyone saying “I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me” or asking God to show them via a vision, dream or sending somebody to them with the answer to their question. Yet it is clear that New Testament apostles were guided in this way. Often, decisions were made by doing “what Mr. Armstrong did” rather than by asking God for direct leading.

Now, the leaders of these groups do pray for God's guidance in their decisions, and they believe that their decisions are of God. So, how can this writer say that they, “have little direct guidance from God?” Do I claim to know God's mind? I think we can answer that question from these groups' history. We can look at the goal of the GCG (doing a big WCG-style work), we can look at decisions made that were thought to be “guided by God” and we can see the fruit of them.

Top Down Government (Mostly)

The founding documents of the Global Church of God placed Rod Meredith in charge. I remember Mr. Meredith saying, once people make the decision to leave the WCG, it will be much easier for them to leave the GCG if he does something wrong. In other words, the people would “vote with their feet” and leave. I remember hav-

ing no objection to this. The GCG started with nothing, and starting over again with nothing would have produced little difficulty at the time.

But after the GCG grew for a couple of years and had physical assets, people began to think about preventing the thing that happened in the WCG: someone with different ideas getting control of the corporation and using it for a different purpose. So, the GCG bylaws were amended so that a 90% vote of the board could remove Mr. Meredith. It was difficult to understand how this would work, since there were only 7 people on the board at the time, two of which were Mr. Meredith and his wife.

I had left the GCG by the time the UCG-IA formed in the spring of 1995. It was a devastating blow to the GCG; they had hoped that most of those WCG ministers and congregations would come to their organization, but only a few did. Many ministers had worked for Mr. Meredith before and did not want to work for him again. In an effort to show that he was not an absolute dictator and to appeal to these ministers, Mr. Meredith agreed to change the percentage vote that could remove him to 75%.

He also agreed to ask his wife to resign from the board as she was seen by many people as simply giving him a "second vote". Finally, Donald Davis, a close friend of Mr. Meredith's who helped him start Global from the very beginning was asked to resign from the board for "personal reasons". Nevertheless, it was Mr. Meredith who appointed successors. Did God choose these successors, or were they "decisions of men"?

Disagreement Hidden till Too Late

During 1998, Mr. Meredith and others were earnestly desiring to expand the media outreach of the GCG and really try to reach a big part of the world. They purchased time on WGN, the super-station in Chicago that goes nearly everywhere via cable. They purchased time on other stations as well. To do all of this, they had to borrow money. They hoped that the increased outreach would bring in new donations from new listeners. It brought in some, but it brought far more debt. Several employees of the GCG loaned hundreds of thousands of dollars to it. At one point, the GCG owed 1.4 million in

various loans. Again, did God make this decision, or was it of men?

This debt was the given reason why the board members felt they had to remove Mr. Meredith from being head of Global. Most of the board members were against going into debt, and they wanted to spend more for local congregations rather than on "warning the world". In addition, there seemed to be an ever-growing personality rift between the board and Mr. Meredith.

As is common for CoG groups, none of these serious problems were shared with the brethren. My first confirmation of the brewing split in the GCG was Mr. Meredith's article **denying rumors of a split** in the August 31, 1998 issue of *The Journal, News of the Churches of God*. (*The Journal* is available for \$22 for 12 monthly issues from PO Box 1020, Big Sandy Texas 75755.) From experience in the WCG, I learned that proclamations of "unity at headquarters" would often come just before a reshuffling of positions or a split. Also, sermons against gossip would be given when a leader had actually done something wrong.

Nearly all the Church of God groups need to learn that "credibility" does not come by hiding the problems and sins of the leaders, but by openly confessing them and correcting them.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning **rebuke in the presence of all**, that the rest also may fear (1Tim 5:19-20).

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

The Big LCG/GCG Split

Even though Mr. Meredith cut back spending, went off a lot of stations and dropped the debt down to \$900,000, the board still voted to remove him. Rod Meredith immediately began to start a new organization, the Living Church of God. Nobody should be proud of the events that followed. The members received a series of letters from both the LCG and the GCG: full of accusations, counter accusations, partial stories, defenses, and selective ignoring of

issues where there was no good defense.

The scriptures indicate that "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and conflict between doing God's work and obeying man's law was everywhere. Rod Meredith believed that God called him to preach the end-time warning and to do the work he was doing. He believed he was part of the spiritual government of God. Yet now, all of his writings, telecasts and even the mailing list he had built up legally belonged to the GCG—controlled by its board. The GCG board's complaint against Rod Meredith was his taking the corporation into debt. But his leaving the corporation absolved him of responsibility to pay the debt, and made the GCG board responsible to pay it.

There are several accounts of unethical, unbiblical or illegal conduct on both sides. As one example, Rod Meredith and Don Davis attempted to pay off some of their own loans to the GCG by writing GCG checks *after* Don Davis had been removed as a co-signatory on the GCG account. The check payment was fortunately stopped—which prevented Meredith and Davis from being prosecuted for check fraud. On the other side, the Global Church of God retained television and accounting employees whom they could not afford to pay and certainly did not need—simply so they would not go to work for the Living Church of God. They refused to give (or sell at a reasonable price) the copyrights to Mr. Meredith's literature so he could continue to use it. There are many other issues on both sides. Christ will be the ultimate judge of each person.

The issue was further complicated by the fact that most international offices of the Global Church of God were separately incorporated. The GCG board in the USA did not control them. Many remained loyal to Mr. Meredith and severed all ties with the GCG board. But some countries, such as Belgium, remained with the Global Church of God. Others were divided.

England was an especially unusual case. Some wanted to remain with GCG, but many others formed a new Living Church of God. David Sheridan, a member in England, helped to form both corporations. He had incorporated the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 into their founding documents—it was the responsibility of corporate directors that had a

problem with somebody else to first go to them, then to take others as witnesses, then to take it before the whole body. This was not just a suggestion—it was “law” for that corporation. When members of the board took actions against others without following this procedure, Mr. Sheridan filed the appropriate documents with the British “Companies House” and they were removed as directors from the corporation. The other directors had a chance to respond to his actions, but they did not. So the Living Church of God is having to regroup there under yet a different name.

As it turned out, about 80% of the members of the Global Church of God left and went to the Living Church of God. After all of their advice to Mr. Meredith to live within budget, the Global Church of God failed to cut expenses down to levels appropriate for their greatly reduced income, and they quickly went through the reserves that they had. I am sure that they thought that since they were trying to “do the work of God”, that He would send the funds to do it. They tried to work out a long-term solution to pay off their creditors. They tried to get the LCG members to help pay the old loans. But Don Davis had a demand note—a loan that was due whenever the holder asked to be repaid. They were running out of money to pay current bills and they could not pay him.

On September 17, 1999 the Global Church of God dissolved itself “for the benefit of creditors”. A court-appointed receiver took over to find the assets, sell them, and pay off the creditors—they will probably receive a few cents for each dollar they were owed. Much of the equipment and furniture was auctioned off on a Saturday—preventing the Living Church of God from buying it. Fortunately, the copyrights to all of their literature were sold later, and the Living Church of God was able to obtain them. After 18 months of rewriting some of the booklets, they can now use their old booklets and programs if they desire.

Most of the directors of the Global Church of God moved to the Dallas Ft. Worth area to start a new organization, The Church of God, A Christian Fellowship. It may be surprising to some Americans, but this is the way the American corporate world works: A group of men can form a corporation,

become its directors, lose a lot of money (whether it be their own fault or not), let the corporation go bankrupt, personally owe nothing on its debt, and then go start a new corporation doing exactly the same thing that the last one did. One would hope they would have learned from their mistakes, but the law does not require them to do anything different. The Church of God, A Christian Fellowship does seem to be living within its means. They do not have the money for a big evangelism program, so they are not doing one. It has published one issue of a new magazine, *The New World Ahead*, which is available on the internet: www.newworldahead.org. This issue contained a number of articles all centering around the “armor of God” and I think it would be very helpful to many people.

Where Was God?

But where was God in all of the decisions that led to these actions? How can any of the GCG split-off groups claim that they are “the one group” showing the outside world the way to peace and harmony in the Kingdom of God when their own history looks like it does. Numerous friends and family members were separated by this split. About a million dollars was wasted in repurchasing equipment, reprinting booklets, reforming corporations, retraining new employees, etc. etc. The members and the people to which these groups minister were the real losers.

How much different would it have been if Mr. Meredith and the board had humbly acknowledged their differences to their ministry and membership and asked them to pray for a peaceable solution? What if they had asked their members to vote on whether they should spend more money on evangelism or not? What if they had asked them to vote on who should be in charge? Is that heresy? Is that playing politics?

In reality, when the group split, **each member was forced to “vote with his feet” and decide which group he or she would attend.** I am not saying that all church decisions should be made by a vote of the members—but I am saying that what actually happened was certainly worse than having the members peacefully vote. The split that occurred looked much more like “a fight for control”, not people humbly seeking God’s will. Even

now, to an outside observer, these groups do not look like they have any great doctrinal disagreement—they preach almost exactly the same thing! So why can’t they get along?

Dave Pack: An Unsolved Problem from the Beginning

We have said nothing yet about Dave Pack’s **Restored Church of God**. (It is not related to the recent WCG split-off, the *Church of God Restored*, or John Allen’s *Restoration Church of God*.) Dave Pack stayed with the GCG when the LCG split off of it. During the Spring of 1999, he formed his own group, the Restored Church of God, claiming that he was following Herbert Armstrong better than any other group. He wrote stinging letters against all of the other groups on a number of doctrinal and personal issues. But this is not a problem that started at this time. Dave Pack was a problem that “Church of God” leaders had failed to solve for decades.

Dave Pack has been a wolf in shepherd’s clothing and should not be any kind of minister or servant among the people of God. The only apology I will make for that statement is for not having clearly stated it sooner in the pages of *Servants’ News*. I base this conclusion on direct personal experience and the testimony of dozens of witnesses.

Dave Pack is a brilliant man, a powerful speaker and a commanding personality. He has the ability to stir people into thinking they are special to God and that they are being used in a powerful way when they work for Mr. Pack. For those who work “on his side”, he is able to see everything they do in the best possible light, and to have unending mercy to overlook their sins and errors. But to those he opposes, he seems to have an unending ability to recall minute details of years-old conversations and twist them into the greatest of sins. Many witnesses claim that he simply made up lies about them and spread them to others in a most believable fashion. Several people have specifically said that they did exactly what Dave Pack asked—unjust as they thought it was—only to be disfellowshipped for it later.

Dave Pack was one of the first ministers to join the GCG in 1993. The office was small then, and Mr. Meredith shared the details of many of his calls

with us. Dave Pack spoke of the hundreds of brethren that were going to come to the GCG with him. When the dust settled, there were about 70. Mr. Pack was a "shepherd" who commanded his "sheep"—not one who knew and cared for his "sheep". (In great contrast, John Ogywn, who always made visiting brethren a priority, knew almost exactly who would stay in the WCG and who would leave to join the GCG with him.)

Soon, complaints of Dave Pack's abuse began to make their way into the GCG office. He disfellowshipped far more members than any other GCG minister. Dave Pack asked me (head of the computer department) for names and addresses of people outside of his own area of responsibility. After I refused to give him any special treatment, he began telling Rod Meredith that he needed another computer manager who would get the ministerial reports out on time. (None of the other ministers complained about receiving late reports—Mr. Meredith assured us that he knew that it was one of our lower priorities and that he was not taking Pack's threats seriously.)

The problem was that no one stood up and said: "this manipulative, unjust behavior does not belong in the ministry of God and if Mr. Pack does not change, he will be removed from the ministry." I think many people, maybe even his superiors, were afraid of him. Mr. Meredith did make efforts to correct him. He once said that he would have removed him, except that he was so loyal to the GCG and kept bringing so many new members. The question should have been, "How does God want us to deal with unjust behavior?" not "How many members and how much money does he bring to the GCG?"

When I left the Global Church of God and started Servants' News in 1995, I probably heard as many abuse complaints about Dave Pack as I heard about all other ministers put together. They are recorded as hundreds of pages of call logs, letters, e-mails, etc. I wrote several letters to Mr. Meredith during this time and failed to mention all of these complaints about Dave Pack. I believe I was wrong for not doing so. Even though we did not agree on many things, Mr. Meredith, upon hearing of all the complaints, might have taken action sooner.

Nevertheless, Mr. Meredith contin-

ued to receive his own complaints about Dave Pack and eventually removed him from being a salaried minister and a director, though not from the GCG ministry. Rather than telling the membership the truth, he simply said that Mr. Pack needed more time to devote to the business which he inherited from his father.

Dave Pack was a major force encouraging the other board members to remove Rod Meredith—by one man's account, he was **the main force**. But Mr. Pack did not remain long in the GCG; he had too much else to accomplish on his own. His official reason for departing is that the GCG was not following the teachings of Herbert Armstrong, but the pickiness of points he argued was almost beyond belief. Mr. Armstrong changed his own teaching to a much greater degree than the changes Mr. Pack was arguing about.

Early in 1999, he began to send his sermons all over the world apart from the GCG's method of sermon distribution. He encouraged Bill Shepherd, his volunteer website designer, to take his week of vacation from his government job in order to help him. He told him not to worry about having vacation for the Feast that year, that he would hire him to work with the RCG. He later encouraged Bill to take off all of his "emergency days" because he was going to hire him, so Bill did, and the government laid him off. But Dave Pack changed his mind and decided not to hire him. He told him that is what happens in the business world and that he should not get in a bad attitude.

That was the "last straw" for Mr. Shepherd and nearly all of the other Restored Church of God office staff. Most of them quit, and half of the Akron congregation left.

Don Tiger Joins With Dave Pack

One of the few individuals left helping David Pack is a new addition to his staff: Don Tiger. We first mentioned Don Tiger in our November 1998 *Servants' News* as being the source of CD-ROM's containing old HWA and WCG literature. Don began collecting WCG literature on his own and later joined the Philadelphia Church of God who promised to help him distribute it. Over the years, it became clear that the PCG wanted to send out only a portion

of the literature—Don Tiger was gradually fired, demoted, then disfellowshipped. Then he joined a PCG split-off that seemed to want to help him distribute the WCG literature—but they also tried to modify it.

Now, he and Dave Pack are working together to try to make **all** the old WCG literature available, **unedited**, on CD-ROM and to make most of HWA's literature available in printed form. They have even set up a separate **Herbert W. Armstrong Library Trust Fund (PO Box 23283, Wadsworth OH 44282)** for those who want to contribute to the publication of these materials without contributing to the Restored Church of God. Though the RCG only has a few hundred members (and seems to disfellowship a few of those rather regularly), Don Tiger stated that over 10,000 households have expressed interest in obtaining HWA literature.

This writer hopes that Dave Pack will actually help Don Tiger complete his efforts—not simply use him as a way to access thousands of former-WCG brethren. **My view of why this is important, is completely opposite to theirs.** I believe that a thinking study of WCG literature turns up many contradictions, failed prophecies and excessive demands for money. I believe that Mr. Armstrong taught a lot of truth but some error, and that he was not the "human head of the Church on earth" as he claimed to be. **The WCG discontinued much of its own literature so they would not have to defend errors in it.** Most CoG split-offs know this so they either edit his old literature or do not publish it at all. Don Tiger and Dave Pack somehow believe it is "all truth". They will certainly attract many other former WCG members who believe the same. How will they sort out exactly what is truth when Mr. Armstrong made conflicting statements or when prophecies did not come to pass?

I think, for the RCG, "Mr. Armstrong's truth" will become whatever Dave Pack says it is. Notice this excerpt from a letter from Karen Ray. Karen Ray spent three years of her life working closely with Dave Pack documenting the changes in the Worldwide Church of God. The book they produced helped many people to see the changes, but Mrs. Ray, like nearly everyone else who has worked with Dave Pack, quit

because she could not accept his manner of dealing with others:

The test for us [the Rays] personally of whether Global truly had a better government came in the spring of 1996. These are some of things I was told by Dave Pack at that time:

1) *No matter what the "headquarters" ministers of the GCG did or said, we were never to ask or send in any questions. People who wrote letters to "headquarters" always "left" the Church. Only people with bad attitudes wrote to "headquarters." Because we had already sent questions to "headquarters," Rod Meredith and Carl McNair had a greatly lowered opinion of us. If we insisted on sending in questions, we would be "punished". Anyone who thought they needed to ask questions belonged in the UCG.*

[Points 2 & 5 removed for space.]

3) *If something in the church's literature seemed wrong to us, it was none of our business. If we felt something was wrong in the church's literature and we read it anyway, it was our own fault if it upset us, because we should have known better than to have read it. If we let anyone know what was in literature the church was promoting, we were guilty of sowing division.*

4) *Ministers do not need to use Matthew 18 in their dealings with brethren. Even if a minister treats a person unjustly, a person with a good attitude will tolerate the severest injustice. If a person leaves the organization over being treated unjustly, they have a bad attitude so it's good they left. (He called them "a boil that needed to be lanced.")...*

After Dave Pack told me all of the above and more, he said I should not analyze anything he had said lest I convince myself that he was wrong and I was right. He then told me I had to be done "studying," I had to "put away" my computer, and could not read anything that contradicted his ideas.

In addition, Dave Pack was disfellowshipping or finding other ways to force out of Global dozens of brethren from many different states in 1996. He had spies watch them, made phone calls behind their backs, and solicited letters against them. He

sowed much discord using outright lies and double talk. Because he was telling so many lies, brethren began tape recording their meetings with him, and he cried, Blackmail!

We and many others wrote and called Rod Meredith about Dave Pack. Depending on who he was talking to, Rod Meredith either apologized for or denied the things Dave Pack was doing. He told one man that Dave Pack was destroying Global, but that he was afraid to confront him because he might leave and start a competing "work." He told us personally that he was too busy to do anything about it himself.

Conclusion

Dave Pack is clearly a wolf—he devours sheep. The GCG and LCG need better skill at dealing with wolves. They should be ashamed to have lost (and to have kept) members due to the "scare tactics" used at left. If Mr. Meredith had removed Dave Pack from his ministry in 1996, he might well have avoided the GCG/LCG split. He certainly would have saved many brethren from needless suffering.

The leaders of these organizations need to realize that when they tell brethren that God takes care of problems from the "top down", the leaders make themselves responsible for correcting these problems. I realize that Mr. Meredith and other leaders in these organizations really are concerned about how the brethren feel. But the leaders need to develop the faith to trust that God will bless them for making a sound judgment. If they have kept a bad minister or taught a wrong doctrine, admitting the error will cause difficulty. But that difficulty will be less than that caused by hiding the error until it becomes evident on its own.

These leaders also need to think about what they promise to their people. If leaders tell members that their church organization is the only one they should look to for Bible truth, are they not taking responsibility for all of the truth that their members might learn elsewhere, but do not? If leaders tell members that they will have a supernatural revelation when it is time to flee to a "place of safety" before the tribulation, are they not making themselves responsible for the suffering of the members if such a revelation never

comes? Should the members trust that their leaders will have such a revelation if God has apparently never give them any revelations about who should be on the board or who should be a minister?

God works with many different people in many different ways. When I left the WCG, I did not know how to conduct a Sabbath service on my own. I thought I needed an "ordained minister" to do many of the things that the Bible simply tells believers to do. I believe that the Eternal still works with people in all of these groups. Some people feel a minister must "tell them what to do", so they tend to seek out these groups. May the groups teach them to grow!

But like a nursery with aging children, I believe the function of these groups is becoming less and less necessary. Most of them are shrinking in size. The number of independent Sabbatarian groups, and the number of church organizations that are willing to work with other Sabbatarian groups is growing. It is nice to see that the *Living Church of God* and the *Church of God, A Christian Fellowship* do not have titles that make them sound like the one true church of God on earth (such as "Worldwide", "Global", "International", etc). I would not encourage these groups to immediately disband, but to stop penalizing their members for associating with Christians in other groups and to actually encourage joint activities between groups. If they continue to produce services, broadcasts, booklets and whatever else Christ wants them to produce, they can be confident that He will keep the required members in their organizations and the required money coming in to do it. It is a lack of faith in their own mission and teaching to think that they must keep their members from fellowshiping with other Sabbatharians lest they lose them.

—Norman Edwards

For More Information

Living Church of God; PO Box 501304; San Diego, CA 92150; 858-673-7470; www.livingcog.org

Church of God, a Christian Fellowship; PO Box 161698; Fort Worth, Texas 76161; 877-846-2072; www.newworldahead.org

Restored Church of God; PO Box 23295; Wadsworth, OH 44282; 330-334-2266; www.herbertarmstrong.org

The **Global Church of God** is now defunct.

Continuing the Work of the Worldwide Church of God? Triumph Prophetic Ministries?

Beginning in 1987, Bill Dankenbring, founder of Triumph Prophetic Ministries, has been one of the more successful of the many "one man works" splitting off of the WCG. Many others have contributed to his efforts, written articles for him, etc., but he has never had a "field ministry", a "headquarters staff" or anything typical of the Church organizations. A number of his associates have come and gone—some to start their own competing "works". There is nothing wrong with a "one man work"; many men of the Bible essentially did that. Mr. Dankenbring is not trying to follow exactly in Herbert Armstrong's footsteps as he has expounded a number of problems with Herbert Armstrong's teachings. But he bases his credentials very heavily on his WCG experience and he does seem to believe that he teaches more truth than any other WCG split-off group. He sent the following press release to us, so we are reprinting it with commentary:

All NEW Triumph Web Site Now a Reality!

TRIUMPH: In September-October 1999, our former website was "hijacked" and taken over by a former associate and friend in the faith, John Keyser, who was with us for ten years. He was a former member of the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena, and joined us about 1989-90. He has changed our former site to "Hope of Israel Ministries," and now teaches that the weekly "Sabbath" rotates to a different day each month.

It has required intensive work and becoming more familiar with website building, but the new Triumph website is a "site to behold"! With dazzling pictures of the universe, Grand Canyon, and creatures that mystify evolutionary theory, it puts forth the gospel of Jesus Christ in a powerful, no-holds barred manner. William F. Dankenbring, who wrote scores of articles and booklets years ago for the Worldwide Church of God, was disfellowshipped in January, 1987, by Larry Salyer, at the behest of Joseph Tkach, Sr., exactly one year (to the very day) after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. He had been a member of Worldwide since 1957—thirty years—when the fateful blow was struck.

SN: Mr. Dankenbring still seems quite tied to the WCG as he calls his disfellowshippment a "fateful blow". Most independent believers now see such disfellowshippments as irrelevant to membership in Christ's body. Many consider them a blessing that helped them "wake up" to the fact that they were too dependent upon a human organization.

TRIUMPH: He graduated from Ambassador College in 1963, and became a fulltime unordained minister serving in the

Letter Answering Department under Clint Zimmerman. He began writing articles for the Plain Truth, Good News, and Tomorrow's World in 1964 through 1974, and lessons for the Bible Correspondence Course, until his employment was "terminated" in a budget-staff reduction cutback, at a time the Church was suffering severe internal dissension and strife due to massive high-level coverups of egregious sins, including adultery by a top evangelist. From that time till 1987, William Dankenbring published a score of books, many written by himself, and others by Church members, including evangelist Raymond C. McNair, which were sold through mail order, and at book stores and grocery stores at various sites of the Feast of Tabernacles.

SN: Some of the "heads" of WCG split-off groups have re-invented history to make themselves a significant figure in the WCG when indeed they were not. Mr. Dankenbring may overstate his importance a little, but he actually did write many articles for many years.

TRIUMPH: After being disfellowshipped by Tkach in 1987, and accused of heresy and being a "false prophet," Mr. Dankenbring continued his publishing activities, but added a newsletter, entitled *Prophecy Flash*. The initial mailing list was about 35 people, and the first issue was about 8 pages. Today, *Prophecy Flash* is still being published every two months—about 88 pages, and a circulation of roughly 3,500—after many renewals to eliminate those who did not maintain interest. In addition, Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God), incorporated as a non-profit religious organization by Mr. Dankenbring, also produces weekly Bible Study audio tapes, free of charge to interested people, and

video cassettes on a monthly basis, each cassette containing four or five full 90-minute Bible Studies, and broadcasts over short-wave radio every week.

The spanking new Triumph Website gives a brief history of Triumph Prophetic Ministries, the background of Mr. Dankenbring, and insight into the various outreach ministries being performed by this end-time Work of God. It does not claim to be "God's only Church," or "only Work," and never has. It does claim, however, to be unique—"one of a kind"—in its approach and understanding of many Biblical doctrines, Bible prophecy, and current events in the light of prophecy!

Many Bible-related articles are posted on the website which can be read or downloaded free of charge. Newly posted articles on the website include, "New Truth about the Calendar Postponements," "Why Does God Say, 'I Hate Your Feast Days'?", "Daniel's 1260, 1290, and 1335 Days Revealed," "The Book of Revelation Decoded at Last," "A Message to Garcia," "The Mystery of the Menora," as well as the latest hot "Prophecy Briefs" section.

SN: Mr. Dankenbring has certainly not been afraid to publish letters critical of himself or to answer questions on difficult topics. This is something that I would hope other groups would learn from. I know people who read *Prophecy Flash* specifically because he published so many of the brethren's letters. I do not agree with all of his research, but I think some of it is very good. He always shows, from the scriptures and history, why he believes what he believes, so it is possible to weigh his evidence and evaluate his conclusion.

TRIUMPH: Mr. Dankenbring, a prolific writer of books and articles, was converted and gave his life to Jesus Christ, however He wanted to use it, as a teenager in Taiwan, in 1956, when his father was stationed there in the U.S. Navy, living in Kaoshiung, near the southern tip of the island. He began reading through the New Testament, given to him by an elderly missionary lady. He had been baptized in a southern Baptist Church in Strong, Arkansas, shortly before leaving for Taiwan (then called "Formosa") in 1954. Having thought at the time he was merely "joining a church," he felt after being "baptized," that he needed to study and find out just what a "Christian" really was—and what better way to do it than "read the Book"! He began reading about 5 chapters every Sunday, and then feeling this was hypocritical, he began read-

ing at least one chapter **every** day, plus 5-10 on Sunday. Within two years' time, he had read the New Testament 5-6 times through. In spring of 1956, he attended a special four week Bible Study on the prophecy of Daniel; and at the end of the seminar, he felt he should be baptized again, this time "for real," since he knew his first baptism was merely to "join a church" and only amounted to a "dunking in the water."

SN: I find it significant that Mr. Dankenbring begins his "spiritual history" with his teen-age commitment and Bible reading—prior to his knowledge of the WCG or the Sabbath. My own history was similar. The WCG taught that this sort of prior commitment or "conversion" meant nothing, and I believed that for a while, but I now disagree. My life changed at that point. I noticed it, and so did others around me.

TRIUMPH: Returning to the States in August, he first heard the World Tomorrow broadcast by Herbert W. Armstrong, in Seattle, Washington, and began listening every night at 10:30 pm. While still a student in Shoreline High School, he began attending the Tacoma church under Jimmy Friddle in 1958, and joined the local Spokesman's Club. He entered Ambassador College as a freshman student in fall 1959, along with Roy Holiday, Dave Albert, Howard Clark, Anthony Buzzard, Ben Chapman, Ralph Helge, and others.

The new Triumph Prophetic Ministries website—full color, 15 plus pages—has a hundred or so articles available for download on such vitally important topics as: "Law Versus Grace?", "Is Obedience Required for Salvation?", "Is God a Trinity?", "Who or What Was Jesus Christ Before His Human Birth?", "Is God Reproducing Himself?", "The Mystery of God," "Which Day Is the True Sabbath?", "Sabbath Versus Sunday?", "God's 6000 Year Plan," "Armageddon—How Much Longer?", "What Do You Really Mean, 'Born Again?'", "What Is the True Gospel?"

In addition to those articles and many more, we have published many articles on the annual holy days of God—Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles—articles giving new profound insight into the mysteries and majestic symbols of these holy days.

SN: These articles are mostly about historical, prophetic and doctrinal subjects. His strength is **not** family life, Christian living and related topics.

TRIUMPH: Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God) is not in full agreement with

the majority of the churches, groups and splinters which came out of the original Worldwide Church of God, directly or indirectly. After much study and research, it has concluded that most groups that came out of Worldwide are still stuck in the old Worldwide syndrome or time warp—and haven't grown in much grace or knowledge of Christ and God's truth since leaving Worldwide. They seem caught fast in a circling time warp repeating history over and over again—as if reliving "Groundhog Day" in a repetitious cycle.

SN: Mr. Dankenbring has rarely been shy about saying what he thinks of other groups. "Open rebuke is better than secret love", but needless offenses often divide brethren.

TRIUMPH: Contrary to the assumptions others make, Triumph Prophetic Ministries believes that there is much we can learn from the Jews—although they are far from perfect. In particular, there is much to be learned about when and how to keep the Passover properly, when Pentecost should be observed, and how to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Many people do not realize it, but even Herbert Armstrong was confused about Pentecost! Originally he observed it on the same day the Jews do worldwide—Sivan 6—but switched in 1936 to a Monday Pentecost, and then, after heart-wrenching agony, to a Sunday Pentecost in 1974. But William Dankenbring says he should have gone "full circle"—because the Jews were right, all the time!

SN: I don't agree with everything that Mr. Dankenbring accepts from Jewish sources, but some of his writing helped me become interested in Jewish sources where I certainly learned many things. As an overall summary, Jewish sources are much like Christian sources—they are a mix of true history, false history, inspiration of righteous men and error—both careless and deliberate.

TRIUMPH: Many people consider some of Mr. Dankenbring's articles to be controversial, and some even say he is a "heretic"—such as the Worldwide Church of God," who originally branded him with this epithet in 1987, when they suddenly dis-fellowshipped him at Joseph Tkach's bidding. But in the 13 years since that "day of infamy" and the "long knives," Mr. Dankenbring has "stayed the course"—continued serving God, as he vowed to do when he gave his life to Christ in 1956—and has now been serving God with all his heart, soul and mind and might for 44 years! He still claims Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, Redeemer,

and coming King, and counts it a joyous blessing to be able to follow Him and do His Work, as He leads and directs.

SN: Some people who study "Jewish sources" give up on Jesus. We must give Mr. Dankenbring credit here.

TRIUMPH: There indeed may be and are "disagreements" during these end times among many of the people of God—there is much confusion and controversy—but did not the apostle Paul command us all to "prove" or "test" **all** things (1Thes 5:21)? On many things we may not see "eye to eye" until the Kingdom itself arrives, but that should not drive us apart, or cause us to hate one another. As Isaiah prophesied: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD brings back Zion" (Is 52:7-8, NKJV).

Come see our **new** web site! Pay us a visit! Tell us how we can improve! We look forward to your suggestions, comments, and dialogue!

Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God); PO Box 292; Altadena CA 91003; Fax: 626-797-0075; e-mail: Triumphpro@aol.com; web address: Triumphpro.com.

SN: Bill Dankenbring seems to be quite willing to work with and listen to others in this press release. This is good. It also seems that he is emphasizing prophetic interpretation much less. Mr. Dankenbring wrote some articles showing where Herbert Armstrong erred in prophetic interpretation. In previous *Prophecy Flash* issues, he gave a definite date for the return of Christ—which has long since passed. Obviously he does not have the gift of prophecy. How could God hold **anyone** responsible for not heeding a prophetic warning of Christ's return from Mr. Dankenbring, when he has wrongly prophesied it before?

The New Testament shows that the Church works by members each using their spiritual gifts. Mr. Dankenbring and other "one man" groups do not have all of the gifts to do all the work that Christ is doing, but it seems that they can make a positive contribution **if** they are willing to acknowledge Christ's work in others. I hope all of us can come to see ourselves in that perspective. —Norman Edwards

Could God Use "Other Groups" to Do His "End-time Work"?

Many "Church of God" group members believe that they **must be** the ones who will teach the "truth" to the rest of the world: repentance, baptism, salvation through Jesus, His return to a literal "Kingdom of God", the Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats, etc. After all, no other significant group teaches these doctrines, right?

Actually, there are quite a few of them. The ad below was forwarded to us from one such group in Port Angeles, Washington. Most were formerly Seventh Day Adventists. They still have friends in that group, with which they try to keep in contact, but are sometimes shunned. (Does that sound familiar?) The members of this group are now studying the Bible from a Jewish perspective, though keeping Yashuah (Jesus) as their Savior. They now keep the Holy Days. They still quote from the teachings of Ellen White (SDA prophetess), but they no longer treat her work as nearly "infallible" like most SDAs do.

Do I think this group is "the one" that God will use? Do

I think it is superior to all "Church of God groups?" **No.** The group teaches more Jewish tradition and SDA doctrine than I think is good. But twice in this ad, they claim that the scripture is their sole guide (*sola Scriptura*) and they ask people to leave their denominational teachings at the door. They allow discussion and questions in their studies. They even invite pastors of other groups to come and participate. (Try getting your CoG group's pastor to publicly discuss doctrine with a pastor from a different group.)

I think this is one group that God could use to teach *some* truth to *some* people. A new person would probably find that this interactive format answers his or her questions much better than listening to CoG sermons which are too often about church government or some other "CoG problem".

Will this group preach the Gospel to the world? Probably not. But there are literally thousands of varying Messianic-Jewish and other Sabbatarian groups springing up across the country. Christ knows how to use each of them. —NSE

Come Attend our Beit Midrash It Will Change Your Life!

If your life is always ordered and you never miss your prayer times; if you have your "carnal nature" under complete submission, if you never have distractions when studying the Word of the Living God, if you never come across troubling Biblical statements, then the **Beit Midrash [house of study]** is not for you. However, if you're like the rest of us and answer "no" to any of the above then perhaps it's time to pull back and reorient your life. Sailors who can't depend on maps out on the open ocean, periodically adjust their instruments to get "true" readings and account for naturally-occurring variations. They do this because their lives depend on it. If you haven't taken the time in awhile to reorient yourself, maybe it's time you did. Your life **too** depends on it.

As Dr John Garr explains so well:

In ancient times the synagogue was probably the assembly of the people in homes for social interaction, for prayer, and for study. Later, these meetings were housed in buildings designed specifically for such use, which took on the name of the meetings, themselves, and were called synagogues.

The synagogue has had three traditional functions which were manifest in the names given to it: Beit Kneset (House of Assembly or Meeting Place), Beit Tefillah, (House

of Prayer), and Beit Midrash (House of Study or Learning).

Come, spend a weekend with us at our Beit Midrash. Our place overlooks the San Juan Islands and the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Immerse yourself in the Word as you seek **His** face, let **Him** restore your soul as you gaze out on **His** handiwork. For one full weekend, do nothing but study **His** Word while seeking **His** face and **His** will with other believers—*sola Scriptura* without denominational interpretations. Eat, sleep and meditate on **His** Word for a full weekend.

Your life will be changed forever!

Follow the links below to learn more about a Beit Midrash, what to bring, map, etc. Call or email us and let us know when you will be here!

The Practical Stuff:

When is the Port Angeles, Washington, Beit Midrash? Right now, we are still very small and consequently only meet once/month on the 3rd weekend of every month.

What time does it start? We begin shortly before Sabbath on Friday and end on Sunday at approximately 4PM.

What about the kids? It is our hope to eventually have a youth Beit Midrash coinciding with the Adult Beit Midrash but we can't quite get that together yet. It grieves us to ask you to please not bring your children with you yet so as not to disturb the others in the Beit Midrash but HaShiem willing, there may come a day when it won't be this way.

Can I bring my pastor? Any believer in Yahshua Ha'Messiach (Jesus

the Redeemer) desiring to know more about our Creator's will for us as is **outlines in scripture** is welcome. There is a basket by the door and all denominations must be "peeled off and put in" this basket before you enter. Pastors seem to have more trouble than most in shucking the garment of denominationalism but *sola Scriptura* is our guide. Denominations are not welcome.

What should I bring? If you can bring pot-luck, please do; it will help considerably. If you can bring your own towels, air mattresses, sleeping bags or foam, please do; it will help. **Do** bring all the different Bible translations that you may own as well as all concordances; preferably Strong's. We have slow cookers, an extra bathroom, a queen-size hida-bed, a couch, air mattresses, foam and plenty of blankets.

How much is this going to cost? There is no financial charge for the Beit Midrash. You may make a tax-deductible donation to help defray the expenses if you are so impressed, but there is no charge.

What about the Ferry? Port Angeles is an international Port city and is a 30 minute ferry ride from Victoria, BC Canada. If you do not drive your car and need someone to pick you up at the ferry terminal, call us and we will be happy to do so.

—Bill & Jo Kuhlmeier, List Servants:
www.tagnet.org/sabbathmorefully/
sidneydavis@sabbathmorefully.org

(not associated with
"SabbathMoreFully" email forum) 

Why Do So Many People Seem Blind to “CoG” Abuse and Error?

The above question was sincerely asked on an Internet forum. Pam Dewey’s answer has been turned into this article.

Where do the corporate Church of God groups and their ministers derive their “reason for existence” and the validity of their “credentials” to represent God on Earth? Nearly every one derives their authority from their previous membership in the Worldwide Church of God or from their present work which they proclaim to be a continuation of the WCG in *some way*. They use similar logic to demand tithes of the people. If they had to go back **just** to the Bible to establish **any** of these things, they would be at a loss, for there is nothing in it that would establish their authority in any of these matters. To be specific, they cannot show any prophecies, great miracles or great body of new, unique doctrinal teaching that would establish their current group as “the one” with which God is working.

What they use, on a tiny scale, the Catholic Church’s concepts of *Apostolic succession* and the validity of *Church Tradition*. A local minister who is “in charge” of a corporate congregation can say, “I had hands laid on me by someone who had hands laid on him by someone who had hands laid on him by Herbert Armstrong. Therefore, I am in charge. Such a person’s “credentials” would mean **nothing** to someone who did not know about or was not convicted that Herbert Armstrong was “God’s Apostle”.

Because of all of this, **most** people in positions of responsibility in the corporate church organizations are very careful to repress almost all evidence of abuse by the leadership within the “old” WCG—particularly any evidence regarding Herbert Armstrong himself. Obviously, most people who “lived through” those years in the WCG are aware of **some** abuse of power and of some corruption, as most experienced or at least observed, or had friends who experienced or observed, **some** such abuse and corruption. But unless one has a wider circle of information to draw from, it was easy to excuse such abuse and corruption as likely being just isolated, or infrequent.

When we were marked and disfellowshipped in 1978, the “disinformation” system within the WCG was run-

ning full time. All problems were quickly swept under the carpet, “dissenters” were quarantined from sharing information by marking and disfellowshipment. “Dissident literature”, which might document abuse and corruption, was labeled as “spiritual poison” so that members were fearful of ever daring to have a peek. At Ambassador College for a time, the administration even forced the students to sign a document allowing those in charge to physically censor incoming mail, to prevent students from receiving copies of the Ambassador Report.

Meanwhile, after periods of upheaval such as in 1972, 1974 and 1978, and after any complainers were hustled out the door, there were periods of relative quiet and peace in the organization, and enough “good” going on that people were lulled into a feeling of the essential “goodness” toward the WCG. It felt good to be part of a church organization that bought more radio and TV time than any other on earth. It’s pretty neat to see the “head” of one’s organization hobnobbing with the rich and famous of the world. So what if a few people gave up the family farm and the security of their own retirement to fund this sort of thing. They did it of their “own free will”, didn’t they?

Also, it is a frequently observed fact of human nature that the more a people becomes “invested” in a group, in terms of time, money, relationships, belief in the cause, and mental and emotional allegiance to the leadership of the group, the more willing they are to tolerate “cognitive dissonance” regarding what goes on within the group. That is, they can actually see problems, and they may register in their mind as being not “in harmony” with their conviction of the absolute goodness of what they are involved in. Thus there is, inside their head, “dissonance”—dis-harmony.

Under healthy normal functioning of the human mind, this sort of dissonance **should** send a warning that something is seriously wrong, and they ought to take some sort of action. They should either want to get more information about what is going on so they can resolve the dissonance, or they should face the fact something **is** wrong in the

real world and try to either change what’s wrong, or withdraw themselves from it.

But if people are able to “tolerate” such dissonance, they will probably not take any of those actions. And the more “investment” they have that makes them convinced that they **must** stay where they are, and that they **must** not make waves, the more they are forced to somehow try to ignore that dissonance. As one minister put it back in 1978, “I pull a steel trap door over my mind so I don’t have to think about it.” This process went on back then, and it still goes on now.

It is **extremely** painful for most people to have to consider that a “cause” they have given much of their life to might **not** have been “the One True Church of God”, and the leader they idolized might not have been the Great Man of God they always believed him to be. They would much rather believe the organization **was** what they thought it was, and the leader **was** who they thought he was, and that it was just stolen, or undermined, or hi-jacked, or whatever, by a bunch of unscrupulous men.

Unfortunately, the “Church of God” leaders who most strongly dismiss Herbert Armstrong’s shortcomings as “minor” often themselves refuse to fairly investigate his problems. But at the same time, they will investigate the shortcomings of other groups with which they disagree—and dismiss those groups as “not of God” because of their problems. Where is the concept of “judging righteous judgment”? **Does God care if we have a totally different standard for judging ourselves than we have for judging others?**

I have, in the past twenty years, studied a broad cross-section of religious groups that have arisen since the first century. I have particularly been interested in researching those groups that taught that they were the “one true church” and/or predicted the End of the World in their own time. I know it may be very difficult for most people who have invested a lot in the WCG to accept, but the experience of those

Continued on page 34



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.

WCG 20% Effective with Members

LETTER: Nov 19, 1999
Hello all:

Lussenheide surveys the CoG, in response to my recent "census".

I am taking the best guess that around 2000 to 3000 are in the independent community churches. My other best guesses based on festival reports, hearsay, etc.:

Flurry	5,000
UCG-IA	11,000
Global/Living	6,200
Hulme	2,500
CGI/ICG/CGOM	2,800
Ritenbaugh	350
Coulter	200
Combined others... Lacy, Smith Westby, Cole, Havir, et al	2,000
Independent Community Churches	2,500
Total Sabbatarian Legacy of the WCG	32,550

It has been estimated that over 200,000 people were baptized by the CoGs, of which over 85% are still alive. This means, of the figure of 32,550 faithful, only 19.5% of all current living baptized individuals have persisted in the faith.

This is a terrible number! In fact, if you throw in WCGs current number of about 30,000, you still have a retention rate of any sort of church attendance (Sabbath-keeping or not) of under 40%! No wonder we have had such a bad youth retention rate! Long term church viability is built on a base of retained multi-generational pillar families!

It is high time for all the CoG everywhere to realize it is 5 times more expensive (or higher) to bring in "new" people as it is to serve and keep your current attendees and youth. Our "customer service" needs some tremendous upgrading!

—Bill Lussenheide, Menifee, California
[Post to internet forums]

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for

putting this together. Obviously, the numbers are rough estimates. It is nearly impossible to produce accurate statistics because so many organizations count "members" differently. Some count actual church attendance, some

use a list of those who at some point said they are members. Others use their mailing list. Some groups

are diligent about removing someone from their membership roles if they stop attending—other groups will keep people on their membership list for years after they have stopped attending. Several people have told me that they are considered members by two or more organizations.

In my opinion, more people are in the "others" and the "independent" categories, and probably less in the organizations. But, many days of work would be required to prove that. There are many hundreds who now attend with Messianic Jewish groups. Nevertheless, the overall figure of 20%—maybe 25%—is probably "in the ballpark".

Even if we had accurate numbers of how many are in each group, we would still not know **why** they are there and **what** they believe. The WCG **still** consists of people who believe the old doctrines but won't leave that church organization, as well as those who believe standard Protestant doctrines. Some who left the WCG for other groups did so because their friends did—they may have little doctrinal commitment.

From this, we should learn that no man should ever claim he is the "head" (not even the "human head") of God's Church. **Christ is the head!** (Eph 5:23, Col 1:18). Christ knows what He is doing. When people set up organizations, membership criteria, membership lists, etc. and begin to think they know exactly who is in the Church, they just get further and further away from understanding what Christ is doing.

—NSE

UCG-IA Member Seeks Reconciliation

LETTER: January 13, 2000

I would like to share with you a letter that I wrote recently to the *Journal*. From reading in the *SN* and the *Journal*, I get the feeling that a lot of Christians see things the same way.

"My wife and I desire a church that is practicing 1 Corinthians 13, full of love and truth and that has the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5:22—a church that is going about the Father's business.

In a healthy church environment, each member will be growing, will be edified, and their talents being utilized. In our local congregation these things are not being

done. Members capable of giving sermons, leading songs, and doing other functions are being overlooked. From reading and studying the scriptures, this approach goes contrary to what the scriptures say.

When one member hurts, the whole body hurts...from what we see and read, it appears that the whole body is in pain—it's hurting **big time**.

The Bible talks about the body being made up of many members—all are a part of the whole body—all functioning as part of the same body (1Cor12:12). It also talks about the ministry being one of **reconciliation** (2Cor 5:18)—to God and to each other—our brothers and sisters!

Christ gave His disciples some very important instructions in the New Testament (Mark 9:38-41). Why can't the various "little groups" use this principle? Why can't we say that we are for each other...all doing a part of Gods work—working together taking the good news, the message of hope to a helpless, dark world?

You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. In the same way, the growth within the body of Christ would be a lot more if we all practiced this and it needs to come from the "pulpits" too!

Let's all begin to tear down the walls and build bridges. Let's all begin to fellowship with each other. Don't be afraid to order tapes and literature from other groups. Let's all begin the healing process now! Reconciliation is knocking at the door.

Let's all open the door and truly become one in body, in mind, and in spirit".

Let's stop this madness now!

—concerned UCG-ia member

RESPONSE: I hope everyone comes to see it as you do. All of the groups need to work together in spite of their differences. We need to work together for study, evangelism, social activities, etc.

Why don't some groups work together?

Groups that try to exercise "church authority" have a logical conflict if they acknowledge other groups as "near-equal" believers. A member in a church organization may ask his leader why he needs to travel to a distant site for the Feast of Tabernacles but not for Unleavened Bread, or how tithing is to be implemented today, or whether the scripture would allow a divorce in a certain case, or any number of other questions not clearly spelled out in the scriptures. His Church organization may give him the answer and claim that it has authority to expound the scriptures for the member or to a render a decision on behalf of God for the member—and the member must abide by it.

But suppose that the member disagrees with his organization's decision and goes to a

second organization that renders a different decision. If the first organization sees the second organization as a “near-equal” group, how can it say that the second organization's decision was **not** of God? Organizations that recognize other groups as “near-equals” can not claim to render authoritative judgments for God (unless He specifically reveals something to them). All they can do is show the person what they believe are the relevant scriptures and tell the individual that they will be responsible to the Eternal for what they do.

But isn't that what Bible teachers should be doing anyway?

—NSE

Why So Many *SN* Comments?

LETTER:

January 10, 2000

Please remove my name from the *Servants' News* mailing list. The articles written by others than the staff should not require an editors comment on every section. I feel this is improper. Christians should be intelligent enough to go to the Bible and “prove all things” for themselves, and makes one wonder why they print articles which do not fit their view anyway, unless solely for the purpose of tearing it apart. Thank you.

—Linda Choate, Bolivar, Missouri

RESPONSE: Thank you for raising some excellent questions.

Why does the Bible contain so many stories of bad kings, false prophets and false apostles? Why does it tell about the years that Paul persecuted the Church? Why not just tell the good part about him? Why does the Bible contain an “evaluation” of the seven Churches in Asia Minor? Why does it contain Paul's evaluation of Peter's sin (Gal 2:11-17) and Peter's evaluation of Paul's writing (2Pet 3:15-16)? These Bible examples—both good and bad—were clearly written for our learning (Rom 15:4; 1Cor 10:11).

We realize that *Servants' News* evaluation of a teacher or doctrine is not the same as the Bible's evaluation. The Eternal does not regularly speak to *Servants' News* (either directly or through an angel) and tell us exactly what to print. Much of the **Bible** is the words of the Eternal or the words of Christ. That is why we print some articles that we partially disagree with and then write an editor's comment. The author's story is told along with our understanding of the subject. **In case our understanding is wrong**, people have a chance to read the author's original words. We are not so proud to think that the only thing worth printing is that which we write ourselves. On the other hand, if we print an article that we partially disagree with and do not explain ourselves, readers often mistakenly assume that we agree with the whole

thing. (This has happened many times.)

Finally, we print some articles (or parts of articles) that we think are largely in error so **that others may know that such errors exist**. Both Old and New Testaments have specific warnings about quite a few specific false doctrines. When people leave the corporate Church of God groups they are often joyful to find so many other groups that keep the Sabbath and Holy days. It is important that they realize that some of those groups teach (sometimes not openly) major heresies—such as “only one race can be saved”.

Whenever we talk about doctrines that we disagree with, we try to provide contact information for anyone who wants to contact those who teach it. If they are right and we are wrong, the Holy Spirit can still lead people to the truth through us. When I worked in the Worldwide Church of God, I heard of several cases where people first contacted the WCG from reading a book against it—but that gave the WCG's address. They found, for example, that the few WCG quotes about the Sabbath in the anti-WCG book made more sense than the book's rambling on why Sunday is the right day.

Unfortunately, the WCG (and most of her offshoots) do not reciprocate. If they are being affected by some other doctrinal teaching, they will only rarely name the group or person who is teaching it. In only some infinitesimal fraction of the cases will they provide information so that members can read both sides of the story. These groups will claim that they are “protecting the sheep” from false doctrine by not acknowledging the source of the doctrine.

I believe it is more important to teach, from the Bible or history, **why the doctrine is false**. If we cannot show why it is false, then we should not be teaching against it. And in the event that we are wrong and do not know it, we still make the other view (which might be correct) available to our readership.

If the Eternal raises up a prophet whom he reveals doctrines to directly, then that prophet will not need to teach as we do, but he will be able to say “thus says the Eternal”, and give his true message as he received it. But for now, we must pray and ask God to show us what to write, but still realize that we are not perfect and that He does not teach His people every truth all at once. I do not see how our frequent editorial comments can stop Christians from being mature or from proving all things. A mature Christian can always ignore our writing or else read it and then prove it true or prove it false from the Bible.

Thanks for listening to this long explanation. We will discontinue your subscription unless you let us know that you would like it again.

Promise Keepers & Feasts

LETTER:

August 18, 1999

Norm,

Greeting from Washington. Just wanted to take a moment to say “thanks” for producing *Servants' News* and making it readily available to all who ask. We appreciate the information and the effort you put into it and hope that you will be able to produce *Servants' News* for a long time.

Thank you for keeping in touch with Paula regarding the Feast and for publishing the information on the Feast. Paula has done quite a bit of work in it and we have a great contact in Spirit Lake, Iowa who has helped tremendously with making available a great location. It should be a lively and enjoyable Feast.

If we are still here in Washington a year from now, we hope to host a Feast site near Mt. Rainier at another church camp we recently found. It would be a great place for brethren to congregate away from the busy city attractions and spend lots of quality time together in many activities and sharpening one another.

Three weeks ago I attended a **Promise Keepers conference** along with 20,000 other men in Tacoma, Washington. I don't know if you have had the chance to visit a conference of theirs, but I found it helpful to open up to others in the area who are trying as well. I found Steve Farrar's message the most inspiring. He spoke about the society in which we live and the historical analogy of similar times in our past. Quite compelling and motivating.

Thanks again for all you do and for your help. We hope your Feast is inspiring and enjoyable as well.

Sincerely

—Daniel Vander Poel, Sumner, Wash.

RESPONSE: We are glad to see more people planning Feasts. If anyone is interested in the areas you mention, we will be glad to put them in contact with you.

I agree with many things that Promise Keepers teach, but do not agree with the goals of their organization. In their conferences, they heavily emphasize doing good to others and put little emphasis on doctrine. At the higher levels, the organization pushes ecumenical union of religion. I am in favor of people working together, but not of leaders unifying organizations from the top down. This kind of unity invariably leads toward “one humanly approved way to worship”—which is not at all what the Eternal wants.

—NSE

Let's Get Back to Jewish Origins

LETTER:

January 2, 2000

Dear Servants' News,

I think your publication is alright. But a little too much wishy-washy. No one can make up his/her minds entirely. So I'm going to stick to the messianic Jewish people, as the Jews have the right dates for the festivals. The churches of God are still trying to figure it out. Still following in the paths of the Sadducees, instead of the Pharisees. Well, I think it is simple, we came from Jewish origin and let's get back to it. So take my name off the mailing list. Thanks very much, and I pray that you will all get it straight. And God will see that it will happen one day.

—Washington

RESPONSE: We will remove you from our mailing list.

If you think that the Jews are "right" and not "wishy-washy", you must be listening to just one "Jewish origins" teacher. If you read the books that the "Jewish origins" come from, you will find much "wishy-washy" debate in them. The Mishna, the basis of Rabbinic Judaism is the size of a Bible. The Talmud is commentary on the Mishna, and about five times larger. Rashi, Maimonides and other major rabbi's commentary are also huge. They debate nearly everything.

Are you sure that the Jews always had the "right dates" for the Feasts? They used to start new months based on witnesses sighting the new moon. Notice this Mishna passage, Rosh Hashanah 1:7:

If a father and his son saw the new moon they may both go to bear witness; not that they can be included together as a valid pair of witnesses... Rabbi Simeon says: a father and his son, and any that are near of kin, are eligible to bear witness about the new moon. Rabbi Jose said: Once Tobia the Physician saw the new moon in Jerusalem, together with his son and his freed slave; and the priests accepted him and his son but pronounced his freed slave ineligible. And when they came before the court they accepted him and his slave but declared his son ineligible.

There are many teachers, both Jewish and Christian, who act like they have "everything right". These tend to form cults and divide themselves from others. The best teachers are the ones who do not claim to know everything, but who are always learning truth—and who are quick to practice the truth that they know.

—NSE

Biblical Calendar Events in History

LETTER:

March 14, 2000

Jan/Feb 2000

In your "Biblical Calendar Basics" article you pointed out one way to verify which is the "correct" calendar: Match prophetic [significant] events in history with various calendars [and see how many important events turn out on holy days in the various calendars]. Have you done any more research or know of anyone else who has?

—Anthony McKay, Texas

RESPONSE: A few people have written to me about one or two incidents, but I do not have any conclusive proof on the matter. I would be interested in hearing others—Jewish, Christian and Anglo-Saxon.

—NSE

WCG History Research Site Lost

LETTER:

March 4, 2000

In the Nov/Dec edition of *Servant's News* on page 5, in the lower right hand column there is a section with the title, "Useful WCG History Research". This section closes with the URL: <http://www.crosswinds.net/~gwmatteson/index.htm>

This is not a valid URL. Do you have the correct one?

YBIC,

—Ewin, Missouri

RESPONSE: A number of people called or wrote about this. That was the correct URL, but the site is now gone and nobody seems to know where it went. If we find out where it is available again, we will print it.

—NSE

Questions on Eternal Judgment

LETTER:

January 18, 2000

Dear Norman

I have read with interest your writings on the subject of "eternal judgment". Your belief that Luke 12:42-48 indicates that the beatings with few or many stripes shows that truly converted Christians will not automatically go into the Kingdom at Christ's return raised a question.

I understand your point that there would be no point in God punishing someone if they were either going into the Kingdom or the Lake of Fire. You used the example of a trainee pilot, who was refused his license until he had a further period of training. How does this square with scriptures like Ephesians 1:13-14, which describes the sealing of the Holy Spirit as the guarantee, that we will receive salvation in its fullness at Christ's return?

Thanks for all the efforts that you put into *Servants' News*. I always find each issue very interesting.

—Philip Perry, United Kingdom

RESPONSE: Read the verses as they are:

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph 1:13-14).

Christ gives us a little of His spirit now—like a down payment on our eternal inheritance. He will not leave us (Heb 13:5). But that does not prevent us from leaving Him. Blasphemy against that Spirit, that down payment in us, can put us into a situation where we cannot be forgiven (Matt 12:31). A down payment can be given either a short time or a very long time before the final payment. Ephesians 4 says nothing about the resurrection in which a believer might receive their inheritance. If a person is not in the first resurrection, that Holy Spirit will continue as their down payment until they have learned what they need to learn and receive their Eternal inheritance. A person can choose to reject that inheritance, either now or in the second resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power" (Rev 20:6).

—NSE

Eternal Judgment for Angels Only?

LETTER:

March 11, 2000

Thank you for sending the Nov/Dec 1999 issue of *Servants' News* which included your paper on the subject of "Eternal Judgment," and also for being interested in constructive comments and criticisms from others. As you indicated the Bible has a whole lot to say about this subject.

Early on in the article you apparently sense that your readers may stop reading your paper because "it advocates salvation by works," and therefore you asked that we continue to finish the section because you believe "we are not saved by our works." The paper does give the indication that you may be striving to "have your cake and eat it too." What do I mean? On one hand it appears you believe that salvation is a "free gift" only for some who are in certain categories, yet on the other hand if one doesn't come up to a particular "categorized standard (like strings/conditions attached to the free gift)," then salvation is **not** a free gift after all. This all makes it sound like God is an "Indian-giver," one who gives something out, and then later takes it back.

RESPONSE: I would prefer to think of God as a good parent—one who gives good gifts to his children when they are ready to use them in a manner that they do not hurt them-

selves and others. A parent may promise to give a child a car as soon as he or she appears responsible enough to drive it. The son or daughter does not have to pay a cent—it is a gift. The child's responsibility in no way pays for the car—the parent's money does that. But if the apparently responsible child begins to drive irresponsibly and crash into people, should not the parent take the car away?

LETTER: To be more specific, you have noted within the paper that, "We are not saved by our works," yet you conclude your paper with four general categories of people. You have concluded that one category (People who cannot or will not live a righteous life in any environment) can "... only be given eternal destruction." This category of people, for whatever reason, has **not** come up to some "standard" so that they could be "qualified" enough to earn eternal life. By having three other categories of people you are concluding, although you apparently don't want to admit it, that eternal life is gained as "salvation by works."

RESPONSE: I suppose that depends on your definition of "works". Most people think of "salvation by works" as a process of doing various religious things, good deeds to others, penance, etc. None of these things earn salvation. But if you consider repentance, baptism or calling upon God for deliverance as "works", then indeed "works" are required for salvation. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

LETTER: I would like to mention some "food for thought" scriptures you have **not** cited which we may consider as "iron sharpens iron" constructive criticism from God's Word. As you know and stated, it's a big subject.

James 4:5 says, "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" James is telling us, Christian, Firstfruits, God's Church, The Bride in "the making," that there is something "in" us, and it doesn't do good. Unless James lied there are no exceptions to this. In other words, if this "spirit" is in Christians, then it must also be "in" **all** humans as Christians are Firstfruits that God calls, or drags, out of "the rest" of humanity which are of this world, of Satan's kingdoms. This is not talking about the "spirit in man." How does one get rid of this "spirit" that is "in" each of us? Could this "spirit" impact one's salvation? Could it impact the "eternal judgment" one would receive?

RESPONSE: Understanding what James meant here is fairly easy if you read the rest of chapter 4. James was talking to people with big problems—some murders (v 2). But he answered your questions: "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God

resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

That spirit in us can affect our salvation! We have to humble ourselves to receive grace (I hope that isn't a "work" to you). God also tells us to submit to him, resist the devil, and cleanse our hands (clean up our act). It is the power and grace of God that provides salvation, but if we have an attitude of pride, God promises to "resist" us.

LETTER: A verse like this has helped me understand The Apostle Paul, when he said, "...sin that dwelleth IN me." (Romans 7:17) In fact, a little later it appears that Paul took no responsibility for this sin in him for he stated (verse 20), "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Paul appears to be in agreement with James. Paul, a long-time Christian veteran near the end of his life, told us that this was the reason he did evil things he didn't want to do, and that he had a problem doing good—just like what happens in our lives today. Paul admitted, in my opinion, that another force, or "spirit," was operating **within** his flesh. A Christian is **not** immune from that "spirit."

RESPONSE: I agree that Paul still struggled with sin till his death, that I still struggle with sin, and that every believer I know struggles with some kind of sin—however small it might be in some cases. But he explains how all that works: "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live". We must all be about the process of putting to death the deeds of the flesh and "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2Cor 10:5). Christ will judge whether we have done that well enough to be in the first resurrection, or what will be necessary for eternal life at a later time.

LETTER: Did Christ have this sin "in" Himself too? Very possible, for Ephesians 2:16 states, "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" Additionally, my Authorized King James Bible in the margin indicates that "in Himself" is the more appropriate translation for the word "thereby." It sounds like Christ was able to do something about what was "in" Him, whereas The Apostle Paul was, like us (?), helpless. Perhaps "enmity" is another word for the "sin" mentioned by The Apostle Paul, or "spirit" mentioned by James.

RESPONSE: I think your translation and understanding of this verse is correct. Christ had this spirit in him, but he conquered it. Hebrews 4:15 explains it: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin". We are not like Christ—we cannot do this, but we are commanded to call upon Christ for his deliverance—and to make every right decision that we can make.

LETTER: Additionally, your paper makes mention of an "unpardonable sin," a phrase nowhere found in God's Word. In fact, you quoted Matthew 12:22-32 and Luke 1-12; however, you may want to also consider the parallel scripture Mark 3:28 where Jesus Christ is quoted as saying, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." This verse is very clear and says, however God will do this, that "... **all sins** shall be **forgiven** unto men..." Wow! This sounds like some very good news. Does Christ really believe this? Did He lie to us? Well, we know, He can't lie. He did speak His Father's words, and our Father can't lie. Even blasphemies "of men" are forgiven! That's incredible! The Apostle Paul admitted to being a "blasphemer," so the rest of that verse would certainly be "good news" for him, and any like him.

RESPONSE: My paper specifically says: "what theologians often call the 'unpardonable sin.'" I realized that it is not in the Bible. I accidentally removed the quotation marks from "unpardonable sin" in the subtitle, so I will restore them—thank you.

There are many places where some gospel writers leave out details that others supply. Because Mark does not continue with the details included in Matthew, should we assume that Christ did not say what Matthew records? All of the manuscript resources I have indicate these words belong in Matthew. If we want to understand Christ, we should go to the most detailed account, not the shortest.

Please notice that even Mark does not say "all sins will be forgiven for all men" He just says that it is possible to forgive all sins, but then qualifies that in the very next verses which list sins that will not be forgiven: "But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will **never** be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.'"

LETTER: This isn't all. Where does our Father fit in with this matter of eternal judgment? What about 2 Corinthians 5:19, where The Apostle Paul stated: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, **not** imputing their trespasses unto

them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What a blessing! Did The Apostle Paul lie here? Again, it appears, however God does this, that He intends to **not** impute trespasses unto men, humans.

RESPONSE: No God does not lie, but this verse does **not** say, "not imputing **all** trespasses of **all** people who have ever lived." Who is this verse addressed to? Read verse 17, earlier: "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation..." Paul does not end the chapter by saying "good news, everybody is saved no matter what they do," but he says: "...we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Cor 5:20-21).

LETTER: What happens to your category 1 people if Mark 3:28 and 2 Cor 5:19 are true? From God The Father, and Jesus Christ's point of view it appears there will **not** be any category 1 people that will "... be given eternal destruction."

RESPONSE: Neither of these verses say that God forgives all the sin of everyone. Whereas there are dozens of scriptures that tell us **what to do to have our sin forgiven**. Those things that we do, do not forgive our sins—they don't pay for the car, to revert to our original analogy, but they are the things that are required in order to have and use the car. Your letter has said little about many of the other scriptures I quote that show some people will not have eternal life. To ask your question, "Are these scriptures lies?"

LETTER: Finally, you did cite Matthew 25:31-46 and subsequently said, "... none of these scriptures give us detail on how Christ judges!" I'd like to mention only two of those verses, namely:

Matthew 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" and verse 41 "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"

Verse 34 is referring to humans, as one category, represented as sheep, and Christ does not mention any "strings/conditions" attached, and yet it's a "done deal" from the "foundation of the world." Could it be because God and Christ will **not** impute "**all** sins/trespasses" to "men," that Christ saw no need for giving any details. Verse 41 is referring to a second category of "beings," which are cursed angels, not humans, going "into everlasting fire," which is everlasting punishment (verse 46), and never to be reversed. It appears from God's perspective that there may only be two categories. I personally find it very difficult to try

to get around these verses but again, as you mentioned it's a big subject.

RESPONSE: I can see how Matt 25:41 might be confusing. Since it says the fire is prepared for "the devil and his angels", you assume that it is for "spirit beings" only. The problem is that the word "angels" is supplied by the translators. The Hebrew *malak* (Strong's #4397) is translated "angel" 111 times and "messenger" 98 times. The equivalent Greek *aggelos* (Strong's #32) is translated "angel" 179 times and "messenger" 7 times (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2 Luke 7:24,27; 9:52; 2Cor 12:7, Jms 2:25). The words *malak* and *aggelos* simply mean messenger—it is left to the reader to determine if it is a divine messenger or not. Young's Literal Translation consistently translates *aggelos* as "messenger", so Matt 25:41, YLT says the fire was "prepared for the Devil and his messengers". (You can check all the uses of these words with a Hebrew or Greek concordance, or a computer Bible.)

Similarly, Matthew 25:31 speaks of the Son of Man coming with "all the holy angels", but the YLT says "holy messengers". The word for "holy" here is *hagios*, the same word that is translated "saints" many other places. It seems that this judgment is carried out when Christ returns with his saints (1Thes 3:13, 2Thes 1:10; Jude 1:14)—the first resurrection. Neither this verse, nor verse 41 specifically says it refers to spirit beings—that was the translators idea—these can be human (or formerly human) messengers.

Do you really believe that the purpose of Matthew 25:31-46 is to compare the fate of humans and demons? If that is the case, why does it even mention helping the needy? Cannot Christ tell the difference between humans and demons without keeping track of how many needy people each of them helped? Will demons be eternally punished because they do not help the hungry, thirsty, imprisoned, etc? Are demons supposed to take strangers into their houses? (I hope they do not ask me in!) To make sense, this parable must be about two kinds of humans (sheep & goats) that can choose who they become. It says "all nations will be gathered", not "nations and demons". Eternal life is offered only to those who helped others in need. Have all humans done that? No. I have read books by people who say "only suckers help others in need". If Christ, as you previously suggested, forgives all sins of all humans all the time, why should anyone ever help anyone else?

LETTER: I have personally found it very helpful reading a short article titled: "Is it Man or Is it Angel?" published for free by God's Church, currently known by its publishing name Church Outreach Program [directed by Robert Roenspies], with an address of P.O.

Box 6111, Elgin, IL 60121. That short article, in my opinion, helps shed more "light" on the subject of "Eternal Judgment." In portions of God's Word, the word "man" or "men" does not always refer to human beings (e.g. Exodus 15:3; Daniel 9:21; Revelation 21:17).

RESPONSE: If you disagree with what I wrote, just skip my writing and read all the Bible quotations and ask the Eternal to show you what the Bible says. I agree that the words "man" or "men" as found in the Bible come from a great variety of Hebrew and Greek words and can sometimes refer to a spirit being. However, I do not think you can begin to prove that every verse that talks about eternal judgment or punishment is talking about spirit beings and not people.

LETTER: Norman, if your paper is not your "final word" on this marvelous subject of "Eternal Judgment," you may want to consider providing some additional explanation about some of the verses above cited from God's Word — in particular Mark 3:28; 2 Cor 5:19; Matt 25:34, 41 and 46. You may want to consider and make it part of an expanded paper which includes the eternal judgment that God has in store for Satan and the demons as well — perhaps even use different categories than you already used in your paper. Satan and his demons would definitely, in my opinion, fit into the Category 1 you mentioned, and God does have a "sentence" for them.

Thanks for your efforts and sharing your thoughts on this subject. And you may publish the above within *Servants' News*, as "iron sharpens iron" for others, if you wish.

—John Gordon, 119 Pine Street
Nashua, NH; (branch00@aol.com)

RESPONSE: Thank you for writing. It is questions such as yours that help me to evaluate how thoroughly I have studied. I do have a short appendix on judging angels coming, but my primary purpose is to help people be ready for eternal judgment. I do not believe God wants me to teach angels what will happen to them, so I will not try to be exhaustive in this area.

Finally, I have a question for you. If God is going to forgive all sin and give eternal life to everyone, why has He allowed so much suffering? Why does He allow Satan to affect us? Why doesn't he just give everyone eternal life and perfect character as soon as they are born? Also, what is really wrong with committing mass murder or suicide? Won't God forgive all of that—and aren't you just sending people to eternal life all the faster? My understanding of the Bible says that we have a purpose down here **and the decisions we make do matter!** But how do you answer those questions?

—NSE ☞

“Truckers Study” from page 2
about the moral decline in the nation and the need to get back to the vision the Founding Fathers had of one nation under God. It was moving to hear the discussion, which I feel inadequate trying to relate. One of the truckers is of Mennonite background and therefore during the war in Vietnam was a conscientious objector on religious grounds. Had he been drafted, he would not have served, but he looked at the veteran and told him that he and his friends were thankful that others did serve.

He then discussed a friend in their church who did serve in the military, and has since come home. The man is a wonderful Bible teacher, but some in the congregation have a hard time accepting him back because he chose to serve in the military. “Should we not accept him back?” he asked.

I then asked a question that might not be all that hypothetical. I turned to the Vietnam vet and asked him what he would do if Jane Fonda walk into his church one day—would he accept her? (Note: There are unconfirmed reports circulating that Jane Fonda is studying the Bible and is becoming a “born again” Christian.) [During the war, Jane Fonda visited USA prisoners held by North Viet Nam and insisted that they were all being well treated—not realizing that she was shown only a select group that were specifically well cared-for so they would look good for her visit.] The veteran hesitated, understanding very well the importance of the question. This led to a discussion about Saul of Tarsus and his conversion, and how hard it must have been for the Christian community of that day to accept him.

I then turned to John 13. I pointed out that this passage takes place during the Passover season and discussed briefly the meaning of the Passover, but also pointed out the ordinance of humility that footwashing represents. Jesus, the one who was God in the Old Testament, stooped down as an act of servitude and humility, to wash his disciples’ feet—and he even washed the feet of Judas, whom he knew would betray him. What an example for all of us!

The retired gentleman at this point spoke up. He said that he and his wife are Catholics, and they had never been to a Bible study like this before. In their background, everyone just sits and listens to

the priest, and there is no chance to discuss and ask questions. They had heard all these Bible passages over the years, but had never had them explained, and they were so glad that they decided to come to the study. In his experience, once the children get past Catechism, there is no further in-depth Bible instruction for adults, and indeed they had been told in the past that they don’t need to read the Bible. I made sure they took a Bible with them, while one of the truckers chatted with them afterwards and discussed different Bible translations and the strengths and weaknesses of each. I also gave them some tapes and the first lesson of the CEM Correspondence Course.

As I mentioned to the Vietnam veteran, there is nothing more rewarding than helping someone who is new to understanding, and eager to learn more about God and His ways.

January 23, 2000: Before the study today, one of the truckers mentioned to me that temptation seems to be a problem only when he is **not** on the road, for when he is home, such things as television and the culture in general invades his life. This became the take-off point for the study today as we were joined by more truckers. We had a total of six today, including a couple who had joined us a few weeks ago. While I was involved upstairs with the truck drivers, Arlo was elsewhere in the truck stop talking to some teenagers.

We began with John 14, which says that the Holy Spirit was “with” the disciples, but would be “in” them, which is one of those little-understood statements that pack big meaning. It tells us that the disciples were not yet converted, but it also outlines one of the differences between the Old and New Covenants. Hebrews 8 tells us that the problem with the Old Covenant was not with the covenant but with the people. Under the New Covenant the law is written on our hearts as opposed to in stone, which means that we are therefore capable of living according to God’s ways, something that the Israelites were unable to do for any length of time.

I used this as an entry point to a discussion on the passage “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1Cor. 5), and most of the rest of the Bible Study we had a discussion about the Holy Days and how they point to Christ and to God’s plan for the human race.

We began with Passover and its symbols, Days of Unleavened Bread and leaving spiritual Egypt, and Pentecost and how it bears a relationship with the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai under the Old Covenant and the writing of the law on our hearts by the coming of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. We ended up working our way through to the Day of Atonement. The concepts ingrained in the Holy Days seem to fascinate those who have never heard them explained. I believe that those days can be a tool of outreach to better preach the gospel.

One of the couples who attended with us this morning is from Houston, and they took several tapes and pieces of literature with them, and were particularly interest in the CEM materials, as the wife happens to be originally from Longview, TX.

Just as we were ending, another gentleman came in, and we engaged him in a conversation. This fellow had an interesting view of the Bible, including a knowledge of the need to keep God’s law, that Sabbath is the seventh day, and some other well thought out issues. Another truck driver joined in the conversation, so in a sense we had a second Trucker’s Bible study on the heels of the first. The second driver’s style seemed to be more contentious—he has his mind made up about everything—while the first driver seemed eager to discuss ideas and concepts. One thing that distresses him is so many people using the same Bible but coming to different conclusions about what it says. On the other hand, as he would come across an answer to a question as we went through a scripture or two, he would shout out an exclamation of excitement. He was delighted to take a Bible and some literature with him.

I am pleased to say that we have been able to unload lots of literature, tapes, and Bibles the past few weeks. We’re looking forward to unloading some more.

January 30, 2000: We were able to reach six people with the Good News today. When Dave Throckmorton and I arrived at 8:15 (about 45 minutes before the study was to begin), a couple was already there. It so happens that this was the same couple (from Houston) who were with us last week.

We were later joined by another husband/wife team from Montana, and

two more men (one from Kentucky and another from Tennessee).

The people from Montana have been studying Romans and found some confusing passages relative to the law in Romans 2 and 3, and they wanted some background to that book, which I was able to provide. Still, how do we reconcile Romans 2:13 ("Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified") with Romans 3:20 ("Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin")? Why does Paul apparently contradict himself?

The answer of course is that the law does not do the justifying (only the death and resurrection of Christ can do that). Rather, the law simply defines right from wrong. But when one is justified by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then that person will keep God's laws. Another way to express it is to say that they will try to do right rather than wrong. Even so, all the law-keeping in the world cannot justify past sins.

Discussions also took place relative to the Gospel and what it is in its fullness, which includes the second coming of Jesus Christ and His kingdom being established on this earth. David commented to me later that he was impressed that so many people understand that Jesus is coming a second time, and I have to admit that this is something that is talked about more these days than it was 30 years ago when David and I were both learning the truth of the Bible.

[We can give credit to Sunday-keeping Christians for much of the spreading of this truth, without accepting their errors. The big problems arise when Sunday-keeping (or Sabbath-keeping) organizations claim that they are the "only ones" with "the truth". —NSE]

Finally, one of the truckers kept mentioning salvation-oriented issues. This provided an opening relative to how so few people in the overall scheme of things seem to have had a chance to come to know God and His son Jesus Christ. Since there is no other name by which men may be saved, and since God is not willing that any should perish, then why does God seem to be losing the battle for souls? In fact, we read in Romans 11 that "God has concluded them in unbelief,

that He might have mercy on all." So it is God who has blinded them, and He takes the responsibility for it. That being the case, how will God rectify it? From that point of departure, we discussed the resurrections and God's plan for those who have never had a chance, including the thousand year reign of Christ and the general resurrection that follows it.

Once again, we had very positive comments from the participants today. More literature, Bibles, and tapes passed through our hands for destinations unknown, and we had some nice conversations both before and after the study.

As a sidelight, after the study, I spoke to some extent with the couple from Montana, and the fellow told me that he used to ride rodeo, and back in those days the riders were a rough lot. However, there has been a change over the past few years, and they now have an organization called "Cowboys for Christ". He says that their meetings before various rodeo events are packed. I report this for what it's worth, as I believe it is important to keep one's ear to the ground on social and religious events.

[There seems to be a growing number of people today who now completely distrust big government, big business, the big media and big religion. They see that nearly everything these groups say is a carefully crafted statement designed to manipulate people to increase their power and wealth. The truth is told when it happens to be convenient or when it is necessary to avoid legal entanglements. Unfortunately, HWA's wealthy lifestyle, advertising approach and claim to be the "only true Church" looks much like other "corrupt, big religion". People are hungry to learn from real, local people who clearly have a personal relationship with God. —NSE]

I will mention here that there is an outside chance that we could pick up two more truck stops for Bible studies, but we need more people to man them. I take a look at the unused talent in the Church of God today, and it is fun to muse about what would happen if we could turn some of it loose. So many of us have been around for decades and know the Bible very well—and can even teach it. Imagine what would happen if all those who are able would have

a ministry of some kind. Imagine if each of us could connect with three people a week. We cannot imagine the impact we could have. I hope and pray that we can unlock some of the unused gifts that have been quenched for too long.

February 13, 2000: Our visitors today included a truck stop employee and a repeat customer who had joined us two weeks ago.

I began by relating an event at a Bar Mitzvah that I had the privilege of attending last week. The boy who was at the center of the celebration gave a short explanation of several scriptures from the Torah, and commented that he disagreed with God about animal sacrifices because "the animal didn't do anything wrong. Why should an innocent animal suffer when a person does something wrong?"

One gentleman made the excellent point that God doesn't make mistakes, but having said that, the boy was right that it is okay to disagree with God. Moses did it when Israel made the golden calf and Abraham did it when he was bargaining for the preservation of Sodom and Gomorrah. Perhaps we can influence what God does more than what we think. We just don't try enough.

On another level, sacrifices showed that sin often hurts innocent parties. And finally, animal sacrifices pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was the lamb without blemish, something that the lad at the Bar Mitzvah would likely not understand.

Another item of discussion related to resurrections and the return of Christ. One trucker believes in the rapture, and we were not inclined to debate the point. It turns out that both men understood that there is more than one resurrection, and we reviewed some scriptures in that regard. We let him explain where he finds in scripture an explanation of the rapture and he turned to Revelation 4:1-3. This wasn't the time to argue but to listen, but it is interesting how tenuous the evidence for a rapture is.

Both men today were very open to learning and discussing, and neither was inclined to argue. It is a joy to encounter people who understand there is a God and are anxious to learn from the Bible.

—Lenny Cacchio; 705 Ne Bryant Dr
Lees Summit, Missouri 64068
lcacchio@yahoo.com ☐

"Blind to CoG Abuse" from page 26 involved in the WCG is **not** unique in any way. It is practically a "classic text book example" of the kind of evolution such groups go through. Leaders of such groups often start by teaching that they are just one of many groups that God is using. But they point out where doctrines of major denominations differ from the Bible and they offer new explanations for prophecies. Their diligence and energy in teaching attracts many new followers. As these groups grow bigger, corruption, abuse, high-living and sex scandals increase among the leadership. Each group will then usually react by even more loudly asserting itself to be the "one True Church", and by removing members that try to expose or correct the problems. Groups usually continue or crumble, depending largely on the ability of each leader to continue to operate like the previous leader.

The fact that the WCG fits this typical "cult" pattern does not invalidate all that happened there. To the contrary, consider this:

1. Those who truly repented, were baptized and received the Holy Spirit really had a relationship with God. The Bible's promises to individuals are not made void by the mistakes of organizations.

2. The value of relationships between brethren established while being a member of such an organization still stands. (WCG split-off groups often discourage close friends between their members and members in other groups—but these brethren ought not let organizations take away what God may have built up over years.)

3. The truth of the doctrines taught by HWA and the WCG are not "canceled" because of some errors. I am firmly convinced **those doctrines** ought to be lined up against the Bible, and accepted or rejected on their own merits. If a doctrine can be proven to a new person from the Bible, then it should be taught. If a doctrine must be taught by saying: "this scripture has that meaning because HWA said so", then it is not worth teaching. .

4. Even the value of our "happy memories" about specific Feasts or other experiences from better days while involved in the organization do not have to be rejected. Most of those memories come from people sharing

together and doing what they understood to be the will of God at that time.

But lots of good and sincere and godly friends, and happy Feast memories, and conviction of truth that one learned do not, in **any** way, negate the fact that corruption and abuse were rampant in the organization, and do not "justify" any of the flaws in the leadership including HWA. Those acts **also** ought to be "lined up" against the Bible standard for church leaders, and evaluated by that standard, not "excused" by one's own desire to avoid painful reality.

It was easy to have wonderful memories when you were devoting yourself to be a diligent member of "God's one True Church", when you thought the leaders were great moral men of God, when you knew of no major doctrinal problems, etc. Once you know about the reality of the problems, the wonderful experiences that produced those "wonderful memories" are gone. How can anyone ever whole-heartedly support a particular church organization that claims to be the "main group" that God is using, when they have close friends in other groups whom they consider deeply converted? We will probably not have whole-hearted conviction and wonderful memories again until the center of our religion turns to Christ, the Bible and our relationships with all the other believers we know. That means our religion must no longer be centered around a particular human church organization that makes claims about itself that it cannot prove.

Why are so many still so blind to all of this? Because they and their leaders do not want to do this hard and painful work of evaluation and, in their own minds, "risk" so much. It is so much easier to label publications like *The Journal, News of the Churches of God* or *Servants' News* as "heresy"—without even reading what they say. It is easy to dismiss Likeminds and other Internet forums as "gossip" without seeing the many sincere and truthful statements there. Most COG leaders simply do not want their congregations to know about past or present problems in the Churches of God. But God will bring all of these things into judgment. The good, the bad, those who attack the good, and those who defend the bad.

—Pam Dewey

"Significant Passover" from page 1

My husband, George, and I left Michigan in the morning and drove to Louisville, meeting Richard and Tarcila Fox at a motel and heading for the Kentucky Women's Prison after dinner. We were to visit with the Foxes' friend Debra Rogers, a prison inmate who had been a longtime WCG member, to observe the Memorial of our Savior's last night. Arrangements for the evening were made through the prison chaplain and approved months ago, and we had strict instructions on what we could bring in:

- 3 wash basins and towels (not sure why 3—5 participated)
- Bibles
- matzos & grape juice
- a guitar and some song books
- picture ID for each person
- car keys for the driver.

That was it; nothing else—not even a ball point pen.

When we arrived at the guard house about 7:30, there were several minutes of tension after the guard insisted no one had informed **him** of our permission. And the chaplain had gone home, so he could not verify it. I guess they finally decided to call the chaplain at home. Eventually, the guard verified our "right to be there," and, after confiscating all of our IDs and trading them for visitor passes to clip on our clothing, he sent a signal to the imposing, barbwire-topped gate to open, and pointed us to the chapel.

A guard met us there to let us in, and then we heard them page Debra over the loudspeaker system throughout the complex. He also paged **another** person named Glenda whom we did not know! It turned out the chaplain had informed Debra some time ago that another woman lodged in a different part of the prison was "of the same faith" and asked if she wanted contact. Debra said, "Sure!" but the other woman had never expressed interest in getting together for even a weekly Sabbath.

But Glenda had been informed about our plans, and evidently had decided to take up the offer. What a poignant situation. She had not taken part in such a service since **1973** in the WCG! We never did ask her how long she had been in prison, but I doubt that it had been since 1973—I'm assuming she may have left the church way back then over personal problems.

She was obviously emotionally touched by the whole service, but at the

continued from previous page

end of the service, when we sang "Amazing Grace" she broke down and cried openly.

Debra was obviously thrilled to have us there. She has been in prison for six years, and hasn't had anyone come for Holy Days and such in all that time. We sat around in a circle informally, and took turns reading various applicable scriptures, interspersing the various symbolic acts with praise and worship songs accompanied by Richard on the guitar, starting with a lovely piece called *White as Snow*:

*White as snow, white as snow
Though my sins were as scarlet
Lord I know, Lord I know
That I'm clean and forgiven
Through the power of your blood
Through the wonder of your love
Through faith in you I know that I can be
White as snow*

The only shortcoming was the short time. We had hoped to have an extended time to talk after the service, but just as we finished a guard came in and nagged us about the time. George somehow managed to "gently persuade" her for ten more minutes—and she didn't come back again for almost a half hour. It was a tearful departure, but I'm sure the experience was deeply meaningful for all involved.

It certainly taught me that the **incredible** privilege most of us have to decide to celebrate this special time of the year "any way we choose" should never be taken for granted! 

Were they really guilty?

That is the question that people so often ask about prison cases. Obviously, only God knows what each of us are guilty of, and what we have repented of. Most people in prison will tell you that they are not guilty. Some are, some are not—but it is hard to know when you are hearing only one side of the story (Prv 18:17). The founders of our country tried to provide a way so important human decisions—like who goes to prison—could be made by a fair jury after they heard both sides of the story. If you or I want to determine if somebody is "really guilty", maybe we should consider jury duty. I have never done it—but I am rethinking what I believe. How many people are in or out of prison who should not be *because* I failed to do my part in rendering just judgments? Or is jury duty just better left to the unconverted? —NSE

"Missing Point of U.B." from page 1 the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses for whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel (Ex 12:8,15).

In the first month on the 14th day of the month at even **you shall eat unleavened bread** until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses for whosoever eats that which is leavened even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger or born in the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall **you eat unleavened bread** (Ex 12:18-20).

Seven days **you shall eat unleavened bread** and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall be no leavened bread be seen with you, neither shall there be leaven seen with you in all your quarters (Ex 13:6-7).

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord; **seven days you must eat unleavened bread** (Lev 23:6).

Some years ago, the Worldwide Church of God began to say that you don't have to eat unleavened bread every day during that seven day period. Now, I believe they say its no longer required but you can do it if you want.

Yet God clearly says, as we have just seen from his word you shall eat unleavened bread and in the case of Lev 23:6 you must eat it.

God's Holy Days show God's plan—that God is expanding his family, that we are his children, and that we shall be like Him (1Jn 3:2).

Let's ask a question, which of the holy days show the process by which God is doing this, under the new covenant and therefore more applicable to us today than we may have realized?

For finding fault with them he said, behold the days come says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and write them

in their hearts; and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people (Heb 8:8,10).

God has clearly placed his emphasis on the eating of unleavened bread, not deleavening. Many Jews regard unleavened bread as the bread of affliction. To Christians, it is Christ's body, a type of the bread of life.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life...." (John 6:35).

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.... Then said Jesus unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat of the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood you have no life in you.... He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so he who eats me even he shall live by me. (John 6:51,53,56-57).

It is my belief that the seven Days of Unleavened Bread picture the complete process of becoming spiritually "deleavened". It is a physical exercise which depicts a spiritual process, which must go on for the rest of our lives once we have accepted Christ as our Savior and Passover.

When Christ died, his blood was shed for all. It meant the penalty for sin was paid, i.e. death.

But that of itself does not change us. **What changes us, is the process of allowing Christ to live in us.** He is the true unleavened bread from heaven. These seven days of unleavened bread picture that process. Eventually, when we are changed to be immortal, we will be totally unleavened as Christ is.

People who say we do not need to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, are missing these vital lessons important to salvation. Those who place the emphasis on deleavening instead of on the eating of unleavened bread are focusing on "what people do", not on "what Christ does".

Once the emphasis is correct on the physical aspect of eating unleavened bread, we find our whole attitude will change towards these days. Not only will we be balanced about deleavening, but we will enjoy eating unleavened bread because of its spiritual implications which are a must for every Christian. 

"Passover 2000" from page 1 made, and her approach to life was altered because of my well-intended, but unthinking two-minute evaluation.

Was that a sin?

Yes. Without question. I apologized and asked her forgiveness upon hearing her story. I did not seek to do evil, but I did not ask the Eternal to give me His words for that evaluation. I was more concerned with "sounding impressive" than I was in helping someone who needed encouragement.

So what does this have to do with "Church of God groups"?

As I thought I was doing the "right thing" in my evaluation, so most WCG members thought they were doing the "right thing" for many years. They proudly defended their organization as the "One True Church". Leaders were followed and honored no matter what problems their sins and errors may have caused. As I never cared what happened to that first-time speaker, WCG members rarely cared about the "disfellowshipped" who often just "disappeared".

For years after that evaluation, I had an "important job" in the computer department of the WCG. Similarly, many people in the WCG went on to do their "important work", often unknowing and uncaring about offense to new believers. Nobody remembers the person who struggled for three years to overcome fornication so he could attend the WCG, only to find out that a minister's son was regularly fornicating and was still allowed to attend. Nobody took responsibility for this man giving up on God and the Bible for many years due to such hypocrisy. But there were a number of people who knew about the hypocrisy—and could have done something about it.

I, Norman Edwards, remember regarding hundreds of people as "unconverted" because they were not in my church organization. I remember refusing to talk to people because they were "disfellowshipped". I remember refusing to discuss the Bible with seriously interested people, telling them they could write to my "headquarters" if they wanted to learn. I remember refusing to help people who knew I believed in the Bible and who were in legitimate need, because I was giving my money to the more important "Work." How many people did I "turn off" from seeking God? How many people did I help to convince that Sabbath-

keepers were self-righteous and not worth learning from? How much did I help others to do these same things on a larger scale by working for the WCG and GCG?

There is no doubt that a lot of good was accomplished by those organizations—and at least a little good accomplished by me personally. Similarly, a lot of other speakers were helped by my evaluations. I received the "most helpful evaluator" cup several times. But all of this "good" did nothing for the one new speaker who never gave another speech. I have no way of knowing how many other people I may have similarly affected. How many did not recover? How many, for some period of time, rejected God, the Sabbath, or the Holy Days because of me?

How about you?

How many people heard you say that you were a member of "God's One True Church"? How many of those same people knew about serious sin or errors in the WCG and either rejected the Bible or the truth the WCG taught because of it? Is their knowledge of the sins and errors the problem? Does God need to hide the truth—maybe tell a few good lies—to bring people into His Kingdom? I hope you are saying, "No!"

But we must realize many thousands of people who were considering WCG membership studied doctrines, such as hierarchical government, in the Bible and found many scriptures that disagreed with the WCG teaching. Similarly, some heard stories of sins and abuse that were against the Bible definition of a "minister"—and were dumfounded when WCG leaders refused to even talk about such problems.

How often did you justify Herbert Armstrong's expensive life style to other people as being "necessary to go before kings"? Yet almost anyone who has been to Sunday school knows that Christ and Paul went before kings without wealth—as prisoners. What do those people think of our ways and of our "Bible knowledge"?

I have said these things. I cannot recall all of the people to whom I said them. But God has not forgotten. And, like the freshman speaker I evaluated, many of the people have not forgotten.

Understand the Error

If it is still hard to grasp that someone could have been severely hurt by

the WCG, think about this:

1. During the 1990's, you almost certainly lost some friends because you were disfellowshipped from their church organization or because they were disfellowshipped from yours. (Simply quitting an organization can have an effect similar to disfellowshippment.) You know what it can be like to suddenly lose long-time friends because somebody else made a decision.

2. Think about what it would be like to lose nearly all of your church friends at once in this manner. It can take sometimes 10 years to recover.

3. Now think about the people you know to whom this actually happened. As groups began to split off from the WCG in the 1990s, I was amazed at the number of people who began attending who had been disfellowshipped from the WCG in the 70s or 80s—many, apparently, for unjust reasons. If you have visited a few groups, you probably have met someone like this.

4. Now think about the many people who were unjustly disfellowshipped or offended, and never returned to a "Church of God" group.

Who is responsible for the people who were offended and left? We all have excuses: I was just a member who could not change anything; I was just a minister following orders; I was just a Church Administration employee following orders; I was a Pastor General too busy doing "the Work" to know what was happening in local congregations. Christ will ultimately judge, but there is probably something that everyone could have done. He will not accept these excuses.

Following Christ is not a process of patting ourselves on the back for the good things we do, and ignoring sins that are hard to think about, hard to see, and only hurting people whom we do not know. Christ said:

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48).

We must also realize that once we understand what we should be doing, we are responsible to do it:

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (Jms 4:17).

So many people seem to want to go back to the "good old days" of the WCG. They seem content to "coast into the Kingdom" on the merits of those days,

and are very little interested in righting any wrongs that Christ has now made clear. But if we are sinning now—failing to repent and correct error we now recognize—then the good we have done in the past will not “make up for it”:

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abomination that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die (Ezk 18:24).

I am thankful that the Eternal has shown me my sin in that 1977 speech evaluation. I am thankful that He has shown me my errors of idolatry—giving honor and allegiance to church organizations and leaders when it really belonged to Christ. Those were sins in ignorance at the time—I did not know any better way. **But I know a better way now.**

I believe that the Eternal has allowed the WCG to split up to show us what we were like all along. WCG leaders usually kept internal fighting and sins quiet—not telling the members and disfellowshipping anyone who talked about it too much. Now, when we are split up among many organizations, leaders do not hide the truth about each other. We see the way it is—and was.

Having spent so much time in the WCG, it was initially very hard for me to grasp how to worship and serve the Eternal outside of that environment. So has it been—and still is—for many others. But the many organizations that have split off from the WCG—even though they may still teach hierarchical government—have each helped people leave the WCG and the one-man rule system. Each person who leaves the WCG for another group proves that Christ expects individuals to choose the leaders and congregations with which they will fellowship.

I believe that all of the WCG split-off groups are serving a purpose—though some probably better than others. Most formed to serve a specific need—with much joy and rapid growth. But unless they continue to be willing to seek Christ and change, that joy and growth usually stops. Now, many groups’ evangelism efforts do not replace the numbers of their members that are leaving or dying.

It is possible that a few thousand dollars spent by Tom Justus to reprint an old Sabbath book read by a couple of independent Sunday congregations has produced more new Sabbath-keepers than the millions of dollars spent by some hierarchical group’s evangelism programs. Now, someone may argue that these new independent Sabbath-keepers “don’t count” because they did not join Tom Justus’ “work”. But that is exactly the point that we need to learn: **Is evangelism teaching people to “follow us”, or to learn truth and to follow Christ?** Can we trust Christ to work with the groups that learn *some* truth from us? Or must they follow us—accepting **all** of our truth, our methods and our error?

We have included a number of articles in this issue on various WCG split-offs—listing some of their strengths and weaknesses. The purpose is not to condemn them, but to help those in the groups see how they look to others, and to help all of us overcome our difficulties. Many are tired of church organization issues and would rather not read or think about them any more. I feel that way some times. But ignoring the problems and hoping they will go away will not solve them. **If you have a friend who might benefit by an article or even a page of this issue, please copy it and give it to them.**

It Is Never Too Late

As long as we are alive, it is never too late to see our sin and repent. The Passover is a time when we think about people we may have offended and make peace with them. Indeed, Christ instructed that making peace with our brother is more important than “doing work for God”:

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matt 5:23-24).

If we know we have personally sinned against someone, it is good to ask for forgiveness and make the situation right if possible. But it is also good to think about people—like the first-time speaker that I evaluated—whom we may have offended and forgotten about. During this Passover and the days of unleavened bread, I encourage

you to think about possible sins in the following areas, repent if you have some, and ask Christ to give you a new heart so they will not be repeated:

1) If we attend with a church organization, we need to stop viewing it as “the group with the truth that is going to get us into the place of safety and the kingdom”. It is a place to grow, serve others and help preach the gospel. We should not look down on people who attend other groups or home fellowships.

2) If we do not attend with a church organization, we need to be patient, kind and loving to those who do. We probably cannot “argue them out”. We should not judge them and say that their reasons for staying are wrong. Some people—even ministers—are remaining in those organizations primarily to help them change or to help brethren see a way out.

3) We need to think about friends and relatives that we have needlessly offended in the past because of our religion. Did we justify some unbiblical practice or teaching to them simply because it was taught by the WCG? What do they now think of the Bible, the Sabbath, etc. because of us?

4) Did we reject people because the WCG told us to do it, even though we did not know why?

5) Do we avoid mentioning the Eternal, Christ, the Bible or the Sabbath because the WCG taught us to do so? We should not be obnoxious to others. But, if someone asks us to do something that is against what we understand the Bible to teach, do we identify our Master to them, or do we just say, “I’d rather not do that.”

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven (Matt 10:32-33).

Let us think about these points and judge ourselves now. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1Cor 11:31). If you have not read the last issue on “Eternal Judgment”, please do so. We need to see which “talents” Christ has given us and set about using them! We cannot sit and glory in the good of the past, nor can we live on, repeating the error. Christ has enough love and mercy to forgive any sin, but we must ask for it (1Jn 1:9).
—Norman Edwards

Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a **Complete Literature List**.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

New Items Available for the First Time:

Basic Literature:

Are You Ready for Rome's Challenge? edited by Alan Ruth, 20 pages. Covers articles from the Catholic Mirror showing the Bible does **not** teach Sunday Worship, but the Catholic Church commands it.

Mature Literature

Ambassador Report Index by Byron Sanders. Gives a brief description of the content of each of the 69 Ambassador Report issues. A sometimes helpful reference tool when questions arise about the past.

Lessons from Gideon by Kathy Puliafico, 10 pages. Historical background of Gideon with lessons derived for our time.

Get your updated Scattered Brethren Contact List!

We have just produced a completely new version reflecting hundreds of new subscribers. If you have requested it before, you may want to request it again! The list contains all the cities where our subscribers live. You decide which cities are near enough to you that you might want to establish a friendship. You can then write as many cards or letters as will be required for the number of people in the cities of your interest. You send them to *Servants' News*, and we forward them to the people. This allows them to receive your correspondence without us giving away anyone's name and address. Most brethren respond to a sincere letter. Happy friendships!

Items Just Announced In the Previous Issue:

Basic Literature:

Barnabas Bookmark Bunch by Alan Ruth, 3 bookmarks. Three 2-sided bookmarks covering Bible basics, Plan of Salvation & Words of Comfort, and World Wide Web resources. Excellent to keep, carry or give away.

Easter...Is It Christian? edited by Tom Justus. What do rabbits laying colored eggs have to do with the Resurrection of Christ?

What Kind of Faith is Required for Salvation? edited by Tom Justus, 10 pages. Explains faith vs. works issues of salvation.

Where Did Halloween Come From? edited by Tom Justus. Did you know Halloween was celebrated by pagans centuries before the New Testament church was founded?

Study Resources and Information:

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

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

Mature Literature:

200 Years of Sabbath-keeping in Australia by Bruce Dean, 8 pages. Shows many Sabbatarian groups in Australia.

God vs. Evolution Y2K by Rabon Vincent Jr., 214 pages. This book contains 21 chapters and 13 appendices on widely varying topics including evolution, Bible chronology, the calendar and British Israelism. Has some unique ideas.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Rich-

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

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of "Church of God" history.

Study Resources and Information Freedom Biblical Information Center

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

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

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

Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages.

Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index, 36 pages.

Servants' News, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107
tel: 517-625-7480, fax: 517-625-7481, e-mail: Info@ServantsNews.com
International brethren will receive literature more quickly by writing or e-mailing the nearest address on page 2.