

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 2 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be Mar/Apr 2000

The Love of God

By John Eastman

This is an article about how great and complete God's love is for us, and how we need to break away from the physical things of this Earth in order to really know God and understand His love for us. My goal is to give the reader the vision to see God's awesome love for us and realize that God is more important than every physical thing that exists.

Sometimes we make the physical life the most important thing. In fact, the entire physical life from birth to death is none other than growth and preparation towards life ever after with God, and within God, for all eternity. Someday physical life as we know it will not exist, and our challenge as Christians is to realize that the physical life is just a temporary bridge to cross over and fulfill our destiny as the spiritual children of God Almighty. Someday we will pass from a physical existence to a spiritual realm where life is eternal and filled with God's love.

There are so many examples in the

Bible of men and women who gave up everything physical for their relationship with God. Certainly these Christians wrestled with the physical things of this world every day of their lives, but at the end of each heroic story they gave it all up for God. What was it they found in God and nowhere else in this physical world? Job, who was put through trials of every sort, lost everything he owned, endured all manner of sickness, was attacked by his wife and friends, simply summarized the "whole of his existence" in Job 13:15, "Although You slay me, I'll always hope in You." Another example is in Rev 12:11, where the Bible says those who overcame the physical things of the world "did not love their lives to death".

How did Job and these Christians in Revelation have such a fervent love for God when faced with their own personal trials of death? What motivated them to see beyond their own physical existence

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The 40-page *Eternal Judgment* appendices are finished but have yet to be proofread and printed. In order not to delay this issue any further, **Shelter in the Word** and the *Eternal Judgment* appendices will be included with the next issue.

Feast of Tabernacles Sites 2000

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

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Are We Living in the "Last Days"?

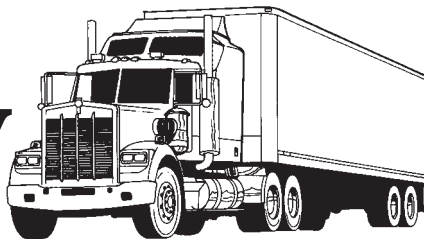
The expressions "last days" and "latter days" are found 19 times in the King James Bible—mostly in the Old Testament. According to the Bible, when are these days? Are they the last few years before Christ returns? Are they some specifically prophesied dates? Or could they refer to multiple events occurring after the "last days" prophecy was uttered?

It is easy to say: "Our world is a terrible place. These 'last days' prophecies must apply to us right now." But do the many Bible preachers who teach it, or the millions of Christians who believe it, make it true? The first time I, Norman Edwards, met a WCG minister, was in 1971 when I was 14—my older brother was applying to Ambassador College. I remember the minister telling us that we were living in the "last days" and that our world was going to collapse in only a few years. He

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Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#41-47



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.

February 27, 2000:

Maybe my age is showing, as I'm having trouble remembering everything that happened today. I will tell you that we ran into all kinds of people, and I wish there had been more time to talk to one fellow. He had a colorful background to say the least, which included associations with the Hell's Angels, drug-running both in the US and internationally, and illegal production of controlled substances, not to mention personal abuse of such substances. He mentioned some of the types of people with whom he used to associate, and many of them were perpetrators of some nasty crimes. He was also an enforcer for the teamsters union, and he was not anxious to discuss some of the things he was involved in there. For ten years he has been clean due to an association with Alcoholics Anonymous, and through them also developed an interest in seeking the help of a higher power.

He desires now to be baptized, and we have access to a facility on rather short notice through the Church of God Seventh Day, where Arlo attends. However, we needed several hours lead-time and the trucker wasn't able to wait that long. From what I can tell from the scriptures, there would be nothing wrong with baptizing someone who is seeking that ordinance even on such short notice as long as they understand the seriousness of the step.

In light of the trucker's desire to be baptized, we spent some time reviewing Romans 6 and the meaning behind one's baptism in a watery grave and the symbolic resurrection to a newness of life. He seemed to be quite taken with verses 11-14:

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

I found his reactions to certain topics quite enlightening. When talking about substance abuse, he would nearly come out of his chair with energy, so adamant was he about the evils of such. If I understood him correctly, he speaks on occasion to Alcoholics Anonymous and strongly supports a zero tolerance policy toward all such substances, including alcohol and tobacco. This is from someone who lived it and profited from it. His demeanor brought to mind a recent taped sermon that theorizes about the personality of the end-time Elijah. Here was a tough-minded, plain spoken, motorcycling, leather-clad individual who would tell it straight without compromise and without regard to who was listening.

We were joined later in the study by a second trucker. I am not at all amazed at the absolute loathing that many have of the goings-on in Washington, nor am I surprised at the level of concern that many have regarding the future of this country. The future of the nation and the sell-out of American national security interests is nothing to take lightly. This we used as a springboard to remind the truckers (or perhaps tell them for the first time) that Jesus Christ is coming back to take over the govern-

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

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

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

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News from Local Congregations



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

Barnabas Ministries Hires Church Brethren to Expand Web Site

Barnabas Ministries (website at www.biblestudy.org) announced in March that it has hired several people to research and collect materials on the Internet. These materials will expand the Web site and enhance its ability to serve and preach the gospel to the world.

Five people, four who are in the church of God and one who is a friend of Webmaster Alan Ruth, have begun research on three different topics. Mr. Ruth's friend and June Narber Harrison have been gathering data for a new section on the Creation vs. Evolution argument. Janet Treadway and Lorraine "Toni" Ellis are assembling audio and written information about home schooling. Calvin Lashway is collecting uplifting, encouraging and inspiring materials for a section that will be called *God's Comfort*. Church of God brethren from other groups and fellowships will additionally create or collect needed aids for the site.

These researchers responded to an ad sent by Barnabas Ministries to various church of God e-mail forums and one placed on Ron Dart's *CEM and Friends* forum. Each person hired is paid \$500 for 70 hours of work.

"I've known for a long time that the 'unordained' have a tremendously wide variety of untapped talents and abilities," Mr. Ruth stated. "Our belief in a stifling, hierarchical church government philosophy has kept most brethren from a dynamic, active participation in the gospel. It's exciting to see fellow Christians discover, broaden and contribute their God-given gifts to serve others. I am thankful to be able to play a

part in encouraging my brethren."

In the future Mr. Ruth hopes to hire more researchers for the web site. New tentative sections will be on *Teaching Children the Bible*, *Music*, *God's Holy Days*, female Christians and the issues they face (to be titled *The Virtuous Woman*), *Bible Health Principles* and a section with popular church study aids translated into foreign languages.

The Bible Study Web site at www.biblestudy.org was created in 1996 and has become the largest church of God related site on the Internet. More than 15,000 people from around the world visit it monthly. It currently houses more than 200 articles and 150 audio messages/sermons from close to 100 church of God writers and speakers. Specialized sections include *God's Sabbath*, *Bible Maps*, *The Passover*, *Humor* and references to useful web sites. The site also hosts sections with articles from *Your Choice Magazine* and *Giving & Sharing*.

To help with this ministry, contact Barnabas Ministries, PO Box 3393, Farmington Hills, MI 48333, USA; e-mail: webmaster@BibleStudy.org.

Huntsville Alabama Picnic

Attention all former and current Worldwide Church of God members and friends around the **Huntsville Alabama** area!

Friendship Picnic: Sunday, June 25 at Monte Sano State Park just East of Huntsville off HWY 431 South.

Time: 11:00 am. Pot Luck lunch at 1:00 pm. Volleyball, softball, fellowship and fun—absolutely no preaching allowed! Come and renew old friendships!

Call Clyde Thompson for more info

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. ☐

or directions.

Also, so we can know how many to prepare for, please call toll free, 877-643-9802, e-mail csfpastor@juno.com.

Milton Church of God

Milton Church of God held its first meeting on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, with 20 in attendance. This is an interactive fellowship, open to any who are interested in studying the Bible with us. We will be meeting at 1:30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Sabbaths of the month.

The location is the Milton Community Center, 508 19th, Milton, WA 98354.

— Dan and Paula VanderPoel
253-826-0953

e-mail: dpvanderpoel@wa.freei.net
shawnfoster@worldnet.att.net

Churches of God Conference 2000

Don't forget this conference in **Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 28, 29 and 30** at the Sheraton Tulsa Hotel; 10918 E 41st Street; Tulsa, OK 74146; telephone 918-627-5000. A special lower rate of \$69 plus tax for one to four persons per room is available if you mention the **Churches of God Conference 2000**.

The conference will be about discussing the major project of taking the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations through respectful cooperation. The Tulsa Church of God congregation will coordinate the round table discussion and pay for the conference room, fellowship hour beverages and the Sabbath day lunch. There will not be any other fees except your own personal travel, room and meal expense.

If you would like to attend the conference or would like to present an idea on Friday evening for later discussion, please request the appropriate forms from the Tulsa Church of God; PO Box 54621; Tulsa, Oklahoma 74155-0621; telephone 918-622-3448.

I have made arrangements to attend this conference. I do not know what Christ will do at this conference, but He certainly must like to see brethren of different backgrounds coming together in an effort to serve Him better.

— *Norman Edwards*

Sears Makes Deal for Sabbatharians

Rather than face a costly lawsuit, Sears, Roebuck & Co worked out a compromise offer with New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer to allow appliance repair workers to work Sundays instead of Saturdays. "People should not be forced to choose between their faith and supporting their family," Spitzer said on Tuesday, April 4 (according to the Associated Press).

In addition to changing its policy, Sears agreed to pay \$120,000 toward training scholarships for Sabbath-keepers, \$225,000 toward education programs, and \$100,000 to pay for the Attorney General's investigation.

The Attorney General found that Sears' busiest repair day was Tuesday, even though Sears claimed

that it was Saturday.

The Attorney General began his investigation after at least 6 complaints of Sears firing or refusing to hire workers specifically because their religious beliefs caused them to refuse Saturday work. This is a clear case of the work of a few being a benefit to all. Please realize that this is not a law requiring employers give "equal opportunity" to Sabbath-keepers, but a policy change on the part of Sears. Nevertheless, Sabbath-keepers having difficulty obtaining work may find it helpful to mention this situation to potential employers.

I think it is important for Sabbatharians to expect **fair** treatment under the law, not **preferential** treatment. In this case, Sears could reasonably accommodate its employees' religious preferences. But suppose another employer hires part-time people specifically to work weekend jobs. A Sabbatharian might want to work only Sundays (and only be paid for the time he works). However, it may be much more difficult for the employer to hire other people to work "Saturday only" and then to train two instead of one. I see nothing wrong with the employer preferring to hire people who will work both days.

— *Norman Edwards*

HWA Web Site Info

Previous *Servants' News* articles have mentioned the apparent loss of a popular web site for old HWA and WCG writings in "PDF" format. Another site, while not using PDF files, has numerous old out-of-print booklets in HTML format. The address is <http://home.sprynet.com/~pabco/index.htm>

— *Michael F. Wilson*

Ronald Dart in Lexington, Ky

On the Sabbath of June 17th, Ronald Dart will conduct a question and answer session at 10:30 am, followed by a buffet lunch, an inspirational keyboard presentation by Dr. Larry Keenan, and a message from Ron Dart. The meetings will be held at the Holiday Inn South, 5532 Athens/Boonsesboro Rd (exit 104 off I-75). The meeting is sponsored by the

Independent Church of God-Lexington. For more information contact James Hickey; 473 Lakeshore Dr; Lexington, Ky 40502; telephone 606-266-8641.

"Building the Next Church" Conference

After its very successful March women's conference, the IBLC is sponsoring a conference for the whole family entitled "Building the Next Church", **June 30 through July 2** at the Omni Park West Hotel in Dallas. People of all Sabbatarian backgrounds are welcome. The purpose of the conference is to encourage and prepare the ekklesia for the next millennium and to explore ways in which we can preserve the best values of our legacy.

Speakers will include: Dixon Cartwright, George Crow, Ronald Dart, David Havir, John Merritt, Melodee Overton, Alan Ruth, Rodger Sandsmark, Linda White, Wes White and Ray Wooten. Topics will include: the church as family; toxic vs. healthy groups; the Church of God mind-set; fiction vs historical reality; what the church is supposed to do; a realistic perspective on church growth; personal evangelism; the role of women in the next church; conflict resolution for church groups; the coming cyberchurch; and the need for sharing information.

Seminars begin at 7:00 pm on Friday, June 30 and end at 12:30 pm on Sunday. Separate children's and teens' educational programs are planned for the Sabbath—the parents and children being together for worship and meals. An outing to Six Flags Over Texas is planned for those interested on Sunday afternoon.

Lodging at the **Omni Park West** will cost \$69 per room per night for up to four people. It is located at 1590 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, Texas (take exit 28 south at Luna Rd). To get this \$69 rate, mention the "IBLC Building the Next Church" event when you call them at **972-869-4300 before June 9**. The Omni has a heated pool, children's toy check-out, and many other family facilities. Rooms have small refrigerators.

You can complete the following form for attending the conference, which should be sent to the address shown at the end.

IBLC Conference Form:

Name: _____
 Names of spouse or other adults rooming with you:

Names of children 3–11 attending:

Names of youth 12–17:

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Zip: _____

Home phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Are you interested in a July 2 group outing to Six Flags? Yes _____ No _____

Fees for those staying at the Omni:

_____ adults 18 & up x \$60 = _____

_____ children 3–11 x \$25 = _____

_____ youth 12–17 x \$45 = _____

_____ ← **People total. Cost** → _____

The above conference fees include admission, all materials and breakfast, lunch and dinner on Sabbath, July 1. Children under 3 can eat free off their parents' plates.

Conference fees for those not staying at the Omni:

_____ adults 18 & up x \$75 = _____

_____ children/youth x \$50 = _____

_____ ← **People total. Cost** → _____

The above conference fees include admission, and dinner only on Sabbath.

Please send your completed form and a check or money order for your conference fees to IBLC, 4021 Randall Lane, Carrollton TX 75007. For more information, call 877-444-IBLC or 972-492-3305 or e-mail info@iblc.org.

I intend to bring my family to this conference and hope to see some of you there. I think it is important that non-aligned believers work together—realizing that they will not agree on everything until our Savior returns.

— Norman Edwards

Church of God Member Survey

One of the things that the COGs have lacked over the years is good self-analysis. Most of the time, neither members nor ministers have had a firm grasp of what the average member expected from their church as an organization or from their Sabbath services. In 1978, the WCG did engage SRI, a large national consulting firm to survey members, but that information was never shared with the membership and to my knowledge was never applied in any fashion. A subsequent survey was done in the 90s, and it supposedly did have some impact on the guys the Pasadena administration. A third one was conducted in 1995.

As part of the upcoming IBLC Conference “Building the Next Church”, I would like to ask those interested to participate in this little survey. I have already received 60 responses, but several hundred would be better. Please feel free to ask your friends to participate. I would appreciate your honest responses and will share the results with you at a later date. All surveys will be kept confidential—you do not even need to give your name.

Thanks,

— Linda H. White; 4021 Randall Lane, Carrollton, TX 75007.

Which of these factors do you consider important in a church? Please rank each one from 1 to 20, with 1 being most important and 20 being least important. Comparing 20 items to each other can be a difficult task. If it helps, first read the 20 items and place a check in one of the five columns at the left of each item, rating them in one of the five categories, most important through least important. After that, rank all of your “most important items” (if you have five such items, they will be 1 through 5), then all of your “fairly important items” (if you have four, 6–9), then rank the other three columns one at a time. The last number you write should be “20”.

But the only results necessary are the final rank, 1–20. If you do not have a way to copy the survey, multiple people can submit it by simply writing the item letters (A–T) on a piece of paper and putting the ranking numbers (1–20) after.

← **Write numbers 1-20, ranking items by importance**

Least important items: check this column				
Average importance: check this column				
Very important items: check this column				
Most important items: check this column				

- A. how many friends you know who attend that church
- B. the theological beliefs and doctrines of the church
- C. affiliation with a corporate COG
- D. how much you like the pastor
- E. the quality of the sermons that are preached
- F. the length of the sermons
- G. how much the people seem to care about each other
- H. interactive Bible studies
- I. a participative worship service in which people are free to present music, share news, or make prayer requests
- J. how friendly the people in the church are to visitors
- K. how much the church is involved in helping poor and disadvantaged people
- L. the quality of programs and classes for children and youth
- M. the convenience of the times of Sabbath services
- N. an ongoing evangelistic program to reach people in your community or area
- O. the quality of the music in the service
- P. the type of music in the service
- Q. the amount of music included in the service
- R. how far the church is located from your home
- S. how clean and comfortable the meeting facility is
- T. how much the group emphasizes tithing and money

Other factor(s) important to you: _____

Seventh Annual Southern House Church Conference

Steve Atkerson, Les Buford, Dan Trotter, the New Testament Restoration Foundation and *The New Reformation Review* website invite you to consider attending our conference this year. Our theme for the 2000 conference is house church reproduction. The conference will be held from from 6 pm Friday July 28th to 2 pm Sunday 30th at **Oglethorpe College, Atlanta, Georgia**. Our keynote speaker, **Dick Scoggins**, is the Extension Coordinator of the Fellowship of Church Planting Teams, headquartered in Rhode Island, USA. Dick and his fellow laborers are responsible for starting about two dozen churches in the New England area, and have started churches all over the world, including closed Arab countries, and in England, where Dick now resides.

Our seminar speakers include: house church planters who have ministered in Holland, Spain, South America, and Africa; two speakers who will have just returned from ministering to major leaders of the underground house church in China; a brother who is so consumed with starting house churches that he gave up a full time pastorate to wash windows in order to be free to plant house churches; speakers from Spain, England, California, Texas, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. Among these speakers you will find a dentist, small business owners, a high school teacher, an ex-mayor, authors, a college professor, as well as fulltime church planters—people from many different walks of life with a common vision of Jesus Christ and Jesus' church. They're doing it, not just talking about it.

The conference costs \$80 per person if you sign up before Friday, July 7, 2000, \$90 per person afterward. This includes a dormitory room and meals. (If you do not need to stay or eat at the college, other arrangements can be made.) Make checks out to *Southern House Church Conference*. We **promise** we won't take up an offering. Please send your registration as soon as possible, a confirmation will be mailed. For much more information check the web site or contact:

— Les Buford; 351 Chalmers Mountain Rd; Walhalla, SC 29691; 864-638-9306; e-mail: lbuford@innova.net; website: www.geocities.com/dantrotter

Boston Sabbath Invitation!

You are warmly invited to share Sabbath with brethren from the New England area on July 8th, 2000. Our guest speaker will be Norm Edwards from *Servant's News*.

Services will begin at 10:30 a.m. and a Bible Study will begin at 1:30 p.m. Norm will be speaking on "What Is the Eternal Doing Among Us Now?" in the morning and will lead the interactive Bible study in the afternoon. Lunch will be provided.

Services will be held at the Arlington Elks Lodge at 56 Pond Lane in Arlington, MA (25 minutes west of Boston). Everyone is invited to the Rudd's in Somerville for dinner after services.

The Edwards family will be here for the entire weekend, so if you can't make it for services or Bible study, join us for a picnic on George's Island in Boston Harbor (www.bostonislands.com/home.html) on Sunday, July 9th. The Tall Ships (www.sailboston.com) will be sailing into Boston that day, so it should be fun.

For more information, contact:

—James & Jean Rudd, 617-776-4541
<http://www.crosswinds.net/~jarudd/norm>

Help Proofread a Bible Version

Many people believe that the "King James Version" of the Bible was the first translation of the Bible into English, but that is far from the truth. It is called a "version" because it was taken largely from other English translations, it was not a completely fresh translation in itself.

The KJV 'compilers' used a combination of the Bishops' Bible (1568), Tyndale's work, the Thomas Matthew Bible (1537), the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Great Bible (1539) as the base for the KJV. I believe the predominant rule was: follow the Bishops' Bible unless the Hebrew or Greek was in clear disagreement and use other versions only where they provided a clearly superior reading.

The Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Bible were independent revisions of the Great Bible, which, in turn, was a revision of the Thomas Matthew Bible.

Although William Tyndale completed the New Testament translation, he only completed the Pentateuch and Jonah of the Old Testament. Later, his completed work was combined with his unfinished manuscripts of Joshua through 2 Chronicles to produce the Thomas Matthew Bible. It is my understanding that neither the Bishops' Bible nor the Geneva Bible could have been created without the work of Tyndale as a base.

So, essentially the 1611 KJV was a revision of a revision of a revision of a version of Tyndale's work.

I have undertaken the task of producing a new version of the Bible from the Tyndale/King James family. The major goal is to bring it into a more contemporary English. The KJV and even the NKJV still use words and expressions and sayings that are very difficult for many people to relate to or even understand in some cases.

I agree that it is a major undertaking. However, I have been compelled to do it.

While the NIV, NRSV and others make for ease of reading, they often do not speak with the force and authority that we know is in the Scriptures. Translation mistakes of the KJV have been carried over into these translations while correct KJV passages have sometimes been changed or softened.

Even with the accuracy prevalent in the KJV or NKJV, we both know that these translations are far from perfect though the inspired word of God is flawless. Is the translation that I am working on perfect? or will it be? Not likely. However, are not there a few places in the KJV where you know that you could improve the understanding?

[How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans notes numerous places where the King James contains erroneous translations of government-related words. — NSE]

I am very familiar with the KJV. I grew up on it. However, it took me twice the time to read it through as did the NIV or the RSV. I know many readers that use the NIV or others because they are so easy to read. Are they getting the best translation? I don't think so.

I have been working from the KJV as a base. However, I am going through it

verse by verse, line by line. “Ye”, “thou”, “thy”, “thine”, “comest”, “goest”, “hast”, “hadst”, etc. are all being modernized. This part of the project is not at all difficult. I have an excellent knowledge of the modern equivalents of these words. Not everyone does. I think this alone helps many readers more clearly understand a passage. Even the NKJV leaves many, many words un-modernized. Other KJV words are a little more difficult and require a little more effort, i.e. “staves”, “knops”, “lavers”, “emerods”, etc. To make sure that I get the most accurate contemporary word in every case, I have been working with two Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, clear copies of both the MT and RT (with Strong’s numbers attached), numerous translations and a great deal of commentary.

On the more difficult passages I have only modernized the language, unless I believe that I have a clear understanding that may be better than what the KJV

translators used. I would never remove (such as Moffatt) or alter (such as NIV) to fit my ideas. Maybe no one will accept my translation because I am not a linguist. If that happens, so be it. But I do believe that I have a desire to be completely faithful to God’s word.

I have a substantial portion of the Bible completed and (if God is willing) it will be ready for loose-leaf distribution very soon. I am working with two publishers for means of distribution. One will be a CD-ROM version while the other will be traditionally bound. No royalties will be collected by me (or anyone else) in either of these distribution modes. It will be a free translation.

While my family has been reading diligently for clarity and spell checking, I would appreciate additional help. I am looking for people willing to read portions and to help make sure that the translation is as free of careless mistakes as possible. This will also allow for some up-front criticism of the transla-

tion before any distribution takes place.

— Rabon Vincent; 324 W Albion St; Avilla, IN 46710; 219-897-4148; e-mail: rvincent@americansilicones.com

[Bible translation suffers from three major problems: 1) Theological bias on the part of the translators—this is especially true when a translation is sponsored by some Church group with a pre-defined creed, 2) Translators that do not fully believe in God—they tend to minimize the supernatural, and 3) lack of technical language skills. In most cases, those who have the best technical skills have spent the most years in either religious or secular schooling and are most likely to have problems 1 and 2. The fact that Rabon 1) believes in God, 2) is not writing to please any organization and 3) is willing to let his translation be freely spread makes it valuable. I hope people who can help him will volunteer — NSE.]

Understanding Daniel 2

By Jim Sorenson (with some editing by Norman Edwards)

Daniel 2 is the account of a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who was responsible for the captivity of the Jewish people for 70 years. It is a dream, prophetic of future events, given by God to Nebuchadnezzar, but it required a man of God to interpret it to him. This dream was then explained by Daniel.

The dream consisted of a statue, the head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet part of iron and part of clay. Then a stone smashed the image on the feet and destroyed it. After that the stone became a great mountain.

Daniel explained most of the dream. He tells Nebuchadnezzar that he and the Babylonian kingdom were the head of gold. His kingdom was going to end and be replaced by another kingdom of silver that would be inferior to his. That would be replaced by a third kingdom of brass which would rule over all the earth. This would be followed by a fourth kingdom of iron. Then Daniel explains that the feet of iron and clay and the whole statue were going to be

destroyed by God and another kingdom was going to be established by God and it would never be destroyed.

This is, in fact, the history of the western world. The kingdom of gold, Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, was in fact taken by the dual kingdom of the Medes and Persians, which (represented by the silver and the two arms). The Persian empire was later taken from Greece by Alexander the Great, who is represented by the brass. Then finally Rome, the iron, came on the scene and took over and subdued the “brass” empire of the Greeks.

The common teaching is that there were to be only four world-ruling empires in the history of the world and in the end time the iron empire will be revived in the form of ten nations from Europe who will form the ten toes of iron and clay. In the time of these ten kingdoms, God will destroy them and set up the Kingdom of God.

The historical part of this teaching as far as it goes is correct. But the understanding that explains the iron and clay of the ten toes and the setting up of the Kingdom of God may not be correct.

There are other alternatives to the common understanding of Daniel 2. One is in the translation of the word *ara* (Strong’s #772). This word is the Chaldean equivalent of the Hebrew word *erets* (Strong’s #776) which is translated “**earth**” 712 times in the KJV, but as “**land**” 1,543 times. About half those times, it means “**the land of Israel**”. Yet in Daniel 2:35, 39 it is translated as “**the earth**”. Thus, in common interpretation, we have four “world-ruling” empires:

- The 1st kingdom, the head of gold, was Babylon.
- The 2nd kingdom, the silver, was the Medes and the Persians.
- The 3rd kingdom, the brass, was the Greek Empire.
- The 4th kingdom, the iron, was and is the Roman Empire.

Did the translators pick the right word here? These kingdoms did not rule “the whole world”. If you have any doubt, ask a Chinese person who knows a little bit about his history. We cannot say that these millions of people and their exten-

Continued on page 40

Why Ambassador Report on the Net?

Our last issue mentioned a website for the *Ambassador Report* Index. That site has now moved to:
<http://absolute.inetworld.net/birone/arindex.html>

Some complete issues are already available on the Internet. The scanning process takes a while—more issues will be available as they are scanned:
<http://homepage.altavista.com/AmbassadorReport/files/Home.html>

As we mentioned in our last issue (Jan/Feb 2000, p. 15), the attitude of *Ambassador Report* can be quite negative at times, and some of the writing is based on the testimony of one witness. But there are many provable facts and sincere letters from brethren. We know of precious few cases where someone has refuted an *Ambassador Report* article, showing it to be wrong. The scripture says “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses” (1Tim 5:19). The combined statements of the 71 *Ambassador Report* issues record hundreds of witnesses against many “elders” in the Worldwide Church of God. In nearly all cases, no public refutation has been made. (If you know about any refutation of any *Ambassador Report* article, please contact *Servants' News*.)

For those interested in a little more history of *Ambassador Report*, one has to understand the conditions in the Worldwide Church of God in the mid-1970s. The church once had a book called *1975 in Prophecy* and ministers frequently talked about fleeing from the Great Tribulation in 1972 and the return of Christ in 1975. Many members **believed** this was inspired by God. Even as late as September 1970, Herbert Armstrong was still writing to the co-workers, telling them it was a definite possibility:

I certainly cannot set dates for the much talked of “end of the world”—which means end of the present age, and begin-

ning of the peaceful World Tomorrow. But I have said there are some indications of the possibility of the final world crisis beginning early in January, 1972—just a year and three months from now. Actually events of the last few days could be leading into a chain reaction of events that would threaten immediate world war. Such a war could—except for supernatural intervention by the “unseen Hand from someplace” probably would—blast all human life off the earth.

I must tell you, dear friends and Co-Workers, these are SERIOUS times, and it IS far later than people think! I cannot know what shall have happened between now and the time you will read this letter—about a week from now. I will send it to our Headquarters office in Pasadena, California, and it will be mailed to you from there. Possibly my son, Garner Ted, may add a little to bring events up-to-date before it is mailed from Pasadena.

But here is what COULD happen—as

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we have been saying for two or three months now. Syria and Iraq could invade Jordan, Syria could take over the northern part of Jordan. The Iraqis take over the central part. King Hussein could be assassinated any hour now. The Israelis would then be compelled to take over the southern portion of Jordan.

A day or two ago, the United States fleet in the Mediterranean moved quickly to the eastern Mediterranean, ready to fly large numbers of Marines, probably para-

chute troops, into Jordan. The guerrillas threaten to kill all Americans, and destroy all American property in Jordan if the U.S. intervenes. Of course the principal reason the U.S. forces have moved up close to Jordan is to block the U.S.S.R. from moving in, as well as to be poised for any emergency. Meanwhile the Israeli forces are on instant alert as of September 23.

This is a serious world crisis. It could EXPLODE into a world war at any moment.

Many people remained in the WCG, as it promised its members a “place of safety” during the Great Tribulation. But when those events did not take place by the mid-70s, a lot of unrest developed among the WCG ministry and some of the student body at Pasadena Headquarters. Many, many very disturbing doctrinal, policy and organizational problems had been left to fester for years. Reports of sexual improprieties by Garner Ted Armstrong were regularly swept under the carpet—even by Herbert Armstrong himself. Grumblings about financial excesses in the forms of extravagant housing and perks, almost bottomless expense accounts, and many other such issues were also ignored by those with the power to make changes.

Thus, in 1976, a group of current and former *Ambassador* College students got together and created the first *Ambassador Review*, an independent full-length magazine full of investigative reports of problems in the church and college. The contents of the first issue, published in June 1976, were hard-hitting and in some cases explosive. While its tone was bitter, it was not just a “scandal sheet” full of rumor and innuendo, but an exposé of many serious problems full of solid documentation. There were immediate repercussions for any thought to be involved. The AC administration literally censored the magazine from being delivered to student mailboxes on campus at first. When

some students reported this to the US Postal Service (such censorship was totally illegal) the administration put in place "Plan B" which required students to give written permission for college authorities to censor their mail!

Church members were warned to not even peek at the contents of this "dissident literature" as it was branded. They were told that it was just the lying rantings of evil people inspired by Satan to attempt to destroy the church. (That, in itself, was probably a lie.) On a more truthful note, members were also told that "most people who read *Ambassador Review* ended up leaving the church" (meaning the WCG). The question most members never asked was: did these people leave the WCG because of the lies they read or because of the truth of what they read?

Nevertheless, the WCG was quick to warn people: "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first..." (2Thes 2:3). If members would have only kept reading, they would have seen: "and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2Thes 2:3-4). John Trechak clearly never claimed to be God—never even started a "church". He was not the "man of sin" and this verse clearly did not apply.

The editorial staff of the first *Ambassador Review* had made it clear that their goal was **not** to destroy the institution, but to call for much-needed reforms. They were, as you can imagine, totally ignored. It was "business as usual" at Pasadena.

So in 1977, the magazine was renamed *Ambassador Report*, and an even harder-hitting issue was published. This time around, it became more and more obvious that **no** meaningful institutional change was to be forthcoming. Publication, in newsletter format rather than magazine style, continued from that time up to the death of the founder, John Trechak, in 1999. As time went on, the emphasis shifted from attempting to reform from the inside, to exposing the continued folly. Although there is no question that the content continued to be, at times, cynical and sarcastic, most

of the issues were real and fairly well researched. The WCG leaders continually implied that it was, indeed, just a *National Enquirer*-style publication that dealt in lies and half-truths, and used that as their excuse for never refuting anything in its pages. The several attempts made by *Servants' News* staff to verify *Ambassador Report* facts have shown them to be correct. During the most crucial times of distress in the WCG, including the departure of GTA in 1978, the Receivership in 1979 and

Many who left the WCG only in the "apostasy" days of 1990-95 have had no clue that there were big problems in the organization for decades before that

HWA's lingering divorce proceedings starting in 1982, **much** of what they printed was actual documentation from official sources such as newspaper reports, trial transcripts, intra-organization memos, and so on.

Thus the *Ambassador Report* became for many the "Underground Free Press" of those who had roots in the WCG. And the archival copies are still the most useful source for "on the spot" reports about what it was like for those who were disfellowshipped from the WCG during its "good old days". If you had been a WCG member for many years, you probably know of some member(s) who were diligent to serve, then one day were quietly disfellowshipped. The old *Ambassador Report* issues explain *why* so many were disfellowshipped, not for sin, but simply for asking the "wrong questions" or knowing the "wrong things".

Many who left the WCG only in the "apostasy" days of 1990-95 have had no clue that there were **big** problems in the organization for decades before that. The problems, in their own way, were just as serious as those created by the Tkaches. Both were perpetuated by the erroneous teaching that "God corrects the leaders from the top" (Revelation 2:2). There are many other verses showing that God expects people to reject bad leaders). The very first issue of

Ambassador Review in June 1976 included a list of 5 evangelists, 3 regional directors, 14 pastors, 28 preaching elders, 31 local elders, 17 AC faculty members, 11 television staff employees, 38 editorial department employees and 20 more assorted personnel who had left the organization in disgust just since 1973. The exodus picked up steam from there, and eventually included **many** thousands of regular church members, too. (George and Pam Dewey left in late 1978—officially marked and disfellowshipped in January 1979, two days before the Receivership was imposed.)

The exodus did not slow down until several years later, in the early 1980s. By then, most of the people who both **1)** had access to disturbing information and **2)** were willing to do something about it, had already been purged. The "grape vine" of information had been mostly cut off at the root. Many new folks were coming along from the media efforts who just had no idea of the troubled past.

On the *Ambassador Report* site (<http://homepage.altavista.com/AmbassadorReport/files/Home.html>) you can read the nine page introductory letter that was sent out in early 1976, a few months before the publication of the first issue, including an open letter to GTA, who was vice-chairman of AC at the time. It outlines the avowed purposes of the group of people initially involved in producing the AR. After that, you can see the full text and pictures of the first two magazine-style issues from 76 and 77. And then move forward over the years.

It is **not** a pretty picture that you will see, so we are not specifically "recommending" that anyone read it. It can be a bit overwhelming to suddenly take in **so** many unpleasant revelations at once if one has been mostly shielded from any such facts about the folly that went on for so long. However, it may have value for those who honestly want to understand the past so they can avoid repeating it and help others who may be attempting to repeat it. And there are **many** who have not publicly acknowledged and repented of those sins of the past, but seem to still be trying to identify their "work" with the former WCG—truth, error, sin and all. ☞

— Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

The Creation Origin of the Festivals

As brethren and leaders in the various Church of God groups pray and seek unity in the Body of Christ, we often fail to think outside of our own familiar surroundings. Is Christ interested in unity only among former-WCG members? Or is he interested in unity among all those who have His spirit and obey Him? The following article was written by Sydney Davis, a former Seventh Day Adventist—who now keeps the holy days as well as the Sabbath, clean meats, and most other “Church of God” doctrines. This article is interesting both from the teaching it provides, and as a way to look at how WCG members look to other Sabbatharians. — NSE

The teaching of what is known as “New Covenant Theology” championed by Protestant evangelical theologians represents a very real and serious threat to Sabbatarian Christians regardless of denominational affiliation. In recent years the New Covenant Theology teachings of two former Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) theologians have shaken the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) from center to circumference, resulting in that denomination’s giving up the Sabbath truth. Next to the SDA church, the WCG founded by Herbert W. Armstrong was the second largest Christian denomination that observed the Bible Sabbath. The doctrinal considerations brought to view by these former SDA theologians have had a devastating effect upon the WCG Sabbatarian theology which has caused that great body to splinter into many factions with the exodus of many of its membership into various independent Sabbatarian splinter groups and organizations.

Now it seems that “the chickens are coming home to roost” in the SDA denomination. In my home church a fourth generation SDA family (a life-long product of SDA traditional theology, educational and religious institutions through the college level) gave up the Bible Sabbath and left the SDA church to fellowship with a Sunday-keeping Baptist church. This experience is not unique. It is being repeated in the religious experience of individuals, families and SDA churches throughout the North American Division. Some churches have become divided resulting in split memberships forming independent congregational churches and in some cases whole

churches have left the SDA denomination over this Sabbath question. There is even a web-site for former SDAs (formeradventist.com) who have embraced the New Covenant Theology.

Meanwhile SDA church tele-evangelists are advancing the gospel message with the advanced technology of Internet and satellite evangelism, filling the church coffers and pews, the success of which leave her with little concern as to the threats against the Sabbath represented by the New Covenant Theology. Church heresies have come and gone, and leaders think that this, like the others, will just have to run its course. I beg to differ. The very same proof texts presently being used to bring new Sabbatharians into the church will be the very same texts that will take them out, unless we properly address and teach our members how to answer the claims of the New Covenant Theology.

The apostasy from the Sabbath truth we see taking place in the WCG, the SDA church and other Sabbatarian organizations is not a rumor. It is real. Many who embrace the New Covenant Theology are highly intelligent and spiritually mature Christians who have instead of entrusting their soul’s salvation into the care and keeping of church pastors and ministers have rather decided to take personal responsibility for it themselves. These are thinking and thoughtful individuals who treasure their Christian experience as extremely valuable. They are not content to rest their spiritual laurels on church creeds, dogmas and fundamental beliefs, but on the assurance of their salvation in Christ as revealed in the Scripture. They have abandoned Sabbath observance not because of emotional despondency or

disillusionment with the Sabbath or their church, but to become better Christians. Or, as they might say, Christians freed from the Judaizing legalism represented by the Sabbath of the Sinaitic covenant that has been abolished and “nailed to the cross”.

The Sabbath once again is being attacked from within but the nature of this inside attack is unlike the blatant anti-Semitism within the early church as seen in the matter concerning the Quartodeciman Passover (14 Abib) controversy in 325 AD.

At that time Constantine denounced the Jewish calendar and substituted Easter (Sunday) for the Passover (Abib 14). This resulted in the institutionalizing of the yearly observance of the traditional “Lord’s Day”—the resurrection of “Christ the firstfruits” (1Cor 15:23) long typified by the day on which the first-fruit offering occurred “on the morrow after the Sabbath” during the Passover (Lev 23:11, 15), to a weekly observance of that event—from an annual “Lord’s day” to a “weekly” Sunday. The first attack was clearly for reasons having to do with hatred for anything “Jewish”, particularly the Jewish calendar (on which the calculation of the Passover was based) and the Jewish Sabbath.

Today the anti-Judaic position has a more acceptable face because it wears the make-up of a sophisticated theology and hermeneutic that can justify its fundamental anti-Judaism calling it a “politically correct” New Covenant Theology.

The New Covenant Theology regarding the Sabbath simply put is this. It teaches that the Sabbath is a part of the Sinaitic covenant given to Israel that was “nailed to the cross” along with its

festivals (see Col 2:14-17). It is alleged that since the command to observe the Sabbath originated at Sinai as part of the covenant law, it was done away with the covenant law. The proof text for this teaching is, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones... was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:" (2Cor 3:7. KJV). Since this text clearly refers to the Ten Commandments "engraven in stones" of which the Sabbath is a part, it is interpreted to mean that the Sabbath is now "done away" with.

One thing about the New Covenant Theology. It exposes the inherent contradictions and inconsistencies of the traditional Sabbatarian understanding of the law of God upon which our Sabbatarian theology is based. It exposes the faulty traditional usage of proof texts to support the doctrine of Sabbath observance. It exposes the weakness of the traditional arguments that Sabbatarians have been using upon which an entire Sabbatarian theology has developed.

Creation Origin of the Holy Days

Fundamental to our theology of the Sabbath is our theology of the law of God. This particular article will bring that clearly into focus as we discover **the creation origin of the holy days**—the festivals of the Lord.

I recently had the privilege of sitting with two Sabbatarian university professors where a informal meeting for the purpose of discussing the festival issue was held. During this frank and candid discussion one professor cited Acts chapter 15 to point out that the festivals were not one of the stipulations put upon the Gentiles in the Christian church which he said proves that they have no relevance for the Christian church today. I suggested to the professor that based upon that reasoning neither was the Sabbath among the specific stipulations given to Gentile Christians to observe. This is one of the cardinal points of the New Covenant Theology against Sabbath observance for Christians.

The other professor stated that though the Sabbath was not one of the specific stipulations laid upon the Gentile Christians that the Sabbath was *men-*

tioned in Acts 15:21. But to buttress his point proving the continuing obligation for Christians to keep the Sabbath he cited the creation ordinance of the Sabbath that shows the universality of the Sabbath for all mankind. I suggested to the professor that the holy days themselves originated as a divine ordinance founded in the creation narrative just as the Sabbath. He challenged me to show him where. I pointed him to Genesis 1:14:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, **and for seasons**, and for days, and years."

I carefully and respectfully pointed out to my esteemed and learned colleague that the Hebrew word for "seasons" is "mo'ed" which is a direct reference to the festivals. The same word is translated "feast" in Leviticus 23. The professor replied that what I stated regarding the Hebrew word for "seasons" ("moed" meaning "feasts" or "festivals") in the context of Genesis 1:14 was inaccurate and false. He further stated that one should not try to build a doctrine from one verse or one word in the Bible. Well it is certainly agreed that we not make a new doctrine on the strength of only one word or one verse, but I strongly disagreed with his conclusion regarding the meaning of the word "mo'ed" in that text. I believe that the Scripture, as well as other sources—both ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian—conclusively show that the word "seasons" as translated from the Hebrew word "mo'ed" in the KJV Genesis 1:14 means just what the Strong's Concordance says it means:

MOW'ED [4150]

1. appointed place, appointed time, meeting
 - a. appointed time
1. appointed time (general)
2. sacred season, set feast, appointed season
 - b. appointed meeting
 - c. appointed place
 - d. appointed sign or signal
 - e. tent of meeting

The 35 references presented below all go to prove the same thing. [The original longer version of this article contained 48 references.] They are not presented to be repetitious or redundant, but rather to emphasize to the reader that the conclu-

sions that we have reached on this point is not an invention or a fanciful view. The proofs and evidences presented herein represent the consensus of a universal scholarship transcending denominational barriers and dispensations whether Jew, Gentile, Sabbath-keeper or Sunday-keeper, ancient or contemporary. These facts therefore recommend themselves to ones intelligent faith.

Bible Translations

[1] "Then God commanded, let lights appear in the sky to separate day and night and to show the time when days, years, **and religious festivals begin.**" *Good News Bible*

[2] "God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them **indicate festivals**, days, and years.'" *Jerusalem Bible*

[3] "God said, let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both **for festivals** and for seasons and years." *The New English Bible*

[4] "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs and will mark **religious festivals**, days, and years.'" *God's Word*

[5] "God said, "Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven to separate between the day and the night; and they shall serve as signs, and for **festivals**, and for days and years." *Artscroll TaNaKh, Stone Edition*

[6] "God said, 'There shall be lights in the heavenly sky to divide between day and night. They shall serve as omens [and define] **festivals**, days and years.'" *The Living Torah by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan*

[7] "God spake: Let there be a system of light bearers in the vault of the heaven to distinguish between the day and the night, and they shall also serve for signs and for **festival times** and for cycles of days and years." *The Pentateuch—Samson R. Hirsch New York: Bloch (1963)*

[8] "God said, 'Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven to separate between the day and the night; and they shall serve as signs, and **for festivals**, and for days and years.'" Bereishis [Genesis] — *Meir Zlotowitz Brooklyn, N.Y.: Mesorah (1977)*

[9] "God said, let there be lights in the vault of the heavens to separate day

from night, and let them serve as signs both for **festivals** and for seasons and years." *The Revised English Bible, Oxford University Press, 1989*

[10] "Then God said, Let there be lights in the Vault of heaven to separate day from night, to mark out **the sacred seasons**, the days and the years." *The Bible, A New Translation by James Moffatt*

An important rule of Bible interpretation is that one must take into account the meaning of the words, in the languages of the authors at the time when they were written, and not necessarily the English translation of them today. Even though the KJV translators translated the word "mo'ed" as "seasons" it has no reference to how the word "seasons" is used today (summer, winter, spring and fall.) This is why Bible concordances and lexicons are invaluable Bible study tools. You don't need to read Hebrew or be a "scholar" to use them. Moses, the author of Leviticus 23:2 was also the author of Genesis 1:14.

Bible Commentaries

We begin this section to show the testimony of various Bible commentaries beginning with the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC). The SDABC is presented here first as leading a consensus of commentators showing that "moed" translated "seasons" in the KJV in Genesis 1:14 refers to the holy days.

[11] "Yearly returning **festival periods** and other definite times were to be regulated by the movement of the celestial bodies." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol.1, p. 213 under "seasons"*

[12] "And God said: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them serve as signs for the festivals, the days and the years. And they shall serve as signs. Contrary to the usual conception, the Torah teaches that the sun and the moon were created to serve as signs; for example, to set terrestrial time and the calendar..." *Call Of The Torah Commentaries, Rabbi Elie Munk, Bereishis, p. 11*

[13] "And God said: 'Let there be

lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for, signs, and for seasons, and for days and years;'"

"For seasons. a. "**Seasons**" was an anticipation of the future: the festivals (also called "seasons") were fixed by lunar calculation. (Idem) b. To regulate the calendar. The "seasons" are spring, summer, autumn, and winter; also seed-time and harvest. **The Heb. word for "seasons" later acquired the meaning of "festivals," since these were fixed by the year's seasons.** (Hertz, J. H.) c. "Signs" means minutes and "seasons" hours. (Ibn Ezra)" *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation.*

"Yearly returning festival periods and other definite times were to be regulated by the movement of the celestial bodies."

— The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

Menahem M. Kasher. vol. 1, p. 47

[14] "MEANING AND RELATED WORDS **OO'LE MOAADIM** means AND FOR FESTIVALS... The root is MOED — noun meaning — 'appointed time, festival' as well as 'appointed place, place of meeting, appointed sign, signal'... (p. 84-85)" *MILA YOMIT; THE TORAH, WORD BY WORD OO'LE MOAADIM "AND FOR FESTIVALS" Bereishit 1:14 by Rabbi Itzhak Marmorstein (from milayomit@shamash.org)*

[15] "The Targum of Jonathan is, and let them be for signs and **the times of the feasts**, and to reckon with them the number of days, and, sanctify the beginnings of the months, and the beginnings of the years, and the intercalations of months and years, the revolutions of the sun, and the new moons, and cycles.

"And so Jarchi interprets 'seasons' of **the solemn festivals**, that would hereafter be commanded the children of Israel; but those uses were not for a certain people, and for a certain time, but **for all mankind, as long as the world should stand.**" *Gill's Commentary*

[16] "[For seasons] **moadim**; For the determination of the times on which the **sacred festivals** should be held. In

this sense the word frequently occurs; and **it was right that at the very opening of his revelation God should inform man that there were certain festivals which should be annually celebrated to his glory.** Some think we should understand the original word as signifying months, for which purpose we know the moon essentially serves through all the revolutions of time." *Adam Clarke's Commentary*

[17] "The word 'moadim' which they translate 'certain times', is variously understood among the Hebrews: for it signifies both time and place, and also assemblies of persons. The Rabbis commonly explain the passage as referring to **their festivals.**" *John Calvin's Commentary*

[18] "Seasons — not merely time naturally marked, or days and years would also not be also specified, but **FESTAL TIMES.**" *The Book of Genesis, Henry Alford, D.D.*

[19] "And for seasons. Heb. Moed-set or appointed times...signifying to fix by previous appointment. The phrase points not only to the seasons of the year, which are regulated by the course of the sun,

and to the computation of months and years, but also to fasts, **feasts, and other religious solemnities, such as were appointed to be observed by the people of Israel.**" *Notes on Genesis Vol.1, George Bush*

[20] "And for festivals. This translation follows Rashi who interprets moed here as **a reference to the 'Festivals':** 'This is in anticipation of the future when Israel would be commanded to regulate the festivals by calculation.'

"[The translation also agrees with Targum Yonasan and with the Midrash which specifically renders]: 'This refers to the three pilgrimage festivals.'" *Bereishis-Genesis/A new translation with a commentary anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources, Mesorah Publications, Ltd.*

[21] "The heavenly lights are created to divide day and night, to give (additional) light, and to serve as signs (i.e. time markers) for days, years, and **fixed seasons (the word for 'seasons' is also the word for religious festival).**" *The New Interpreter's Bible Vol.1 (paren. Belongs).*

[22] "...their (the luminaries) influence here (creation) is restricted to that

which obviously depends on them, viz. The alternation of day and night, **the festivals**, etc... It is noteworthy that this is the only work of creation of which the purposes is elaborately specified.

“for signs and for seasons, etc. Mo’ed-מָוֶד (seasons) appears never to be used of the natural seasons of the year...but always of a time conventionally agreed upon... or fixed by some circumstance. The commonest application is to the **sacred seasons if the ecclesiastical year**, which are fixed by the moon (cf. Ps 104:19).” *The International Critical Commentary*, John Skinner, 1976 (3rd Edition) pp 25 & 26.

[23] “God is described as calling into existence the heavenly bodies for three distinct purposes: (1) to divide between day and night; (2) to determine periods of time, days, months, years, seasons, **FESTIVALS**, &c.; (3) to give light upon earth...

“for signs, and for seasons — Literally, ‘for signs and for fixed times.’...The ‘fixed times’ probably denote the periods of the year for agricultural and rural occupations, **together WITH THEIR FESTIVALS**. Days of festivals were determined by particular moons, or by the rising of particular stars.” *Herbert E. Ryle, D.D., The Book of Genesis, 1921*

[24] “There are several Hebrew words which refer to a long period of time. These include *qedem* which is the main one-word term for ‘ancient’ and is sometimes translated ‘of old’; *olam* means ‘everlasting’ or ‘eternity’ and is translated ‘perpetual’, ‘of old’ or ‘for ever’; *dor* means ‘a revolution of time’ or ‘an age’ and is sometimes translated ‘generations’; *tamid* means ‘continually’ or ‘for ever’; *ad* means ‘unlimited time’ or ‘for ever’; *orek* when used with *yom* is translated ‘length of days’; *shanah* means ‘a year’ or ‘a revolution of time’ (from the change of seasons); *netsach* means ‘for ever’. Words for a shorter time span include *eth* (a general term for time); **and moed, meaning ‘seasons’ or ‘festivals’.**”

How Long Were The Days Of Genesis 1? Some Hebrew ‘Time’ Words from Answers in Genesis Ministries Intl
<http://www.answersingenesis.org>

Hebrew / English Lexicons

[25] MOED (time of) **feast pl.** Gen 1:14. “A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic

Lexicon of the Old Testament” based on the lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner by William L. Holladay Lowry Professor of Old Testament Andover Newton Theological School — William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids Michigan. p. 186

[26] MOED — Notes. It is most probable that in Gen 1:14... **the reference is to the sacred seasons** as fixed by the moon’s appearance; and so also he made the moon for sacred seasons Ps 104:19.” *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, D.D. D. Litt—Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1907, p 418*

Reference Works of Biblical Scholarship

This category helps to establish how various scholarly reference works make references to Gen.1:14, although their primary emphasis is not to exegete the text. The casual “matter of fact” reference to the text shows how widespread the common understanding of the text and the word in question was.

[27] “The word ‘seasons’ does not denote the four seasons of the year that resulted from Noachan flood, but to the ‘set times’ or the ‘appointed times’ of the sacred calendar.

“When God created them and set them in the firmament of heaven, He said, in Gen. 1:14, ‘Let them be for signs and for seasons.’... The word ‘seasons’ does not denote merely what we call the four seasons of the year, **but cycles of time**. It is (mo’ed) appointed time (from the verb מָוֶד to point out, appoint). It occurs three more times in Genesis, each time in connection with the promised Seed — Gen. xvii. 21, ‘At this set time in the next year’; and for cycles (appointed times).”

“Here, then, we have a distinct declaration from God, that the heavens contain not only a Revelation concerning things to come in the “Signs,” but also concerning appointed times in the wondrous movements of the sun, and moon, and stars. Gen. xviii. 14, “At the time appointed I will return”; and Gen. xxi. 2, “At the set time of which God had spoken.” Gen. 1:14 is therefore, “They (the sun, moon, and stars) shall be for signs (things to come).” *E. W. Bullinger, The Witness of the Stars, Kregel Publications.*

[28] “The Lord appointed the sun as a great sign above the earth for days, sabbaths, months, **FESTIVALS**, years, sabbaths of years, jubilees, and all times of the years.” *4QJuba 6:7 quoted by James C. Vanderkam, Dead Sea Discoveries Vol.1 No.3, November 1994*

Vanderkam notes that this particular section of the Dead Sea scrolls is thought to be addressing certain renegade Hellenists priests who had asserted it was the distinctiveness of the Mosaic law that resulted in separatism between Jew and Gentile that had not been a part of God’s original purpose. The article elaborating on this says:

[29] “This may be the theological or philosophical background toward which the author of Jubilees directs his book, including the creation material. Whereas some of his contemporaries thought (or hoped) that Mosaic legislation (or surviving corruptions of it) spoiled an earlier, purer form of religion, he asserted forthrightly and with sufficient exegetical warrant that the distinctive practices of Judaism, other than those which were necessarily tied to a later historical event (e.g., Passover), had not begun with Moses nor had the forefathers practiced a freer, more cosmopolitan religion. Rituals such as Sabbath celebration, circumcision, sacrifices, **AND FESTIVALS** (at their correct, solarly determined times) **had been practiced FROM THE BEGINNING... FROM THE TIME OF CREATION.**” *Ibid.*

Whether or not the author of Jubilees from the Qumran Scrolls dated “circumcision and sacrifices” from the beginning along with the “Sabbath and festivals” is circumstantial to the understanding that was held by the Jewish people in the second temple period concerning the meaning of “seasons” in Gen 1:14. This evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the Jewish people have always understood Gen 1:14 as a reference to the origin of the **FESTIVALS** and the creational mandate of their observance.

[30] “In Christianity and the Calendar, James B. Jordan takes the argument a step further by arguing on the basis of Genesis 1:14 that **the annual festivals, like the Sabbath, are a creation ordinance**. He interprets the term “season” (mo’ed) in Hebrew in Genesis 1:14 as referring to the special appointed times of the annual festivals

and concludes that the “annual festivals regulated by the sun and the moon are a **creation ordinance, every bit as much as the weekly Sabbath day.**” *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History* Part 1, Samuele Bacchiocchi 1996, p 46.

Samuel Bacchiocchi supplies in his footnotes of “God’s Festivals in Scripture and History — Part 1” supporting documentation to the conclusion that the word “mo’ed” translated as festivals indicates a creation origin for these ordinances just as for the Sabbath.

[31] **“The term ‘season’ (mo’ed) is interpreted as referring to religious festivals** by Solomon Gandz, ‘The Calendar of Ancient Israel’, in *Homenaje a Millas-Valligrosa* (Barcelona 1954), I:645; Paul Beauchamp, *Creation et separation: Etude exegetique du chapitre premier de la Genese*, Bibliotheque de Sciences religieuses (Aubier Montaigne 1969), p. 114; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 1-11* (Cambridge, 1973), p.21; and Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas, 1987), vol. I, p.23.” *Ibid*, p. 52 fn

Can the Hebrew word *mo’ed* (sing.) or *mo’edim* (pl.) translated *seasons* in Genesis 1:14 be translated “appointed times” or “festivals”? We have presented overwhelming evidence in support of the concept that *mo’edim* here does in fact refer to the appointed times or festivals.

“And God said... Let them be for signs, and for seasons”. As stated before even though the Hebrew word *mo’edim* is translated “seasons”, one cannot apply the term to mean “the four seasons” of the year, i.e. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. In the beginning after the creation week there were no “four seasons”. It was due to the condition of the earth after the flood that God said;

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” Genesis 8:22, KJV.

[32] “Let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.” A little reflection on these words will help us to understand some remarkable truths...

‘Days and years’ clearly denotes the use of astronomical bodies for measuring time. God ordained that years, months, and days should be determined by astronomical means.

“But of more interest to us is the other use of the stellar heavens: ‘for signs and for seasons’. According to Keil and Delitzsch the Hebrew root for ‘signs’ is *avah* (a mark)... The sign was a mark of something other than itself. In the same way the signs in the sky are marks of God’s message to man.

“The word *seasons* (Hebrew *moed*) means something fixed or appointed.

Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the Jewish people have always understood Gen 1:14 as a reference to the origin of the FESTIVALS and the creational mandate of their observance

This word is never used in Scripture of a season of the year such as summer (a different word is always used). *Moed* indicates an appointed or fixed time, such as the time God had appeared for Abraham and Sara to have a son (Genesis 17:21; 18:14). The feasts of Jehovah in Leviticus are *moedim*, the plural of *moed*, and were appointed times when Israel would honor God in specific ways.

“Signs and seasons’ were therefore ordained by God to indicate happenings and the periods of time pertaining to them. God designed the stars with the purpose of using them to prophetically signify historical incidents at chosen times which would come to pass as the plan of salvation was unfolded.” *God’s Voice In The Stars*, K. C. Fleming, p. 14 & 15

The Hebrew word *mo’ed* [4150] and its derivatives are most often translated into terms connected with appointed times of worship and the holy feast days. In fact it is difficult to find an example of its translation in connection with the climactical seasons of the year.

[33] “He appointed **the moon for seasons** [*moed* — 4150]: the sun knoweth his going down.” (*Psalms*

104:19 KJV)

The Apocrypha

[34] “He made the moon also to serve in her season for a declaration of times, and a sign of the world. **From the moon is the sign of feasts**, a light that decreaseth in her perfection”. *Sirach* 43:6&7

And one may well ask what part the moon (the lesser light Gen 1:17) plays in determining the four climactical seasons. It is clear then that “seasons” here refers to something other than the four seasons of the year.

In Gen 1:14 the phrase, “for seasons, and for days and years” omits reference to months. This is not surprising as it is clear from even a basic study of language that “months” are “moons” and thus cannot be determined by any other method except by the cycle of the moon.

If it is accepted that the Hebrew calendar is determined in part by the moon (the new moon marking the first day of the first and subsequent months) then, by association, the determination of holy days — God’s seasons or appointed times (Lev 23) are included in the purpose of the creation of the lesser light.

The Book of Jubilees

[35] Jubilees 2:8-10: “And on the fourth day He created the sun and the moon and the stars, and set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon all the earth, and to rule over the day and the night, and divide the light from the darkness. And God appointed the sun to be a great sign on the earth for days and for sabbaths and for months and **for feasts and for years and for sabbaths of years and for jubilees and for all seasons of the years.** And it divideth the light from the darkness [and] for prosperity, that all things may prosper which shoot and grow on the earth. These three kinds He made on the fourth day.”

The Book of Jubilees was written in the second century B.C.E. during the time of second temple in the inter-testament period. [*In some places, the book of Jubilees appears to be in conflict with the Bible, but it certainly reflects how some people thought when it was written. — NSE*] It is one of the earliest documentation of an authentic theology and midrash of the Jewish people. It proves

that the ancients understood the festivals as a creation ordinance having its origin in the creation week. This reference to Genesis 1:14 in the Jubilees is the earliest known midrash on the text showing the festivals as a creation ordinance. This ancient midrash is reflected in subsequent midrashim on Genesis 1:14 that supports the same. It is also witnessed by the Christian commentators. Any attempt to deny this can only be seen as an anti-Semitic attempt to maintain a medieval (Gentile Christian) view of the law that this understanding of the text overthrows.

Summary

Any view of the law that denies the creation ordinance of the Sabbath as well as the festivals is anti-Semitic at its root just as the interpretation that says that the law (or some portion of it) is "nailed to the cross" that attempts to justify such a view. The understanding of the creational ordinance of the holy days presented herein represents a major blow to both the New Covenant Theology that attempts to link the Sabbath and the festivals together as originating in a Sinaitic covenant. This is because, the *SMF* links the Sabbath to its attendant holydays (which even the New Covenant Theology proves beyond doubt are an inseparable unit), and it destroys one of its major assumptions; that because the Sabbath and the holy days are Sinaitic in origin that they are subsequently done away with.

This also represents a major blow to the Sabbatarian theology that denies the holy days for the same reason that the New Covenant Theology denies the Sabbath. For if the Sabbatarian answer to the New Covenant Theology is the creation origin of the Sabbath, then what are Sabbatarians going to do with the holy days which have been clearly proven herein to be a creation ordinance as well? This necessitates a change in our view of the law and brings into question why we have the view we presently hold. From whence is it? For if the observance of the Sabbath means that we should observe the holy days as the New Covenant Theology rightly implies, then what are we going to do with the Sabbath and the holy days, and what are we going to do with the law?

The New Covenant Theology has struck at the Achilles heel of Sabbatarian theology of the law that puts the Sabbath In Crisis. If the Sabbath is inseparably linked to the holy days, then we must accept the Sabbath with the holy days or we must give up the Sabbath with its holy days just as the Worldwide Church of God did when they were faced with the same vexing dilemma. Whatever argument is made for or against the Sabbath is also made for or against the festivals. At issue is THE LAW OF GOD.

"The Ordinances of Heaven and Earth" and "The Everlasting Covenant"

"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and **the ordinances <02708> of the moon and of the stars** for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name" (Jer 31:35, KJV).

"Thus saith the LORD; If **my covenant** be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed **the ordinances <02708> of heaven and earth**" (Jer 33:25, KJV).

Jeremiah calls the fixed movements of the celestial bodies "**the fixed ordinances**" (Goodspeed) or "**statutes**" (חֻקֵּה **chuqqah** < 02708>). This can only be a reference to the "mo'ed" (the appointed or fixed times). The Psalmist says, "He appointed the moon for seasons <04150> "mo'ed" (Psalm 104:19). Just as the Sabbath is called the "sign" of the covenant (Ex 31:16-17), God links his eternal covenant with the festivals as well. His covenant of redemption is as unmovable, irrevocable, permanent, sure and eternal as "the ordinances (statutes) of the moon and of the stars"—the "appointed times".

In Jeremiah God refers to the surety and the permanence of "the fixed ordinances" (statutes) of the moon and stars as the guarantee of the surety and permanence of the "**new covenant**" that he will make with His people.

"Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance <02708> (statutes — חֻקֵּה "chuqqah") in his season <04150> (appointed time — מוֹעֵד "mo'ed")" (Exodus 13:10, KJV).

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have

transgressed the laws (תּוֹרָה torah) <08451>, changed the ordinance (02706 קֶחַח choq) <02706>, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa 24:5, KJV).

Transgressing the laws, changing the ordinances and breaking the everlasting covenant are all equivalents. This text in Isaiah 24:5 parallels Daniel's prophecy of a world power that "shall think" to accomplish this.

"And he shall speak great words against the Most High [God], and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times [of **sacred feasts and holy days**] and the law" (Dan 7:25 AMP [brackets belong]).


This translation from the Amplified Bible reveals more of the sense of what is understood from the original Hebrew (or Aramaic) text which is hidden in the traditional "word for word" translation of the KJV. That which Sabbatarians have claimed for the abrogation of the Sabbath is in actuality a reference to the change of the festivals of which the Sabbath is the first (see Lev 23:2, 3).

And so says the Roman Catholic church through one of her prelates: "**The Catholic Church abolished, not only the Sabbath, but all the other Jewish festivals**", T. Enright, CSSR (see M. Abbott, *Paul the Sabbath Keeper?* Publisher Peaceful Meadows, Rt.8, Bx. 123-A, Mena, AR 71953).

We proclaim the *Sabbath more fully* in showing how the festivals testify to the veracity of the Sabbath truth and are a part of the Sabbath truth that proclaims the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation is not understood by observation. It is understood by experience. Truth is not understood by just the learning of it or by the intellectual assent many call "faith". Truth is understood by the doing of it. The testimony of Jesus is, "For I DO always those things that please him. (John 8:29).

Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully is a quarterly publication. It is also an independent research ministry supportive of the Seventh-day Adventist Church promoting intra-denominational dialog addressing mutual interests relevant to all Sabbathkeepers.

Editor: Dr. Sidney L. Davis, Jr.; **Associate Editors:** Marsha Clark-Basner & Anthony Gerace (Web Servant); **Editorial Secretary** Olga Schwingel. Address comments and questions to the Editor: P.O. Box 1213; North Chicago, IL 60064; Telephone: 847-785-0315; Fax: 208-330-6908; Web-site: <http://www.sabbathmorefully.org>.

Please visit the web-site for the longer version of this article. 

Feast of Tabernacles Sites 2000

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

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

- Unless otherwise noted, all sites use the Hebrew calendar—the evening of Friday, Oct. 13th through Saturday the 21st.
- We are happy to print information on other Feast sites that welcome all brethren regardless of organizational affiliation.
- Please send information on such sites to *Servants' News* (see contact information on page 2 or back cover).

North-East USA

Port Austin, Michigan Great for Families and Singles

At least 70 people are already planning to attend this *Servants' News* site. There is still plenty of meeting space and nearby motel space, but certain kinds of rooms on the campus are filling up.

Please see the details in the Jan/Feb 2000 issue, or contact us at 517-625-7480, e-mail: info@servantsnews.com.

We emphasized the "family feast" aspect in the last issue. Indeed there is much convenience in eating, sleeping, attending services and having recreation all on the same campus. **However, this is also an excellent Feast site for singles.** Those on a thin budget could literally keep the whole feast for \$149. There will be a maximum of opportunity to meet other brethren and to learn from them.

Everyone should bring their **spiritual harvest from the year**—what they have learned, stories of what they have done—and be willing to share it with others. We will have several interactive studies as well as discussion after every message.

Four additional items not covered in the last issue:

1. RV and tent camping will cost \$24 per night (plus any meal plan that you may want). We realize that this is much more expensive than staying on campus, but these prices are controlled by the association of camp-site owners and cannot be changed quickly. More than one

tent can be placed on a site. Water, electricity and sewer hookups are available.

2. Please make your \$20 per person deposit check out to Norman Edwards or *Servants' News*. A deposit is required for those who are staying and/or eating on campus. The balance will be due when you arrive at the feast. Please make this final check out to *Port Austin Center*, but give it to Norman Edwards (or his assistant) Friday evening before the Feast begins. (Port Austin Center would like one lump sum payment from us, but will accept multiple checks.)

3. We will attempt to find financial help for any individuals in Michigan or adjoining states who cannot afford to go to the Feast.

4. Pets are allowed if they are not left to roam unattended. They are not permitted in buildings.

5. Note these corrections to the "Port Austin Accommodations" (Jan/Feb issue, p. 7): Captain Morgan's Cottages are 6 miles from the site. Sand Castles on the Beach is 3 miles from the site.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions, comments, or ideas you would like to see implemented at the Feast.

— Norman Edwards

Paducah, Kentucky (1)

This is a non-aligned site. For more information call 618-253-6051 or 270-522-0972.

Paducah, Kentucky (2)

The Belleville Church of God is pleased to be hosting a Feast Site at the

JR Executive Inn, Paducah.

The inn is a four-story atrium-style 400+ room hotel with a tropical atmosphere. Inside are restaurants, shops, barbershop, game room, full size swimming pool, workout area and more.

Housing information is as follows:

JR's Executive Inn
One Executive Boulevard
Paducah, KY 42001
800-866-3636

Standard room for 1–2 persons: \$50 per night plus 10.24% tax; standard room for 3–4: \$55 per night plus 10.24% tax; suite for 1–4: \$95 per night plus 10.24% tax.

The reservations desk is open from 8 am – 8 pm Monday through Friday and from 10 am to 6 pm on Sundays. You must identify yourself as being associated with "The Belleville Church of God" to received these rates. A deposit for one night's room rate is required to hold your reservation (cash can be sent or hold with a credit card). Please ask for written confirmation.

If you require special accommodations like quick accessibility to the elevators, please state that when you make your reservation and also send that information to Al Buchanan, PO Box 764, Glen Carbon, IL 62034.

If further information is needed, please contact Al Buchanan via e-mail at al_buchanan@hotmail.com or write him at the above address, or phone 618-288-4529.

Mystic Seaport, Connecticut

The Northeast Church of God is again planning a local Feast of Tabernacles at beautiful Mystic Seaport,

Connecticut. It is easy to reach by plane, train or automobile, with many sights and attractions. The style is "traditional", i.e., regular services with two messages. But it is also designed to encourage fellowship, activities and Bible Studies.

For housing, there are ample motels and B & B's. The cheapest would be about \$55/night. As with last year, the Residence Inn is giving us special rates, which are quite good for New England. The Residence Inn contains apartments with one or two bedrooms, the latter with two baths. The rates include breakfast and light meals on weekday evenings.

A studio/one-bedroom is \$119 per night, two-bedroom is \$179 per night. (Rates are \$20 per night more if you are staying less than 5 nights.)

Make your reservations directly with the inn 860-536-5150, and ask for the Northeast Church of God rates. They are good from Friday, October 13 through Sunday, October 22. For further info, contact Don Carruthers: 203-333-9214; e-mail: JDCarruthers@worldnet.att.net; or:

— Rodger Sandsmark: 860-651-7690; e-mail: klrsands@rcn.com

South—East USA

Orlando, Florida

Please join us at a Feast of Tabernacles site that is not sponsored by any specific organization. There will be traditional services on the High Days. On the six intervening days, educational seminars will be conducted by Mark. D. Kaplan. We have scheduled a meeting room at the Days Inn Maingate West. It is located 3.5 miles of Walt Disney World property. To make a room reservation call 407-997-1000 and mention "Feast of Tabernacles" to receive the rock-bottom rate. We recommend that you reserve as early as possible for the best rates. To register or contact us:

— Mark Kaplan, 2130 W Crescent Ave
Apt 1130, Anaheim, CA. 92801
e-mail: feastfever@usa.com

St. Pete Beach, Florida

The Church of God in Miami is hosting a Feast site with the House of God

Daytona congregation at the **Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites** in St. Pete Beach, Florida. Over 100 are expected.

At last year's Feast, one of the church members staying at a nearby hotel happened to be talking to another hotel guest. It turns out this other guest was part of a group of 40 or so people also meeting to keep the Feast. This group had found out about the Feast days by their own study, never having had contact with the WCG. The group visited the COG services and were provided with many booklets explaining our COG beliefs.

For more information, call Tony Fontao at 305-385-6306 or Nelson Moreno at 305-385-2137.

Destin, Florida (1)

Friends of the Sabbath is hosting *Festival 2000, a Feast Without Sermons.* at the Crescent, 800-336-4853 (give cust # 975847). We will have lots of music and Bible readings. Everyone willing is invited to give a 12–15 minute presentation followed by discussion. We will explore ancient Hebrew Feast Traditions, including the building of a Sukkah. Contact John Merritt: 262-567-6488; fax: 262-567-6469; e-mail: friendsabbath@aol.com.

Destin, Florida (2)

This site is sponsored by the Church of God, Big Sandy. It will be held at Pelican Beach Resort and Conference Center, 1002 Highway 98 East, Destin, Florida; 800-654-1966; e-mail: reservations@pelican-beach.com; web-site: <http://test.emeraldcoast.com/coldsun/pbr> Speakers include Mark Gully, Dennis Moulard, Steve Durham and Dave Havir. Contact Shelley Howell; 800-946-5545; agprosys@aol.com.

Fort Walton Beach, Florida

This site is sponsored by the Church of God Outreach ministries. For more information contact Ian Hufton; RR2 Box 114; hawkins, TX 75765; 903-769-3520; fax 903-769-2314; e-mail: ihufton@aol.com. Or, contact James Ussery, 15 Purdue Circle, Little Rock, AR 72204; 501-565-7283; fax: 501-565-1086; e-mail: jduss@aol.com.

Niceville, Florida

Christian Educational Ministries will again hold the Feast of Tabernacles at The Arts Center of the Okaloosa-Walton Community College in Niceville, Florida. Extensive Seminars, music, youth programs and other activities are planned. There is a separate "Festival Association" mailing available to those interested in this Feast site. See the contact information at the end to request it.

Discount room rates have been arranged at four establishments. You will need to mention CEM and sometimes a "group #" to receive those rates: the **Newman-Dailey** at 800-225-7652; the **Hidden Dunes** at 800-824-6335, e-mail hiddendu@emeraldcoast.com, web-site www.hiddendunes.com; **Silver Shells Beach Resort** at 877-447-3767, web-site www.silvershells.com; and **Abbott Realty**, group # 741146 at 800-336-GULF, web-site www.abbott-resorts.com

For more information, contact CEM, P.O. Box 560, Whitehouse, TX 75791; 903-509-2999; fax: 903-509-1139; e-mail: adm@cemnetwork.com; web-site: www.cemnetwork.com.

Sevierville, Tennessee

This site is jointly sponsored by Guardian Ministries with David Antion and United Christian Ministries with Ray Wooten. Sevierville is a few miles from Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge in the Smoky Mountains. Condominiums are available through Hidden Mountain Resorts, 800-541-6837; ask for Kay Green. Ask Tony Funderburg about rooms in the Oak Tree Lodge, 800-637-7002 or the Fairfield Inn, 888-429-8300. For more information about the Feast, call UCM at 888-985-9066.

North—Central USA

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

This site is sponsored by the Big Sandy Church of God and several other independent congregations. It is at the Raintree Resort & Conference Center, 1435 Wisconsin Dells Parkway, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965; 888-253-4386; fax: 608-253-3192; e-mail: gpsales@dellsraintree.com; website:

www.dellsraintree.com. Speakers include Garry Pifer, Hal Geiger, Dave Havir and Tim Lindholm. Contact Shelley Howell: 800-946-5545; agprosyps@aol.com or Tim Lindholm: 612-425-5012; e-mail: lindholm@usfamily.net.

Branson, Missouri

This site is sponsored by the Church of God in Truth. **It will be held from October 10th through 18th.** Contact James Russell; 800-328-5199.

Lake of the Ozarks, MO

The Mid-Missouri Church of God is pleased to announce a Feast site at Lake of the Ozarks. The facility, Ozark Resort and Conference Center, is conveniently located in Lake Ozark, right at the intersection of Hwy. 54 and Business Hwy. 54 (adjacent to Denny's Restaurant). The opening service is 7:30 pm: "A Time to Rejoice!". All "Church of God" brethren are invited, about 50 to 70 are expected to attend. The meeting room can easily seat up to 100.

Services will be held daily, as well as several open-forum Bible studies and seminars. Volunteers are needed for speaking, song-leading, choir, piano-playing and special music. An excellent piano and bench will be provided, and the sound system promises to be very good! Joining us for at least one service will be the popular instrumental/vocal group, "New Beginning".

Planned activities include the popular lake cruise, pizza party, a family variety show, a hayride, a movie night, and a "Pie, Cake & Ice Cream Social". A night of casual dancing is planned if enough are interested.

Resort features include an indoor pool, hot tub and sauna. Discounted rates start at \$44.95. Camp grounds and other motels are nearby.

For further information or to volunteer help, contact: Wyatt L. "Duke" Schneider, 31879 Triangle Cove Road, Gravois Mills, MO 65037; 573-372-3221; e-mail: ddinmo@mail.usmo.com

South—Central USA

Hot Springs, Arkansas

This site is sponsored by Points of

Truth Christian Ministries at beautiful Yorktown Bay Retreat nestled in the beautiful Ouachita Mountains of Central Arkansas. This retreat offers the Feast goer a true family atmosphere in a beautiful, serene setting. Yorktown Bay will become a small community of Brethren all living and sharing meals together in fine fellowship, activities and worship. This retreat is surrounded on three sides by the waters of Lake Ouachita which offers boating, swimming and fishing. Feast goers will be only minutes from the resort city of Hot Springs, Arkansas which offers a wide variety of attractions.

Retreat activities include sailboating, canoeing, paddle boating, swimming, fishing, water skiing, hiking, basketball, softball, volleyball, ping pong, pool, campfire, sing-a-longs and fellowship. Many of these items are included with the accommodations.

Services, Fun Show, and various activities will be held in the beautiful new **dining hall**. Worship will begin daily at 10:30 am. Special Meals will be provided on the first and last Holy Days following services at no cost. **Speakers** are still being scheduled but will include Larry R. Lasiter, founder of Points of Truth Christian Ministries and pastor of the Church of God Fellowship in Russellville, Arkansas; and Jerry Boston, who has a television ministry and serves as pastor of the Church of God at Little Rock, Arkansas.

Musically, we will be blessed with the musical talents of Melvin Johnson, from Tennessee, Domenica Gordon, from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, Joanne Boston, from Little Rock, Arkansas, Julius Reed, from Vilonia, Arkansas and Sarah Lasiter, from Russellville, Arkansas.

A Variety of accommodations are available: There are 8 **lodge rooms** at \$30 per day. Each room has 2 sets of bunkbeds. Bring your own bedding and towels. **Cabins** cost \$5 per person, per day. Each cabin has 4 sets of bunkbeds. They are wired for electricity but have no heat or lounge furniture. Bring heaters, stove, bedding, towels & toiletries, grill, etc. The on-site **Motel** is owned by the retreat and has 14 units, but they are in use for Friday and Saturday nights, October 13th and 14th, but will be available Sunday, Oct. 15th, through the remainder of the Feast. We

will have tents set up for Oct. 13 and 14 so those who wish to stay in the motel will have a place to sleep until their rooms become ready Sunday. Motel room cost is \$45 per day.

There are no specific **tent site** locations, but there are plenty of level places that will accommodate tents. Electricity can be run from the bathhouses or other buildings to the tent areas. Please bring electrical cords for use in your immediate tent area. Cost is \$3 per person, per day. There are no designated **RV sites** but there are plenty of level spots that will work. Electricity can be run from nearby buildings. The Cost is \$10 per day. There are two **bathhouses** near the cabins and tent areas, each with 6 showers. Bring towels and toiletries.

No pets or alcoholic beverages are permitted at the retreat.

For more information, contact Larry Lasiter, P.O. Box 102, Russellville, AR 72811; 501-498-4524.

E-mail: lasiter@pointsoftruth.com; website: www.pointsoftruth.com.

Wagoner, Oklahoma

Sharing the Feast of Tabernacles

In the past few years, with the advent of smaller groups and organizations in the body of Christ, there has been an increase in the number of feast sites, especially in the USA. Some cities have had four, five or six feast sites going on at the same time, with some of the brethren visiting the various feasts. Many brethren have commented on how they have seen a long time friend that had moved to another organization, and how good it was to meet again at the Feast of Tabernacles. Since we all understand there is only one body of Christ, consisting of many organizations, groups and individuals, it seems it would be appropriate to share some of the overlapping feast sites.

After much thought, discussion, and consideration of the many duplicate feast locations in America, the Church of God, International and the Churches of God Outreach Ministries have agreed to share the 2000 Feast of Tabernacles site at the Western Hills Lodge in Wagoner, Oklahoma. CGI and CGOM have mutually agreed to share all feast expenses, and all activities and services and other duties that are required for serving the brethren and

worshipping our Father at this Feast of Tabernacles. The offerings will be separately identified for CGOM and CGI. The feast co-ordinators will be Ron Elkins of CGI and Bill Fowler of CGOM. It is the intent of the co-ordinators to involve as many brethren as possible in the various duties of service and rejoicing at the feast, to show the unity of the body of Christ, as it will be in the Kingdom of God.

Come to Wagoner, Oklahoma for HIS Feast of Tabernacles in 2000, and share in the love of our Father, with a common desire that will insure the fruit of His Spirit, Love, Joy and Peace.

— Bill Fowler: 316-945-7773;
e-mail: bfowler@kscable.com

Lake Texoma, Oklahoma

This is the 4th year at this beautiful site. Questions or information contact: Steven and Suzanne Kieler, 2193 Sheker Drive, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-8707; 515-576-5743.

E-mail sskieler@juno.com

Lake Murray, Oklahoma

This site emphasizes the Hebrew Roots of Christianity. Contact Tim Kelley: 903-769-2750; e-mail: n55154@aol.com.

Austin, Texas

The Christian Church of God is sponsoring this site. Contact Jeff Booth: 806-353-4400.

Big Sandy, Texas

The Big Sandy Church of God is sponsoring this site in their own building. Speakers will include Wayne Cole, Dave Havir, Ed Mitchell, and Wynn Skelton. Contact Shelley Howell: 800-946-5545; e-mail: agprosys@aol.com

San Antonio, Texas

The Church of God San Antonio (affiliated with the Churches of God Outreach Ministries) for the third time and by popular request will host the Feast of Tabernacles in beautiful San Antonio—the Alamo City. All brethren regardless of organizational affiliation are welcomed to attend with us. Workshops on “Evangelism and

Outreach” will be coordinated by Dr. Alfred Harrell, founder of Christian Leadership Academy. We are also planning to invite the public to attend an evening lecture concerning the Seventh Day Sabbath.

San Antonio is one of America's most unique cities and the number one tourist destination in Texas. Major tourist activities that appeal to both grown-ups and children include the Alamo, River Walk, Sea World, Six Flags Fiesta Texas, HemisFair Park and the Tower of the Americas, the San Antonio Zoo, and the Japanese Tea Gardens. There are many other attractions too numerous to mention here.

Meetings will be held at the Ramada Inn Conference Center, 10811 I-35 North, San Antonio, TX 78233; 800-797-1234; fax: 210-590-2464. Mention Feast of Tabernacles, Group Code: CGOM; Reservation Number: G003-91 to obtain the \$54 (plus tax) room rate (up to four people per room). The first night's fee must be guaranteed with credit card or by sending a check or money order to be received within 7 days of the reservation.

We must fill at least 40 rooms by September 30, 2000 in order to receive meeting rooms free of charge, so please register under Feast of Tabernacles reservation. Please make reservations early so we can determine if we need to ask for a greater number of rooms to be blocked for us.

The Ramada Inn Conference room seats up to 370 with three break-out rooms for Youth Bible Classes and workshops. There is free coffee daily in meeting room; microwave & refrigerator in all rooms; a swimming pool; Texas size spa and guest laundry facilities.

For those who would like to camp, there is an RV Park one mile from the Ramada Inn Conference Center: Greentree Village North, 12015 O'Connor Road, San Antonio, TX 78233; 210-655-3331. It is important to make reservations early to be ahead of the snow birds.

For more information, contact:

— Julian Cruz, 219 Whitefield Avenue,
San Antonio, TX 78223; 210-333-7229
e-mail: jrcruz@ix.netcom.com
web-site: churchofgodsa.com



North—West USA

Glendale (Southern) Oregon

Omega Praise Fellowship will again be sponsoring a Feast of Tabernacles site at Fir Point Bible Conference camp, located about 6 miles off the I-5 interstate highway at Glendale, Oregon. Registration will be October 13th and that evening there will be a welcome service and blessing of the sukkah. A glorious Erv Shabbat banquet will be held on October 20th. There will be Bible studies, teachings, **lots** of praise & worship music and dancing, not to mention time to relax, hike, bike and play a little volleyball! The site truly lends itself to a “family reunion” atmosphere—so come prepared to **join in**.

The cost will be \$240 per person for room and all meals. Children under 18 who are accompanied by an adult will be free. This year it is our sincere hope that any widows who otherwise would not be able to attend will also be provided for without cost to them.

Accommodations at Fir Point include rustic cabins, a lodge, and RV parking. A deposit of \$50 for a single or \$100 for a family will secure your place at the site!! If you would like more information, send a request to: Omega Praise Fellowship of Southern Oregon, 1720-A Redwood Avenue PMB 48, Grants Pass, OR 97527-6075; 541-479-0467 or 541-837-3642.

South—West USA

Ventura, California

This site is jointly sponsored by Guardian Ministries with David Antion and United Christian Ministries with Ray Wooten. The Holiday Inn is right on the beach—every room has an ocean view. It is within walking distance of downtown shops, restaurants and theaters. To make reservations, call 805-648-7731, mention Guardian ministries and ask for the \$79 per night package. For more information, call UCM at 888-985-9066.

Catalina Island, California

The beautiful Island of Catalina is located 26 miles off the coast of Long Beach, California. It is a veritable paradise and a perfect setting to celebrate God's soon coming Kingdom. Experience family activities and dynamic messages with long time members of God's church. An intimate setting, and a family environment to connect with your family of faith.

The Church of God, Restored has negotiated an extraordinary rate with the convention site. The package includes your travel from the port of Long Beach, 8 nights in a premier hotel, and includes meals and tour activities. Send for your Feast of Tabernacle Package from:

— Church of God, Restored;
PO Box 1682, Simi Valley, CA 93062;
805-527-2810; e-mail: cogr@juno.com

Angel Fire, New Mexico

Meetings will be sponsored by the Church of God, Big Sandy and held at the Angel Fire Community Center; 71 Valley Road; 505-377-1544. Speakers will include Dave Havir, Wayne Cole, Reg Killingley and John Warren. Contact Shelley Howell; 800-946-5545; e-mail: agprosyst@aol.com

International

Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

The Canadian Church of God will be sponsoring the Feast of Tabernacles in The Collingwood Area of Ontario, Canada. Speakers will be drawn from various Churches of God from across

the United States and Canada. Services will be geared towards furthering of the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.

There will be Interactive Bible Studies and Seminars. Many group activities will be held at the Toronto Ski Club premises in Collingwood. The Canadian Church of God is a group of individual fellowships who see the need to come together from time to time to collaborate on shared ministries and to further the gospel and understanding among believers.

We hope that your feast experience with us will be an enriched one. Jerry Schut is the coordinator and he can be reached at (905) 725-7167. For information about accommodation, please visit us at www.canadianchurchofgod.com or write to: Canadian Church of God, P.O.Box 476, Don Mills Station, Don Mills, Ont. M3C 2T4.

Llandudno, England

This year's UK Festival of Tabernacles is planned for the North Wales area in Llandudno. There's ample accommodation (46 rooms) in the hotel and booking, at a special rate, should be made through Conwy Country Borough Council, 1 Chapel Street, Llandudno, LL30 2SY (Tel: 01492-574005). Plenty of alternative accommodation is also available locally. All other enquiries regarding accommodation, should be addressed to:

— Gerald Kirby, Ty Cerrig, Betws Gwerfil Goch, Corwen, LL21 9PD; tel: 01490-460414.

Yarrowonga-Mulwala, Australia

As we did last year, we are planning to go to Yarrowonga-Mulwala for the Feast of Tabernacles, a pretty place built on the Mulwala Lake on the Victoria-New South Wales border.

Yarrowonga-Mulwala boasts a mild climate around September and October and has plenty of accommodations, including motels, hotels, resorts, country clubs, caravan parks, units, houses, bed and breakfasts and host farms. The township has no less than 18 eating-houses and offers various activities such as fishing, waterskiing, parasailing, horseriding and golf, among others.

There are homesteads to visit, an animal farm, cruises on the lake and several wineries within easy driving distance.

We are planning to have services daily except two midweek days when we will have two interactive studies. Other planned activities are a lunchtime cruise with a BBQ on one of the boats, a family afternoon, a quiz night, a social and an evening of movies. If you are interested in joining us, you are more than welcome.

Write to us at Endeavor Hills Church of God, P.O. Box 179, Endeavor Hills, Victoria 3802, Australia.

Baguio City, Philippines

If you look at a map of the world, the Philippine Islands look like a miniature profile flung out into the open sea. From an armchair, you might think, "How can those clumps stand baking heat, howling winds and storms, several earthquakes, bombings, uprisings, the occasional volcano, the president's advisers?" But if you're here, among the whistling bamboos, lean coconut trees, broad-armed acacias, you'll know.

By the grace of the Eternal God, we are still able to have the freedom to come together during the cycle of His festivals.

The address of the Feast site is:

Oring-ao Hall, Teachers Camp, Baguio City, Philippines.

Why, after more than 30 years are we always led to choose Baguio City as a site for the High Festival? It is set apart. A city on top of a mountain. And quite in the clouds. Beautiful, and for us in the concrete pile, temporary. Land route from Manila passes through ricefields, grazing land, rivers, mountain ranges. By the time you have climbed the winding zigzag road, the scent of pine trees has the power to blot out the memory of the city, and set the mind toward things above.

What we can share with you is everything we have. We'll greet you with open arms, soapy hands and muddy shoes. Because this year has taught us more lessons of being free under God. We've met people who drop by, people who walk in after hearing the hymn singing from the street, people from other fellowships, people who come and go, people who come and stay. We have learned that love is not all bliss and smooth sailing.

Every day is a conscious, prayerful effort to work with our differences and do things together, with one spirit. So

Continued on page 31



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.

Thanks For the Literature Plus Another Question

LETTER: May 20, 1999
Thank you for the literature. We really appreciate your effort in studying both the issues of ecclesiastical government and financial support.

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

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

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

— David Swaim

RESPONSE: When I read all of the Scriptures saying that YHWH is His Name, I thought it was very important to pronounce it the right way. Then I read so many different papers on how to pro-

nounce it, many appearing credible, I realized that it would take me months to sift through the evidence and come to a conclusion. Since the Greek New Testament that has been preserved does not attempt to reproduce this name at all, but does have transliterations of other Hebrew words (Abba—Father, etc.), it is hard for me to believe that maintaining the exact pronunciation was of major importance to the Eternal.

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

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

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

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

When I write to an audience that might include “Sacred Name” people, I use “the Eternal” for YHWH and Christ (which means “anointed”) for Jesus. Yes, I am avoiding their names, but I am speaking a language that nearly everyone under-

stands, but is offensive only to a very few.
— NSE

Request for article

LETTER: Jan 16, 2000
I have a copy of your article titled *Biblical Calendar Basics* and dated December 1995. This is the preliminary version. Have you yet completed the expanded version? If so, please could you send me a copy.

— Helen Carboni, Cape Town, South Africa

RESPONSE: I made a few minor changes to the article, but never greatly expanded it. It would take many hours to try to cover all of the major calendar systems that have been proposed—and to cover all of the verses that people believe are related to the calendar. I think this would make a helpful paper, but I believe that it would not solve the calendar issue for most people. There would still be a variety of calendars among Sabbatarian groups. The Bible contains clear commands to assemble with brethren on holy days, so I meet with other believers when they assemble. The commands for when to start the months are less clear. In the Old Testament, there was no provision for an individual to determine when a month began—the Day of Atonement sacrifice was offered on the day determined by the priests—an individual who calculated another date had no way to have this sacrifice performed on his behalf.

Well, I don’t need to write another paper here, but I think it will be some time before I get back to calendars.

— NSE

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?

LETTER: Feb 23, 2000
I finally finished reading Norman S. Edwards’ second edition of *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* and I have to say that I am very pleased at the open and honest attitude which seems to be behind its creation and the quality of biblically accurate information it relates.

Some of us have been, strictly speaking, unconnected to so-called Church organizations for some time now trying to focus on uncovering and helping reveal the real Gospel and its purpose for each individual and the Congregation of Believers in general. Part of that has focused on the issue of church government and therefore

much of what Mr. Edwards teaches has been touched on by us. In this pursuit, beyond looking deeply and correctly into the true meanings of original Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew and Chaldean wordings, we have had occasion to use many writings of scholars and researchers from a number of disciplines, churches, schools, etc... There has been much useful information discovered on which to build but this is the first occasion I know of where I could recommend a complete (and large) work in its entirety without proviso or reservations.

Of course, the entire issue of Churches misled by Catholic-inspired scholarly fraud is far more extensive than Mr. Edward's work but, as pertaining to the issue of Church Government, this is undoubtedly the most thorough and accurate work available today. I don't see any reason not to simply put this forward as the standard for seekers of information on correct Church structure. And I will be encouraging others to follow my lead in liberally quoting (in proper context and with full credits) this paper when dealing with any issue related to deliberate misinterpretation of scripture being used as a tool of power and manipulation.

Please let me know if you have a more recent edition or other related material which I may find useful to expounding the Scriptures.

— David Hinkley

RESPONSE: The latest version of *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* is August 1998. There are two older versions, I'm not sure which you have. Thank you very much for the encouragement. I agree that the fraud of false religion far exceeds the scope of my writing. I may write more on it another time.

I am sending you some other literature that we have and a complete list of all that we have distributed. We have two bi-monthly publications: *Servants' News*—aimed at people with a "Church of God" background; and *Shelter in the Word*—aimed at people with a general "Christian" background. We will add you to the subscription list.

Do you currently worship with any others? We are always interested in publishing the experience of others who have worshipped outside of corporate walls for a number of years.

— NSE

Seen on Video

LETTER: Mar 15, 2000
Thank you very much for the articles you are

sending here. It is very informative and easy to understand. Personally I like the way you speak in your videos. You do not criticize other religions rather you teach straight to the point the things you ought to say. I also like the style of writing you use in your articles. It makes it more interesting for me to read your articles.

At my age, somehow reading text articles is a boring thing but when come to your article I seem to like reading. There are times I don't have time but once I'm free I read your articles. I pray that God would continue to shower you with his blessing and wisdom. Encourage you more to write more articles. Again Thank You for the articles, it is a great help for me to understand the Bible and practical things around.

— Abigail Pia Perpetua L Magat

RESPONSE: I'm glad that you have enjoyed the videos. I have not made any videos myself, but others have at conferences where I have spoken. I think videos are a good way of teaching, but we simply have not had time to make videos.

— NSE

Request to Correspond

LETTER: Mar 15, 2000

Appreciate the fine research and balanced commentary you (and your staff) do. I think of all the Church of God ministries we've searched out, yours is the one we'd like to support the most. I'll work on making adjustments to our contribution disbursements.

Liz and I have two web site ministries of our own, so this consumes money as you know, in equipment/supplies sometimes, and in reading material especially. We also have a gospel hour we lead for some retirement centers. So there are these types of expenses to consider as well.

In this last issue you printed a comment by a fella named Harry Curley in Altadena, California. I would like to correspond with him personally. If you have his address or email on record, could you let him know. I'm at RobinSyngs@aol.com or address: 6413 Stephan Ct. S.E., Lacey, WA 98503. Thanks for your help if able.

— Robin Todd

RESPONSE: Thanks for the encouraging letter. I think your approach is a fine example of a personal ministering. You are skilled at singing and artistry, so you sing for retired people, and have a website for others. In the course of many years, one humble website may help point thousands of people in the right direction, and may change the lives of a few dozen others.

Even if it just opens the door to you really sharing what you do and believe with one or two people, it is probably worth it.

Other people have other talents and serve in other ways. Even though they are personally serving, some still want to use their financial resources to serve God in some way. Romans 12:8 clearly lists "giving" as a spiritual gift. For some people, this may be their primary spiritual gift. (However, it is clearly unbiblical to treat church members like "giving" is the **only** spiritual gift that they could have.) God does not specify how much a believer is to give any more than He specified how much time they should pray, how much time they should spend helping others, etc. He or she must pray about it and work it out with the Eternal—knowing that He will not be fooled.

The amount given may not be near as important as **where** it is given. Giving \$50 here is not the same as giving \$50 there. If you are trying to help people who lost their homes due to flooding in India, you might be able to search religious magazines, church bulletin boards, or the Internet and find a charity staffed by volunteers that has been audited and proven to ensure that 100% of the amount you give actually ends up in the hands of the needy people. On the other hand, you may be called at home or see a TV commercial by an organization with a nice marketing line stirring you to contribute to the very same cause. They may speak very respectfully of you and even offer you a plaque or certificate if you give to a certain level. But some of these organizations give as little as 1% of their total intake to the needy people. You would need to give \$5,000 to do the same amount of good as giving \$50 to the first charity.

It is not as simple to compare the efficiency of groups that preach the gospel—it is harder to measure the fruit. Nevertheless, some certainly appear more efficient than others. We can always ask our Father in faith to show us and help us know.

I know this is a long answer for a short letter, but thank you for wading through it.

— NSE

Feast of the Passover Begins the Evening of 17th April—Not the 18th

LETTER: Apr 12, 2000
Because of its relevance for those who will be

observing the Feast of the Passover in a few days time, you may wish to forward this to those you know.

Feast of the (2nd) Passover (the Sabbath)—evening of the 17th, day of the 18th Feast of Unleavened Bread—evening of the 18th, day of the 19th. The new moon day began on the evening of the 4th of April i.e. the first day of the month. Counting 14 days to get to the 14th day of the month at even = 4 Apr, 5 Apr, 6 Apr, 7 Apr, 8 Apr, 9 Apr, 10 Apr, 11 Apr, 12 Apr, 13 Apr, 14 Apr, 15 Apr, 16 Apr, 17 Apr. Thus the 14th day of the month begins on the evening of the 17th April (not the 18th as the Hebrew calendar states).

This means the start of the 15th day of the month and the night of the full moon is the evening of the 18th April, and **not** the 19th as the Hebrew calendar states.

I have posted on this before and it is available in detail on my web pages:

<http://members.xoom.com/lornathomas/20march2000.htm>

<http://members.xoom.com/lornathomas/cyclespatterns.htm>

As I also wrote I believe the 1st Abib was on 6th March because there was no intercalated 13th month in 2000. This was instead in 1 March 1999.

This belief is based on the positions of the moon and stars. Each month the full moon rises fairly close to the time of the setting sun. Each month the full moon rises in a different constellation. In the first month Abib it rises before or with the first stars of Virgo. This it did on the night of the full moon of 15th Abib (meaning 'ear of corn'). This was 20 March, the Passover began on the evening of the 19th, new moon was on the 6th March.

It is important to note that the full moon of Abib must not rise **after** Spica (meaning 'ear of wheat'), the bright star of Virgo. And it WILL do so on the night of the 18th April, and rise even further down on the evening of the 19th, rising in the constellation of Libra away from the constellation of Virgo.

The evening of April 4th thus begins the 1st of the **second** month and the evening of the 17th April begins the 14th of the second month. The 17th April should then be kept as the evening of the second Passover.

The entire day of the 14th Abib is the Feast of the Passover. The night of the 14th God passed over the firstborn of Israel. It was the night Christ ate the Passover and was betrayed. The 14th is a Sabbath and the first day of the 7 days of unleavened bread. The evening of the 18th April begins the 15th of the second month.

On the night of the 15th Abib God brought ancient Israel out of Egypt together with their flocks. It was also the first day they could begin

to harvest the corn. It is not a Sabbath day. It is the 2nd day of the 7 days of unleavened bread.

Just a reminder of how to tell when the new moon will be ahead of time from the moon prior to sunrise. Many people wonder how it is possible to know when the new moon will be ahead of time when it is so difficult or impossible to see in the late afternoon.

The evening of the new moon was 4th April. If you took the opportunity to see the waning crescent in the predawn sky prior to new moon you would be able to tell by visual observation **ahead** of the new moon when the new moon would occur from the early morning sky.

When the sun and moon set on the evening that began new moon day, the 4th, they set fairly close to each other. Earlier that morning, you would not have seen the crescent, but on the morning of the 3rd you would have seen a very thin crescent probably about an hour before sunrise in the darkish part close to the horizon, visible for about half a handbreadth up until about half an hour before sunrise, fading against the lightening sky in the minutes before sunrise.

On the 2nd you would have seen a thin crescent but still easily visible in the dark sky about two hours before sunrise and about two handbreadths from the eastern horizon.

On the 1st April you would have seen the crescent about 3 handbreadths up 3 hours before sunrise. e.g. moonrise Apr 01 3:25, Apr 02 4:24, Apr 03 5:24, Apr 04 6:26.

So again, I emphasize that the time to visually observe when to keep the new moon is **prior** to the new moon and before **sunrise** rather than after sunset.

With many about to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in a few days time, one thought we might keep in mind, is the exhortation to keep the Feast not with malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1Cor 5:8).

Many interpersonal problems are caused by a failure to replace the former qualities with the latter.

Are we going to keep the Feast this year with malice and wickedness? Who do **we** feel malice towards? Spouse, friend, boss, workmate, neighbour, minister, member? Will we determine to be rid of the malice which in fact causes us to sin in thought and in deed.

What is malice? Malice is a desire to hurt someone else or see something bad happen to them. Malice makes us seethe with hostility to others. It may stem from pride or from hurt feelings or from envy. Instead of esteeming others we loathe them and concentrate on their every flaw and try and expose them to others to help justify our own feelings. Malice is gossiping about someone, rather than having the courage

to try to sort out problems. Malice is rejoicing when someone gets hurt. Its root emotion is hate, not love. It is bearing ill will towards someone. It is feeling malevolent and spiteful and out to 'get' others because of real or imagined wrongs. It is wanting revenge. To see others hurt as much as or more than you have been hurt. It is feeling bitter and allowing that bitterness to grow and harden your heart and crush your spirit—and quench God's Spirit. Malice is wanting evil more than desiring good for another human being. It is unforgiving and grudge-bearing, even years down the road. Malice like pride shows on our face. And it's not a pretty picture.

Sincerity and truth on the other hand are purity and light. Truth makes us free—and that includes free from sin. So many of our problems could be sorted out if we would employ sincerity and truth with others and with ourselves. (The word of God is Truth and that is where our doctrinal problems will be sorted out too, not looking to this person or that—not tossed to and fro by every doctrinal twist and perversion. We must accept the Bible for what it is saying, rather than trying to put our own or other's interpretation to it, rejecting what it is actually saying.)

Sometimes the first step in overcoming our problems or sins is being truthful with ourselves and admitting we do indeed have a problem or sin that is hurting ourselves or others. Sometimes we have to have the courage to go to someone else whose sin is obvious to all but themselves and meekly bring it to their attention because at that stage they are blinded to the truth through the deceitfulness of sin.

If we don't get rid of sin in its early stages it is going to spread and hurt not only one person but many others. If we don't love the truth enough but are prepared to live with a lie, we compromise with sin and then have to endure the pain it brings. By mercy and truth, iniquity is purged.

— Lorna Thomas

RESPONSE: Lorna, I receive a number of posts and articles like yours in regard to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. They usually have two parts: the calendar/chronology and the spiritual meaning. The calendar/chronology parts are almost always different—each author going to the scriptures that they believe are "clear" and interpreting other scriptures based upon those. Each includes the history or astronomy that makes sense to them (e.g. you start the year based on the location of the moon in constellations—you can find scriptures that talk about using the moon and stars for signs, but you cannot find one that says "start the year when the moon can be seen...")

However, when it comes to the spiritual meaning, most of the writers agree. They all have a particular area of emphasis, but they do not contradict each other. I think yours was particularly good and I plan to read it to my family.

The dead sea scrolls and other historical documents prove beyond doubt that there were calendar controversies at the time of Christ. Yet, the New Testament makes no effort to explain them in detail. However, there is a lot of emphasis on learning spiritual lessons. My studies on Eternal Judgment indicate that these lessons are the most important. I will have no difficulty instantly switching to Christ's true Calendar if He miraculously reveals it to me in this life, or in the life to come. Most other believers I know now would say the same thing (probably a few would argue with Christ and insist that they had figured it out correctly). Also, most believers from 300 AD to 1700 AD probably had no good way of knowing what the true calendar was (most history and astronomy was simply not available to most people).

However, if we have not learned the spiritual lessons, we cannot instantly switch to begin doing those things. It takes time to see the malice and wickedness in ourselves for what it is and to ask the Eternal for his way instead. Thanks for your post.

— NSE

Unloading Excess Baggage

LETTER: May 4, 2000

My wife and I for the first time spent this Holy Day at home. Part of the day was spent in reviewing your recent article *How Biblical is the Two-Class System?*. As we were getting on into it, my wife made a comment to me. She said you know if I didn't know better, I would assume you had written that article as that is the line of thought you have been on for some time. My response back to her was that God is directing all of our thought processes if we were in the frame of mind to simply allow him to guide and direct us. I sincerely believe the very work that is going on at this time is that the climate is right for our Father to show us where we have been wrong in the past.

Most of us brought so much excess baggage with us when leaving W. W. and have been so weighted down from it causing us not to be able to see the forest for the trees. It has taken a few years for us to unload ourselves of that awful

weight, and finally come to see we indeed did serve our own creation rather than the creator.

Someone recently said to me they had run completely out of options in regards to who to follow, and were discouraged by it all. This person said, "I don't trust any leader any longer." My answer was, "Well yes, you indeed do have one option left open to you, and that is the very work god has been doing these last few years. This work of men has been exposed for what it is, and now it is time for you to turn your heart toward the one who counts."

I am coming to see that to learn well how not to do things will be an invaluable lesson on out into eternity, and will give us a much deeper appreciation of the right way of doing things long into the future. With our past experiences to draw from, it will be unlikely we could ever be encouraged to rebel against God's way of life any time in the future after what we have been through. We have lots to be thankful for.

You know, we of all people have made an absolute mockery of the first three commandments, and are only now getting into a position to see and understand the reason for it. A few by seeking and searching will come to see things in a different perspective in the days to come. As that happens, it will become God's work rather than a work of men with the fruits following. Those few who meet those conditions will be very content in being just servants of God with all the glory passed on to our Father, and taking none for self. No, all is not lost. The great God of this broad universe is still very much in charge and we still are part of that well thought out plan that was started long before we came on the scene.

Norm, would you send us the Scattered Brethren list. Thank you, and our prayers go with your efforts.

— Bernice and John Kilough, Horseshoe Bend, Arkansas

RESPONSE: I am indeed very thankful that the Eternal has shown many others and myself that we were following men when we thought we were following God. An ardent HWA follower recently wrote me and defended his adherence to everything HWA taught with this scripture: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). I found this nearly blasphemous as Christ was clearly talking about Himself, but this man sincerely believed that Christ and Herbert Armstrong will be there in the judgment to reward him for his diligence.

Nevertheless, if we look at most of history, we see most people were a member

of some religious group, followed it, and died thinking they were following God. I have no idea how God decides who to show the error of their ways and who not to. But the Scripture says he "reveals them unto babes". I keep thinking about this scripture, which I used to classify as just rather obscure:

Matthew 11:20-25 — "Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.' At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.'"

Christ clearly has a way of fairly comparing Tyre, Sidon and Sodom which had little of His truth to the educated Jewish people of the first century who had much truth. He must also have a way of comparing people who were stuck following big religious organizations with those who understood the truth. Fairly judging all of the billions of people who have each lived millions of minutes in millions of different situations seems a complex task beyond belief. But when I look at the complexity of the Universe and the living things that He made, I am confident that He can do it. May each of us please the Eternal in what we do.

— NSE

GCG, LCG or Direct to Christ?

LETTER: May 5, 2000

I read with interest several articles in the latest SN (Jan/Feb). One short article mentioned the apparent loss of a popular web site for old HWA and WCG writings. I would like to mention another site, while not using PDF files, that has numerous old out of print booklets on line in HTML format. The address is

<http://home.sprynet.com/~pabco/index.htm> and it is currently still on line.

I also read your various articles under the topic of "Continuing the Work of the Worldwide Church of God?". You may recall through our previous correspondence that my wife and I have been associated with GCG since leaving WCG in 1995. After the ousting of Mr. Meredith in November of 1998 and the subsequent accusations and counter accusations that ensued, our local congregation in Belleville, IL chose to not take sides and has to this day remained an independent, or dependent (on God and His son) as I would prefer to be called, Church of God. We have not incorporated and in fact have specifically decided that incorporation would be a mistake, at this time, for our group. We have recently decided to conduct our own Feast site this fall although I would prefer to not mention the location until more details are available and contracts have been made. It is my hope and desire to make this site available to all who may be interested in attending and I will keep you posted. Take care and keep up the good work.

— Michael F. Wilson, Mount Vernon, Illinois

RESPONSE: Now that your group is independent, it is free to fellowship and cooperate with any other Sabbatarians who will work with you. You are free to engage in whatever local evangelism Christ makes possible. You can raise your children not to "stay in the XYZ Church of God" till they die, but to assemble each Sabbath with similarly-minded brethren wherever they can find them.

Please send information about your Feast site when it is ready.

— NSE

Like News of Local Fellowships

LETTER: April 23, 2000

I received my latest issue of *Servants' News* yesterday, and I have read most of it already. I must commend you on an excellent issue—maybe the best one yet. I especially enjoy reading about what other fellowships are doing, including Rich Schulz's efforts at the orphanage.

Keep up the good work.

— Lenny Cacchio, Missouri.

Don't Pass On Uncertain Posts

LETTER: November 29, 1999

Following is a website I have found to be very helpful in double checking my e-mail messages

and warnings:

Anti-Virus Research and Development Team:
<http://www.datafellows.com>

I hope this information will be helpful to your readers. I have found in the last few weeks that it is best to check out my e-mails before I pass them on thru the Internet. **Most** all of these "chain-letter" types of e-mails are a "hoax".

A friend and reader of *Servants' News*,
— John Strouth, Noth Carolina

RESPONSE: Thanks for the information. There are a number of other such "anti-hoax" sites in the USA. The Internet can be a powerful means of communicating the truth. As our news media becomes increasingly controlled by big business and government, the Internet provides a way where truth can travel rapidly at a "grass-roots" level. However, this will only work if each person acts as an intelligent filter, passing on only things that they have a good reason to believe are true. If everyone passes on anything just because it sounds exciting, without trying to determine the truth of it, the Internet will become like so much bar-room or playground gossip.

— NSE

Does Anyone Have HWA Evidence?

LETTER: May 3, 2000

Hi Norm & Friends,

I am trying to catch Dr. Lochner who is hard to keep up with. I have tried phoning him but he never seems to be home. According to Robinson's *Tangled Web* there are also manuscripts of the famous tapes [of Herbert Armstrong confessing massive personal sin]. Would you or Pam have any idea about them?

Also, I understand that there was a three hour tape made of the interview with [Stanley] Rader [in 1979] ("60 Minutes"—Mike Wallace) as the WCG hid a microphone under Wallace's chair. One of the CBS anchor men claimed that CBS has a copy and according to the AR website they do too. AR claims that after playing it to the church in Hawaii over 90% of the Hawaiian brethren quit the church. Do you know anything about it? I would like to get a copy—even if I had to pay for it.

Thanks much

— Mary Lane

RESPONSE: I do not know the answers to these questions, but I would be interested in knowing who does. The books of the

Old Testament give the true history of the kings and prophets—both good and bad. The WCG tended to publish only what was good about itself. It is sad that people think they have to "protect God and His Work" by covering up the truth. I think we should tell the truth on the testimony of two or three witnesses. There have been millions of leaders of all kinds throughout history who have lied and distorted the truth to make "their side" look better. I hope every one who believes in God's way has the faith to know that they do not have to join them.

If someone either **knows about these tapes or knows that they are a hoax and the stories about them are false**, I would very much appreciate them contacting us.

— NSE

Origin of Christ and Satan

LETTER: May 1, 2000
Dear Norm,

Have you read the latest Prophecy Flash? The article on the signs in the heaven was interesting **but**, on page 12 Bill writes "Interestingly, it appears that at one time, aeons ago, Lucifer was created about the same time as the Logos, who became Christ..." I would have thought that Bill knew that the Logos was the one that created all things created.

Some of his articles are very good, but when I came to this statement, I have my doubts about his wisdom.

All for now.

— Ed and Betty Armstrong, Murray, Utah

RESPONSE: I am sure that Bill Dankenbring would have an answer for your question. Studying these things is probably more important than studying the latest fashion or entertainment. Rather than answer this, I would like to point out that the origin and nature of God, Christ and Satan has been debated by theologians for years. Churches have split and gone to war over it. People tend to think that those who expound these subjects must be spiritual and "close to God". But do the Scriptures give great praise for those who can explain these things? Look:

[Cornelius,] a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who **gave alms generously** to the people, and **prayed** to God always (Acts 10:2).

For all of us make many mistakes.

Anyone who **makes no mistakes in speaking** is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. (Jms 3:2, NRSV).

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one **in a spirit of gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted (Gal 6:1).

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **but have not love**, I am nothing (1Cor 13:2).

When we give account of ourselves in the day of judgement, I somehow do not think that we will be asked to explain the origins of Christ, Satan and the Angels. But I do think we will be asked about how we treated others, how much of our life we lived for Christ and how much we lived for ourself.

—NSE

Christians and Athletics

LETTER: April 26, 2000

Greetings from North Dakota on this Last Day of Unleavened Bread. We hope you had a nice Feast day. We listened to a tape by Richard Ritenbaugh titled "Be Still"—was a very good tape. It goes on to show that we have to slow down so we can see God's instruction for us and not be so caught up in this world; we thought it proper for this last day of the feast.

I have a question for you. Our girls are in sports basketball and track—they do not compete on the Sabbath. It is hard for them because they would like to. but we have brought them up to rest on the Lord's Sabbath. We tell them to give thanks to Jesus Christ for the talent they have and to be lights to those around them, there is both good and bad in sports we tell them no matter what, win, lose or draw, always give thanks to their heavenly Father and be good sports for all to see. What is your view on sports? And do you have any literature on this subject? [literature request omitted]

Thank you and again have a nice Feast day.

Your friends in Christ,

— Ron & Kathy Volk, North Dakota
e-mail: rkvwgn@daktel.com

RESPONSE: I have written a new article on that subject. Please see this issue of *Shelter in the Word*.

—NSE

Dave Pack Feedback

LETTER: April 20, 2000

Thank you for letting the public know what a liar and evil person Dave Pack truly is, though I don't think it will help those who follow him because they idolize HWA. I hope it will prevent others from considering joining his group. I feel sorry for [names of two men removed] who were Pack's hench men. They realized they made a mistake after Pack turned on them. They went along with Pack's lies as long as he stroked their egos. I am sorry his staff had to learn such a hard lesson, but at least their eyes were open to what a truly evil man Dave Pack really is.

I too have learned a lesson to never be part of a hierarchical church organization. I am a member of a small group in Akron who exercise God's Spirit each Sabbath. We are totally interactive and inter-dependent and we do not play tapes, but we all serve as teachers and ministers in learning God's word. No man leads this group, only Jesus Christ the true head of the Church. We now have a web site: http://members.truepath.com/akron_fellowship. Please feel free to see what we are all about.

Norm, I am very appreciative of your service and all of those who serve on *Servants' News*. We need your paper. May God continually bless your work.

Thanks,

— Will Blair, Ohio

RESPONSE: I appreciate the feedback from one who once attended Dave Pack's congregation. I appreciate the difficulty that many people have had with this situation.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pet 1:6-7).

— NSE

Tapes Do More Harm than Good

LETTER:

I found it quite interesting your evaluation of some of the splintered CoG groups in the Jan/Feb issue, particularly Bill Dankenbring's "ministry". Unlike David Pack who Norm knew quite well, he obviously hasn't spent a lot of time listening to Bill's "sermon" tapes (if that's what

you could really call them), otherwise he wouldn't have gone so easy on him. For some reason, for which I don't really understand now, myself and some other Sabbath keepers listened to Bill's tapes more on than off for close to three years. Much of Bill's tapes, at the beginning of them at least, were taken up with diatribes against anyone who didn't go along with his particular beliefs, especially Pentecost and Passover dates and how to properly keep them.

His speech and manner were often borderline profane. It got to the point where we had to screen tapes because of the newer baptized members and young people who were part of our services. No real *agape* love there for anyone who didn't go along with Bill. This plus his preaching on the necessity of prayer shawls and tzits (Pharisees?) led our group to question why we needed to continue listening to this man who was so full of himself. Like an answer to prayer, when Bill uttered the classic line (or something very much like this) that God had revealed to him the real truth on Passover our group immediately stopped listening to his tapes. Many of us repented of the fact that it took too long to do so. Bill Dankenbring, like so many leading the splinter groups, are doing much more harm than they are doing good. Don't these men realize they will have to answer to God for their teachings?

Take Care,

— Dave Cavall, New York
dcavall@aol.com

RESPONSE: Thank you for sharing your evaluation of the situation. You are right, I have not listened to a whole Bill Dankenbring tape in five years, if ever. I do not spend any long time driving or doing routine work where I could listen to tapes at the same time. If I want to know what somebody teaches, I can learn it from their written material much faster. I probably read transcripts of tapes more than I listen to tapes.

I think Bill Dankenbring's ministry has helped some people and I think it has harmed some people. There were certainly cases where his was **the only** non-WCG Sabbatarian ministry that people knew about. I hope he will continue to do good, and stop doing the things that so many people obviously see as his problems. I have talked to him about them, but was not able to make much progress:

Now if anyone builds on this foundation [Christ] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test

each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1Cor 3:12-15).

We shouldn't try to judge whether a ministry has done "more harm than good" in an "eternal judgment" sense, but we need to decide (as you did) whether we will use a certain ministry's materials and whether or not we will recommend them to others. It is a good thing that fellowships like yours are learning to make these decisions.

— NSE

Are Combat Soldiers Mass Murderers?

LETTER:

January 5, 2000

I sure thank you for the *Servants' News* and the other literature that you have available for us upon request. This is a valuable service.

I also have a question for you. I am a veteran of World War II. I am disabled from wounds I received in combat. Now the question: "Am I a mass murderer, a professional hit man?"

I was attending services a good while back. The minister was giving a sermon on the sixth commandment. I had known the man for many years. During the sermon, he singled out World War II and made the above statement, referring to all the service men in World War II.

Is this a fair judgment of our service to the freedom of this nation?

I would ask you to give me a private answer if you have the time. I was in the 15th Air Force in World War II.

[Literature requests omitted.]

— South Carolina

RESPONSE: I am answering this question here because others have asked it and there are probably many more who have wondered about it. I will keep your name confidential.

The answer from Scripture is not too difficult. But apparently the sermon you heard did not cover it. The sixth commandment is best translated: "You shall not murder" (Ex 20:13, NKJV, NIV, NRSV, etc.) The Hebrew word for "murder" is *ratsach* (Strong's #7523) and is used for unjustified killing—either intentional (murder) or cases where it is claimed to be accidental (but possibly murder). The Hebrew word that means "kill" or "slay" without regard to motiva-

tion is *harag* (Strong's #2026) and is used in nearly all cases that discuss people slain in a war. It is also used to describe the killing of a person who has committed a sin worthy of the death penalty. The people who carry out these acts are not "murderers".

I could not find any verse in the old Testament where the Eternal called someone a murderer for fighting to defend their nation or to attack a nation that the Eternal sent them against. When Saul asked David to kill 100 Philistines to be able to marry his daughter, David went out and killed 200 (1Sam 18:25-27). Was he labeled a mass murderer for it? No. He was not allowed to build the Temple because he had "been a man of war and shed blood" (2Chr 28:3), but he was never called a murderer or told that this killing was a sin.

So does that mean that all one has to do is claim that a killing is a part of a war (maybe even a personal war) and then killing is no longer a sin? No. Notice what David said to Solomon about the leader of his army, Joab:

Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace (1Kngs 2:5-6).

Joab killed men whom he had been fighting against in war, but who later tried to arrange peace. David clearly indicated that this was a sin to be punished. But all of the other hundreds of people Joab killed are not listed as sins. Indeed, God commanded Joshua and other leaders to slay entire nations. The Eternal sometimes blessed his people with no casualties during these wars. The Old Testament makes clear that fighting in these wars that were sanctioned by the Eternal was not a sin.

If we apply these Old Testament laws today, fighting in a war to prevent a country from being ruled by evil forces seems very similar to the Old Testament battles. Most of the Ancient Israelites did not have the Holy Spirit, and neither do most people who fight in wars today. I would assume that you [the writer of this letter]

were not converted when you fought in that war, and therefore can hardly be held accountable for the instructions to brethren with the Holy Spirit.

The issue of whether or not **believers** should become involved in wars is considerably more complex and I cannot answer it all here. Some things to think about are:

- John the Baptist advised Roman soldiers to be honest, but did not tell them they had to resign from the army (Luke 3:14).
- Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was considered a good man while he was a Roman Centurion. There is no record of him resigning his military job (Acts 10).
- But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt 26:52).
- Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Other important questions include:

- Does the Eternal expect people to fight to defend themselves, or will He give the same victory some other way if they simply trust in Him?
- Leaders usually claim a war is helping to defend their nation, but how does a potential soldier know that their primary motive is not power and money for themselves?
- What is the will of the Eternal for each person?

Ultimately, we must live by our own convictions on whether or not we should participate in a war. But to me, it seems foolish to accuse someone for doing something that they believed to be right at the time—especially when so many have benefitted from it.

I am thankful that my own father, you, and so many others fought in World War II. I am much happier to grow up under our present imperfect government than I would be to grow up as some kind of servant under Adolf Hitler's proposed 1000-year Reich.

— NSE

Doctrines and Marines in Philippines

LETTER: January 10, 2000

Thank you so much for the 3 tapes you sent us. I received them last Friday afternoon and played your tape on Eternal Judgment at services the next morning. Everyone was so happy and grateful for your very helpful message. Personally, I find your insight into the study of Eternal Judgment interestingly calming and refreshing. It removes a lot of uncertainties and misconceptions concerning the subject. We pray that God will give you all the inspiration and help you need to get to its true understanding. That would be very profitable to all.

Your article on church government is gaining more interests lately as it continues to be very effective in waking people up. I understand Cesar has some more names to be added to the list of new subscribers. He is just working on getting the complete addresses. He has been hoping to write you soon to give you a more detailed info of the goings-on in the distribution of *SN*, *SW* and other articles as well.

Oh yes, the Y2K thankfully has not caused (so far) a disaster here. But there is an apprehension that the bug may still strike anytime. However, with Y2K threat or not, our country has been beset with too much worrying concerns. The common cry of the people is that there is too much graft and corruption in the government. Our president has kept revamping his Cabinet and changing his advisers. Reportedly though, he is only resorting to a simple reshuffle. No one in the government seems to know how to govern anymore. It is almost impossible to find one honest politician. Every one seems to be looking only after his own interest. No wonder the President's popularity has plummeted to a record low. The poor, who are his best supporters, have also become disappointed.

It is a mess out here. Like today, we suddenly find 500 marines (elite members of the armed forces) reportedly deployed in Metro Manila. The only reason given for this is to help policemen apprehend criminals. To the common citizen it looks like we are under martial law. A senator even commented that the President could be impeached for this.

We can be grateful though that God has given us a way of life that leads out of this mess.

Thank you for all your labor to help so many to understand and appreciate God's truth.

— Priscilla Cardona, Philippines

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouraging words. I am happy that the government paper continues to help people. As I find them, I send it to non-CoG groups

that are splitting off from big church organizations. I hope it will help them.

Most Western Nations have laws against their governments using their armed forces within their own country. Historically, armies have a bad habit of going wherever they want; taking whatever things, supplies or women they want; and not being accountable to any kind of judicial process. This was a major issue when the United States became a nation, and it is a major problem in third-world countries today.

Nevertheless, there seem to be more and more news stories about armed forces being used to help with natural disasters, "keep the peace", or, as you stated "apprehend criminals". May the Eternal bless those who seek to follow Him.

— NSE

When Someone Just Disagrees...

LETTER: January 10, 2000

Hello again Norman,

Your advice to me to "love and help those whom you serve" is great advice and pretty sounding words, but not all of us do it in the same way. You have your way of serving others, and I have mine.

RESPONSE: You are right. 1 Corinthians 13 mentions a number of other ways.

LETTER: My way of serving others is slowed down by people like yourself who refuse to publish my stuff. My way of serving others is similar to what the apostle Paul spoke about in Acts 20:29-31—Paul warned the brethren night and day with tears for 3 years telling them that "grievous wolves" would be entering the churches of God and devouring them after his death.

RESPONSE: "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (2Cor 12:12). If the Eternal is performing signs, wonders and mighty deeds through you, then you should find numerous people coming to you for your God-inspired miracles and doctrine. But if you don't have God-inspired miracles like the Apostle Paul, then maybe people are not as sure that you have God-inspired doctrine. Paul writes of many trials that impeded his ministry, but I do not think he ever faults someone for not "publishing his stuff".

LETTER: Another way I serve, is found in the words of Christ in Matt.7:15. It says: "Beware of False Prophets, which come to you in sheep's

clothing, but inwardly they are 'ravening wolves'. Herbert Armstrong was both a False Prophet and a Wolf In Sheep's Clothing.

If my writings expose him, and divide the ones that 'idolize him', then I feel like I have been doing my job properly. If I don't get a prize for it, then so be it. My purpose is not in the pursuit of a "wolf-hunters prize", but simply to obey the words of Christ and Paul and others on the matter. If you choose to serve Christ thru "sugar-coating" the gospel, and your followers, then go for it.

RESPONSE: I do **not** have followers. If I died tomorrow, my ministry would be over. Yet I do not know of one person who would begin to fellowship with a different congregation or one congregation that would change what they believe or do. I do not know of any people who regard me as "their Bible teacher". And if I find some, I would tell them that they need to first look to Christ and then a variety of brethren with spiritual gifts.

LETTER: I must do what I must do, and you must do what you must do. If you want to keep ignoring the important scriptures I gave you that proved that the apostle John could not have used the Roman times in his writings, and you want to continue to ignore my articles on it, as well as the many other articles I have sent you thru the years, then it's your decision to do so, and there is not a thing I can do about it except warn you not to.

RESPONSE: I read most of what you send, published some of your writing, and published your name, address and e-mail several times. I have prayed that the Eternal will cause everyone who needs your information to write for it. I have not ignored you, I both disagreed with your facts and feel that the issue is less important than many other issues. There are still people in church organizations who are not even sure that it is all right for them to read your papers (or mine).

LETTER: Your statement about H.W.A. forging an organization of "agreement", and that those that disagreed with him being removed from it, etc. is all true, but don't you sort of do the same thing thru the pages of *Servants' News* by refusing to publish the writings of others you disagree with? (You seemed to have learned well from H.W.A.)

RESPONSE: Can you show me where HWA published any lengthy articles or letters by those who disagreed with him or published their contact information so people could get both sides of the story? HWA never publicly mentioned or gave the address to *Ambassador Report*, other

Church of God groups, or books written against him.

LETTER: I now look at Herbert's organization as "the blind leading the blind"! If your calling is to "unite" people or promote a false prophet, etc., then I feel sorry for you. Maybe you need to re-read the words of Christ in Matt.10:34-36. Exposing the wolves, will naturally bring out the swords of those that idolize the wolves. If the idolizers of H.W.A. are in agreement with you concerning the things I brought forth in the e-mail you published of us, then I would be extremely worried if I were you.

RESPONSE: If you have read the last eight issues of *Servants' News*, you must realize that I do not idolize HWA. He taught a lot of truth as well as a lot of error to many people. His personal life seems far from exemplary. I would not want to trade places with him in the Judgment. There is no doubt that I agree with his supporters on some things and disagree on some things. Similarly you and I agree and disagreed on some things. But my beliefs result from reading the Bible and my life's experience. Whether or not HWA supporters (or anyone else) believes the same makes little difference. I'm not worried about who else shares my beliefs.

LETTER: Feeding a bunch of people that idolize a dead false prophet is not something that I would want any part of Norm. If that's love, then you can keep it.

RESPONSE: I do not want it and I do not think it is love. You do not seem to understand me very well. My purpose is neither to support HWA nor try undo everything he did. My purpose is to find and teach important truth. I deal with the writings and teachings of HWA because many of our subscribers learned from him, so I have to specifically show where his teaching was in error. On the other hand, I give away HWA's booklets without his name (as edited by Tom Justus) because I believe they contain truth.

LETTER: If a prize is what you are after, then I think you are going about it in the wrong way.

Sincerely W/ Love,

— Glen Myers;
2975 Gulf To Bay Blvd #507
Clearwater, FL 33759
wolfhunter4u2@yahoo.com

RESPONSE: This is the second time you mentioned a "prize". I am not sure why you are so concerned about it. Before the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they asked about their reward and debated

who was the greatest among them. After they became a "in Christ a new creation" (2Cor 5:17), they did not seem to worry about these things much. Paul simply says "there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Tim 4:8)—no special "apostle to the Gentiles" prize. I cannot remember thinking about "my future reward" during the past five years. I think I would be happy just to hear a hopefully brief judgment on my sins that I did not know about or repent of, and then a "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

I spend much more time thinking about the daily struggle to pray, study, be a good husband and father, read and answer my mail, write articles, serve in my local congregation and put together two newsletters. I **know** that I am not doing this job as well as is humanly possible for me to do—I certainly fall far short of Christ's standards. It is enough of a challenge to live each day through the faith and power of Christ. It is enough of a reward when I feel that is accomplished. But it is accomplished seldom enough to be very discouraging. Nevertheless, I receive enough answers to prayers and encouragement from brethren to keep going. If I thought the Eternal wanted me to do something else, I would.

I am not sure what motivates you to do what you do, but I pray that the Eternal will help you to understand it. I realize that you would stand and fight against the entire world if you thought you had the Eternal's truth on a matter and they did not. Such determination. But please realize that standing against the entire world is of little value if the Eternal does not want you to do it. May He give you peace and help you to understand His will for your life.

— NSE

SN Comments on Ron Wyatt

LETTER: October 8, 1999

In your July/Aug 1999 issue of *Servants' News* on page 4 you make derogatory comments about the biblical archaeologist, Ron Wyatt. May I bring this matter to your attention? It is natural to rubbish something not understood, but that trait is one which does not come

from the Spirit of God but from the devil's entourage, as Jude explained in Jude 10.

You say, "One claim I had trouble with." Then you go on to try and explain that it concerned the receipt of a prophetic word from God about the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant. Unfortunately, a typographical error occurs at that critical point in your account, so the reader is left unaware of what you really mean. Your account reads: "Wyatt claimed that he was walking in Jerusalem with a member of the Israel Antiquities Authority and a voice [text missing] to them where the Ark of the Covenant was located." Some could presume that the word missing was "spoke".

Your unbelief prevents you accepting his claim. Because, apparently, you don't believe that God does speak to anyone today in the way that Wyatt said.

Well, it's certainly unusual for God to speak audibly. But, it has happened. Three instances are: 1) the biblical account of Samuel's call from God, 2) the voice that spoke when Jesus was baptized, and 3) the voice that sounded in the hearing of the crowd before Jesus' last Passover (Jn 12:28). There are other biblical examples, of course. And there are accounts today, especially in Third World countries, of similar occurrences.

God is not incommunicative with an inactive and dry theology, as you promote Him, but vibrantly alive; and those who have living faith in Him hear from Him, even daily. But that is only possible when one fully accepts the gifts of the Spirit, which some disdain as "Pentecostalism". That is all bunkum to you, because your intellect and ego are the centre of your theology, not God. Thus, you reduce faith to the superficial level of mere human intellectualism. Rationalism or pragmatic assent to things in God's Word is the core of your "spirituality". This is nothing more than walking in the flesh, and a failure to appreciate the deeper things of the Spirit.

When a man comes along and claims to have heard from God directly, you dismiss such claims because they are not part of your experience. Your theology doesn't extend that far. So, being bitten with egotistic malevolence, you disparage any such claims from others, despite what Paul exhorted in 1Thes 5:20 "despise not prophesyings". Paul encouraged prophetic utterance in the assemblies (1Cor 14). You don't. Your human "faith" just doesn't stretch that far! Likewise, it balks at Ron Wyatt's claim that God spoke.

However, Ron Wyatt didn't hear a voice from heaven, if that was what you were trying to write. Not only do you disparage his claims, you misrepresent the actual facts. What occurred was that suddenly for reasons that were not immedi-

ately apparent, and against Wyatt's own knowledge he blurted out aloud that the site whereon they stood was Jeremiah's Grotto and that the Ark of the Covenant was in there. Ron Wyatt was as astounded at these words coming from his own mouth as was the hearer. But they were not dismissed, as you have done. Like the prophetic message itself, the faith to believe such words was provided by God, because Wyatt was called of God to unearth these unique discoveries. Many may wonder, "Why Wyatt?" Because he had a wonderful humility, combined with a dramatic boldness, and coupled with a sincere desire to see people saved and brought into the Kingdom of God. He promoted the discoveries which God gave him, not for his own merit, but for truth's sake, and out of his deep love of God.

How do I know? I have met him. I have attended one of his meetings and seen the videos he has produced. I have talked personally with him. I have witnessed the good spiritual fruits of his life and work. Clearly, you have not met him, or if perchance you have, you still have an unwarranted malevolent attitude towards him. Your appraisal totally lacks spiritual discernment. Just because Ron Wyatt may have said things with which you do not agree, does not make him an impostor. But finding fault, as you have done with those who are sincerely trying to promote what they know about God to others and undermining their spiritual credentials by sowing seeds of doubt and distrust, does! That is the work of the Accuser of the Brethren. Those who accuse falsely, malevolently, are the impostors!

Yes, your approach is one which the devil used in the Garden on Eve. He first questioned something of God. He cast doubt upon its veracity. Then, when that doubt was entertained by the victim, it was bolstered by the ready response of unbelief. And so, God's Word was nullified. Thus have you done to the reputation and findings of Ron Wyatt.

Your report of him was far too brief to be comprehensive or accurate. Furthermore, you did him a great disservice by merely highlighting his activities in a negative light. Your accusation that he was supplying videos of his findings "just to make a few dollars" is completely false. He supplied them to promote God, and the discoveries which God gave him that pointed to the accuracy of God's Word. Moreover, despite CoG dogma, there is nothing unbiblical in supplying any materials to others for money. Profiteering from the gospel is out, but it is New Testament policy to earn one's living from the gospel if you are called into Jesus' service (1 Cor 9:11-14). You've bought a Bible, haven't you? And a commentary or Bible dictionary, or religious music on

tape? Why not videos about archaeological finds supporting the Bible accounts? What's wrong with that? Do you resent Wyatt's influence, and just want to undermine his credibility? The facts would indicate you do. The evil spirit of resentment is an easy one to inject into the hearts of gullible and unsuspecting sheep. I ask you to renounce this wrong spirit in you and undo the damage you have done to the work of this man of God.

I would hope that you would be prepared to print this entire defense in your next *SN* with an apology for your presumptuous comments. I include as a postscript a summary article on this subject which you may also care to print. If you are not prepared to do so, I will not hesitate to expose your work to others as fraudulent, because what I perceive in you by the Spirit of God are not the efforts of a man with pure motive. I have not seen you try to bring glory to God by upholding the work of others dedicated to God's service. Instead, your comments reflect a selfish parochial bias, and one which places you and your personal theology centre stage. I'm sorry to say that yours are not the fruits of one imbued with the Spirit of God. They are ones fostered by an evil spirit which promotes self-seeking, competition and strife.

Sincerely,

— Jacob I. Myers [Not Jacob O. Myers of Assemblies of Yahweh]

RESPONSE: I'm sorry for the typographical error. It should say "...a voice <<told>> them where the Ark of the Covenant was located."

I think you misunderstood me completely. I <do> believe that God speaks to people today. Here is a quote from that same article: "Does God tell people things like this? Maybe." I believe that He still does this—but I do not believe that everyone who claims that God speaks to them is telling the truth.

I have friends whom I believe were spoken to by the Eternal or His angels. I believe that the Eternal has directly guided me by dreams and by people He sent to specifically answer my prayers. I believe that the Eternal has guided my life in many other ways. But I do not try to convince other people of these things or try to get them to listen to me because of these things. The Eternal has not done these things in a way that I can prove them to others. Nor has He told me to take them to others. This is nothing more than a fulfillment of Christ's promise to direct the life of each and every believer

as they allow Him. The prophets and apostles in the Bible were given messages **that they were told to take to others.**

I am not sure how you obtained your opinion of the "core of my 'spirituality'", but I believe that what a person does and the nature of his relationship with the Eternal is far more important than his "doctrinal knowledge". That should be clear in my paper on Eternal Judgment. This very day, in our local Sabbath assembly, I spoke for several minutes on 1 Corinthians 14 and the need for directly inspired prophetic speaking.

I did not disbelieve Ron Wyatt because he claimed to receive a direct revelation from the Eternal, but because **his staff was so unco-operative** in helping me find any way of independently verifying any of this story. I believe the Ark is a great treasure. If the Eternal revealed its location to me and one other person, I think I would remember that person's name. I asked about other evidence: Did he still have any of "Christ's blood" that he found or someone's written analysis of it? Did he have a copy of the Israeli "digging permit" or any other Israeli paperwork? Where is the "gold pomegranate" he found? Is anyone else who helped him still alive?

Some of these things they just "no longer had" or "could not remember". Other issues were supposed to be possible to verify, but only if one traveled to Israel to do it. When I made it clear that I had been to Israel twice before and would gladly go again to verify such a great find, they just could not remember that evidence either.

In other words, I was asked to believe this man had seen the Ark, but was to accept it with no independently verifiable evidence. There are many other people who also claim to know the location of the Ark, but have no evidence. Is that the best that the Eternal can do? Did He reveal the true Ark to one man who forgot or lost all the evidence so that his story is little more convincing than the many others who claim to have found the ark? Look at what the Eternal has done with the Bible. There are more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than any other ancient work in existence!

I was even further disturbed by their claims that almost nobody else asked the kind of questions I was asking. Was he saying that he sold tapes only to gullible

Ron Wyatt Continued

[The following letter was written by the same person as the previous. These letters provide a good lesson in basing our faith on facts, not folly.]

LETTER: December 8, 1999

people? I would have gladly paid thousands of dollars to verify such a great find, but I was not going to pay \$20 to further the work of a "phony".

To finance my own ministry, I try to follow Christ's instructions in Luke 10:4-8: those who preach the gospel should accept what others give them. Christ or the apostles **never** went to anyone and said "pay me first and then I will teach you." Nevertheless, I frequently buy biblical materials—just because their publishers understand that point differently than I do does not mean they do not have wisdom on other issues. But when I was asking Wyatt's staff my many questions, their answer was frequently: "Buy our video"—even though they admitted that the video would not answer my questions. Selling their videos seemed more important than proving them to be true.

If the Eternal has revealed the location of the Ark, I would like to know where it is (though this certainly is not necessary to be a good Christian—most believers throughout history have **not** known the location of the Ark). I hoped that your letter and articles would have provided more information. But they continued the same practice of repeating Ron Wyatt's story, praising him, and attacking people who disagree with him.

I do not believe that truth is established by hiding information from people. It should be made available to all so its truth can be learned or so its falsity can be exposed and rejected. I will publish your name and e-mail (address and phone number also if you will send it) so that people may ask for your articles and decide for themselves. If you have a current address for Ron Wyatt's organization, I would be glad to publish that, also.

— NSE

Yes. That's right. And you are asked to do that also with the greatest event in all history upon which your salvation depends: Jesus' resurrection. The point is, when something is from God, those with God's Spirit have a witness in the spirit that it is true. Those who try to verify everything with their intellect fail to do so, because the witness is from God, not man. In Jesus' case, there is enough anecdotal evidence to see that the claims surrounding His resurrection were true. With Ron Wyatt's testimony re the Ark, there is also sufficient evidence on the video he offers. So why didn't you buy it? It could have satisfied your curiosity if you were willing to believe. Or, is it, as I said previously, that you are an unbeliever, and your lack of God's Spirit is replaced with one which is of an evil, hostile, doubting nature?

Thank you [for promising to publish my name and address]. I appreciate that.

— Jacob I Myers; c/o Midnight Ministries; PO Box 29, Aylesbury, HP17 8TL; UK; e-mail jim@midnightministries.org.uk

RESPONSE: So, let us compare faith in Ron Wyatt to Faith in Jesus Christ.

1. Four independent witnesses wrote of Christ and his resurrection: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Peter, James, Jude, Paul and others also wrote about him shortly afterward, filling in some details that the others left out. Their efforts were to make the message of Christ clear. Christ himself returned to dictate the book of Revelation. I used my mind to study and accept truths of the Bible and to reject evolution, humanism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and a few other religions that just don't make sense.

— NSE ☐

By contrast, only two people claim to have seen Wyatt's Ark. Nobody remembers who one of them was and the other one is now dead. Wyatt's followers didn't know anything more about the Ark than Wyatt did. Wyatt said that (paraphrasing) "the Lord told him not to reveal the location of the Ark until it was the right time." Unless Ron Wyatt comes back from the dead, that statement was obviously false because the Lord never revealed it to him.

2. The true gospel was freely preached and distributed throughout the world. Almost any Christian church will let you come in and read a copy of the Bible and will freely answer your questions.

Ron Wyatt wanted to be paid for his video before he would tell me what was in it. The price he was charging was far more than it costs to duplicate and ship a tape.

3. Christ promised the Holy Spirit to confirm to those who believe on him, repent and are baptized. Numerous believers have experienced this power and know that Christ is real.

Ron Wyatt has no Holy Spirit to give and can no longer keep his promise to reveal the Ark when the time is right. Furthermore, most Christians for the past 1,900 years have lived their lives without knowing much about the present location of the Ark. How has that affected their spiritual condition?

I could go on comparing, but that is enough.

Thank you for identifying yourself with Malcolm Heap and Midnight Ministries. I am quite familiar with his prophecies, almost none of which have come to pass. I appreciate your diligence to serve the Eternal, but diligence and truth are not the same thing.

— NSE ☐

"Feast of Tabernacles Sites 2000" from page 20

when we come before the Eternal on His holy convocations, we learn more of what it means to live according to one's faith, yet part of one Body.

Whether it be an interactive Bible study, where everyone sits in a circle, and shares from the Bible what they understand about a topic each chose by lot beforehand. An evening around the keyboard and the guitar for a sing-along. A family concert for glockenspiels, har-

monicans, even poetry. A day where parents can enjoy the same games as their children.

A day for packing into jeepneys and visiting the nearby strawberry farms, or the arts and crafts in the mountain villages. An afternoon of tea and talking of issues we face in real life. An exchange of experiences between adults and young people. An afternoon for trekking some trails on horseback. An evening for a show, with costumes and music. Last year the children filled the hall with

giant ferns and pine boughs until it smelled like a forest. Just try taking them on at the Bible Bowl.

So, are you game enough to come to sail eastward for the Feast of Tabernacles this year?

For more information, please get in touch with: Cesar Lumbuan, e-mail: maxzen@skyinet.net

Note: If you sent information to Servants' News about a site and it is not listed here, please send it again. ☐

Small Groups and Evangelism

The Church of God in Miami

The Church of God in Miami, Florida, is a congregation that has a special emphasis on reaching Spanish-speaking people. Formerly with the Church of God International, they went independent five years ago after checking into the revelations about the personal activities of Garner Ted Armstrong.

Starting with about ten members, their weekly attendance now ranges from 35 to as high as 50. There were 36 at the recent Passover service. Their

minister, Tony Fontao, reports that they have many visitors. Their service consists of songs plus a live-speaker sermon, generally given by Tony, alternated with taped sermons from Tom Justus, John Shavers, and Ron Dart. Many of the members wanted the service to be conducted in Spanish, but Tony felt that was not right since they are now in the United States. So services are in English, with a simultaneous translation into Spanish.

The congregation is heavily involved in distributing the Spanish editions of the booklets printed by the Tom Justus group in Little Rock (see the Jan/Feb 2000 edition of *Servants' News* for more information). Tony's wife, Alieda, started translating these booklets into Spanish when the group was with CGI and has carried on her translating work ever since. They put these booklets in Post Offices and supermarket locations. The congregation also has a web site (www.godschurch.org) that Tony reports is receiving a good response. They also send out videotapes of their services, and now send out a total of nine per week.

Tony feels God has blessed their work since going independent. He is especially personally thankful because, after 24 years of being in the church by himself, his wife, Aleida, was baptized four years ago. In addition, his mother, who hated the church for so many years, was baptized last year in March. Another church member, Wally Elder, was diagnosed with cancer. Not having enough hospitalization insurance, he realized that as a veteran he was eligible for VA hospital benefits. The VA confirmed the cancer diagnosis and a date was set for an operation. Tony relates that prayer was requested from as many church members as possible, including the prayer list published in *The Journal*. Wally was re-tested shortly before the scheduled operation and no cancer could be found. A second test revealed the same results.

The Church of God in Miami hosted a Feast site last year with the House of God Daytona congregation. They met at

Treasure Island, Florida. There were about 120 in average attendance. These two churches will be keeping the Feast together again this year. However, there will be a change of location to the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites in St. Pete Beach, Florida.

Tony tells of an interesting occurrence at last year's feast. One of the church members staying at a nearby hotel happened to be talking to another hotel guest. It turned out this other guest was part of a group of 40 or so people also meeting to keep the feast. This group had found out about the feast days by their own study, never having had contact with the WCG. The group visited the CoG services and was provided with many booklets explaining our CoG beliefs.

The Church of God in Miami meets at 2:30 pm at the Embassy Suites, 3974 N.W. South River Drive, across from the Miami International Airport. Tony Fontao can be reached at 305-385-6306 or call Nelson Moreno at 305-385-2137.

— "One-third Century In CoGs"

[There are two very vital lessons in this message:

1) *Many "Church of God" members find that relatives have a complete change of heart when they leave the corporate churches. These relatives were not against the Bible truth as much as they were against the control exercised by corporate ministers. When the member switches to an independent fellowship, it removes the obstacle, and the relatives can come to grips with just what the Bible says.*

2) *An independent fellowship like this can share the feast with another group and help them. I know of cases where a group learned about the Sabbath and feasts on their own and were overjoyed to find a Church of God group and its literature—then greatly saddened when they found that the only way they could have any ongoing relationship with the CoG group was to completely accept all of their doctrines, send all their money to them, and come completely under their control. How*

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

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

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

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

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

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

could one expect these small groups to buy the line "God works only through one man" when they have been so obviously taught truth directly from Christ and their own Bibles? — NSEJ

Church of God New Mexico

The Church of God New Mexico started in 1980 as a small group of people who broke away from the WCG. Their attendance now ranges from 25 to 40, doubling on the Holy Days. A large percentage of their congregation is children and teenagers.

They send out audiotapes and videos of their services. They also do other evangelism work by distributing the booklets printed by Tom Justus and the Fayetteville-Springdale AR Church of God (see the Jan/Feb 2000 *Servants' News*). These are placed in doctor, dentist, and other offices where church members are customers. Noticing that the rented hall where they meet is used throughout the week by many other groups, the Church of God New Mexico also leaves booklets throughout the hall. These are picked up by the general public as they attend the various meetings. John Shavers, the minister, however, feels the best evangelism still is word of mouth, one-on-one personal evangelism.

Comment: In the context of one-on-one evangelism, this writer recalls Ron Dart of Christian Educational Ministries saying that, despite the billions of dollars spent by the WCG, half or more of its membership increase came about as a result of personal evangelism: a member bringing someone else into the church.

I recently evaluated my own acquaintances still in the Churches of God. It surprised me to realize how many are related to one another by blood or by marriage. It seems evident each such family structure is a result of a person who was influential in bringing in one, two, three, sometimes four or more new people.

As Mr. Dart further points out, the WCG increase came about even though the organization strongly discouraged members from reaching others on their own. He then goes on to ask, What could

have been the results if church members had actually been encouraged to invite others?



John notes that their church is listed in the Yellow Pages under Seventh Day Church groups. He reports that this listing brings in a large number of telephone inquiries. About ten percent of the callers will visit a church meeting.

The Church of God New Mexico meets at 1:30 pm every Sabbath at the Learning Lab, 1224 Pennsylvania N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico. Sabbath School starts at 1:00 pm. John Shavers can be reached at (505) 883-1614.

— "One-third Century In-CoGs"

Heartland Fellowship

Heartland Fellowship is a Church of God group in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area. They started in March 1996 as a result of the changes that took place within the Church of God Inter-

national. They have an attendance that averages from 18 to 20.

Before the worship service, from 1:30 to 2:15 pm, they have an interactive Bible study. The worship service begins at 2:30 pm. It consists of Bible readings (anyone can volunteer for this, men or ladies), songs, and then a sermon, generally given by the pastor, Len Neubert.

The Heartland Fellowship is using the latest technologies in their evangelistic efforts. For example, they are using public access television to sponsor a one-hour long video sermon from Christian Educational Ministries (Ronald Dart). This is shown over Warner Cable Cincinnati Channel 15 for those subscribers with a box, Channel 22 for those without the box. It is shown on Sundays at 9:30 am. They also sponsor the Christian Educational Ministries radio program, "Born to Win", on local radio station WPFB, 910 on the AM dial, Tuesdays at 10:00 am, and Fridays at 1:00 pm.

They also have a web site: <http://home.fuse.net/heartland>

They were able to purchase their own building in July last year, buying a church building formerly used by a Baptist church. Len emphasizes that visitors are always welcome. Having their own building that holds 120 people, there is plenty of room! The address is 3200 Manchester Road, Middletown, Ohio. Len may be reached at 513-777-8260, or Wayne Schatzle may be reached at 513-777-1756.

— "One-third Century in-CoGs" 📖

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

Sitegen, Inc. (<http://www.sitegen.net>) has volunteered to help us host 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 send e-mail to (upper/lower case does not matter):

info@ServantsNews.com and info@ShelterInTheWord.com

“Are We Living in the ‘Last Days?’” from page 1

pointed out many areas (debt, morals, corruption, military strength, etc.) where the USA was in greater trouble than it had ever been before. I specifically remember telling him that I thought our country could continue to function for 10 or 15 more years. He authoritatively disagreed with me—insisting that the “last days” were already upon us. He and many of his colleagues have now passed away and the end is not here.

Actually, the history of most prophetic interpretation is a lot like that. People conclude that they are the last generation upon which the “end of the world” will come. They write books, give lectures and convince big groups of people that they have “the key” to prophecy. Unfortunately, nearly all of this has been wrong—the events did not happen when or how they were “supposed to”.

If we are to understand Bible prophecy, then we must do something different than previous generations of prophetic teachers. They typically equate world events with specific prophecies, interpret symbols, add up years, and then work it all into a “prophetic framework” that will convince a lot of people that the teacher “understands prophecy”. People with just a little religious conviction tend to have an uncertain feeling of the future, so they may “get serious” and change their lives when they hear someone who seems to understand the complexity of Bible prophecy. To the extent that they stop living a life of sin and begin to follow God, this is good. But then they may join the church group that is preaching the prophecy, which can have an opposite effect. Bible prophecy no longer motivates them to change their lives as much, because they are in “the church” that has it all figured out, and they know exactly when everything is going to happen. The individual’s situation further worsens when the prophetic framework unravels and fails to come to pass. At that point, some people “give up on God” when there was nothing wrong with God. There was only something wrong with a false prophecy teacher.

What can we do to better understand prophecy from the Scriptures? First, we can be more open and honest with our-

selves and be willing to look for and consider scriptures that disagree with our prophetic theories. Some people might call the consideration of opposing viewpoints “confusion” or a “lack of faith”. If God has clearly spoken, then looking for scriptures against Him is clearly a lack of faith. On the other hand, looking for scriptures against the teaching of a man is not a “lack of faith”, but a sound “Berean” attitude (Acts 17:10-11).

Second, we can go to the New Testament and see how its authors dealt with Old Testament prophecies. This article cannot cover all we could learn, but it will focus on the words “last days”.

But **this is** that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:16-17, KJV)

Peter is directly quoting from Joel 2:28. Note that we establish two things in this passage.

What can we do to better understand prophecy from the Scriptures? First, we can be more open and honest with ourselves and be willing to look for and consider scriptures that disagree with our prophetic theories

1) Peter is applying the passage in Joel to his **own** time, which means he considered “the last days” to include his own time. Yes, we realize that there could be a “dual fulfillment”, that perhaps Peter was referring to a “former last days”, and the scripture will be fulfilled completely in some “later last days”. Nevertheless, Peter says nothing about this being an “initial fulfillment” or that what he was doing was an exception to some “prophetic rule”. Peter clearly notes that the “last days” didn’t mean some specific time right before the end, but included his own time—at least the “beginning” of the last days as they relate to Joel’s prophecy.

2) We can make a connection

between the Joel 2:28 Old Testament Hebrew for “last days” with the corresponding Greek phrase in the New Testament. The writer of Acts must have used an equivalent expression to translate the words from Joel. This allows us to find other references in the New Testament to “last days” which use the same Greek wording.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these **last days** spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb 1:1-2, KJV).

Here, the author of Hebrews is referring to his own time as being included in the “last days”. It is the same phrase as in Acts. The word for “last ” in both cases is *eschatos* (from the same root as we get the word “eschatology”—the study of “last things”). Strong’s defines it as “farthest, final (of place and time)”. The word for “day” is *hemera* in both verses—meaning a literal 24 hour day or a general period of time (e.g. “It was the day of prosperity”).

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for **the last days** (Jms 5:1-3, KJV).

The same Greek phrase is used again. One could claim that this is a prophecy, but that does not fit with the context of the rest of the book. James was clearly addressing the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” (Jms 1:1) and lists many things that they were doing and gives them many things to change and do. There are no words anywhere else to indicate where a prophetic part might begin or end. James certainly seems to be speaking to rich men in his own time.

Similarly, the Apostle Paul seems to be addressing his day as the “last days”.

This know also, that in **the last days** perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-

minded, lovers of pleasure s more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away** (2Tim 3:1-5).

One could claim that this was just a prophetic word by Paul for some people 2000 years after he wrote. But from the context it is abundantly clear that he was addressing people in his own day, and giving them advice. If this were something to occur many hundreds of years later, why does Paul begin by telling them “this know” and end by telling them to “turn away” from the men he describes? If this were a future prophecy, shouldn't he be emphasizing that they write it and save it so that others will remember it when it happens?

This does not negate the concept that there are also “later last days”, but we are asserting that it is, indeed, possible, that the “last days” just may, from God' s point of view, have started in the first century. Suppose we use the “a day is with the Lord as a thousand years” principle (2Pet 3:8) and compare the 7-day week to a 7000-year plan of the Eternal (the Sabbath day representing the Millennial Kingdom of Christ)? Days 5, 6 and 7 (millennia 5, 6 and 7— from Christ's birth to the end of the Millennial Kingdom) would be the three “last days”. We are not proposing that as an “iron clad” truth of Scripture, but we think a real mistake is made thinking that we have got God's Formula all figured out and now all we have to do is plug in a few dates and names and we can “crack the code” that Daniel sealed.

We are not suggesting that people stop studying prophecy. Both of this article's authors love to study and crack a code as much as the next person. **We are just suggesting that we all stop joining the ranks of the millions of Christians throughout history that thought they had prophecy figured out but didn't.** We need to ask the Eternal for His understanding of prophecy for the time that we really need it. Peter understood the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from Joel 2:28 and applied it to his day—even though the next few verses (the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood) apparently did not apply to his time.

Nearly all of the New Testament was written before the devastation of the Jewish nation in 68 through 70 AD. Some was probably written only a few years

before. There are plenty of comments about the difficult times in which they were living, but the New Testament contains virtually no prophetic speculation about the timing of Jerusalem's destruction (or even potential years for Christ's return). Nevertheless, history shows that a great many did flee Jerusalem when it was surrounded by armies a couple of years before it fell. Many probably remembered Christ's words and understood that it applied to them, at that time:

the Eternal could hold back the disasters and allow us to live in peace for any number of additional years

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20).

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

We believe that statement. Lots of prophecy teachers quote it. But it does not mean that everyone who *interprets prophecy* is a prophet or even a servant of the Eternal. Looking backward, it seems that this statement proves that many church organizations have **not** had any of “His servants the prophets”. How many church leaders said something like, “God has shown me that I will soon die and the man I appoint will undo most of my teaching”? How many said, “God has shown me that my church group is about to have a massive split”? Or did the leader “proclaim” unity just before his group split? How many church leaders said, “God has shown me that I will be voted out of my own group”? What person today clearly prophesies major world events and is always right?

The purpose of this article is not to stop anyone from studying prophecy in depth, or from reading the books and listening to the messages of prophecy teachers. The purpose is to help each of us **not** to be a part of the “prophetic problem” by dogmatically asserting prophetic interpretations that the Eternal has not given us. We clearly need to read the prophetic parts of the Bible so we know what they say. We clearly need to see that evil will be punished, good will be rewarded and that the Eternal will

judge everyone. But rather than spend hundreds of hours with tables of numbers, years, symbols and national identities, maybe we should spend more hours in prayer, asking the Eternal to show us what we need to understand. This is what Joseph and Daniel did (Gen 40:8; Dan 2:28; 2:28). We probably also need to spend more time on **becoming** the kind of humble servant to whom the Eternal will reveal His secrets.

What happens if the Eternal does **not** show us what these prophecies mean? Then we simply will not know—and we will be **better off** than the millions of people who **thought** they understood prophecy, but believed an untruth. If “the end” is not coming in your lifetime, do you really need to know when it will come? We have met numerous people who did not pursue their college or career goals, did not buy a house, did not marry, had fewer children, did not save for retirement, did not do any number of things because they thought they were already living in the “last days”. Nearly all the people that we know who made such mistakes did it because of their own or someone else's “prophetic study”—but **not** because they believe that the Eternal directly revealed it to them.

Do not misunderstand us! We are **not** saying, “there are many more decades before the return of Christ.” The world situation, from a political and historical perspective, is probably as dangerous as any time in history. The world is full of evil leaders pursuing selfish interests. Weapons of mass destruction are now available essentially to anyone who has enough money. A globe-encircling disaster could happen at any minute. But the Eternal *could* hold back the disasters and allow us to live in peace for any number of additional years.

Let us neither be lax, as if we had a much time, nor fearful, seeking a place of escape: Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods (Matt 24:44-47). ☞

— Norman Edwards and Pam Dewey

"Truckers Study" from page 2

ments of the world. It is also a springboard to discuss the political wisdom that we find in the books of Moses. Under that system, the king was held to the same standards as everyone else (Deut. 17:14-20).

We concluded the study by reading Isaiah 2:1-5, with the encouragement that in the end God wins, and his Kingdom will be on the earth. That Good News should be our focus.

[Jesus reserved his worst criticism for the leaders of his day who had much knowledge, but used it for their own advantage, not to help all the people. When John the Baptist came in rather unglamorous circumstances, the leaders said, "He has a demon." — NSE]

March 5, 2000:

Most of the Bible study today was a one-on-one with a trucker from California. Near the end we were joined by another gentleman from Pennsylvania.

In chatting with the first trucker, I learned that he was first "saved" (as he calls it) when he was in the military, but drifted away and ended up in a drug and alcohol lifestyle. Through participation in Alcoholics Anonymous he was able to overcome those destructive habits and sought to reconnect with his spiritual roots. This is two weeks in a row that we heard a story of how AA helped someone overcome addiction and pointed them toward God as ultimate power in overcoming.

Ultimately, though, it was his family (wife and children) who started to attend church and study their Bibles, and their interest encouraged him to follow their lead.

He is currently reading in Genesis about the life of Jacob, and we discussed how Jacob's name literally means "Deceitful" (see the Hebrew of Jeremiah 17:9). Imagine introducing yourself to someone and saying, "Hi! I'm Deceitful." The name fit, but he met his match in Laban and changed during his 20 years of servitude. Finally, he wrestled with God, showing strength of character, and God not only blessed him, but also changed his name to Israel.

The story is fascinating on several levels, not the least of which relates to Jacob's persistence. He would not let go

of God, even though God told him to. When he didn't let go, God (rather than cursing him) blessed him. How often do we just give up on God when holding on a little longer is all that God requires? And how many of us would feel comfortable arguing with God in such a situation? Yet we see example after example of people of God doing just that, and God honoring their wishes! This led into a brief discussion of the parable in Luke 18 about the widow and the unjust judge, and how her persistence won her the request.

Both truckers today believe there is a revival going on in this country. Their evidence is anecdotal, but there is a growing body of interesting anecdotes that we have begun to see.

The second trucker related some interesting stories about his home church. He comes from a town of 300, and 100 of them attend his church. He obviously respects the pastor of the church greatly, and he says that he himself dedicated himself to God (as opposed to just going to church) when someone close to him died after a long illness, and he observed the comfort that the pastor afforded to the dying man. He also says that for some uncanny reason, sermons time after time cover subjects that he and his wife have talked about just during the prior week, even following the outlines of what they have studied together. It has become a joke between them and the pastor that he must have their house bugged.

As a dedicated and convinced Sabbath/Holy Day keeper who holds to the classical church of God doctrine, the spiritual experiences of people who are not of our church often surprise me. I have become convinced that God is working with these people on some level, and it is a joy to have my life intersect with theirs. I will remember the lesson taught me by the first trucker today, who is so thankful to God for turning his life around. "All that I am today", he says, "is because of Him."

As a final item our congregation helps sponsor the Born to Win radio program on a local station. It happens to air at the same time we are at the truck stop. We are making arrangements to have a tagline added to the end of the broadcast inviting listeners to join us. The station broadcasts from a location just a few miles from our Bible study.

[I have often wondered how many times this scenario has repeated. Joe (or Jane) decides, for whatever reason, to dedicate his life to God. He reads the Bible, prays, attends services, tries to love his neighbor as himself, repents of his sin, gets baptized and has hands laid on him to receive the Holy Spirit. His life completely changes and many people think he is a wonderful example. During his study, he hears from a group that teaches the Sabbath, Holy Days and other Bible truths. When he visits the group, he is amazed that he is treated like an unconverted person—one that does not know God. Nobody in this group wants to hear what God has done in his life, they just want to teach him doctrine. So Joe concludes that only "spiritually dead" groups keep the Sabbath and Holy Days, and does not study them again.

I am not saying that everyone who claims to know God, does know God. But we can never be effective in teaching others, if we automatically assume that God has not worked with them. We must remember that Christ said many positive things about the spiritual condition of some of the people he met—before any of them were baptized or received the Holy Spirit. — NSE]

March 19, 2000:

Humility is a good thing to experience from time to time. We had four truckers today (including a husband/wife team) who knew their Bibles well and had things to teach. In these studies it is easy to succumb to the temptation to dominate and force it to go in a direction that I want it to go as opposed to the direction that the Holy Spirit is leading it.

I opened by asking if there were any questions or insights that the truckers wanted to share, and one trucker began talking about trials, and that he has been facing some. His belief appeared to be that trials are a result of our own sins, and we used that as a jumping off point into a discussion of why good people suffer. We discussed the book of Job and the experiences of Joseph, combining those experiences with comments in both James' and Peter's first epistle about the trying of one's faith works patience, and that often times we do suf-

fer even though we are doing right. Having said that, suffering sometimes does come as a result of sin.

My desire was to try to guide the discussion into one about the Passover and its meaning. We talked about physical healing, and I pointed to the scripture in 1 Peter 2:24 – “by whose stripes we are healed”, and combining this with 1 Corinthians 11. I wanted to get into a discussion of the symbols of the bread and the wine, which we were able to discuss briefly, but then one of the truckers picked up on the attitude that the Corinthians were exhibiting toward each other. It was obvious that they were unworthy to take of the bread and the wine because they didn't get along very well.

I then turned to John 13 and the foot-washing, and I was surprised that three out of the four truckers had been in churches where this is practiced in a literal sense. We thus talked about the meaning of this ordinance from several angles. First, Jesus took on the form of a servant and expects us to do the same. One trucker pointed out that Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 5:9-10 say that a widow should not be “taken into the number” unless she had first served the church and “washed the saints' feet”. If you help others, then you can expect others to help you in your hour of need.

Second, Peter first refused to have his feet washed because he was too proud. Peter felt he didn't need anyone's help, but Jesus later in John's gospel tells him that he would be led where he didn't want to go. Peter needed to learn that he was not self-sufficient.

Third, Jesus washed Judas' feet even though he knew that Judas was about to betray him. And that of course leads back to the whole attitude problem that we see in 1 Corinthians 11.

The discussion then turned to other subjects, such as what the world would have been like had Adam and Eve not sinned, which I then pyramided into reading scriptures relative to the new heavens and the new earth, and scriptures in Isaiah that talk about the Messianic Age. In other words, the world will be restored and all mankind will be able to see that without God we can't make it work.

The lady wanted to share with us some things she has been contemplating relative to what it means to be God's

children—that we have “His DNA” and therefore must take on His characteristics. Just as DNA reproduces itself, so we must also go out and reproduce ourselves spiritually. And we must become like God, literally in His image.

The study lasted about two hours today, and all of us were amazed at how quickly the time went. While I was a bit disappointed that I was unable to unload the Passover material on them, I must conclude that it just wasn't the time for it.

Afterwards, the lady asked me where I attend church and I told her about our congregation here and that we are a Sabbath-keeping church. She said she thought I was going to say that I was in the “Church of God in Prophecy” because our understanding of the millennium is similar to theirs. I have never heard of this church, but perhaps someone who is reading this can fill me in on its beliefs.

[I used to try to keep track of all of the groups that teach doctrines that I once thought were unique to Church of God groups, but I have given up. There are a lot of independent groups and individuals that are willing to read their Bible and learn whatever truth that God teaches them. — NSE.]

March 26, 2000:

Today's three attendees were a husband and wife from Canada, and one of the men who attended last week.

I began with Acts 17 and the example of the Bereans who searched the scriptures to check out whether what Paul was telling them was so. As a result of this, they believed. That is an example for us to check out what people tell us about the Bible as opposed to just blindly accepting what we have been taught.

I then asked them what the phrase “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” means. The fellow from Canada got a little agitated at this, for he had guessed my religious background, but in spite of that we had a very good study of 1 Corinthians 5, especially the part relating to Paul's use of leaven as a metaphor for sin and how it spreads. He related how in his home church in Canada, one of the deacons had committed the sin of thievery (against the church's assets, no less), and how the process of resolving the issue nearly split the church. As he described the process by which they

handled the problem, it was evident that they were attempting the Matthew 18 method. He pointed out that there was no way that the problem could be hid from the congregation, and rather than risk the vagaries of the rumor mill, they thought that it was best to make the information public. The deacon in question was told that he would be welcomed back into the fellowship upon repentance, but he could not be given a position of responsibility because the bond of trust had been broken.

Previous to this, I had asked about verse 7 (purge out the old leaven) and what that means. The answer they gave related to the leaven of the Pharisees, and that we no longer need to keep the Old Testament laws. This answer was given with a very slight hint of hostility. I said that I understood the answer (Jesus referred to the leaven of the Pharisees), but I pointed to the context of Paul's statement, going back to verse one. Clearly, Paul was referring to the leaven of sin. As with this issue of leaven, metaphors can stand for different things in different parts of scripture. The lesson I learned here is to keep cool and focused when someone is getting a little testy—show them that there is nothing outlandish at all in the study of the Holy Days. Rather than approaching them from the point of view of God's Holy Days vs. pagan holidays, it is best to take an entirely positive approach. Rather than telling them about what is wrong with Easter, I showed them what is right with Passover.

They seemed to enjoy the take on 1 Corinthians 5 and its obvious reference to the Passover and becoming personally unleavened. So we went to Exodus 12 and discussed the symbolism of the lamb without blemish, the separating of the lamb on the tenth day of the month, and how that relates to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the tenth day of the first month. A number of scriptures were discussed, including John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:19, and John 12. We also discussed how the very moment of Jesus' death corresponded precisely to the time when the High Priest was sacrificing the Passover lamb.

Another interesting discussion related to the law and how Jesus magnified the law. We were pretty much in agreement about the applicability of the Ten Commandments to Christians, and we discussed the Sabbath in a non-confronta-

tional way. Now that I think about it, my comments on the Sabbath were made on the assumption that these people are Sabbath keepers, which they are not. Perhaps that was good. I explained how the Sabbath was a blessing to the Israelites, who had just come out of slavery. God was giving them a day off, something that they never had before, along with instructions to give all their hired a day of rest. It should have been a blessing—a day of liberty—but they had turned it into a burden by loading it down with their own rules. Jesus broke those man-made rules and revealed that the day should be a delight, a day of healing, a day to do good thing for others (Isaiah 58).

Today's study was shorter than most, but we had some good discussions. I should also add that the fellow who joined us for the second time, although a quiet man, is a very deep thinker. Two weeks in a row he has grasped the importance of the points we made, as evidenced by some of the comments he has made along the way.

April 2, 2000:

We had no visitors today until 9:30, and then one trucker made it an unusual visit. We meet all kinds of people, and this one was by far one of the most interesting—but by no means inspiring. Some months ago Arlo told me about a virulently anti-Semitic trucker, an immigrant from Germany. When our visitor came through the door this week, Arlo recognized him. The fellow spoke with a thick Prussian accent, and I knew immediately who this fellow was.

I want to relate what happened today only because it gives insight into a way of thinking that is foreign to most of us, but I believe it is important to understand the worldview and the assumptions behind it. Arlo went off to other things, and the Prussian gentlemen and I had about an hour and a half discussion, and I only hope that I can relate all that was discussed accurately.

First, he said that he preferred the Old Testament, but he seemed to be poorly versed in even that. He said the Bible is a history book (though a corrupted one) and people made it into a book about religion. He was not the least bit interested in the Bible definition of religion (James 1:26-27), not even in the observation that the Bible describes a way of life.

"Jews are the cause of all the prob-

lems in the world. Stalin was a Jew. Hitler was a Jew. They are obnoxious, greedy people who are trying to take over the world." I asked him if he ever spent time with any Jews, and of course he had not. "But all Jews are rich and they became rich by cheating others." I asked him how he could judge an entire race by the actions of a few. I pointed out that I am Italian. Should I be held responsible for the actions of the Mafia? He said the Mafia has done some good things for their people (which is of course a nonsequitur). Having grown up in a part of the country with a strong mob influence, I begged to differ. I also asked him to stop using anti-Semitic epithets in my presence.

"Did you know that the National Socialist Party in Germany during the 1920's, 30's and 40's was not the Nazi Party? 'Nazi' was actually a contraction of 'National Zionists'." No kidding! That's what he said!

I found it interesting that his worldview says that a person is responsible for the actions of the leaders of those of the same ethnic background. For example, all Jews should be held responsible for the beliefs of Karl Marx and the Jewish leaders of the communist world. That view even extended to himself and his German heritage. It is easy to see why this mindset was important to Hitler's rise. On the one hand those who supported Hitler could say they were only following orders. On the other, they were abrogating their own personal freedoms and were calling on their own heads the blood of the millions who died.

His general approach to the people's relationship to the state was evident in his view of the Bible from the perspective of US history. To him the Bible is a good book that should be honored because it united the United States. It is not good because it is true (in his view it is not true), but because it was a means of controlling the people and creating an orderly society. Under this approach, the ends justify the means, which is of course precisely the general philosophy followed by despots everywhere. To tyrants, the state is of greater importance than the individual and anything done to further the agenda of the state is by definition moral. As we all know, the Bible is a book about freedom. That freedom is tightly bound to the dignity of each and every human being as a unique cre-

ation and son of God. It is not about the supremacy of the state or any other humanly-devised hierarchy. Indeed, Godly leaders are told that we should not do as the gentiles, but that true leaders are the servants of the people. It would do us all well if the church as a whole came to understand that. The founding fathers of this country sure did. But I digress.

I told the fellow that I am not about to claim responsibility for Mussolini just because I have Italian blood in my veins, nor will I claim responsibility for Bill Clinton just because I'm an American. We are each individually responsible to God.

I asked why God made man, and he started to disparage the idea of going to heaven, to which I agreed. I asked him to show me in the Bible where it says we are going to go to heaven and gaze at God for all eternity. I pointed out that the Bible nowhere says anything like this. But why did God make man? I shared with him Hebrews 2 and the passages in the early chapters of Genesis about man being made in God's image. What does it mean to be made in God's image? Essentially, God wants us to be like Him, and God wants to share His creation with us. The Bible says that we shall reign on the earth, and that eventually all things—the entire cosmos—will be put at our feet.

That seemed to catch his interest, but he seemed more interested in spewing out more Jewish conspiracy theories. I pointed out to him that I have heard more conspiracies than you can shake a stick at, and each theory has its own set of villains behind every rock. Some are centered around a German conspiracy, some around a Vatican conspiracy, some around the Illuminati, some around the Freemasons, some around secular humanists, and some around communists. Take your pick. Why should his theories be any more valid?

Here's another one you'll love: "The Bible would be okay if we could get all the Jews out of it." Again, I told him that you can't lump all people from one ethnic group together. The Jews are as diverse a people in belief and practice as any in this country. Some are rich, some are poor. Some are devout, some are agnostic. Some are liberal, some are conservative. Of course he wouldn't know that because he never has had any Jewish friends.

“The Jews think they are superior to all other people.” I pointed out that every nationality feels that way. Russians think they are superior. Chinese think they are superior. The British think they are superior. Americans think they are superior. I left out the Germans, but he got my point—so what if the Jews think they are superior? Every ethnic group has some of that.

And of course he had nothing good to say about Jews marrying non-Jews. In his view they are just trying to blend in with the population at large so that their children can have Aryan-looking features. I pointed out that I married a German girl, but it had nothing to do with infiltrating the Aryan race. Maybe I married her because I loved her?

In a way I found this conversation rather engaging, if nothing else to gain an insight into a mindset that I hope is totally foreign to all of us. Yes, there are still people like this running around, even within our own borders. It is a totally evil and deceptive worldview. May God spare all of us from similar delusions.

Arlo called me this afternoon to see how things went, and he pointed out that maybe we can plant a seed here and there and get him thinking about a few things. We shouldn't lose hope that one day he might repent and even be in the first resurrection. If you think about it, the fellow made it a point to come up to the Bible study today for his second visit. Maybe he is searching.

[Those who teach much be prepared to see the evil of the world—just as God sees the evil. But those who hate usually know little about those whom they hate and have even less interest in learning more. Sharing real knowledge is sometimes the first step to reconciliation. — NSE]

April 16, 2000:

Nothing overly exciting to report today. Right at starting time a trucker came in, and I asked him if he was there for the Bible study, and he said no. He was just going to sit back and listen. Since he was the only one there, Arlo stepped out for a while and I sat down with the trucker and began a conversation.

As a broad brush, this conversation was a refreshing contrast to the one I had with the Nazi truck driver that I had a couple of weeks ago. It would have been

interesting to have had the Prussian and this African American in the same room. The guest this week told me that he had been in the Marine Corps for 12½ years and was an MP and a weapons trainer. He left because “it was time”. He lost a friend in a training accident and just realized it wasn't for him any more.

There were a number of discrepancies in some of the things he was saying, which I won't bore you with, but the numbers just didn't add up, and so I doubt some of what he was saying. Having said that, I hope he was being honest when he said that the birth of his son a couple of years or so ago changed his life. Now that he has this responsibility, he no longer takes chances that he once took. Based on what he was saying, his wife and son are the most important things in his life. He believes strongly in personal responsibility and is upset with those of his own race who want to blame the white man for all their problems. As he says he tells them, the white man didn't make you do drugs, or rob that store, or rape that woman. You did it. We have enough problems making it in this society by being black. Why are you making it even harder on yourself?

Another trucker dropped in at about 9:45, and Arlo talked separately with him. He's a single fellow, very devout, who is having a hard time finding Christian women. Arlo told him about the power of prayer, and I pointed out to him the principle in 1 Corinthians 7 and Philippians 4:11-13 about accepting the state that he is in and using the freedom he has as a single man to serve God and man. Those of us who are married often have other responsibilities that hamper our ability to serve.

[When I was single, I would hear marriage sermons and think, “getting along is easy, finding a mate is the difficult thing.” Now that I have been married for many years, when I hear singles talk about the difficulties of finding a mate, I think: “finding a mate was easy, its working together with a mate and children that is difficult!” We all need to learn to have compassion for others and try to help them—even if their situation is different from ours. — NSE]

April 23, 2000:

Before the Bible study, one of the employees, a young man, came in to talk

and was a bit distressed. One of his fellow employees had told him that Jesus did not rise on Easter Sunday. Not knowing exactly what he meant (that Christ didn't rise at all or that he rose at a different time), I reassured him that in fact Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, but that his friend was right about the timing issue. I briefly mentioned the three days and three nights statement and told him that I would try to find something for him to read on the subject, which I'll bring to him next week. He took with him a short tract that shows the evidence supporting the fact of the resurrection.

Guests today included a couple, a man from the community, and finally a gentlemen who joined us for the third time.

I began the Bible study today by announcing that I have been feeling a bit puny for the past day or so after witnessing the events of the weekend involving the storming of the Gonzalez household in Miami. I asked them to turn to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Knowing that I would be unable to maintain my composure if I read it, I asked one of the others to read it:

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

We discussed the state of the nation, but I also wanted to point out that God has a plan to bring peace to the earth. Christ will return and the government of God will finally reign on the earth.

The gentleman from the community asked a question regarding why so few are Christians. What about salvation for the Buddhists and Hindus of the world? From this we discussed the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection to judgment.

Finally, I gave a short message on how we are not saved by the blood of Christ. Romans 5:9-10 says we are justified by his blood, reconciled by his death, but **SAVED BY HIS LIFE**. Thus it isn't just his death that is important, but His resurrection gives us newness of life, both so that we can have eternal life, but also so that we can walk in a new way (Romans 6:4). Going back to the original theme, the way this country must repent is one person at a time. The walk we walk, the lives we live, must be

a worthy reflection of the Father. Too often people will look at Christians and say, "If that's a Christian, then I want nothing to do with it." We must walk in that newness of life so that others will see and know and desire to follow. Simply getting the "right" people in public office won't save this country. The spirit of the people needs to be reformed, and that's something we can

do one by one, face to face, neighbor to neighbor.

Helpers of Your Joy Ministries would like to offer you a free sermon tape. Why do you attend church services? So often people go home from services feeling discouraged, and yet the writer of Hebrews tells us that we should encourage one another daily (3:13). In a sermon entitled "Encourage One

Another", Ramon Coleman encourages us to use Sabbath services as a time to think and teach about positive things. If you would like a copy of this sermon, please send me your mailing address via e-mail.

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**"Understanding Daniel 2"
from page 7**

sive civilization "don't count". It is not even fair to say that these empires ruled over the "known world" of their time. Historic evidence shows they had at least minimal interaction with the East—people whom they did not rule. To be honest, God stopped the building of the tower of Babel, and there have never been any "world-ruling" empires since.

However, we can say these kings ruled **"the land"** in the Middle East, the land God gave to Abraham—Palestine as some people call it. Nebuchadnezzar, the "head of gold" ruled over the land of Israel when the prophecy was given. The prophecy ends with Christ returning, who will rule from the land of Israel. Daniel 2 should probably say that this final kingdom will rule "the whole land". We can look elsewhere to find that it will rule the whole world.

The **clay** is not just there to divide the Iron into fragments, but can be viewed as a **5th Empire**. It is listed separately in verse 35. I believe we have are **five "land of Israel"-ruling empires**, not four "world-ruling" empires. The clay appears to have ruled "the land" longer than the other four kingdoms all put together.

The kingdom of iron divided into two parts is represented by the two legs. The western half of the Roman Empire was ruled from Rome and the eastern half was ruled from Constantinople in what is known today as Turkey. The western empire was later turned over to the Pope of the Catholic Church. Even the title of the rulers of the Roman Empire, 'pontifex maximus' was transferred to the Pope. Today, the Catholic Church and much of Europe represent the iron kingdom of Rome. But the eastern half of the Roman Empire including northern Africa was conquered by the Moslems, who have ruled over that portion of the Roman Empire to this very day (except for the

time that the iron reclaimed **"the land"** during the Crusades and since 1917 when the land was returned to Israel).

I believe the clay, which is virtually ignored in all explanations of Daniel 2 is the Moslem Empire. It is divided and fractured not cleaving one to another, and in conflict with the iron as to who should rule **"the land"** (Dan 2:41-43).

The contention between the Iron and clay, as described in Daniel 2:43 has been fulfilled in several ways. One way was by way of the Crusades. Rome (the iron) under the inspiration of, or in the form of the Catholic Church came down and recovered much of **"the land"** and established a branch of the iron empire in the Land of Palestine. As time passed, the clay in the form of the Ottoman Empire recovered **"the land"**. The clay had complete control until December 9, 1917 when the British General Allenby brought his army in. This was Kislev 24 on the Hebrew Calendar, a date mentioned in Haggai 2:10, 18, 20. It was exactly 7 times 360 years (a day for a year) or 2,520 years after it had been captured by the Head of gold, Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC (God had said to the nation of Israel, "If you will not obey me I will punish you 7 times"). To this day, **"the land"** is neither completely under Moslem or Israelite control. The Jews control much of it, but the Moslems still have their areas or control, which include the Temple mount.

But more of this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. The iron and clay in Daniel 9 are mingled together, yet not sticking to one another. The stone smashing the idol is also yet to be fulfilled. Just what will this mean for the future? We need to ask God to show us that which we need to know. We can also ask good questions and watch events in the Middle East.

How are the events playing out today in the Middle East fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel 2? Is the iron going to form ten nations, and the clay also going to

form ten nations, or will the ten toes be represented by five nations from the iron and five nations from the clay? And just how does the Catholic Church figure into this equation? The Pope has recently traveled to the Middle East and embraced the Moslem Yasser Arafat. Will there be a temporary agreement between the iron and the clay, especially concerning **"the land"**? Will Jerusalem fall further under the control of the iron and/or the clay again?

The land ruled by the eastern half of the old Roman Empire is now almost entirely Moslem in religion, and the land ruled by the western half of the old Roman Empire is almost entirely Roman Catholic in religion. (But those portions of the western part of the Roman Empire that are not Roman Catholic are undergoing a religious ecumenical movement to co-operate and even reunite with the Mother Church of Rome. Just what does all this mean? Is this also part of the fulfillment of this prophecy?) How can these two different religions, the Catholics and the Moslems, come together in a temporary agreement?

There are ten nations spoken of in Psalm 83—a prophecy that has apparently never been fulfilled. Could these ten nations be the ten nations of the clay that are in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? What about Saddam Hussein, who has spent billions of dollars rebuilding the ancient city of Babylon? How does the city of Babylon fit into this prophetic scenario? Are Arafat and the PLO the "little horn" Daniel speaks of in later chapters of the book of Daniel, as Marvyn Byers claims in his book, "Is Arafat an Apocalyptic Character?" Time will only tell, but we should be watching the events in Israel and the Middle East and the Roman Catholic Church's involvement there very closely. Prophecy may be fulfilled right under our noses!

The Rest of the Story

By Rick Frazee

This article is based on a true story. Sometimes we see God working among us and assume that it means that God is working just here and just now. This story can give us a perspective that is eye opening and encouraging, a perspective that we should be reminded of every now and then. With apologies to Paul Harvey, I call this message "The Rest of the Story"

Remember the story of the "Mutiny on the Bounty"? Remember Captain Bligh and the hero/mutineer Mr. Christian? That was essentially a true story that happened in the late 1700s. It begins with King George III of England in the year 1768 when he decided that certain uninhabited South Sea Islands would be more useful if they had a better food supply.

It was believed that the breadfruit palm could make these islands habitable, so in 1787 King George sent out a small ship (*The Bounty*) to transplant the breadfruit from Tahiti to these other South Sea islands.

The *Bounty* arrived in Tahiti on October 26, 1788. Just a few months later, some of the crew led by Mr. Christian mutinied. They didn't want to leave this beautiful island. The pirates were chased down and most of them were brought to justice. However, nine mutineers escaped on *The Bounty* taking with them 17 natives, including six men, ten women, and one girl of 15.

In their desperation to escape the hangman's noose they fled to a small, little known place called Pitcairn Island. It was a tiny place, only two miles long and one mile wide, a rugged, mountainous island with only about 88 acres of soil suitable for crops.

This small group set out to make Pitcairn their home; nine hardened, tough English sailors and 17 Tahitians creating one of the most diverse and unlikely groups imaginable, marooned on a beautiful South Sea island

They had escaped the oppression of British rule, and surely their dreams were of an island paradise of peace and happiness. But the society that resulted, well, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* called it "Hell on earth". They created their own culture with no rules, with no law. They not only practiced polygamy,

but every possible combination of men and women. History is unclear on the details, but some have said that the hero, Mr. Christian, was shot and killed after attempting to steal another man's wife.

They lied, cheated, stole, and murdered until within just a few years there was just one of the original mutineers left. It was so wretched and violent that only one of the original fifteen men died of natural causes. This society gave new meaning to the word dysfunctional. It was on course for extinction: one man left with a harem of Tahitian women and a bunch of children.

They took the Bible literally, and they did their best to pattern their little island world after the model they found in God's Word, the Bible. As a result, God poured out abundant blessings

Which brings us to "The Rest of the Story".

The last mutineer was named Alexander Smith. This man who could barely read and write was left wondering what had happened to their dream of paradise, a man left with ugly memories and an uncertain future.

Then, in a sailor's chest, he found a book. He began to read it. It made sense. He started to regret his past and resolved to follow the principles that he found in that book. He set out to teach a new way of life to the kids. They grew up, got married, and more children were born. Their society prospered.

Finally, nearly twenty years later in 1808, the American ship *The Topaz* brought news of the fate of the mutineers to the rest of the world. What

could be left of such a dysfunctional group of people with terrible examples of family relationships?

What was society like when Pitcairn was rediscovered?

I would like to quote from *The Book Nobody Knows*, by Bruce Barton:

There was no jail. There was no hospital. There was no insane asylum. There was no illiteracy, no crime, no disease. The people had no doctors, took no medicine, used no liquor.... Nowhere on earth were life and property more safe. What changed that place from a hell on earth to a little speck of heaven dropped down on the South Seas? The reading of *The Book*.

The reading of the Holy Bible?

Now, my curious nature said, "This is too good to be true. This sounds like a fairy tale." After a trip to the library and armed with a stack of books I set out to discover the true story of these people, who were human beings just like you and me. I found that the picture Bruce Barton painted in words was essentially true, but it failed to express their struggles. The struggle to survive the elements, the hurricanes, the heat, drought and cold. The fight to overcome their own mistakes brought down on them by a dysfunctional society, illiteracy, and their own human nature. Through all of this a seemingly perfect society began to emerge. Why? They took the Bible literally, and they did their best to pattern their little island world after the model they found in God's Word, the Bible. As a result, God poured out abundant blessings.

Are we as committed? Are we as determined?

I have known many who have studied the Bible, sometimes pretty diligently, but seldom with such graphic results. So

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"The Love of God" from page 1

and reach out to a relationship with God for all eternity? Many times in the Old and New Testament the Bible states Christians were tortured and killed as subjects of mockery, dwelled in caves and in tents in the desert, and suffered much in their lives (Heb 11:35-39). Did they see something in God that was far greater than physical life itself? What did they see?

Is the answer that they separated themselves spiritually from this Earth in order to forfeit their security and comforts in this temporary life for something far greater? Did they escape the bondage of this physical life and reach out to God and bond with Him? The only logical answer that would justify such incredible acts of sacrifice and suffering is that these Christians bonded with God totally and completely. God became their reason for living and they knew His love for them. As they faced their own prospects of death, they looked forward to a better resurrection (1Cor 15), to an incorruptible life, merged with God for all eternity.

What is this bonding factor that makes people go so far in their relationship with God, where they will allow themselves to be thrown into the fire, burned at the stake, lose their homes and families, subject themselves to persecution, and be put to death in the most horrendous way devised by mankind? What force or ingredient makes it possible for a human being to go this far and still love God? I believe the answer is that God's love in them is so fulfilling and joyful that it strengthens them to reach out beyond the physical ties of this Earth and to believe in a better resurrection, a resurrection to dwell with the One who created the entire universe. The joy of God's love and His affection transcends this physical life, fading it to insignificance compared to a life with God without end.

Sometimes we can look at God, our heavenly Father, the way most children look at their physical fathers. We take God's love for granted, thinking He owes it to us for that is His job, for He is our Father. In our childish way of looking at things, we forget that if God didn't love us so much, we would not exist.

And without God's continuing love for us, we would be subject to our own mortality, alone and without spiritual purpose in the universe. God does not owe us His love, nor is He obligated to love us. Yet, God did choose to love us, and it cost Him His most precious treasure in the whole universe, His Son Jesus Christ. And, Christ did not consider it enough to give His life to save us from sin (which is remembered in the Passover). Christ loved mankind so much that after giving His life for us, He went even further and dwells in us, creating God in us to bring us into the family and Kingdom of God (which is revealed in the Sabbath Day). One day we will be with God and Jesus Christ forever because of Their great love for us.

I would like to relate how I found out about God the Father's love for me. In the early 1940s I was a little boy about 3

I felt strongly that God at that precise moment stepped off of His Throne, the Great Throne over the entire universe, His majestic, powerful, and almighty Throne, and through His Spirit, He came down and put His arm around me, and told me He loved me

years old and was placed in an orphanage home-school with 150 other children in the Appalachians. With no mother or father, the teachers became our parents and mentors. When I was approximately 12 years old, all of the boys had to go and work in the fields early each morning as we worked for our own food. In the hollow between the mountains behind our orphanage there lived an elderly couple, who lived with no running water or inside plumbing. At the time of this event, they were both sick in the bed and asked me after breakfast the next day to bring them water from the spring and build a fire. The spring was about 1,000 ft. from their home and there was no way they were able to get their own water.

After breakfast that next day, the

hired hand who drove the truck to the fields told me to get on the truck. I told him I had to go get Rolley-Lee and his wife some water. In my mind as a child, I thought they might die if I didn't get them the water. When I walked away, he immediately hit me with his fist. As I was falling, I grabbed a clump of grass just before I passed out because I knew that no one would save me from falling into the creek. When I finally came to consciousness, I was all alone. Because of this kind of treatment my whole life at the orphanage, my vision of a "father figure" was someone who administered severe punishment and showed no love. A father's role to me was to punish, punish, punish!

When I was older and in the Worldwide Church of God, I carried these feelings with me and felt like Christ's job was to appease the Father on our behalf because He was such a harsh God. For years the Church reinforced these feelings because it preached the works of the law and the wages of sin, with very little mention of God the Father's love, grace and mercy towards us. As time went on, my fears and worries concerning God the Father became more intense, and I became afraid of Him and couldn't feel love for Him either. I felt like God's total relationship with humans was one of correction, or else we would be condemned and go into the Lake of Fire.

One day, while I was attending a church Spokesman Club, the topic for discussion was to name one of the best things that your earthly father has ever done for you. I was stifled for words, realizing my view of all fathers was that they were for correction and not for love. So as I went home that night, I was very broken up and disturbed by the fact that other men said positive and loving things about their fathers.

I knelt down to pray to God the Father about it, realizing I had a different way of seeing things. During my prayer, a strong feeling came over me that I was standing at the edge of a field. I saw myself from the back as a small boy with bib overalls, and I was facing a forest. The forest was dark and frightening to me. I realized I had to go through this forest to get to the other side, and I had great fear inside me. Suddenly there

appeared Someone standing beside me, who reached down and took my hand, holding it gently but firmly. He said with an assuring and loving voice that He would go with me through the forest. As I started to see "the love of God" during this prayer session, I began to cry. As I was crying, I felt strongly that God at that precise moment stepped off of His Throne, the Great Throne over the entire universe, His majestic, powerful, and almighty Throne, and through His Spirit, He came down and put His arm around me, and told me He loved me. Needless to say, I cried much that day because I saw the love of God that I had never seen before.

When I think of God's love, I think of a song I used to sing when I was about 8 years old in the orphanage, which goes like this:

The love of God is greater far, than tongue or pen could ever tell;

It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell.

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies a parchment made,

And every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above, would drain the ocean completely dry.

Nor could the scroll contain or hold, though it stretched from sky to sky.

Oh love of God, how rich and pure,

how measureless and strong,
It shall forever more endure...

So the conclusion of this article is best expressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:35, 38-39 below:

...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, Or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. ☞

**"The Rest of the Story"
from page 41**

I determined to find out what they did that so dramatically turned their society around. I found evidence of three basic points whose results are so dramatic and inspiring.

First, they put themselves in God's hands, totally, and without reservation. They trusted God to speak to them through the words of his Bible, by prayer, and by study. They prayed together in the morning and in the evening. In their tradition they all studied the Bible together, every day, using it as a guide for living.

One story tells of a visitor staying with an Island family. After everyone in the house had gone to bed, the Pitcairners waited until they thought the visitor was asleep, then they all got up to pray. They were dedicated to looking to God for answers.

Which brings me to the second point: they tended to be open minded. They followed the example of the Bereans. In Acts 17:11 we read, "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

The people of Pitcairn Island actively followed this verse. One book said the Pitcairners were known for their insatiable desire for religious tracts. When they found the truth, the same thing happened to them that happened to the Bereans: "Therefore, many of them believed" (Acts 17:12). They were actively searching God's Word for His will and asking how it applied to them.

Finally, they took action. They were motivated. When they found the truth, they applied it. They zealously embraced the principles they discovered in God's Word, sometimes maybe too enthusiastically.

When they discovered fasting, for a while they fasted twice a week.

When they came to understand foot washing as a symbol of humility, they washed each other's feet every week.

When the seventh day Sabbath was presented to them in the mid-1800s by the Seventh Day Adventists "with the support of many passages of scripture", they zealously embraced the Sabbath.

The book *Pitcairn Island*, by David Silverman, says,

Evidence of the modern Pitcairners' faith is both abundant and impressive. Their close observance of its tenets involves not merely the practice and rituals; it requires many material sacrifices. The Sabbatarian restrictions on labor frequently proved galling [from the author's point of view], as when, on one of their all-important trips to gather miro-wood. Unfavorable winds landed them at Henderson Island on the Sabbath. The Pitcairners chose to return without the prized wood rather than cut and load it on the Sabbath.

These people energetically embraced the Bible as the literal words of God, a blueprint on which to base their lives. It worked with awesome results. Even when outsiders severely criticized them for their strict adherence to biblical principles, they followed the Bible anyway. Think about it! They were being called

legalistic, yet no one could argue with the results.

A friend of mine once knew a man who went to Pitcairn as a social worker. When he came back, he was not only baptized, but he came back to the United States to tell their story to anyone who would listen.

What an awe-inspiring example for us today! They used the Bible, the power of God speaking through His Word, to overcome the worst kind of dysfunctional background and physical trials. The next time you are discouraged or depressed, the next time you are faced with an impossible trial, turn to the answer Book. Look for God to reveal the answer through the textbook of life, the Holy Bible. Expect God to help just as He helped them. God did it for them, and He will do it for us.

Earlier, I promised "The Rest of the Story". I'd like to list for you a summary of the teachings of the Pitcairners of the late 1800's. Again, from David Silverman's book *Pitcairn Island* (remember that Mr. Silverman was an outsider—think about what he would say if he were talking about us):

Their tenets included belief in the Second Coming of Christ and the concurrent beginning of the Millenium, and a Hebraic emphasis on Sabbath observance on Saturday. The new creed further involved acceptance of the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice, the doctrines of salvation by faith, baptism by immersion, foot-washing before communion, and tithing.

Mutineers to God's elect! Could that be the real rest of the story? ☞

Partial Literature List

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

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

Items Just Announced In the Previous Issue:

Basic Literature:

Are You Ready for Rome's Challenge? edited by Alan Ruth, 20 pages. Covers Catholic Mirror articles 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.

Scattered Brethren Contact List, 8 pages, year 2000 version. Contains all the cities where our subscribers live and gives directions on how you can write to them.

Items Featured This Issue (always available)

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.

The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day? (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.

CEM Correspondence Course by Ron Dart, 8 pages. First lesson of a 9-lesson free course.

Christian Bible Study Guide by F. Paul Haney, 4 pages. An overview of Bible study and 77 points to consider.

Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times? by Steven M Collins. 14 pages.

God, I've Got a Problem edited by Jerry Laws, 54 pages. Bible help for the depressed, tempted, guilty, worried, lonely, afraid, bored, disappointed, bitter, doubtful, proud and dying.

Hebrew Holy Day Calendar. (Business card size.) Gives the

traditional Hebrew dates for Biblical Feasts.

How Not To Be Caught in Cults by Charles Dorothy, 32 pages. Easy to read, illustrated booklet explaining the characteristics of controlling cults. Does not discuss doctrine.

The Mysterious 7-Day Cycle by Ken Westby, 24 pages. Plants, Animals and man have biological 7-day cycles. The 7-day week is an organic function, not a man-made creation.

The Reason for the Season by Pam Dewey, 14 pages. Historic and Biblical analysis of Christmas customs.

Statement of Beliefs? by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Explains why we do not have a more extensive statement of beliefs.

The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact? by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.

What Is Christian Religion? by Norman S. Edwards, 2 page tract. Introduction to the Bible—shows religion is living by the Bible and Holy Spirit, not joining an organization.

Why Do You Observe Sunday? edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

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. 24 pages.

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

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

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