The Last Servants' NEWS

Vol. 14, No. 2 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* **Nov-Dec 2010**

Ending the Era, Expanding the Outreach

This is probably the most diverse *Servants' News* ever! It has the largest format and is also the most delayed—11 months late. That problem will be solved, by Norman Edwards and other SN writers continuing to write for *Shepherd's Voice Magazine,* the new publication which all *SN* readers will receive (see back page). *SVM* has a dedicated staff, able to produce it regularly.

Beginning in 1995, *Servants' News* was busy sharing Bible truth and news of Sabbatarian groups in a non-denominational way—and is still doing so in this issue. Since, moving to Port Austin in 2004, I felt the need to be teaching new people—not only those who are already keeping the Sabbath. Indeed, our local church attendance is now mostly people who have never been to corporate Church of God congregations. This is a great contrast to a recent conversation with a man in a typical big corporate CoG congregation—that has not had any new people come and continue to attend since it started in 1995.

If Sabbath-keepers, whether corporate or independent, continue to put too much emphasis on "having the truth" and too little on teaching it to others, the truth will die with them. With that in mind, this issue is **the declaration of the end of *Servants' News*, and the beginning of many new things**. Keep reading, below!

I want to personally thank our Father in heaven for making this possible. I have never had a regular job since *SN* began, but have somehow managed to do this ministry and take care of a wonderful family of six, the youngest of which just recently became 18 years old. A big thank you to the staff, the writers and so many others who helped. May the Eternal reward you all! (Matt 10:42).

— Norman Scott Edwards 🕮

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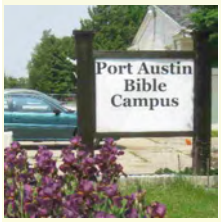

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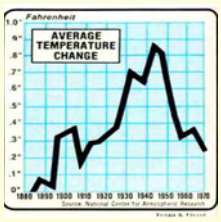

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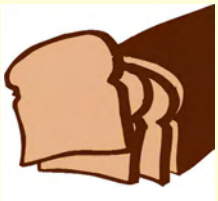

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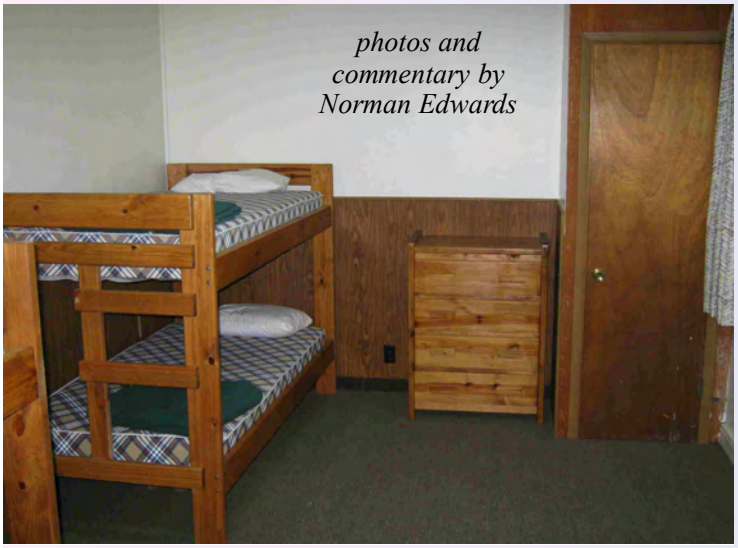
PABC Update in Pictures

We do not publish pictures or names of our homeless Guests as future employers or landlords may use this Internet publication against them.

photos and commentary by Norman Edwards



A typical room in the PABC men's dorm with bed, dresser & closet. We also furnish chairs and desks when we have them. (We gladly accept old desks!)

The PABC Dining hall used for Guest meals, Sabbath services and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. At times, all three of these events fill most of these seats.

Our busy food preparation table from near to far: local wild flowers to help keep workers joyful; 2 crockpots with many years of service; boom-box for the Christian radio station; often-used bread recipes in plastic sheet; 2-loaf bread machine; wheat, spelt and corn in jars ready to be ground, the 2-stone flour mill that has been in the Edwards family for 27 years and a Kitchen-aid mixer.

Since PABC makes all of their own meals—many from scratch—there are always a lot of dishes. Homeless Guests wash them all, every day. Guests have been able to use this experience to obtain dish washing jobs elsewhere.

The former airbase asphalt roads are owned by the condominium association, of which PABC is a member. Homeless guests help repair them—which greatly reduces the $50 per month condominium dues that we would otherwise pay.

The PABC gym was used for several yard sales this summer to raise money to pay utility bills. These items were donated or abandoned by previous residents.

Port Austin Bible Campus Update:

16 Months of Ministry to Homeless

by Norman Edwards

PABC began to open its doors to homeless people in June of 2010. From that time, till the time of this writing (September 23, 2011), it has helped 83 homeless people, 63 adults and 20 children. Currently, 11 homeless people are living at PABC, with our highest number being 14.

A total of 3641 bed-nights provided. (A bed-night equals the number of people that stay multiplied by the number of nights each stays.) If relief or government agencies would have had to place these people in hotels at about $50 per night, the cost would have been $182,050! Yet PABC is presently operating with less than $30,000 per year of expenses.

Some whom we have spent an hour or more approving for PABC actually solve their problems before they stay a night here. When they know they have a place to stay "tonight", it allows them to focus on longer term solutions. Others stay a few nights, a few weeks or even several months. Most are single men, but there have also been single women and families varying in size from two to eight. Few come due to a total lack of planning, but most thought they had some kind of housing arrangements, but they fell apart with little warning.

Some who come to PABC have suffered greatly in the present economy and have simply run out of resources. Most have come from a difficult past where they were not loved or well cared-for by parents. Some have come from jail or prison and are doing a great job of trying to get a new start in life.

Others show little appreciation for what we are providing. Yet others feign appreciation continually, and are highly skilled at telling whatever story they think is necessary to get them what they want. Some have committed crimes while living here. We have worked with law enforcement and they have been successfully prosecuted. We do not want to quietly send them away so they can repeat the same crimes elsewhere.

Government Funding Cuts Creating More Need

Most of the people who come are recommended by government agencies. PABC is a member of the Thumb Area Continuum of Care, an umbrella organization that meets every other month to coordinate the activities of public and private entities that help homeless and struggling people (See: http://tinyurl.com/thumbcc and http://tinyurl.com/thumbcc2) There are no other shelters in Huron County, or the adjoining Sanilac and Tuscola counties, that will take almost anyone on an immediate basis. The fastest government rehousing programs take days to weeks to provide a place to stay. Not everyone qualifies for them. Long term programs now have waiting lists lasting years. If people have to go to the other shelters 80 miles away from here, it is nearly impossible for them to pursue ongoing job leads, get help from neighbors, keep their children in the same school, etc.

The amount of work we will have to do is likely to increase as more government programs are running out of money. On September 6, 2011, House Bill 4409, became law, limiting cash assistance (Family Independence Program) recipients to a maximum of four years. The bill became effective October 1, 2011, and approximately 12,600 individuals or families will stop receiving an average of $511 per month. Many of the recipients were using that money to pay their rent—so they will need new housing solutions.

Living Among Them

The main problem with helping these 12,600 is the same problem that PABC faces every day: Who really needs help and who could get along with out help, but finds it easier to get on a program. Governments and most other agencies have to decide this via a series of forms and the ability to check financial and government records. These things have their place, but they are not the same as caring Christians living among the people they are trying to help. It is much more difficult for them to keep secrets. There habits and practices are known.

It is PABC's goal to help each person learn to help themselves and be as self-sufficient as possible. This is taught both from the aspect of not relying on government programs that may lose funding, and also from the Golden Rule aspect: If you do not want to support somebody else with your work, why should somebody else support you? PABC uses biblical principles on how to help the poor, teaching them to do as much for themselves as they can—even if it is a lot of work. PABC Guests prepare their own food, help to grow some of their food, clean the areas they use, recycle their own trash, work whatever odd jobs are available, pay their own utilities to the extent possible, etc.

Striving for Self-Sufficiency

PABC does not accept any government funds, as it would not be able to continue with its biblical approach, and might well end up in the same difficulty as other government-supported programs which must be cut to balance budgets after too many years of deficit spending. Ultimately, PABC strives to reach a level of self-sufficiency where it will not need any outside assistance, but be self sufficient from the work of those living on its campus. It would be good for us and a good example to those we help. We are not there yet! PABC certainly welcomes those who want to help with its programs or simply want to tour the campus.

Bible Teaching by Word and Deed

We have one required meeting per week where we deal with issues of all those resident here, and teach a basic Bible lesson. When issues come up in regard to how to deal with each other, jobs, places to live, government programs, we try to represent a godly perspective. We pray with them as well as seeking physical solutions to their problems Even when we are fairly sure that one of our Guests has done something wrong here, we try to be careful to hear their side of the story and get the facts—we have occasionally had to apologize. The reaction of the PABC guests seems to be similar to the reaction to the New Testament ministry:

1. Most everyone likes what we provide. (The apostles provided healing, we provide housing).
2. A few think we should provide more. (Some wanted more free food from Christ—John 6:26-29, others sought various favors—Matt 20:21; Luke 23:29).
3. Some want to attend our daily Bible studies or Sabbath services and want to understand the Bible better.
4. Thus far, one has been baptized.
5. Some leave us thankful, some leave angry.
6. Others are interested in helping our ministry, attending our services and understanding our biblical message because they see our service to people in need.

You may contact us at Port Austin Bible Campus, 8180 Port Drive, Port Austin, Michigan 48467; 989-738-774; PABC@PortAustin.net.

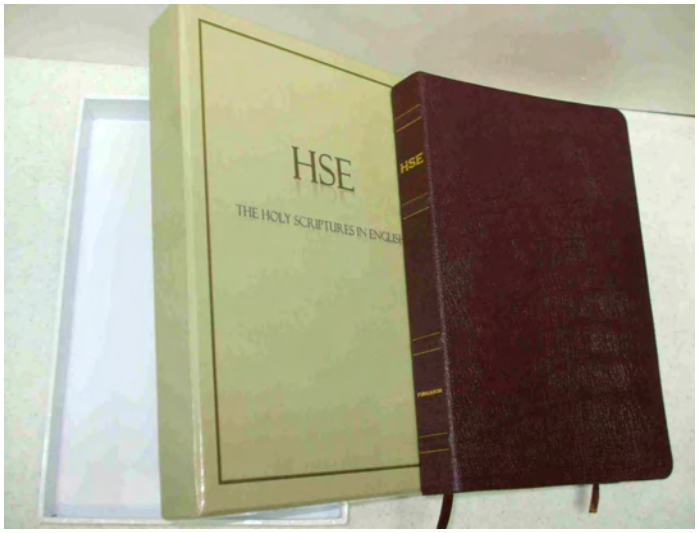
The Holy Scriptures in English

Now Available in Leather with Gift Box

Thanks to All Who Made it Possible!

by Norman Edwards

Rabon Vincent would like to thank everyone who helped him work on the Holy Scriptures in English, and offer free copies to the *Servants' News* readership. This is the King James Version of the Bible with all of the archaic language converted to modern American English and a number of known translation errors corrected. *Servants' News* carried several articles on this Bible beginning with its Nov/Dec 2000 issue. Then Mar/April 2001 issue entitled it "Project for a Decade", and it indeed has taken that long. *SN* Readers suggested input and volunteered to proofread the manuscript. this writer feels profoundly grateful to have his name included in this small, humble, but high-quality effort to distribute the Holy Scriptures.



The Bible is 6" x 9", made out of burgundy Genuine Leather with foil stamping on the spine, gold gilded edges and two ribbon markers. It has 968 pages of thin but sturdy Bible paper. The main text is an easy to ready 10.5 point Arial Narrow font—exactly the same as used for Bible quotes in *Servants' News!* While the Helvetica font has been used extensively in print for decades, the narrow version of it is not as widely available as Arial Narrow and takes a little more space to print the same thing. Both of these are sans-serif fonts—fonts without the little embellishments on the ends of lines in letters. (The main text of *Servants' News* is Times New Roman, a serif font.)

After a careful study of the oldest extant styles of print for the original Biblical languages (both Old and New Testament), Rabon concluded that the original printing style (though by hand) could best be described as Sans Serif.

The Bible and its gift box are made in China at the largest Bible producing plant in the world (about one Bible every 2.6 seconds). When the final draft of the HSE was ready, the printers were narrowed down to two candidates, one from the U.S. (in fact, that manufacturing location is in the state of Indiana, about two hours from Rabon's home) and one from China. Samples of the quality of work were provided by both. On first glance, they were nearly identical in quality. However, after careful examination, the one printed in Indiana showed a lot of crackling, appeared to have head and tail band issues and had an inferior gift box construction. Even though the cost of printing in Indiana was 80% more and some of the quality appeared inferior, it was still considered. In the end, quality and price won out and while China did get the printing job, the U.S. businesses still got most of the associated transportation fees (and managed to do damage to several boxes). Rabon Vincent saw it this way: "A lot of the building materials and workmanship in constructing David's Palace and the First Temple were from foreign sources (2 Samuel 5:11. 1 Kings 5:8,18) and, in the end, the results are what matters."

Unfortunately, Rabon has lost touch with some of the people who helped him on the project, so he strongly urges them to write or e-mail to receive their copy. **Also, he is offering a copy of the Bible free to anyone who will use it. Write:**

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Servants' NEWS

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yashua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of teaching, writing, music and video as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

The gospel is to be given freely—**you may copy this magazine and give it to others**. CBTM has nothing to sell, but is supported by freewill offerings of individuals. We do not have IRS 501(c)(3) status, but churches are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15). Please make offerings to *Church Bible Teaching Ministry* or send via PayPal to info@cbtm.info.

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Biblical Basis for PABC Ministry to Homeless

by Norman Scott Edwards

The Port Austin Bible Campus Ministry to the Homeless cannot be understood outside of the Bible—which has inspired it. Jesus Christ outlined the Christian way of expending oneself to help others in his famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7).

The PABC ministry is not simply an effort to provide for the needs of the poor along with teaching the Bible, in the hopes of making Christian disciples. It is an effort to help the poor in the way the Bible teaches they should be helped. It teaches them how to be self-sufficient, as much as possible, within whatever means are presently available to them. PABC is a non-denominational ministry, and believes that this method is effective with people of any Christian denomination, or who may not yet be interested in Christianity at all.

The Bible frequently speaks of giving justice to the poor (Exodus 23:3,6; Leviticus 19;15; Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 31:9, etc.). It is not possible to effectively help the poor if we say their poverty is entirely their fault—because it is not! Our national laws regarding wealth and property ownership are in many cases contrary to the Bible. We must acknowledge the wrong that has been done to those who have suffered, then go on to help them understand their opportunities in their present situation in spite of the injustice. We must justly help those who are willing to help themselves now, no matter what their past problems were. We must not help those who are unwilling to help themselves—because we just enable them to continue in their ineffective behavior.

Some poor people are willing to work, but the depressed economy, illness, divorce, or other maladies have deprived them of their possessions and ability to earn a living. For some, these are very real conditions that you or I would find daunting if we had to face them ourselves. They have little to live on now, and not even the needed resources to start a business or get to a place that might hire them. Then, there are poor people who do not want to work—or at least do not want to work on the conditions that most people would want to hire them. Nevertheless, they use the real reasons listed above as excuses—and often believe their own half truths.

The solution to this problem is to provide a way for the honest, willing-to-work poor to succeed, and then to point the others to it, and say "either you learn to do this, or leave our ministry, and continue to suffer the effects of homelessness."

Bible Teaching on Our Economy

We hope we will not lose any readers with this next brief section, but without an understanding of what God intended in regard to our economy and property ownership, one cannot understand the Biblical teaching on helping the poor.

While most people assume the Bible teaches capitalism as an economic system; that is not entirely correct. The Bible teaches the private ownership of property (as opposed to the collective or state ownership in capitalism and socialism), but it places limits on it. In the U.S.A., we see nothing wrong with a person working hard, earning millions—or billions—of dollars, investing that capital to earn more money, keeping it for his lifetime, and passing it on to his heirs for generations to come. If they don't violate campaign finance laws, it also seems right for the heirs of this empire to finance political parties to elect "their people" to public office so numerous laws can be passed in their favor. If these wealthy people find it more profitable to move most of their production to poor countries where labor is cheap, leaving millions of Americans without jobs or resources to take care of themselves, that seems all right, too, as long as no laws are violated.

Fortunately, God says that is wrong. God commanded that land be divided equally among the people who live in it (Num 33:54). He says that will be done again in the future (Ezk 45:1). And He further commanded that the land not be permanently sold, but that it could only be sold temporarily and would go back the family that owned it every 49 years, in what was called a Jubilee year in Leviticus 25. It was a quote from this chapter that was placed upon our famous "liberty bell": "Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). This scripture is about restoring land and liberty to people who had lost it through poverty. For millions of people, immigrating to the U.S.A was a chance to have their own land and escape the feudal barons of Europe. But a law to return land to its original owners was never passed in the USA, and about 49 years after it was constructed (accounts vary), the liberty bell cracked.

God intended people to use wealth to take care of their needs, but not as a means of controlling or enslaving others. Today, according to the Wikipedia article Distribution of Wealth, subhead United States, 1% of Americans own 38% of its wealth, while the poorest 40% of us share only 1% of its wealth. Another way of putting it, those in the richest 1% own, on average, about 1520 times as much as those in the poorest 40%. Under God's system with a Jubilee year every 49 years, there would be no massive buildup of wealth in the hands of a few. Land, buildings, factories, etc, would continue to remain largely equally distributed among families. When people are born to families who had lost their land through mismanagement, they could always look forward to a time when they would get their land back. This is a wonderful hope compared to the millions of people today who have almost nothing, and no way of getting it.

There are other parts of our nation's economic and legal systems that are, according to the Bible teaching, also unfair to the poor. Some will be covered below. Others, such as excessive taxation and regulation, are fairly obvious, but beyond the scope of this article.

We Can Do This Now

While it would be wonderful to reform our nation's laws so they conformed to the Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:6), PABC does not believe God has given it that enormous task, and does not believe that this

will happen in the near future. PABC does not teach disobedience to existing federal, state and local laws, even when they are contrary to Biblical teaching. (For example, a person who loses his land in the USA should not try to take it back in the Jubilee year, because that is not the law of our country.) PABC teaches that individuals who have found themselves homeless should take the following approach.

1. Become as self-sufficient as possible: minimizing personal expenses, and providing for oneself—whether through money or doing one's own work in every possible area. Resist the temptation to covet, which is marketed everywhere in society.
2. When necessary, use charities and government programs honestly, in accordance with scriptural principles to the extent possible. Work hard to get away from these things.
3. Cry out to God for justice in regard to all of the unscriptural things that one suffers. He has promised to hear! (Exodus 22:23; Deuteronomy 15:9; 24:15; Job 34:28; James 5:4). Living a righteous life helps! (Isa 59:1-2). God may not necessarily restore to a person his "share" of the land of the United States, but He is able to bring justice to those who seek Him in other ways.

God, in His wisdom, has physically provided for the poor. If they understand His ways, do what they can, and ask Him to take care of them where our society falls short, they will succeed. (The most important message of the Bible is repentance of one's sins and receiving a new life through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But this is an individual, personal decision that should never be coerced out of someone in exchange for necessities.)

Justice for the Poor

Numerous Scriptures tell us the poor need Justice (Exodus 23:3,6; Leviticus 19;15; Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 31:9, etc.). It is difficult enough for many people to successfully deal with the many and varied government agencies and charities that help them, but almost impossible for them to get justice in our legal system. Most poor people have one or more stories about how someone else caused them to be in their present situation. Some involve court cases, some do not. It is important to listen to their stories and attempt to understand whether their perception is accurate or far away from reality. If the people themselves is largely the ones that need to change, they need to be told by someone who is being kind to them—someone who is giving them food and shelter. (Even so, they still may not listen.)

When people have been victimized, they need to be assured that they are all right and that they should seek deliverance either from our society, or from God. The difficulty of our court systems is much greater than many people realize. A poor person cannot receive a court-appointed lawyer for most civil cases. Even when a public defender is appointed for criminal cases, they rarely have the resources to properly defend a poor person. Today, over 90% of criminal court cases are settled with plea bargains—there is tremendous pressure on public defenders to settle nearly all of their cases this way. This generally means that if the evidence against a person is convincing, he will be pushed into pleading guilty to something almost as bad as what the evidence indicates. If the evidence is not so convincing, the person will be pushed into pleading guilty to a relatively minor charge—even if he did not do anything wrong.

Most struggling people have no idea of the resources for justice that are within their reach. As a simple example, nearly every court house has a public law library, but they almost never have a sign on the door. One has to know one has a right to use it, and to ask where it is. There are many books, free law clinics, publicly available law forms, internet resources and other means whereby the poor can get much closer to obtaining justice. The simple fact that they are aware of these resources and mention them often causes them to be treated much more fairly. PABC makes an effort to acquaint its Guests with the resources that will help them obtain justice when it is called for.

Sadly, PABC has had to cooperate with law enforcement authorities to charge some of its guests who see nothing wrong with doing things contrary to the laws of both man and God. While our courts may not deal with it in the same way that the Scripture teaches, some kind of punishment is better than allowing a person to continue to harm others without regard to the damage they are doing to everyone involved.

Leftovers for Profit

The Bible instructs harvesters not to glean their fields—not to go back to gather the small amount that was left during their first harvest (Lev 19:9-10; Lev 23:22; Deut 24:19-22). Even if they tied up a bundle of grain, but forgot to bring it in from the field, they are to leave it there. The poor people are allowed to come in and do the harder work of gathering the "leftover" grains and fruits so they have something to eat or to sell for their other needs. This is a good deal for everyone. The landowner does not waste his time in gathering the leftovers—the least cost-effective part of the harvest. Yet, the poor person, without land, still has a harvest that he can use as a cash crop. He can pay for his necessities, and if there is enough left, for any luxuries he might want. The widow, Ruth, actually lived by gleaning (Ruth 2). Similarly, in the year that crop lands lie fallow, poor people were allowed to gather the crops (Ex 23:11).

Today, gleaning fields is not practical as most people do not live close enough to a farm to do this—even if it were legal. Nevertheless, the principle applies to many other "leftovers" from our society. PABC and its Guests gather scrap metal and sell it for cash. Other people give us unwanted items which we have sold at yard sales or online. Individuals pick up bottles and cans for their funds. We have received surplus food—even extra deer or beef cows—and done the work ourselves to prepare it for suitable meals. We plant a garden on the space we have, and grow food ourselves. Unfortunately, there are more and more laws that restrict our ability to sell any food we might grow, as well as restrict restaurants and food stores from giving surplus food to us.

PABC hopes to continue to encourage others to give their "leftovers" to us so we can use them to take care of the needs of the homeless here.

Give us This Day Our Daily Bread

The Bible also commands farmers to feed the poor on a daily basis—but only as much as they need on that day. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 teaches that the poor could go eat in a farmers' field at any time, but that they could not bring a container with them to take any away. This is reminiscent of the Lord's prayer to "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). There is a very important distinction between this and the "leftovers", above.

With the leftovers or gleanings, above, the amount a person could collect was limited largely by time—it had to be after the owner harvested, but before weather destroyed the remainder of the crop, and it was limited by how much of the hard work of gleaning a person could do. In this case, when a person is allowed to walk into a farmer's field at any time, before the main harvest, the Bible strictly limits what he can take to what he can put in his stomach.

He does not have the right to take away anything from the field to sell.

The principle here is very good in regard to helping the poor. If they are unable to provide for daily necessities, those who are able should provide them on a daily basis. A stockpile of necessities should not be given in advance, as some poor people will sell or trade these necessities for non-essential items or luxuries. Some struggling people may resent the lack of self-determination—having to ask and receive things on a daily basis. But it is the ones who became poor through mismanagement that will likely be the biggest complainers. Their solution to their mismanagement is simply for someone to give them more resources. Those who are good managers of their resources will be thankful for the daily help, and know that they will eventually be able to produce enough to be autonomous again.

Interest Free Loans

There will be times when people have necessities other than food—or need food when there is nothing available in the fields. The Bible also teaches that those with means should lend money to the poor for their needs—but not at interest (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36-37; Deuteronomy 15:7-11). The word "needs" is again key. There is no reason to lend money to someone just because they want something. It should only be done when they need it, and the lender knows they need it. The lender also needs to be careful to be sure that the person is not borrowing for needs, because they have spent the money that should have been used for needs on something else.

The requirement to lend at no interest means that there is no money to be made on these loans, they are a kindness to the person in need. Unfortunately, the practice of our society today is completely the opposite. Today, numerous banks, businesses and governments lend at high interest rates to the poor. Fees and penalties for late payments can be more than the value of what was owed originally. God promises to punish those who make fortunes through these evil practices (Zechariah 7:9-14).

PABC largely serves people by directly providing their needs. In general, it does not have the resources to help people who do not live on its campus. Even so, there are a few cases where PABC can verify that loaning someone a few dollars now will help them save many times the amount in the future, prevent them from going to jail, or make life reasonable to live when it would be very difficult without the money. PABC has loaned money in those cases, and it has usually been returned—but, sadly, not always.

In Your House

As the above sections teach, it is best to give the poor what they need, when they need it. This is difficult to do with weekly food giveaways or monthly government checks. The Bible suggests that we take the poor into our homes (Leviticus 25:35). With this method, we know what there needs are. This is the way of PABC, as the staff actually lives among those it helps.

Another Bible teaching is not making a hardship or impossible condition for the poor—like requiring to pledge their garment for a loan that causes them to have to sleep in the cold (Deuteronomy 24;10-15). Our nation actually has laws that operate on this principle—a person in debt cannot have his only transportation or other essential items taken away because of a debt. If he cannot live and get to work, how can he pay his debt? Again, making a determination of what is essential is much easier when the person is living with you.

Old Debts Must Be Forgiven

While some Christians do not yet understand this, the Bible teaching on "bankruptcy" is very clear: Release of debts should be automatic, every seven years, whether one needs it or not! The Bible teaches debts are to be canceled for everyone in the "year of release" (Deut 15:1-6; Deut 31:10). There is no requirement to "file" bankruptcy. Obviously, a lot less people would lend money under those rules. The current practice of stores, banks, credit card companies, and a host of others marketing and begging solvent people to take out loans is unbiblical. If they had to forgive all loans every seven years, they would make a tiny fraction of today's loans—and they would run much shorter terms.

Since our legal system does not have an automatic release of debts every seven years, filing for bankruptcy is the only way to get the kind of relief for debt that God intended. God does not intend for people to spend the bulk of their life earning to repay some big debts—no matter whose fault they are. Obviously, it is wrong to run up debts with no possible way to pay them and then just file bankruptcy. The purpose of bankruptcy is to help people who have gotten into debt—through their fault or the fault of others—to get out and stay out.

PABC has acquired books, internet sites, legal help phone numbers and other resources to help individuals file for bankruptcy—and encourages people to do it when it will help.

Former Prisoners

Biblical punishments for crimes are usually very different than those of our legal systems. The Bible never specifies jail or prison as a punishment. Most biblical punishments consist of financial restitution. (The Bible teaches the death penalty for capital offenses, and limited corporal punishment for certain cases.) When a person does not have the money to pay court-ordered restitution, the Bible says he could be sold as a servant for up to 6 years (Exodus 22:3; Deuteronomy 15:12). Serving at the farm or business of a successful person is a much better rehabilitation method than caging people in with a bunch of other prisoners. When a servant is set free, he is to be furnished with animals and what he needs to begin living on his own (Deuteronomy 15:14). Today, when prisoners are released, they are frequently burdened with court costs and thousands of dollars in costs to pay for their stay in jail. Criminal background checks, offender databases, and other restrictions make it almost impossible for them to get jobs—yet they owe a lot of money. It is common for them to serve more jail time simply because they could not find a job within a few weeks to pay their court fines and costs. For many, successfully committing additional crimes appears to be the only way to stay out of jail. While there should be punishment for crimes, putting people in "impossible" situations is not a just punishment.

PABC has accepted former prisoners, some of whom would have gone back to jail if we did not accept them. We encourage them to eliminate housing fees through bankruptcy when possible and help them sort through the long and difficult task of reestablishment in the working world. Justice for the poor is an important theme as the PABC ministry has to evaluate each person to determine how much they can be helped versus how much of a threat they are likely to be to the others on campus. So far, we have escaped major difficulties.

Learn More

You can learn more about the PABC Homeless ministry by reading the articles on pages 2-3 or looking at our website:

http://portaustin.net/pabc/homeless/

There you can find a summary (no names) of each guest, how long they stayed and their situation. We welcome visits ot our campus: PABC, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467; tel:989-738-7700; PABC@portaustin.net. 🕮

Eat Your Vegetables!

by Adam Miller

Planting time has finally arrived! I transplanted asparagus and broccoli into the garden yesterday and, to my surprise, it was not the quick and simple task I thought it would be! Yet while the task certainly had a degree of tedium to it, I thought about how rewarding the time I spent would prove to be when the little plants were ready for consumption. As I was thinking along those lines, I recalled the once-common (now perhaps less so) parental admonition "Eat your vegetables!"

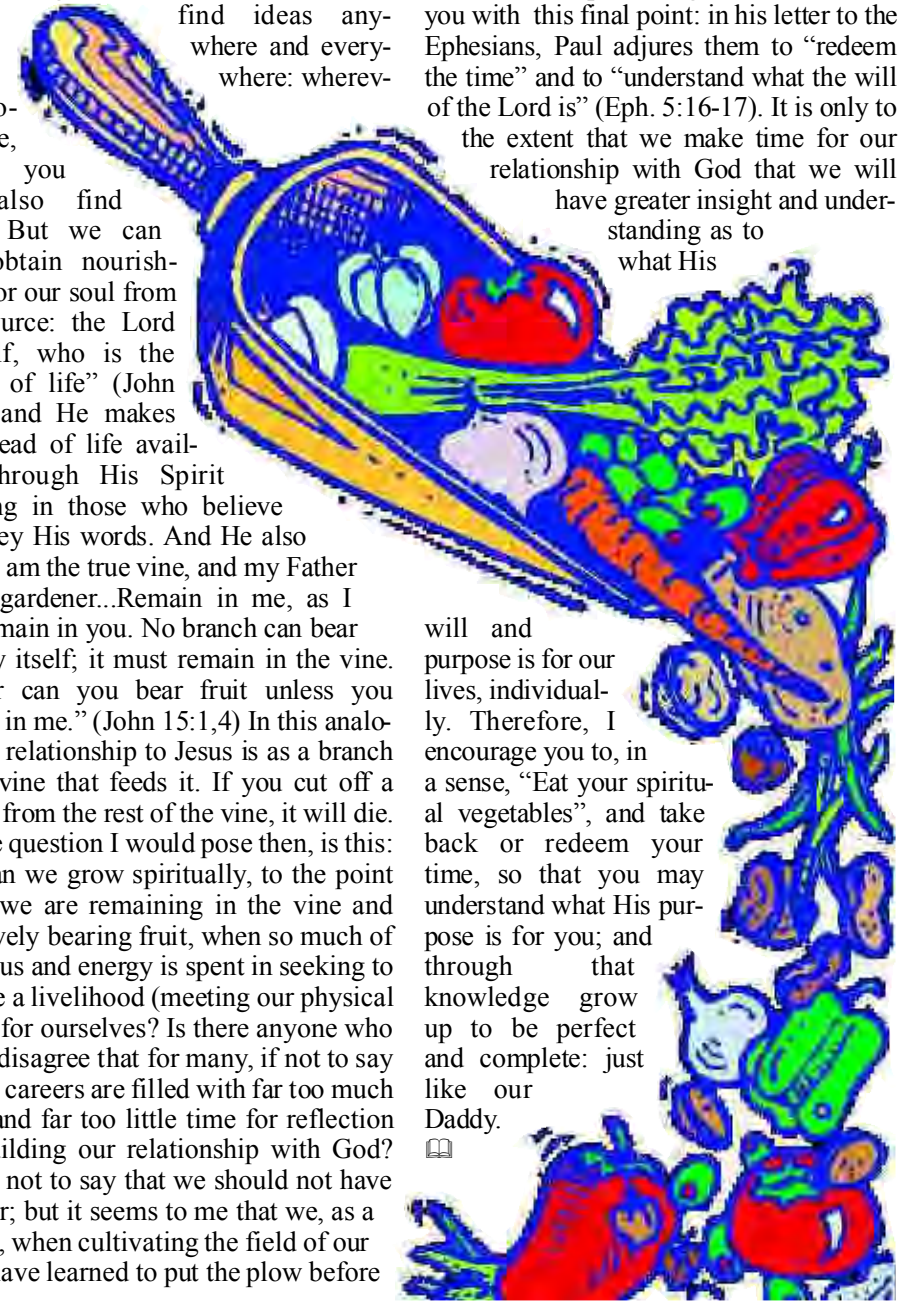
"But WHHHHYYYYYY??!! I don't liiike them; they're yuuucky!", went the equally common retort—which was followed by the sage parental rationale: "So you can grow up big and strong, like Daddy or Mommy." And veggies are indeed packed with nutrients that help to build a strong and healthy body: so now, as an adult who values sound nutrition for its health-producing effect, I can appreciate this advice in a way that I couldn't back then. But as excellent as this advice is, it is not what I really had in mind to discuss, for there is instruction better still than this for us to consider.

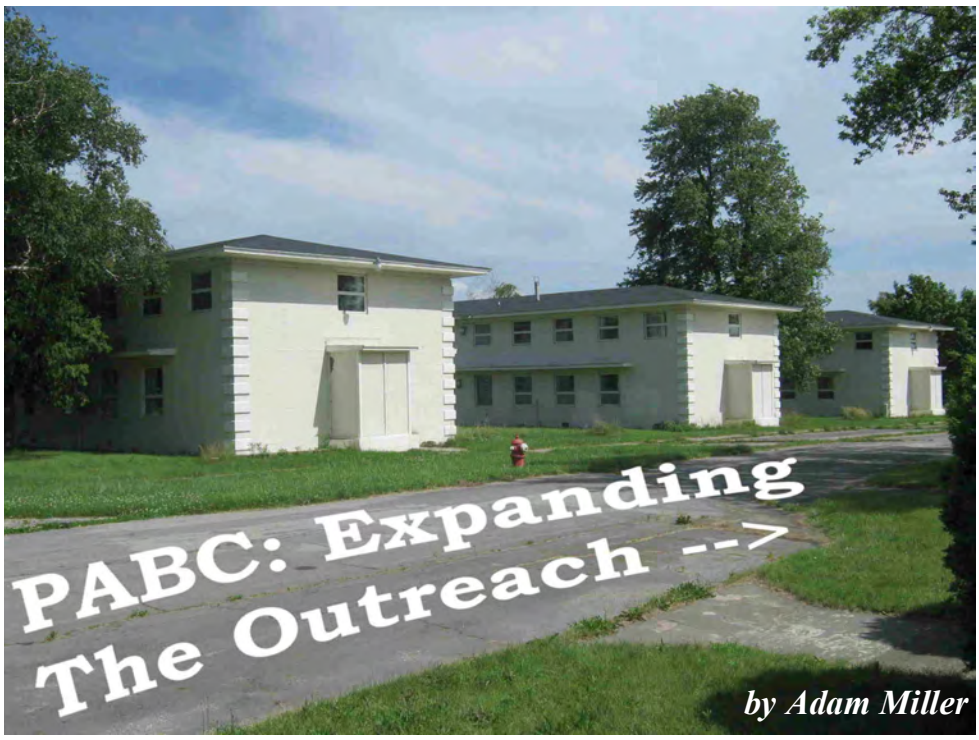
In His model prayer, the Lord said we ought to ask our Father to "give us this day our daily bread". And so we ought. But how often, and how readily, do we limit this instruction by confining it merely to the realm of our physical needs—perhaps overlooking the fact that God created us body, mind, and spirit; and of the three, the soul is foremost in import. (John 6:63: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.") Just as the body will begin to atrophy and eventually die if starved for nutrients for too long, so too will the mind and the soul. The nourishment we supply to each may differ. The body requires oxygen, water, energy in the form of carbohydrates, protein, and fat, as well as vitamins and minerals, etc.; the mind requires stimulation in the form of ideas; and the soul requires truth and righteousness. Yet our approach to ensuring we receive the nourishment requisite to each should not be different. In other words, we ought to seek our spiritual and mental sustenance with no less, and in truth, more, passion and energy than we seek our physical "daily bread". But while the idea of fasting for an extended period of time might cause some to shudder "Oh, I could never do that!" do we have the same sense of dread when we consider a paucity of mental and spiritual food?

We are blessed to live in a country where food for the body is abundant (although increasingly diminished in nutritive value—an excellent reason to begin growing your own veggies, if you haven't already!). Ideas, both good and bad, are in no short supply: and there are those who, like the Athenians of Paul's day, spend their time "doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas". We can find ideas anywhere and everywhere: wherever people are, there you will also find ideas. But we can only obtain nourishment for our soul from one source: the Lord Himself, who is the "bread of life" (John 6:48), and He makes that bread of life available through His Spirit dwelling in those who believe and obey His words. And He also said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:1,4) In this analogy, our relationship to Jesus is as a branch to the vine that feeds it. If you cut off a branch from the rest of the vine, it will die.

The question I would pose then, is this: how can we grow spiritually, to the point where we are remaining in the vine and effectively bearing fruit, when so much of our focus and energy is spent in seeking to provide a livelihood (meeting our physical needs) for ourselves? Is there anyone who would disagree that for many, if not to say all, our careers are filled with far too much stress and far too little time for reflection and building our relationship with God? That is not to say that we should not have a career; but it seems to me that we, as a society, when cultivating the field of our lives, have learned to put the plow before the ox, so to speak.

The Lord commands us not to worry about what we will eat or drink, or what we will wear, yet aren't these the exact things that consume much of our attention, especially now as the economy has worsened and food and energy costs skyrocket? But when we seek first the Father's Kingdom and His righteousness, His Son promises that all these secondary things will be given to us as well. (Matt. 6:33) In my own career, I found that I could not wholeheartedly pursue both "success" and my relationship with God—and my career was not excessively demanding in nature, as some are. So I had to make a change, and what I have gained from that decision is precious to me. Without further elaboration on that topic, though, I would leave you with this final point: in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul adjures them to "redeem the time" and to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:16-17). It is only to the extent that we make time for our relationship with God that we will have greater insight and understanding as to what His will and purpose is for our lives, individually. Therefore, I encourage you to, in a sense, "Eat your spiritual vegetables", and take back or redeem your time, so that you may understand what His purpose is for you; and through that knowledge grow up to be perfect and complete: just like our Daddy. 📖





I moved to PABC in March of this year, and I made the decision to commit to serving here because I was convicted that it was God's will for me to do so at this point in my life. The fact that I was convicted, in and of itself, doesn't necessarily mean that much—I've heard people on numerous occasions claim to do something because they believed it was God's will: even if what they were doing, or intended to do, was clearly unscriptural. But I would like to share what led me to that conviction, not because it was anything particularly profound, but more because I am confident that it is not an experience unique to myself. By that I mean that God will, at times, use events in our lives to get our attention when, and if, a course-correction is necessary. In my case, God used an unstable financial condition to lead me to question whether the life I was living was consistent with His purpose for me. Given the nation's current economic climate, I deem it likely that others may be struggling with this same question, and if so, perhaps what I share may have some value.

Success as a Personal Trainer, but...

I had been living in Austin, TX, working as a personal trainer, which was a career that in many ways was a satisfying one. However, in the year leading up to my arrival at PABC, it had become increasingly less so, for a variety of reasons. As I mentioned, part of that was financial: personal training is a non-essential service, or luxury expenditure; one which requires perspective clients to have both a need for it and a discretionary income sufficient to justify the expense. Beginning in 2009, fewer people were capable and/or willing to do so; even if they acknowledged that they would benefit from the service—and this diminished my income significantly. Be that as it may, God had always provided for my essential physical needs, and I had confidence that He was aware of my circumstances. But, because of this, I began to evaluate the difference I was making in people's lives more closely. I became more concerned about whether I was having any lasting impact or not; because the satisfaction that comes from a knowledge that what you do matters would, for me, compensate sufficiently enough to justify persisting along my current path.

I also knew, however, that reversing my financial trend would require an increased workload—spending more time in what is termed "prospecting" for clients, without any guarantee that it would yield an increase in income. It was important to me to consider what this would cost in relation to the things that were of spiritual importance. Even without it, I found that far too often I had too little energy for a closer relationship to God—or, at times, simply a lack of desire to pursue one: because if I had free time, I wanted to use it to do what I wanted to do. I do not mention this simply to complain against my workload; there are many careers far more demanding than mine was. I say it, rather, because of the realization that many today are faced with the threat of losing their job if they aren't willing to work overtime, and are made to feel guilty if they don't do so joyfully: as if laziness alone were the only possible reason one might refuse. Pursuit of "success" has always been a heavy yoke: how many hearts have given out in its pursuit? For many today though, even *just getting by* requires that life become little more than 'work, eat, sleep, repeat', with maybe a little 'play' thrown in on occasion. This was not a path I desired to follow, and as I did not foresee being able to avoid doing so where I was at, I began to seek alternatives.

Then, in August of 2010, the gym where I worked closed for a week for maintenance, and so I went out to California to visit some of my family. During that visit I mentioned to one of my sisters that we were studying the Sermon on the Mount in the Sabbath fellowship I attended in Austin. My brother-in-law shared a book entitled *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, which he thought might benefit the study. Reading it affected me deeply. I value it because it helped me to more concretely understand the tremendous responsibility that God gives to those He calls; and to realize more fully just how much of my life was spent being primarily concerned with my own welfare. In addition, I received it at the perfect time, when I was most receptive to what I learned from it, because I was particularly desirous at that point to know if it mattered to God what an individual does for their career—in other words, did He have some specific purpose for *me*?

Finding God's Purpose for Me

So what does all of this have to do with my conviction that it was God's will for me to come to PABC? I had been praying that if God had something else in mind for me to do, that He would make it clear to me. A few weeks after I returned from my trip, I received an e-mail update about PABC and the thought entered my mind that this was my answer. Initially though, I was far from being certain of it—indeed I would even say I resisted the idea for a time. I enjoyed living in Austin: I had another sister and brother-in-law who lived there near me and I loved being able to spend time with them. Also, I had

grown up in Michigan and was not at all keen on the idea of returning to experience what I will refer to understatedly as its "unpleasant" winters.

So I explored other options, while praying that if it was God's will for me to continue with personal training, that he would encourage me to do so with an increase in my business. For brevity's sake, I will simply say that the doors to the alternatives I considered did not open. Nevertheless, that fact alone was not enough for me. This was a major decision I was facing, especially since it was not clear to me how I would earn a living if I did decide to go. I wanted to be certain; and I was asking God for a sign. I thought it would come at the Feast, since I knew through the update I received in August that Norm would be attending the same site as I was. I asked God that He might make it clear to me what I should do, one way or the other, through a conversation with him. I did have the conversation, but it did not accomplish what I had hoped. After the Feast was over, I returned home perplexed and a bit frustrated with God. What did it all mean? Why did it seem like He wasn't answering me?

Finally, one Sabbath evening, I happened to turn to the account in 1 Kings 19, where Elijah had fled to the mountain in Horeb. While he was there God told him His presence was about to pass by. Then a great wind came, next an earthquake, followed by a fire—all signs of God's mighty power. But what does it say of each? The Lord was not in them. Elijah didn't need another experience with God's power at this point: God had performed many miracles through him in the past. He needed encouragement, and intimate communion with God, which came in the form of a still, small voice. And there, to me, was my answer! It occurred to me then that every time I brought the question of what I should be doing with my life to God, the still, small voice in my heart told me that PABC was where I belonged.

But I was, and still am, inexperienced in having God lead and guide my life in that way; so as I would go about my daily routine, doubts would invariably creep in and I'd be right back to asking for a sign. But now I understood why I hadn't received it: it wasn't what I needed. All the doubts I experienced led me to seek God much more diligently; and that was the more essential thing. Through this, I have also begun to realize that oftentimes it is the subtle, less obvious ways in which God works that form the foundation of, and strengthen, our faith in Him. Most importantly to me, it gave me increased faith that God did indeed have a purpose for me, and that He cared about how I used my time. I did not know, right then, what specifically I was supposed to do here; I just knew that I was supposed to *be* here and that I would learn things here that I would not learn elsewhere.

Faith and Purpose

Faith and purpose are of necessity interwoven. If you have a purpose without faith in it, you don't really have a purpose at all. Conversely, having faith with no purpose to guide it is like having a car filled with gas, without having any destination. You may begin to drive and may keep going until you run out, but unless you choose at some point along the way, you're not likely to end up where you want to be. How many Christians, who believe firmly that God worked in the lives of the saints, and gave them a purpose as recorded in the Bible, lack faith and confidence that He would be involved in and is at work in *their* lives; and because of this live without a clear purpose? It's not my intention to attempt to answer that question, but I will say this, which I know with all my heart to be true: what a glorious and wonderful thing it is, the highest honor one can have, to be given a service to God, and to know that it is so; because any life, lived without purpose, is a diminished one. The ultimate purpose for mankind as a whole is to bring glory to God through service to Him, yet the service He may give to be performed varies according to the individual. So for anyone who may happen to read this, if you have not yet identified what God's purpose is for you, I can only encourage you to make it a priority in your life to seek one from Him; and to be confident that He will make it clear—whatever it may be, in due season.

Which brings me back to PABC. The reason I have shared all of this is because I am here: and I infer that if it is God's will for me to be here, as I believe it is, it then stands to reason that He has a purpose for PABC as well. Our Father's will and purpose always has our greatest good in mind: so in all things we do, let His will be done and we (speaking of people in general, not just PABC) will prosper. This does not always hold true with regard to physical prosperity, but it most certainly does of our spiritual well-being. Therefore, it is patent that knowing and understanding what His will is serves our best interest. Since I believe this, and my purpose is now linked with PABC, I desire to be equally confident that what we are doing, as a group, is also consistent with God's will, because our efforts will succeed only to the extent that they are so. As *Servants' News* readers are already aware, PABC has sheltered homeless people since June of 2010. Since that time, we have provided shelter for 43 adults and 15 of their children; many for less than a month, some for as long as 10 months. It is good that PABC was able to fill that need for them while they were here. If we knew of a better alternative for these people, we could have sent them there, but we knew of none.

More than Helping the Homeless

During my time here, I have raised the question of whether operating as a homeless shelter is all that God has in mind for us to do. I ask it for several reasons. The first of these is a desire to maximize the use of the resources He has provided. Huron County is by no means a densely populated area, and Port Austin is not a year-round residence for most of those who do live here. It is quite conceivable that there might never be a time when there would be sufficient numbers of homeless to fill all the rooms we have available. If God was involved in the establishment of PABC (and I believe that to be true as strongly as I believe that it is His guidance that led me to come), and His sole purpose in its establishment was that we would serve the homeless, would it not be reasonable to locate it in an area where there are more of them; especially now, when so many are losing their homes? I am not saying there is no value in service on a smaller scale; I am merely considering the impact we have relative to what could be.

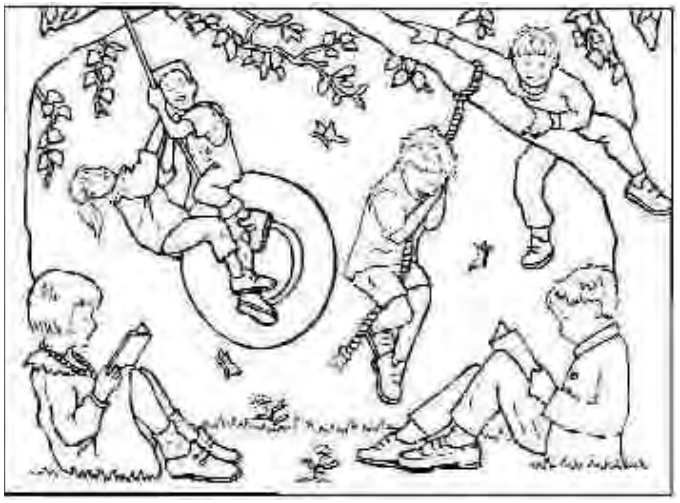
Furthermore, there are several other homeless shelters, about 80 miles away, so the need is being met, in some ways, by those who have more experience with, and resources for, doing so. Granted, we may be unique from the others in that we have a ministerial approach of sharing the Gospel. How much more of a lasting impact we had for the brief time some of them were able to stay here as opposed to another shelter, I cannot say: and the fact that I cannot contributes significantly to why I have raised the question. At this point we have only had two families and seven individuals who needed to stay longer than three months. A significant part of sharing the Gospel is demonstrating a better way of life, one that produces peace and joy, in a way that leads others to desire to have those things in their own lives. Changing lifelong patterns of behav-

ior is not an easy thing, however, even for those who have the benefit of God's spirit to help them overcome: how much less for those without it, especially if they aren't inclined to acknowledge that any change is necessary? To be effective in leading others to desire positive change, one must begin by showing care and concern before moving on to correction. All of this requires that trust be built, and takes time; which is not always afforded us. That is not to say it is un-worthwhile to make the effort, and it certainly shouldn't be avoided simply because it is difficult—with God nothing is impossible: and as long as there are homeless in the area who we can help, I believe we should continue to do so. My point, though, is this: if God has given us this responsibility and we are unique from other shelters solely or primarily because of this, would not the difference we make be more apparent?

Helping Those Who Need it Most

God is concerned to show His love and kindness to those who are less fortunate, and it is fair to say the homeless are so, even when and if their misfortune is a product of their own doing. But undoubtedly, they are not the only ones of whom this is true. Some have lost more than just their homes; and that through no fault of their own. I am referring to orphans, and abandoned or unwanted children. Some scriptures that highlight God's concern for them are:

> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27) .
>
> A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling (Psalm 68:5).
>
> Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow (Isaiah 1:17).



PABC's original stated purpose was to establish a Sabbatarian Educational Environment for young people. This purpose, of course, has not yet been realized. When I spoke to Norman Edwards at the Feast last year, I asked him why he thought that was so. In short, he felt it was because the infrastructure was not in place for an educational program to be successful. But I consider another possibility to be a more satisfactory explanation. I believe it may well be that God withheld the provision of the necessary infrastructure at that time at least in part because the group SEE had intended to serve was not the one God had in mind for us to work with. By that I mean that I believe there is a greater need for providing an environment conducive to learning a Christian way of life for orphans, and abandoned, or unwanted children than there is for young adults who have already been raised in a Christian environment and who have the support of a family who loves them.

The question I would pose, then, is this: is there a need for this type of service today, and would PABC be capable of providing it? Regarding the provision, I am only speaking what is in my heart—to the extent that what I have said is consistent with God's will, I am fully confident that He will provide the means to bring it to pass, because His will is never thwarted. If it is not from Him, then nothing will come from it, and we move on. Regarding the need, statistics are no longer kept specifically on orphans—they are lumped together in foster care statistics with other children who are away from their parents for **either** temporary **or** permanent reasons: parent(s) are incompetent, in the hospital, in jail, on drugs, too poor or simply unwilling to raise their children. Many children go back and forth between the foster care system and their parents, the average time away being 32 months. For the scope of this article I provide only the following, as a place for those who have an interest in pursuing it further to begin:

State Systems are Not Working

An article from October 10, 2002 in the Weekly (Google cache) provides the following statistics:

> "The statistics may surprise you: Adoption is a $6.3 billion industry that is unregulated. Since 1971, United States citizens have adopted more than 265,000 children internationally. In 2001 alone, more than 19,000 children from other countries were adopted by U.S. citizens.

PABC playground

Orphanages are full in most countries, yet the welfare of these orphaned and abandoned children is not the top priority in the current system of adoption. The number of orphans worldwide is estimated at more than 13 million."

(Source: http://216.239.33.100/search?q=cache:HfSEuWOK1zAC:www.theweekly.com/subs/overcoffee.html+%22number+of+orphans+worldwide%22+&hl=en&ie=UTF-8)

In the US, according to Current Events:

"Old-time orphanages—large buildings housing large numbers of orphans—mostly disappeared in this country by the 1940s. They have been replaced by modern facilities known as "group homes" or "group residential programs." Today about 30,000 children—a small fraction of the more than 500,000 kids living apart from their natural parents—live in group homes or group residential programs scattered across the country."

To the extent that orphanages and group residential programs are staffed by individuals who genuinely care for the children, good can be accomplished. Nevertheless, state-run agencies, organizationally, are not concerned with teaching Christianity. Indeed, doing so may even be legislated against. As a non-501(c)(3) church entity, PABC is not subject to any such legislation, however; and therefore has an opportunity to serve in a way that others cannot. But even if Christianity *was* taught, there would still remain a need: as the above statistics indicate, group residential programs fill less than 10% of the need (30,000 out of more than 500,000). Adoption is potentially the best, as parents become legally responsible for children as if they were their own, but only about 50,000 children a year are adopted. The remaining 90%+ are left in the US foster care system—somebody is being paid to take care of them—or they are unaccounted for. (Source: http://adoption.about.com/od/statistics/p/2005stats.htm)

Foster care can be better than a group home, or it can be a whole lot worse. While many families accept foster children out of a sincere desire to love and help them, others do it only for the financial benefit they receive for doing so, and the children are essentially merchandise. Accurate statistics for abuse within the system are hard to obtain, because neither the abusers nor the government want people to know about the abuse, and the children are often scared into being quiet or are considered unreliable witnesses.

The result of poor treatment of children is runaway children. According to the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children, about 1,680,000 children per year either run away, or are thrown away—asked to leave their dwelling with no alternate care arranged. Most of these children return home within a few days, but also most suffer dangerous situations while away. A few thousand never return. It is obvious that these children are not happy with their care. How many of these runaway/thrownaways are orphans or in foster care is not tabulated. (Source: _http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/documents/nismart2_runaway.pdf)

PABC to Help Children in Need?

So again, is this a work that PABC should begin to pursue? One of the differences in working with orphaned or abandoned children, as opposed to homeless adults, is that they require a longer-term sense of stability in a positive environment. A seven year old orphan, for example, is not concerned about how soon they are able to move on and gain their independence by getting their own home. More time is afforded to truly make a positive and lasting difference. Moreover they are reached at a time when they are still receptive to learning, which is not always true of adults. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", as the saying goes. And, as noted earlier, from a standpoint of utilizing the rooms we have available, the need of Huron County's homeless population has not increased to reach even half of our capacity. If we can do more by expanding our vision and outreach, shouldn't we do so? Would doing so mean discontinuing our outreach to the homeless? Perhaps in time, but I do not think that it would, of necessity, be so; certainly not as long as we are able to meet the need. Assuredly, there would be other difficulties in pursuing this course, and questions will arise regarding them, but it would be impossible to address and answer them all here. So I will simply conclude by adding one final detail to my account.

The book I alluded to earlier, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, contained a brief reference to George Mueller; and from it, I felt compelled to read about his life. He was a Prussian minister who lived from 1805-1898. In 1835, living in Bristol, England at the time, he felt compelled to open an orphanage. He started with nothing, received no government assistance, and made no pleas for money—and God provided the means for him to establish an orphanage that would eventually house 2,050 children in six separate buildings and served over 10,000 orphans in his lifetime. The reason he gave for taking his approach was that he wanted to show the world, with visible proof, that God hears and answers prayers.

What a pertinent idea for the times in which we live! Jesus told a parable to his disciples, recorded in the book of Luke, to convey that men ought to persist and not lose confidence in their prayers to God; that God hears and answers even though the answer may not come immediately. Yet at the end of it he asked, "…when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)—indicating that in the days prior to Christ's return, there would be little, if any, belief in the idea that God answers prayers. George Mueller saw a need for more faith over 150 years ago and we are that much closer today to the Lord's return. Has faith in God increased since Mueller's day? When I read his story, before I even came to PABC, I felt that my purpose would be realized through beginning again the work he did with orphans, and that I was to start here. It is for this reason that I have proposed the idea of expanding our outreach in this way. As I have already spoken of it to those of us here, and all are in agreement that it is an idea worth pursuing, Norm suggested that I write about it for the last issue of *Servants' News*. Having now done so, I entrust the matter to God, being confident that if it is His will for us to do so, He will provide the way for it to be accomplished.

by Todd Elder

Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the meaning of life? What is right and wrong? What happens after death?

When the topic of creation is raised, many people think only of the scientific debate between Creationism and the Theory of Evolution. However, the topic is much greater and broader in scope. How a person answers the above questions, how one relates to the Almighty, the reliability of Scripture, and even understanding the need for salvation through the Messiah are all impacted by how one views the first few chapters of Genesis.

One of the fundamental concepts for believers is that Elohim is the Creator and that mankind is part of His creation. This concept greatly impacts how people begin answering the above questions. Within this view, life has much meaning and purpose, there are definite answers as to what is right and wrong, and there is hope of eternal life after a physical death.

From the perspective of Evolution, the great questions of life have hopeless answers: 1) A person's life occurred by chance when certain chemicals came together for a period of time. 2) There can be no greater meaning to life, no absolute right and wrong, and no hope of life after death.

Both my personal work in the creation science field and my efforts at the Port Austin Bible Campus are based upon the same goals of encouraging life, defending Scripture, and helping people have a closer relationship with the One Most High. This is often done by taking a stand against Secularism and the product of secular science that is known as the Theory of Evolution. Secularism is the rejection or exclusion of religious considerations. Secular Science examines the idea that the universe occurred without a god or some type of designer. It often follows the Big Bang Theory for cosmology, the Natural Origins Theory for the Earth's formation and development, and the Theory of Evolution for biological life.

Many believers throughout the world live in a secular society and with a secular education system. Typically, the classroom will have little if any information about the problems of evolution theory and absolutely none of the support for the special creation that has occurred. Furthermore, the effects upon society from following the concepts of evolution theory include an increase in racism, the eugenics movement of the last century, and now the push for genetically modified organisms today. This type of world view devalues life and, therefore, contributes to suicide, murder, and other types of violence that disregard any sanctity of human life.

Secular concepts have also found their way into the lives of believers. This has largely occurred by mixing the truth of Scripture with falsehoods of Secularism. One of the greatest examples of this is the concept of Theistic Evolution, which proposes that Elohim created things but He did so through evolution and over billions of years. This compromise within the church has had the terrible effect of undermining the validity and accuracy of Scripture. It also brings into question many of the basic understandings and truths of the relationship Elohim has with mankind.

One of the prime understandings of the Scriptures is that when Elohim created mankind there was a special relationship between them. When Adam and Eve were disobedient, this relationship changed and death came into the world. This leads to the need of having a Savior who can bring people back into that special relationship and the offer of eternal life. If any types of evolution are involved, then the ancestors of Adam and Eve would have been fighting and killing each other for survival for millions of years. This would negate the effects of the first sin, as death would already exist in the world and a judgment of death for disobedience would be meaningless.

The Scriptures are also clear in describing that Elohim spoke the Heavens and the Earth into being in a literal seven day act of creation. Any theory that suggests it was a longer period of time has to be based on assumptions, philosophy, or a mixing of evolutionary theory. These produce internal inconsistencies with the creation account. For example, regarding the Sabbath day one can read that "for six days hath Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and resteth in the seventh day; therefore hath Jehovah blessed the Sabbath-day, and doth sanctify it (Exo 20:11 YLT)." These days must be taken as literal 24-hour days. If the days were interpreted as long ages, then it could mean that man must work a relentless six million years and then rest for one million years. Instead, the original creation week has becomes the basis of the seventh day Sabbath that the Almighty uses as a sign for His people.

My personal website,

www.exploringcreation.info

examines the scriptural, scientific, and social aspects of Creationism by looking at the topics of the Creator, the Creation, the covenant relationship, salvation through the Messiah, and the battle with evil. I am also the founder and administrator of the Creation Science League, located at:

www.creationleague.info

which is a group of scientists and other people volunteering their time to freely promote an understanding of creation in the sciences. These and other writing outlets, such as Sabbatarian publications, help to spread an understanding of the Almighty's creation and the relationship He desires with mankind.

As administrator of the Creation Science League, I have been making arrangements for the Port Austin Bible Campus to receive a donated set of the Creation Science Lobby Display that is currently being designed by the League. This will be used as a small Creation Museum on the campus. This project will be part of the ongoing efforts to help people know the value of life and the accuracy of Scripture.

For comments, questions, or more information you may reach Todd Elder at PO Box 729 Port Austin MI 48467 or by email at office@exploringcreation.info. 🕮

Exploring truck and trailer used by the Elder family in gathering web-site data.

Deer browsing at thermal pool, Yellowstone National park—one of many photos.

Godly Offspring

by Norman Edwards & others

The following is a true account of a long-time Church of God family. The parents are a half-generation ahead of me, but I had gotten to know them in my 20s. I found their family to be a mixture of peace, patience and practicality, in what is often a difficult world. For several years, I worked either directly for or along side of the father, Carson, a gifted systems programmer at the Worldwide Church of God computer department. Later on, his wife, Verna worked for me in computer applications.

I remember playing with some of their children and holding their babies when I was a young single man—getting advice on this mysterious thing called child-rearing, that I hoped to do someday. Later, after I was married, I remember Verna holding our babies—glad to do so because hers were grown, but no grandchildren yet. I remember learning things about the advantages of midwives, home schooling, vaccine avoidance—and praying about difficulties when there seemed to be no answer.

Even with a large family, God was at the center of their lives. Not only did they frequently attend Bible studies and church activities, they lived Deuteronomy 6:7. The children knew when and where Dad and Mom prayed and not only left them alone to do so, but also learned by their example. As a result, their children were well behaved, respectful to adults, yet creative and fun—a difficult balance to achieve in the art of childrearing.

Theirs is not a storybook yarn where everything always goes right. Some of the children struggled with long-term health problems. Their father also struggled with health problems, and died at the age of 46, leaving Verna with 5 children: Ruth, age 21; Anne, age 19; Lynn, age 15; David, age 11; and Karen, age 6. Nevertheless, all of them avoided the rebellious teen stage that so many go through. And today, they are all married to their first and only spouse, with families of their own. Verna married Frank and moved the two children still at home to southwestern Missouri. Frank is also suffering with health difficulties, but she continues to work and they continue to take care of each other, observing the Sabbath and Feast days with Church of the Great God.

So here, in a combination of Norm Edwards', Verna's and her children's words, are their stories. All of the children have migrated east, and Ruth's house has become the hub for family get-togethers. When the 14 grandchildren get together, you can see the effect of the years Carson and Verna spent leading them in God's way—by example. The individual families still pray together regularly, and talk often of God (Deut 6:6-7). Each family also has taken this gift and tried to extend it outward in service of others

Ruth met Harvey at the beginning of their sophomore years at Ambassador College and were married right before his senior year, so he was a married student his last year of college. They now have two children which were both home-schooled. Kirstin will be 22 in November and Julie is 17. Both of them take God's Way of Life very seriously. Kirstin is a sophomore in college. Harvey and Ruth attend with Church of God, *an International Community*, and at one time hosted a congregation in their home. Harvey has his own portable sawmill business and Ruth works for an upscale plant nursery.

Anne met Darryl at the WCG's Summer Educational Program and they married two years later. Anne was always more of an independent, think-for-herself personality and Darryl is certainly her equal in that regard. He obtained a doctorate and began teaching university classes, but later switched to on-line teaching so that he and Anne could raise their four children on a 57-acre homestead. His parents live next door, and a long-time friend also lives nearby, making it easy to share manpower.

They have a large garden, raise several cows and other animals, make hay, build mountains of compost, have an off-grid solar system, heat with wood, cook on a wood cook-stove and can and dry food. They home school their children while he works on building a house (http://cedar-ridge-farm.blogspot.com/). They have made the choice to forego the traditional American pursuit of things in favor of emphasizing family relationships and both parents being home instead of being gone to work somewhere else. They love that life and the beauty of its simplicity (being simple doesn't mean it doesn't involve a lot of hard work, but it's good, honest, sweat-producing work). Their oldest child is now 14. As you might have guessed, they are independent believers, but still observe the Sabbath and Feast days with other like-minded brethren. They have even received *Servants' News* since it began in 1995.

Lynn was introduced to Stephen, her husband-to-be, by brother-in-law Harvey's family. Harvey and his family had attended the WCG with Stephen in North Carolina before Harvey went to Ambassador College. Beginning in their teen years, Lynn and Stephen corresponded for several years before they actually met. They were married eight years after they began corresponding and now have four children ages 3 through 14. They attended with WCG until a couple of years ago. Stephen now pastors a small independent church in central North Carolina, and is also heavily involved in youth summer camp ministry. They are well loved there as they serve the people there with generosity and loving care and concern.

David met Mikele while he was a student at University of Missouri, Rolla and she was a student at Xavier. Her family was nominally Catholic, from Southern Illinois. How they met and conducted their courtship is an amazing story. David was living in a frat house, one for high scholastic standards. It was hosting, along with a sister sorority, a Saturday night Halloween party for children of the community. David had been to Sabbath services in St. Louis and "sneaked" back into the house after sunset, not wanting to be part of a Halloween Party. He went to his study room. The door was closed and there was a note on the door which said, "Girl crashed inside."

David went into the dark room very quietly and made his way around the edge of the room to his desk. In the dim light he could barely make out the form of a body, lying on his floor. He sat there thinking, "Now what am I going to do?" He had planned to study, but turning on the light did not appear to be an option.

Apparently, his activity awakened this girl and they started talking, without turning on the lights. She was a student at Xavier University, St Louis, and was visiting Rolla because her best friend was a student there, and was in the sister sorority. She was tired from the trip to Rolla and did not want to be involved in a Halloween party either. They talked for about three hours before they turned on the light. By then, the connection between them was well established. David was convicted that he would never marry someone who was not converted, so their friendship could not develop into anything more.

After knowing each other a couple of years, Mikele decided to do some research so that she could prove David's beliefs wrong. Instead, she became convicted of

Continued on page 40

Health: Headed for the Dark Ages?

by Jimmie Parr

When I was very young, my mother told me about the nutritional value of oranges and citrus fruits, in general. She said that English sailors had become known as "limeys," because they carried limes, or other citrus fruits, on their vessels. They had discovered that citrus fruits helped prevent a condition called scurvy, which had, in past times, been linked to a deficiency of Vitamin C. I say that, "in past times," scurvy had been linked to a deficiency of Vitamin C because that type of information may now be lost on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In the March, 2006 edition of Life Extension magazine is an article entitled "Why Is the FDA Picking on Cherries?" The article has to do with the U.S. Department of Agriculture having given a grant of $150,000 to cherry growers in Michigan. Michigan cherry growers used the grant to do research about nutritional benefits of cherries. Among other discoveries, the research revealed a correlation between the consumption of tart cherries and a decrease in pain in joints of people with arthritis. The anthocyanin in tart cherries was said to be better at pain relief than an equal amount of aspirin. However, the FDA told cherry growers either to stop advertising that tart cherries may help with relief of pain, or to register their cherries as a "new drug," and to pay the required fees.

For the time being, let's ignore the waste and mindlessness of having one government agency fund research of which another government agency forbids publication (Romans 1:18; I Timothy 6:20?). Let's overlook the asinine notion that cherries are drugs. Let's examine something else the FDA is doing.

Anyone who takes vitamin supplements has seen, on the labels of supplements, the vitally important message required by the Federal Death Administration:

"These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

For years, I've seen that notice on labels of supplements. I know (wink, wink) that the government cares deeply about me. Why haven't they gotten around to evaluating statements on the labels of supplements? They rushed to test the pain killer, Vioxx, which ended up killing not a few people. How many other "FDA-approved" pharmaceuticals have killed or harmed people? But the FDA won't test natural remedies, with which old-timers were familiar, though those remedies work, as Mom knew about the relationship between lack of Vitamin C and scurvy.

Surely, people at the FDA aren't afraid that, if the general population were well nourished, people would no longer need to buy drugs to mask symptoms of problems that proper nutrients would eliminate. And, surely, the Easter bunny is coming. (Our massively corrupted food supply, with the "Green Revolution" having resulted in plants with decreased nutrient content, along with the up-and-coming trend toward GMO "foods," is another subject.)

For years, I had a problem with those little painful sores in the mouth. The ten-dollar name for them is aphthous ulcers, but they are commonly called canker sores. A friend told me that Lactobacillus acidophilus would get rid of those sores. I didn't see how that could be, but I figured that I had nothing to lose, except for the price of acidophilus tablets, or yogurt which contains live L. acidophilus bacteria. And I found that, for me, maintenance of a population of L. acidophilus in my GT quickly gets rid of those canker sores.

"This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

Those canker sores kept me ill at ease, or in a condition of dis-ease. Regardless of what the FDA requires to be printed on labels of supplements, L. acidophilusin tablets or yogurt put me back at ease. Acidophilus tablets cured my dis-ease.

In my opinion, what the FDA childishly requires to be stamped on labels of bottles of acidophilus tablets is irrelevant. For this reason, and for many others, some people tend to think of the FDA as irrelevant.

But, because of its increasing power, the FDA is far from irrelevant. With our thinking that the FDA is irrelevant, they can slowly ratchet up their sway, especially with a society immersed in Americans Idle, and other servings of published distraction.

Back to the "limeys," and their cure for, or preventative measure against, scurvy, I do wonder, if the FDA has its way, whether much more information similar to the link between tart cherries and pain relief will be obscured and, finally, buried. In time, would the FDA prevent orange growers from publishing centuries-old knowledge that there is a correlation between Vitamin C intake and disappearance of symptoms of scurvy? Is the FDA seeking to treat more and more ailments with pharmaceuticals? Perhaps, just as there is an American Cancer Society, which tells us that it seeks cures for the many types of cancer, there may, in time, sprout up an American Scurvy Society, seeking a scurvy vaccine or a pharmaceutical "cure"—in a world in which knowledge about the role of Vitamin C has been concealed, because we, who still have a chance to stop these people, are too busy checking football or baseball teams, or too busy in a futile effort to live

as well, on two incomes, as our parents lived, with one income (yet another subject). We may be entering a type of "Dark Ages," in which knowledge is suppressed, or is kept from the general population. The same government which would keep cherry growers from publishing information about cherries is running public "education," which, as anyone with a pulse knows, has become an academic train wreck. The same puppet masters who control the FDA also control public schools, and, soon, will increase their control of "hellth" care.

You don't think that society's fund of knowledge can recede, or decrease?

Barry Fell's book, America B.C., makes many references to people having sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to the Western Hemisphere centuries before the voyage of Christopher Columbus. *Ancient American* magazine has over 90 issues chronicling ancient influence in the Americas centuries before the time of Columbus (http://ancientamerican.com/). Yet, by the 15th century, out of fear of sailing off a supposed "edge of the world," many people had become afraid to sail ships westward from Europe. Knowledge about our globe had become lost, or suppressed.

Think about something more recent. Think about what Josef Stalin allowed to occur in the Soviet Union, when T.D. Lysenko sent the study of genetics and other branches of biology back toward "dark ages," or, perhaps, toward Disneyland. For you creationists, think about how far into the Dark Ages we are, with attention given to the theory of evolution. For you evolutionists (with whom I disagree), think about those creationists dragging everything back into what you deem "Dark Ages."

A couple of years ago, when Michigan's Gov. Granholm came to visit Laker schools (a public school district serving Bayport, Pigeon, and Elkton, Michigan), students were told not to display any messages (on clothing, &c.) which might show opposition to Gov. Granholm or to her political party. School officials ignored the idea of allowing, as a lesson in learning to become part of the democratic process, students to express their views in civilized ways. Students were, in effect, "taught" that what the Constitution calls the God-given right of freedom of speech is not a right, but is a privilege to be given or taken by overseers.

The FDA will love this generation now in high school, unless they can awaken from the error which their parents have allowed to be induced by "schools."

Whatever happened to "Let the buyer beware?" Can't I advertise about cherries, and let potential buyers make up their minds? Can't I express my disagreement with Gov. Granholm, and let others evaluate the worth of what I proclaim, without having the school squelch dissent? Sadly, in the U.S., we are less and less able to express ourselves. Schools are training students that dissent is abnormal. Will these students will grow up to accept, among other doses of profiteering propaganda, FDA mandates, which often go against common-sense knowledge of our grandparents and great-grandparents, who knew that nutrition; not medicine, is the cornerstone of health. The government strives to appear to prevent private entities from publishing false notions which would mislead people, but that same government seems at ease with doling out its own disinformation, such as its bedtime stories about the safety of "approved" drugs.

Get your flashlight and batteries. Dark ages are coming, and we need a few bright lights shining. Health comes from good food and right living, not from patented profitable products with FDA approval.🕮

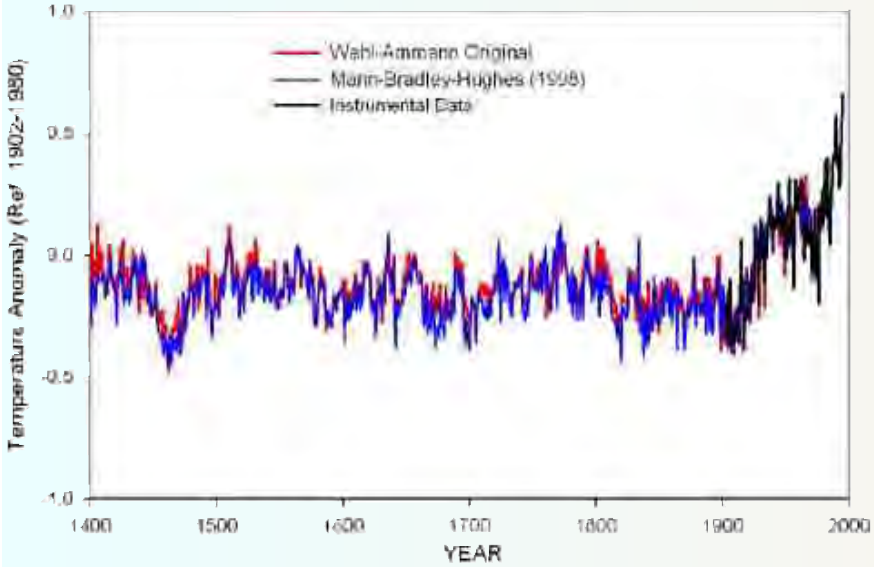
Global Something!

by Norman Edwards

This writer well remembers being scared as a child of ice ages looming on the horizon—endless cold, no more food, and eventually the death of the world. The April 28, 1975, Newsweek article at right, entirely copied for fair use purposes, shows the attitude of the day: scientists were sure of a coming ice age; the only thing in doubt was what people might let their governments do about it. Today, children are similarly scared of global warming!

The National Center for Atmospheric Research produced both the 1975 graph at right and the current one below. In 1975, they were predicting an ice age, and today they are predicting global warming! How can this be? Well, at least their technique is consistent. They always show only the portion of the data that best suits their current scheme. The 1975 graph stops at 1970 because temperatures began to turn upward between 1970 and 1975. The graph begins at 1880 because the record shows the earth had been colder for hundreds of years than it was in the 1970s.

Today, in the graph below and nearly all "global warming" graphs on the Internet, data stops at the year 2000—because temperatures begin to level and drop off during the last few years! Similarly, the left end of the graph deliberately starts in the year 1400 because the thousand years before that was much warmer—some periods warmer than today.



Even the Global Warming movement itself has now adopted the name "Global Change". Whether temperatures go up or down, this movement sees the need for global taxes and global control of resources by the governments, banks and businesses that fund the scientists that produce the answers they want.

Is global warming man made? Do we need to counter the "greenhouse gases" we put into the atmosphere? In the 1970s, global cooling was said to be caused by sunlight reflected away from the earth by dust and ash we put into the atmosphere. **Temperatures change, but the earth remains!** Are you glad that governments took no massive action to stop the coming ice age predicted in 1975? Do you believe that our leaders are any more honest today? Are we not better off to seek **global repentance** and trust God to manage His earth, than to give global power to lying human governments? 🕮

SCIENCE

The Cooling World

There are ominous signs that the earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production—with serious political implications for just about every nation on earth. The drop in food output could begin quite soon, perhaps only ten years from now. The regions destined to feel its impact are the great wheat-producing lands of Canada and the U.S.S.R. in the north, along with a number of marginally self-sufficient tropical areas—parts of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indochina and Indonesia—where the growing season is dependent upon the rains brought by the monsoon.

The evidence in support of these predictions has now begun to accumulate so massively that meteorologists are hard-pressed to keep up with it. In England, farmers have seen their growing season decline by about two weeks since 1950, with a resultant over-all loss in grain production estimated at up to 100,000 tons annually. During the same time, the average temperature around the equator has risen by a fraction of a degree—a fraction that in some areas can mean drought and desolation. Last April, in the most devastating outbreak of tornadoes ever recorded, 148 twisters killed more than 300 people and caused half a billion dollars' worth of damage in thirteen U.S. states.

Trend: To scientists, these seemingly disparate incidents represent the advance signs of fundamental changes in the world's weather. The central fact is that after three quarters of a century of extraordinarily mild conditions, the earth's climate seems to be cooling down. Meteorologists disagree about the cause and extent of the cooling trend, as well as over its specific impact on local weather conditions. But they are almost unanimous in the view that the trend will reduce agricultural productivity for the rest of the century. If the climatic change is as profound as some of the pessimists fear, the resulting famines could be catastrophic. "A major climatic change would force economic and social adjustments on a worldwide scale," warns a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences, "because the global patterns of food production and population that have evolved are implicitly dependent on the climate of the present century."

A survey completed last year by Dr. Murray Mitchell of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reveals a drop of half a degree in average ground temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere between 1945 and 1968. According to George Kukla of Columbia University, satellite photos indicated a sudden, large increase in Northern Hemisphere snow cover in the winter of 1971-72. And a study released last month by two NOAA scientists notes that the amount of sunshine reaching the ground in the continental U.S. diminished by 1.3 per cent between 1964 and 1972.

To the layman, the relatively small changes in temperature and sunshine can be highly misleading. Reid Bryson of the University of Wisconsin points out that the earth's average temperature during the great Ice Ages was only about 7 degrees lower than during its warmest eras—and that the present decline has taken the planet about a sixth of the way toward the Ice Age average. Others regard the cooling as a reversion to the "little ice age" conditions that brought bitter winters to much of Europe and northern America between 1600 and 1900—years when the Thames used to freeze so solidly that Londoners roasted oxen on the ice and when iceboats sailed the Hudson River almost as far south as New York City.

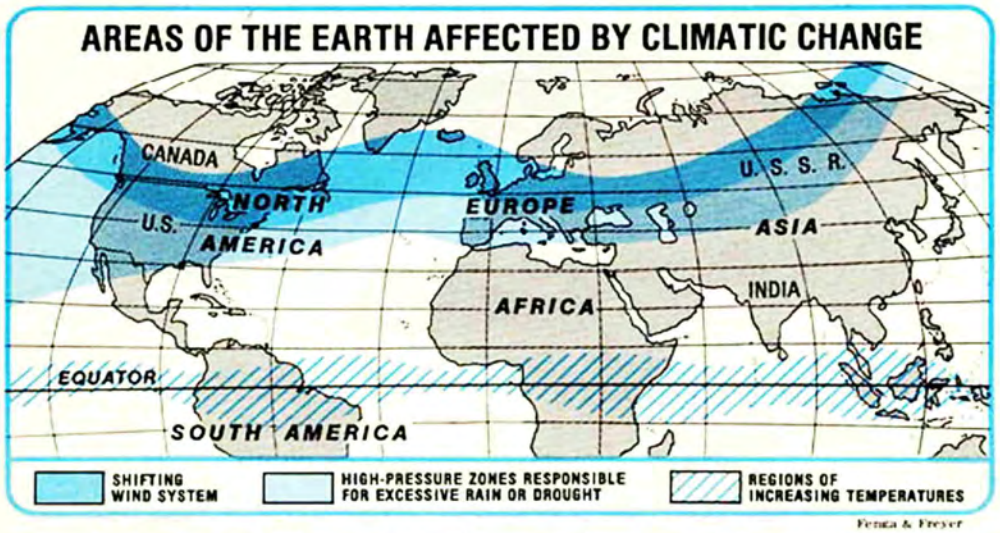
Just what causes the onset of major and minor ice ages remains a mystery. "Our knowledge of the mechanisms of climatic change is at least as fragmentary as our data," concedes the National Academy of Sciences report. "Not only are the basic scientific questions largely unanswered, but in many cases we do not yet know enough to pose the key questions."

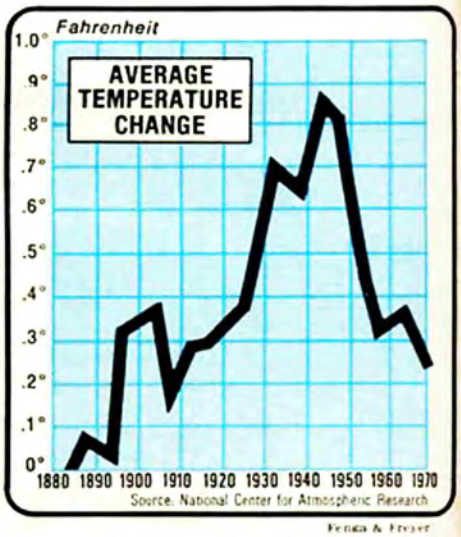
Extremes: Meteorologists think that they can forecast the short-term results of the return to the norm of the last century. They begin by noting the slight drop in over-all temperature that produces large numbers of pressure centers in the upper atmosphere. These break up the smooth flow of westerly winds over temperate areas. The stagnant air produced in this way causes an increase in extremes of local weather such as droughts, floods, extended dry spells, long freezes, delayed monsoons and even local temperature increases—all of which have a direct impact on food supplies.

"The world's food-producing system," warns Dr. James D. McQuigg of NOAA's Center for Climatic and Environmental Assessment, "is much more sensitive to the weather variable than it was even five years ago." Furthermore, the growth of world population and creation of new national boundaries make it impossible for starving peoples to migrate from their devastated fields, as they did during past famines.

Climatologists are pessimistic that political leaders will take any positive action to compensate for the climatic change, or even to allay its effects. They concede that some of the more spectacular solutions proposed, such as melting the arctic ice cap by covering it with black soot or diverting arctic rivers, might create problems far greater than those they solve. But the scientists see few signs that government leaders anywhere are even prepared to take the simple measures of stockpiling food or of introducing the variables of climatic uncertainty into economic projections of future food supplies. The longer the planners delay, the more difficult will they find it to cope with climatic change once the results become grim reality.

—PETER GWYNNE with bureau reports





Are You Sure Leaven Is Symbolic Of Sin?

by John Leitch

"How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:11-12).

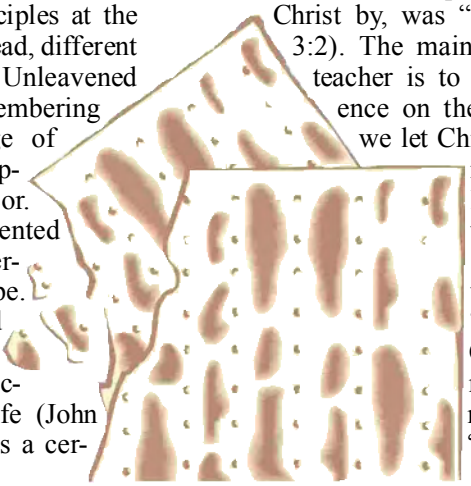
Christ defines the meaning of leaven.

This writer finds it strange why people will lock into John's definition of sin (1 John 3:4) but completely ignore Christ's definition of leaven). **Christ's explanation of leavening in this case is doctrine (Strong's #1322-*didache*- meaning instruction or teaching-Matt. 16:11-12**. I believe a broader definition of leaven would be "something that causes change by its influence" and teaching is just one way.

Teaching can be based on sincerity and truth (God the Father's leavening) or can be based on deception and untruth (Satan's leavening). Teaching (or doctrine) in and by itself, can be either correct or it can be misguided. As humans, we all have been deceived into accepting a wrong type of leavening which allows Satan to influence us, but few people realize the Bible also speaks of a good type of leavening (Lev. 7:13, Lev. 23:17, Matt. 13:33) that influences in a good way.

Sincerity and truth, leavened with correct teaching (Strong's #1322).

This paper's purpose is to show the bread Christ offered His disciples at the Last Supper, was a kind of bread, different than the unleavened type. Unleavened bread typifies affliction, remembering coming out of the bondage of Egypt (Deut 16:3) and also typifies sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:8). The bread that represented Christ was bread much different than the unleavened type. The bread that represented Christ, had an effect of comfort (Matt. 11:29-30) not affliction; and hope of eternal life (John 6:51), not fear that death was a certainty because of sin. The bread offered at the Last Supper was symbolic of sincerity and truth leavened with correct teaching. Jesus Christ is the living word of God (truth) and is the light (teacher who supplies doctrine *(Strong's #1322)* of the way (John 14:6 & John 1:4). In eating unleavened bread for seven days each Passover season, we gain a knowledge and appreciation for the true bread (Jesus Christ) that came from heaven, offered to us by the Father (John 6:32-33).



Is sincerity (attitude) and truth (God's word) all that is needed?

If all a person needed was a bible and the right attitude, then the gift of a teacher supplying doctrine and influence would not be necessary (Eph 4:11). The bible is the most published book ever and most people in North America have one in their home, but what influence has it had on their lives? The Ethiopian eunuch was sincere and had the truth (scripture) in his hand but was in complete confusion until Philip supplied the teaching (or leavening—Acts 8:27-35). The teaching (or leavening) of the Pharisees had an opposite effect, it lead people away from God (Matt. 23:15). This is the type of "old" leavening Christ warned about and Paul wants us to purge out.

Was Jesus Christ devoid of leaven (doctrine or influence)?

It seems strange that a person could think Jesus Christ is devoid of leavening (influence); after all, there is a lot of teaching in the "sermon on the mount" alone. One of the titles people addressed Christ by, was "teacher" (John 3:2). The main purpose of a teacher is to have an influence on their students. If we let Christ explain the meaning of leaven as doctrine (Matt. 16:11-12), then has not "traditional Christianity" missed the mark by saying "His body is represented by bread that is lacking leaven"? After all, if unleavened bread is the bread of affliction and with no leavening (influence), then is a person not saying "The bread which represents Jesus' body is an affliction to me, and without any influence? As Paul would say "let it not be". Christ equated His words (doctrine) to spirit (John 6:63) and His influence, will have its effect (Proverbs 22:6) if one does not rebel against it.

The symbolic bread of "the last supper" changed in the 8th century AD.

Christ established true doctrine and people were amazed by His doctrine or teaching (Matt. 7:28, Matt. 22:33, Mark 1:22). Unger's Bible Dictionary makes the claim (under the "Lord's Supper" heading) that the Latin Church changed its representation of Christ from leaven to unleavened bread in the 8th century C. E. and I presume they have documentation of this. Are we to believe the early church that had been taught by the Apostles or had been taught by teachers the Apostles taught, had no idea what kind of bread typified Christ? Did it take approximately 600 years removed from the fact, to finally have teachers from Rome come and explain the proper type of bread to use? This writer finds this hard to believe.

People today seem to disagree with the meaning Christ gave to leaven.

Many people today understand leaven to be a Bible representation of only sin, rather than an alternative meaning Christ gave it as doctrine (Matt. 16:11-12). When leaven is understood as an influence (teaching in Matt. 16:11-12) it becomes clearer why they left the leavening or influence of Egypt behind (Ex. 12:39) and pressed on toward the mountain. At the mountain we find two loaves that are strangely enough, now leavened (Lev. 23:17). If leaven is only sin, as some would speculate, then why is it in these two loaves? God does not accept sin or a blemished offering. Could these two loaves represent Israel and the Gentiles who came out of Egypt with them? The Church in the New Testament also seems to be two dis-

tinct groups; the circumcised and the uncircumcised (Acts 11:1-3 & 1 Cor. 7:18). The two groups that escaped Egypt now had Jesus Christ's leavening (teaching and influence) in their midst (1 Cor. 10:3-4). This is only speculation on my part.

Throwing out the "old leaven" and becoming a new lump is the responsibility of called out people; not Christ.

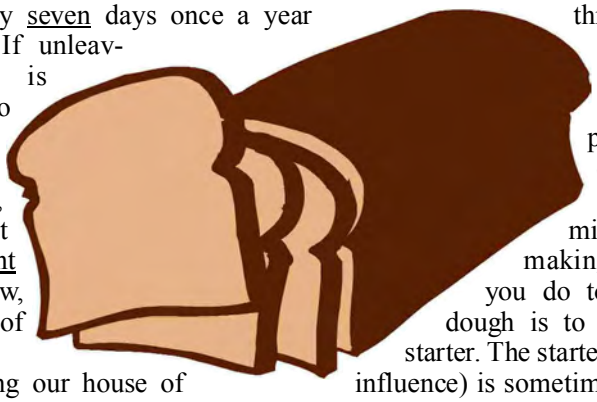
The culture of Egypt was nothing more than men influenced by Satan (Rev. 12:9). Satan's influence is not only false (John 8:44), but it also leads to malice and wickedness. Paul called it the "old leaven" (influence or teaching) in 1 Corinthians 5:8. It is the called out people who are to throw out the "old" leaven and influences that lead to malice and wickedness. It is the people who are to become a new unleavened lump, **not Christ**. Christ never did or ever will have this "old" type of leaven. The Messiah brings the true doctrine and influence to be added to the called out people after they have dispelled the "old" teachings and influences (or leaven). Repentance (purging out the "old" leaven) comes before receiving the Holy Spirit (the true leaven). This true influence will act much in the same way as "the starter" in sour dough bread.

Strong's Definitions

In the Bible, the Greek word for unleavened (bread) is "azumos" (Strong's #106) used nine times in the New Testament and the Greek word for ordinary leavened bread is "artos" used at least seventy-two times (Strong's #740). When a person mentioned leaven at the time of the Apostles, "artos" automatically came to mind (Matt. 16:6-7). The two were related in the people's minds of that day. In the Last Supper accounts (**the day before The Feast of Unleavened Bread**) in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19, Jesus took bread (artos), blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples. Christ claimed this artos (strong's #740) represented His body. Christ also compared himself to leavened bread (artos) in John 6:33 where He called Himself the bread of life. Why did Christ, repeatedly compare Himself to "artos"? Artos is a word with its primary meaning, "a raised loaf". Did the witnesses of the last supper, really witness "azumos" (unleavened) but instead recorded "artos"? What motive would they have to use a word with its primary meaning opposite to what they had witnessed? Also a word which people of that day related to leaven (Matt.16:6-7). This writer believes the witnesses recorded "artos" because it was artos, the same bread the early church used up until the 8th century when it was changed by the Latin Church (according to Unger's Bible Dictionary).

Christ did not come to abolish the law.

We all realize the law requires all bible-believing people to eat unleavened bread for only seven days once a year (Lev. 23:6). If unleavened bread is commanded to be eaten also on the 14th of Nisan, would that not make eight days in a row, instead of seven?



By cleaning our house of leaven each year, we are symbolically throwing the "old leaven" (old doctrine and vile influences) out of our lives much in the same way as Israel left the leavening of Egypt behind. Christ did not come to abolish the law (Matt. 5:17-18) so this is still required of us today. This unleavened bread is called the bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5:8), but is also called the bread of affliction (Deut. 16:3). We must throw out the old leaven ("old" influences) and strive for sincerity and truth (thy word is truth-John 17:17). Sincerity and truth, in and by themselves are entirely unleavened as far as the "old leaven" to which Paul referred. Paul also orders the people to not observe the feast with the leaven (influences) of malice and wickedness. If malice and wickedness are not purged they will grow and spread. Their influence can be seen at a church gathering in 1 Corinthians 11:18-22.

I believe a broader definition of leaven would be "something that causes change by its influence".

Lesson learned by the baking of bread.

Paul, in 1 Cor. 5 draws a parallel between the spiritual growth of a Christian and the bread making process. Paul points out, that we should not keep the feast with the old leaven (or teaching). Much of the old doctrine of men, constituted teachings leading to bondage (Acts 15:10 & Gal. 5:1) and a behavior of malice and wickedness. Sincerity and truth, explained by a person with the gift of teacher (Eph. 4:11) are the opposite of that. We should not be leavened with either the old influences or evil practices (1 Cor. 5:11 & 1 Cor. 11:18-22). Discarding these old influences has given us the opportunity of a new beginning. The idea is to get back to the basic pure ingredients (sincerity and truth) and to start again. People who throw away their old doctrines and evil practices ("old" leaven) are compared to a new batch of dough. The point most people miss is; that in bread making, the first thing you do to a new batch of dough is to mix in the leaven starter. The starter (the piece that has influence) is sometimes called the living bread because it contains a living organism. Christ also referred to Himself as the living bread that brings life (John 6:51 & verse 57). Does this living bread sound like unleavened bread with no life in it that can not influence, or reproduce itself?

A small amount of the living bread (the starter) changes the whole loaf.

Bread, through most of history, was made by a process that is known as "sour dough". A small amount of leavened dough from the previous batch is mixed into the new batch. The pioneers used this method to make their bread. Sometimes the starter could live on (it contains a living organism) for many years. If people thought their neighbor had better tasting bread, they would request a piece of that neighbor's starter. The starter contains life and under its influence would reproduce (with the proper conditions and time) a product identical to the original loaf the starter came from (if the ingredients were the same). "The property of a leavened product is to change or assimilate to its own nature the meal or dough with which it is mixed" (Adam Clarke) and Christ's leavening (influence) will have a similar effect. Christ came from the Father and is now residing in each called out person.

Using Christ's definition of leaven as teaching (Matt. 16:11-12) we can see that if we are subject to His influence, then we will become more Christ like as time goes by.

Throwing out the "old leaven" and baptism, teach a very similar lesson.

A person, when they understand how bread was made throughout much of history, can see the similarity between de-leavening and baptism.

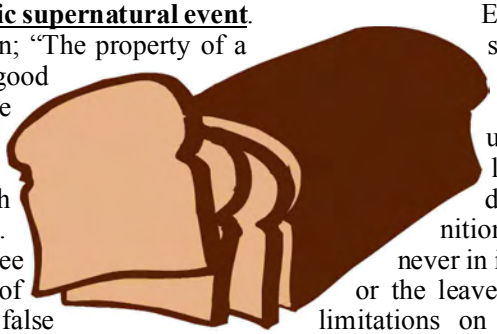
- Baptism represents the death of the old person who was deceived by "old" teaching and influences and sometimes was full of malice and wickedness (I Cor. 5:8). The average person, with their focus mainly on the concerns of how they can make it in this competitive world, views the laws of God as foolishness. This is the very person that we put to death through baptism. Although baptism symbolizes death, we must not remain dead, flat and lifeless. The Christian must rise in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4-5, Col. 3:9-10) and renewed in knowledge.
- De-leavening also represents death because leaven is a living organism that will multiply and by removing it, you take that influence out of the host substance. (In this case, the influence that caused the old person to be off track and sometimes filled with wickedness and malice). When this old leaven is removed, all that is left is; the basic pure ingredients of sincerity and truth.

Being sincere and having truth is not enough. We need Christ's leavening (teaching and influence) to understand truth. That is what the "sermon on the mount" was all about. A person needs a life-giving force, (like the leaven starter in the sour-dough bread), to give them the knowledge to obey God's laws (Rom. 2:13): feed the hungry, visit the sick, watch over the fatherless, etc. Nature hates a vacuum. If a person remains in an unleavened state (of no teaching or good influence) for an extended period of time, sometimes the old leaven (the bad influence) will return stronger than before. Matthew 12:43-45 brings out this principle, although in this case it is about demons. The old man, who was buried in the baptismal waters, could possibly return even more powerful than when he was buried, if no good influence replaces the bad influence.

I realize this is opposite to what many have believed over the years, but I would like the reader to notice how Christ's doctrine or teaching makes the law come alive, with the parable of the "good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-36). Without Christ's teaching, the people who passed the injured man without offering assistance reasoned that they had transgressed no law.

Is Christ required to throw out his true doctrine (leavening) to comply with the law? Is Christ's leavening (doctrine and influence) regarded as the "old leaven" to which Paul referred?

Some people point to Christ giving bread (Artos = Strong's 740) to the two men in Luke 24:30, and say that it would be against the law to have leavened bread because it was the Days of Unleavened Bread. The bread offered to the two men was leavened (artos) but **not** with the leaven that represented the "old influences", but it was bread that symbolically represented the Messiah and His true doctrine. The two men, when supplied this bread which symbolized Christ Himself, recognized the Messiah instantly and we will also. Is there anyone that would believe there is old leaven in bread that represents Christ, who is the bread of life and leavened with the pure leaven (or influence) of the Father (John 6:57)? The only leaven Paul orders people to discard is the "old leaven" (old false teachings and influences). Why else would Paul use the word old, if there was not a new type to replace it? During "The Feast of Unleavened Bread", all bread leavening belonging to humans is symbolically regarded as "old", but this was bread which was offered by and represented Christ Himself, the bread of life. **This was a one time symbolic supernatural event**. Just to restate again; "The property of a leavened product (good or bad) is to change or assimilate to its own nature the meal or dough with which it is mixed ".



Many people see the seriousness of purging out the old false leaven so it will not grow and engulf their whole person, but are totally blind to the effect that the true leaven will have on them. We as Christians must choose life and feed on Christ's symbolic body. After all, that was one of the main reasons Christ came to mankind (John 10:10). "Christ is the bread of life" (John 6:48).

This writer finds much comfort in knowing that the true influence (Christ) will act in a similar way as did the "old". It will be a process that will never stop until it is complete. The end result (if a hostile environment is not created to repulse it) will be a person in the very image of God. We are in the process of being transformed (II Cor. 3:18). This has been God's will from the beginning (Gen. 1:26); to create a man that will not sin (1 John 3:9). This, of course, can only come about with the fulfillment of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34, Heb. 8:8–13).

My Conclusion

In summary, just as there are two ways to mark the death of the Messiah (the first way is the biblical Passover and the second, the traditional Good Friday), there also seems to be two ways to partake of the bread and wine.

A Use unleavened bread, that has never had life in it and is incapable of reproducing itself. This bread has no leaven (represented as doctrine in one place-Matt. 16:11-12 but I believe in a broader sense, can mean influence that causes change) contained in it. This method of traditional Christianity frequently has unleavened bread and most often is supervised by an official representing their particular religious division.

B Use leavened bread, the same as was used by the early called out people for over 600 years, up until it was changed to unleavened bread by the Latin Church.

Each person has their own personal responsibility.

Each reader must personally determine what best typifies Christ for himself (Phil. 2:12): unleavened bread that lacks any influence or doctrine (Christ's definition of leaven) and could never in its existence reproduce; or the leavened bread that has no limitations on its influence. If you answered leavened, the bible does seem to agree. The bread is called "Artos", with its primary meaning as, "a raised loaf" (Strong's 740).

I regret to see the end of Servants' News Letters & Responses as both I and many readers have learned so much here. We encourage you to write to *Shepherd's Voice Magazine*, which is planning a letters section. Jim, myself and others will be answering letters there.

I regret that I still have hundreds of letters in my files—some 15 years old—that I wanted to answer. I want to personally apologize for the ones I promised to answer or could have answered, but did not. Certainly, though, the task was bigger than I was, so I pray that the Eternal will provide other laborers to do the work that I cannot. —NSE

"Thief on Cross" not in Heaven

LETTER: July 22, 2010

Hello to all the Friends and thanks for sharing your knowledge on new discoveries from the Bible that you make. I've got a new one about the thief on the "cross" or stake as we know it. He couldn't be in paradise [on the same day he died] back then, three days ahead of our Savior, as that would have him preempting Christ who was the official first born of many brethren.

— T.M., Clay, Alabama

RESPONSE: That is an excellent point! You are certainly referring to this verse:

> And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

To many people, this means that the man "went to heaven" that day. But as you point out, Christ was not in heaven until he rose three days later (John 20:1, 17). And He is the firstborn among many brethren (Acts 26:23; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18).

Punctuation is not in the original Greek text and must be added by translators, so the above verse should have its comma one word later: "...I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise...." There are many other scriptures that show that even the most faithful to God are dead, awaiting a resurrection (Matt 22:23-33; John 5:28-29; Acts 2:34; Heb 11:13, 39-40; 1Thes 4:16-17).

—NSE

Write this Man Childless

LETTER: March, 2010

Could you explain this difficult scripture? Jeremiah is given a prophecy about Jehoiachin [also "Jeconiah" or "Coniah"], to "write this man childless" (Jer 22:28-30). But 1 Chronicles 3:16-24 gives lots of descendants of Jehoiakim. How can this be?

RESPONSE: In chapters 22 and 36 the book Jeremiah records the Eternal's Word concerning three kings of Judah, two sons and a grandson of righteous Josiah. These kings were not righteous and the Eternal pronounced various evil judgments on each of them. According to Jeremiah 22:11-12 Shallum (or Jehoahaz) would be taken captive to a foreign land, never to see the land of Judah again, and die there. Jehoahaz had reigned only three months after his father Josiah was killed at Megiddo when Pharaoh Neco took him in chains to Egypt where he died. (2Kngs 23:28-34)

Jehoiakim (or Eliakim), another son of Josiah, was appointed by Neco and ruled for 11 years. He was to be unmourned at his death and apparently his dead body was simply dragged outside Jerusalem and not buried for at least a few days, and even then not given an honorable burial. (2Kngs 23:34-24:6) But also according to Jeremiah 36:30, "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David."

Apparently the people did not know this prophecy or ignored it, because Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin became king after him. Perhaps Jeremiah delivered this prophecy concerning Jehoiakim, just before Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem the second time. But only three months after Jehoiakim died, the Eternal sent the army of Nebuchadnezzar to besiege Jerusalem and Jehoiachin surrendered to the king of Babylon. Jehoiachin and the whole royal household and many more Judeans were taken captive to Babylon in March of 597 B.C. (2Kngs 24:6-16).

Jeremiah 22:26-27 says Jehoiachin would never return to Judah. He did eventually die in Babylon, but after many years Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon did release him from prison and gave him a daily ration for the remainder of his life. (2Kngs 25:27-30) Concerning Jehoiachin Jeremiah says

> "Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah' " (Jer 22:30, NKJV).

This verse does not say Jehoiachin would have no children, but that none of them would ever sit on David's throne in Judah. I Chronicles 3:17-24 records Jehoiachin's descendants for several generations. No descendant of Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin has ever ruled over Judah on the throne of David since that time. There was one more king of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C.; but he was Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah (or Mattaniah). (2Kngs 24:34-37) When one considers that the line of Judah was unbroken all the way back to King David, that is a significant prophecy!

But that is not quite the end of the story. Jehoiachin became an ancestor of Joseph the husband of Miriam (Mary) the mother of Christ (Matt 1:12-16). Yahshua, of course, was prophesied to become the king of the house of Judah and sit on David's throne, but Joseph was not His literal father so the prophecy concerning Jehoiachin was not broken. Mary was impregnated with Yahshua by His heavenly Father through Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:16 states that the name of Joseph's father was Jacob, however Luke 23:23 says Joseph was the son of Heli. Were Heli and Jacob the same person? Probably not, since the two genealogies are entirely different from David to Joseph. Some scholar's believe Luke records Mary's line and therefore Joseph was Heli's son-in-law. The ESV Study Bible in a footnote to Luke's genealogy adds the possibility "that there were no male heirs in the family [Mary's], so Heli adopted Joseph as his 'son' when Mary and Joseph were married." All the Eternal's prophesies through Jeremiah concerning these three Kings of Judah have been fulfilled.

—William A Buckman for *SN*

Admonishment on Debt and Asking for Money

LETTER: Jan 10, 2009

Dear Norm:

In the last 4 or 5 years we received two Servants' News, both asking for financial support for realizing your personal dream concerning PABC ahead of your primary responsibility for your family.

If your situation had occurred in Biblical times, which you refer to frequently to support your views, you and your family would have been sold into slavery until the debt was paid.

You are sounding more and more like your mentor H.W.A. who had the uncanny knack for making people feel guilty and condemning them for not supporting "God's work". Also, for using and abusing scriptures which support your dream and ignoring many scriptures admonishing your actions. I believe you should put your name on the top of the list of people who met with serious trials after refusing your request for financial support (page 52 July-

Aug. 08). And you have the audacity to imply that if they are not willing to give up all they have to "you", they can't be Christ's disciples. This smacks of all offshoot ministries of WWCG as well as proclivity to label their every endeavor to be "of God".

We enclose a check payable to Marleen for the support of the family as she sees fit, but definitely not to be put in the black hole of PABC.

We hope you will be able to get yourself out of this mess and get your family back together.

Sincerely,

— [withheld], Canada

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for writing this letter. Several others have written or called expressing similar views. Many others have simply stopped talking to us. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (Prov 27:5).

There are many things in regard to the PABC ministry that I would do differently now. Other things I am still not sure about. I believe that the Eternal has a purpose for me here, and that it would have been wrong to give up and leave when others opposed the project. However, I did not seek a clear revelation from the Eternal that he wanted me to go into debt to keep going. If I had trust and close contact with Him, He may have done it another way. I am actually looking forward to the Judgment in regard to this point. Even if I find out I was all wrong, I want to know His answer!

Let me briefly respond to some of the points in your letter:

Prioritizing one's ministry and family is a complex issue that requires seeking God with fasting and prayer. There are scriptures on both sides of the issue. Here are just two:

> But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1Tim 5:8).
>
> "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26-27).

I believe God has blessed us in that our four children have all been supporting themselves for years . My wife has been able to work, as well as receive additional support from kind individuals like yourselves. She is in complete control of everything she receives, I do not even know what it is. We still want to end our debt as quickly as possible, but we are now at peace with each other in this trial.

The Bible certainly teaches that a man or his family can be sold as a slave for their debts (Ex 21:7; 22:3; Lev 25:39). But I am amazed at how many people apply the Scriptures designed to hold the poor accountable while **ignoring the scriptures that help the poor and hold the rich accountable.** To say that in Bible times I **could be sold** for my debt is true, but to say I **would be sold into slavery until the debt is paid** is false for several reasons.

1) The sale was not automatic, the creditor could decide to have mercy (Matt 18:22-35). As it is now, there are people who could foreclose on the PABC property, but they have decided not to do so.

2) All debts are forgiven and slaves set free in the Year of Release, every seven years (Ex 21:2; Deut 15:1-12). **If a debt was too large to pay, they go free anyway.** There would have been a year of release sometime between 2004, when this started, and now. Our country's equivalent of this law is to file for bankruptcy or wait for statutes of limitation to run on debts, but I am amazed at how many Christians think that it is wrong to use these laws that are somewhat close to what God decreed.

3) If the land of our nation were equally divided among the people (Num 26:55; Ezk 45:1; 47:22; 48:29) and redivided every Jubilee year (Lev 25), I would have received a substantial inheritance when my parents passed away in 2009, which could have easily paid my debts. But our nation does not do this, and 2% of our nation owns over 80% of the land.

4) In biblical times, I might have been able to obtain a fair hearing with the other men who at one time promised to help then turned against me on the project. This may have avoided the debts.

While I intellectually stopped considering HWA a mentor over 17 years ago, I agree with you that there are still things that I learned from his Church organization inside me. I read over some of my old writings, and I agree that I was trying to stir people up in a human way to take action, which, as you say, is trying to make them feel guilty. Others have pointed this out to me as well. I do not believe I said anything untrue or claimed that people need to "give everything to me". The issue you refer to clearly says:

> *This does not mean that God is requiring anyone to give anything to this ministry. But everyone who calls themselves His disciple needs to think about what they are willing to give up for Him, and how much they are trusting him to satisfy their needs (Phil 4:19).*

While the willingness to give everything to Christ is a true statement repeated often in Scripture, writing the above statements, just after an emotional story of suffering and difficulty can be considered an effort to manipulate people. I will try not to do this again.

Rereading that *SN* issue, I see I was more panicky then—worried about all the debt and how it would be taken care of. I think I have grown in faith now, and realize that if God wants this work done, He will provide the means. And if He does not, then we can leave it to somewhere else and be done with this.

I also realize that I should provide accurate information about this ministry, but not try to convince others that this work is of God. If God does not make that clear to them, then they should not be involved in it anyway.

The Bible teaches a person to ask for help if he is poor (Deut 15:7-11), as I certainly am now. But does that mean I should only ask for myself, and give up the efforts to help others? Maybe so. David was leading 400 men one time who were "in distress or in debt or discontented" (1Sam 22:2). They were so poor that they had to ask Nabal for food (1Sam 25). Nabal thought David should just go back to Saul (1Sam 25:10). But David continued his mission. David probably relied on help from others, because when he finally received the major spoil of Ziklag, he sent some of it to his friends where he had stayed in 13 different cities (1Sam 30:26-31).

We are, as you suggest, getting out of the mess. We have been gradually paying off debt, finding ways to reduce expenses, and developing a broader base of funding..

I want to apologize for the mistakes and causing guilt in the past, and continue this ministry in a Godly manner. Thank you again for helping my family.

—NSE

CoG's and Divine Revelation

LETTER: April 30, 2010

Norm,

The Church (or whoever is doing the Work at that time) is almost certainly going to need inspired dreams or visions to know what it must do before the tribulation.

RESPONSE: I agree. That was the way in the New Testament. Prophets still spoke things, the Holy Spirit spoke to people. I wrote about this in How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? in 1995, updated 3 more times since then:

http://www.servantsnews.com/PDF/govhum.pdf

LETTER: I don't see God moving decisively in any church organizations today. That is not to say miracles aren't occurring at the level of individuals.

RESPONSE: II agree there. The big church groups do not seek dreams, visions or miraculous intervention, and are indeed very suspicious of anyone who does seek it or claim it. As far as I know, the LCG still teaches that they will have divine miracles to show them when it is time to flee to a place of safety. (I know of one sporadically attending member who was told that they might not receive the phone call to go if they don't attend more regularly.) The leaders and members ought to wonder about

why they are so sure that they would have divine revelation then when they do not seem to have any now.|

I do think that individuals receive miracles. I will e-mail you a copy of the dream that helped me understand what to do when all these problems became clear to me.

LETTER: You may have heard of another so-called "crisis" in UCG (there's a Facebook page). Clyde Kilough, Jim Franks, and Larry Salyer were recently forced out of their positions of leadership.

It's hard to know who are the bad guys, if any, in this but the cause—I believe—is a sense of drift, that the church isn't doing enough to preach the gospel. It's hard to see the finger of God in much of what United has done the last few years.

Some are content to rely on the internet, while there are many who want to see a return to radio and TV.

RESPONSE: II read the UCG facebook page and it is difficult to figure out good/bad guys. Sometimes it seems both are trying to do good, but disagree on how. Other times, some people are clearly looking out for their own interests (promote the church action most likely to give them nice, long-lasting jobs). And other times, it seems like there are no good guys.

LETTER: The problem is, that UCG's income is limited, and they really can't afford, in my opinion, to divide their forces, so to speak. A half-hearted, under-funded effort in tv is just going to take money away from literature and the internet.

RESPONSE: II actually don't think the problem is limited income, but the lack of faith and dedication to serve God first and wait for him to provide (Matt 6:33). The NT has no example of a work that was not done for lack of funds, but it does have examples of where people started it with nothing (Matt 10:9; Luke 10; Acts 8:26-27,40). When HWA started his radio and TV ministries, he often spent everything he had to get one program on the air and relied on God to bless it to pay for the next one. The UCG could take a grow-our-own-asking-for-God's-blessing approach, rather than a big money approach. They have people like Howard Davis and Jamie Schreiber who have skill and a passion for doing it. In my mind, the question is, can they do a job that God wants done? I somehow do not think money is the main issue. But to get a snazzy TV program without God's inspiration, yes it will probably take lots of money.

LETTER: Most infamously (and this occurred before the so-called "stalemate" caused by Kilough, Franks, and Salyer), UCG tendered an agreement- and forking over a considerable amount of cash - for a new headquarters property in the Dallas area, then decided to let the GCE vote on the matter. The GCE of course voted against relocating headquarters.

Where was God in all this?

RESPONSE: Yes, very similar to the GCG vote-out their former leader then the LCB needing to rewrite all their booklets and redo all their programs. I would hope that the members would wake up and realize that they certainly are not in "the one" or "the privileged" group that God is using. I would hope that ministry and member alike would realize that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ individually (Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10). It will not be enough to say, "I was a member of the good church."

LETTER: You might have heard that UCG has been considering instituting the taking of lots to decide some matters. But to rely on lots takes absolute faith that God is behind such a potentially random outcome, and Christ did ask if He would find faith on this earth when He returns.

RESPONSE: II did not know that, but I wrote about it in the attached paper. I think it does show faith, but as the paper says, if you are going to do that, one should be willing to live with any possible outcome. I have done this a couple of times over less important issues. One time, when I was praying for direction, I numbered 30 pennies and put them in a bottle, then wrote about 30 things down that I thought I should do. One of them was "stop casting lots". I and my son Josh prayed for God to guide the casting, and the first lot out of the bottle was the number for "stop casting lots". I did not let any more lots out of the bottle. I have only cast lots for very minor things since.

LETTER: What would God be saying to UCG right now about how they should spend their money? I wish someone, male or female, minister or ordinary member, would have some inspired dreams and make them known. That would be great, wouldn't it?

RESPONSE: Yes, and maybe not as much as you think. The people of the Old Testament knew who God's prophets were and believed they represented God, but they did not want to listen to them (1Ki 22). I would guess that if we had clear prophecy of God from someone, the religious leaders of today (in nearly all church organizations) would resist it much like the Pharisees and other leaders of Jesus' day. It was not a Jewish problem they had, but a "religious leaders think they own God" problem. People simply find something that Jesus (or his followers) did that they think is wrong, and use that to condemn them (Matt 7:5; 12:10; 26:65; John 8:41; Acts 16:20-21; 17:6).

After 15 years of living on offerings, as well as consuming all my other assets in the process, most objective people who have heard major parts of the story consider it miraculous. God has sent the people I needed, even when I didn't know I needed them. There have been dozens of times when I had hundreds or thousands of dollars due in a few days—even tomorrow—and did not know where it was going to come from but it did. We survived a fire set in our home, multiple lawsuits, and other difficulties. I have received dreams which guided my life, and others have reasonably agreed that they came to pass as interpreted. But many of the people who know these things still find something else they don't think God would do (not a sin) and decide that God must not be working here.

I do not say these things because I think I am a prophet or some great one—I think my role in God's plan effects only a few hundred people greatly and maybe a few thousand people to a limited degree. I would say to the big groups that the apparent lack of miraculous guidance is not an unwillingness on God's part—I feel I have sought it and received it—and I know others who have as well. I just think that if the UCG received divine guidance from God, it would be so different than what many are expecting that they would reject it. I think God leaves people blind to what He is doing so that they will not have as much sin attributed to them (John 9:41).

LETTER: Of course, God may not have anything to say to UCG. This organization has been adrift, in my opinion, from its formative days. It has fulfilled one purpose, acting as a refugee camp for thousands of disheartened former members of WCG, something none of the other ex-CoGs have been able to do.

RESPONSE: I think it has done a good job of that—though I think people have also been happy with that in the LCG, CGI, Church of God Outreach Ministries and even the Church of God (Seventh Day).

LETTER: If God is more pleased with what David Hulme or Meredith is doing, revealing it via dreams / visions would be a galvanizing event.

RESPONSE: It would be wonderful for people like you who are really seeking God. But I am not sure how many of the leaders would find it galvanizing if the dreams did not point to them. I hope many would accept it, but I don't know. I think God does answer individuals who seek him, though. The promises of His direction and Spirit are to all believers, not to just leaders. The New Testament contains no statements forbidding a believer to do something because he was not "ordained" or of some specific rank or spiritual gift. When Apollos started preaching, he did not even understand baptism, but a husband and wife pair did not tell him to get credentialed from the apostles first, but gave him more understanding and sent him on his way (Acts 18:24-26). God doesn't always answer right away, but certainly does over time (Jer 29:13).

LETTER: The problem with all these organizations is that one way or the other they are func-

continued on next page

What I Know About Courage ... I Learned From My Mother

by Connie L. Hawkins

I know that my mother was a woman of courage. I was born in the forty's, a post-war, out of wedlock baby. I was told my mother struggled with the decision to keep me or give me up for adoption. She chose to keep me and that took courage, especially since I was born with cerebral palsy. She had to know it would not be an easy life raising a handicapped child alone.

Even though she may not have said it enough, I know that my mother loved me because she told me so and I believed her.

Growing up in the 40s and 50s was not easy. There was no such thing as "physically challenged." I was the crippled kid and it took courage just to survive that. I know that I got that courage from my mother. She always told me, "There is nothing you can't do if you put your mind to it."

My mother married my father when I was three years old. I grew up on a farm six and a half miles north of Reese, Michigan. I knew as a kid growing up that courage would guide me through life. I didn't learn to ride a bike until I was almost eleven and the first time I rode it, I went into the ditch, tore my dress and ruined my first pair of black paten-leather shoes! I took that courage my mother gave me and got right back on that bike determined that I would master it and I did. While other kids were out playing baseball, running, jumping, skipping, I was in my room writing short stories and poetry.

In spite of the fact that my 10th grade English teacher told me I'd never amount to much and that I would never be a writer because I couldn't spell, I always knew that I would grow up and be a writer, if for no reason than to spite Mrs. Baker. I knew this because in my heart I was already a writer. I graduated from Reese High School, Northeastern School of Commerce Business College and Delta College with one goal in mind to courageously step out and be the writer I knew God created me to be.

I tried milking a cow, riding a horse, and going to beauty school – none of which worked for me. The cow knocked me off the milking stool. I fell off the horse twice. And, I was a beauty school dropout. I didn't like putting my hands in gobs of hair gel. And besides, to be a beautician means standing on your feet all day. There were days I could hardly walk. What was I thinking?

I wanted to be the next great American novelist, but I settled for a career as a billing clerk in a medical office. Until one day it dawned on me that I was off that God path again, out of the rowboat, so-to-speak. With all the courage I could muster, I resigned my job in the medical field (after nearly 19 years) and went back to college to be a writer. I was 38 years old standing in line to register for college with 18-year-old, know-it-all high school seniors. I almost tripped over their book bags trying to get out of line, but courage wouldn't let me fail. "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you" (Phil 4:13).

Health problems overtook me and I never got the four-year degree in journalism that I thought I needed in order to write a good book. I discovered that I didn't need a degree to write—what I needed was guts, determination—and courage. And, I had that! I did eventually become a writer. God saw to that. I worked as a freelance reporter for our local newspaper for over a decade before I started my own Christian newspaper and eventually I ended up helping 27 other "wanna-be authors" publish their books. It's amazing what a little courage can do.

Some people see me as a pessimist walking around with a glass half empty; (I admit to being a whiner and complainer on occasion—often mistaken for pessimism) others think of me as more of an optimist with a half full glass. But the truth of the matter is the glass is neither half empty nor half full. I entertain and make people laugh. I make them feel good—happy even; there's nothing pessimistic about that. I became a success because I simply thought of myself as courageous—thank you, Mother. By the way, in my book, it doesn't matter if the glass is half empty or half full—it's what's inside that counts and my cup runneth over with blessings.

"Nothing but courage can guide life" —Vauvenargus

A great part of courage is doing what is necessary for you to do and, while you are doing it, remember that with Christ anything's possible! 🕮

Connie Hawkins is an author, creative writing instructor and motivational speaker who shares love and laughter with audiences of all ages. As program director for Making Words Count, Connie goes into the classroom to share writing one-on-one with students from Kindergarten through high school. She lives in Kawkawlin, Michigan and has two grown children who still inspire her to write fun-loving stories!

She has spoken at the Feast of Tabernacles at the Port Austin Bible Campus. We hope that our readers, with diverse religious backgrounds in churches and ministries both large and small, will recognize her contribution in providing encouragement to people who need it.

To find out more about Connie, or to have her speak to your group, access: www.authorconnielhawkins.com

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tioning like churches run by men, and not God.

RESPONSE: Yes.

LETTER: Did you know that members of UCG are not welcome at Hulme's church services, and that the word has come down that family members of his church should limit correspondence with those who are not members? This despite the fact there is virtually no difference in the doctrines that are taught.

[personal section deleted]

— VCB, Illinois

RESPONSE: Not surprising. Flurry was encouraging his followers to divorce spouses that don't believe—and I know at least one who did—it devastated the family. It seems that much of organized religion involves people paying money and pledging their loyalty in exchange for church leaders telling them they are the people who will go into the Kingdom, place of Safety, Heaven or wherever.

I need to go now. I have enjoyed writing this. I hope you will share your thoughts on it. May God bless you in the decisions you are making.

—NSE 🕮

The CoG Experience: Lessons We Should Learn

by Norman Scott Edwards

In this final issue of *Servants' News*, it seems important to consider the lessons learned by our experience in the various Church of God groups over the past few decades. This article refers generally to the experience of the Radio Church of God, Worldwide Church of God, Church of God International, Philadelphia Church of God, Living Church of God, United Church of God *an International Association*, Church of God *an International Community*, church of God *a Worldwide Association*, and numerous other "Church of God" organizations as well as independent groups and in-home congregations. The Church of God (Seventh Day) and related groups share only some of the "good things", below, but have also avoided most of the mistakes!

We should be less concerned about the path our past life has followed and more concerned about what we have learned from it. This is one of the most basic lessons of Scripture: When we are in good times of plenty, thank God for them (Deut 8:10); when we are in severe trials, seek God for deliverance (2Kngs 1:2-6). Whether we have reaped good, evil or a mixed blessing, we must ask "What have we learned from the CoG experience?"

Herein we will consider seven good things and seven mistakes that many of us made. There is no claim that they are the fourteen **most** important issues, but every one is certainly worthy of our attention and learning. If we have not learned from our mistakes, we have dishonored God with the life He has given us and we will be destined to repeat them and suffer even more (Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28).

Good things of the CoGs

Teaching the Sabbath, Feast Days & Clean Meats

The evidence that mankind should keep the Sabbath is overwhelming in the Bible.

1. The Sabbath clearly began with the creation of mankind (Gen 2:1-2; Ex 20:11).
2. The Sabbath was taught before the 10 commandments (Ex 16:23-30).
3. It is the fourth of the cherished 10 commandments (Ex 20:8-11).
4. While Jesus taught against man-made restrictions placed on the Sabbath day (Mark 2:23-26), He taught that the Sabbath was for mankind and that He was Lord of it (Mark 2:27-28).
5. There are seven references to the apostle Paul meeting on the Sabbath, often with a mixed group, but sometimes with only Gentiles (Acts 13-18).

6. There is no bible teaching whatever of the Sabbath or the worship day changing to Sunday. Indeed the arguments used for Sunday observance vary widely—because there is no one true argument. The Bible records numerous false accusations against Christ and the apostles. If they had not kept the Sabbath, they could have easily been sentenced to death from the scripture (Ex 31:14-15; 35:2).
7. The Sabbath will still be kept by everyone in the New Heavens and New Earth: " 'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the LORD" (Isa 66:22-23).

Yet in spite of this most Christian work through the ages (translating, publishing and teaching the Bible, as well as providing justice for the poor and needy) has been done by people who meet on Sunday. Many claim that it is not possible to keep the Sabbath in our modern world. But the CoG brethren, who rarely lived in their own communities but usually out in the world, proved that Sabbath keeping today is possible.

Similarly, the teaching and practice of the biblical Feast Days (Lev 23) was a great benefit to many people. These days are full of meaning, both in an Old Testament sense and to the Christian. There is not room to even summarize Feast teaching here, so we recommend Biblical Feast Day Scriptures: www.servantsnews.com/docs/feasts02.htm

Similarly, on the opposite side of the fence, the false religious holidays that have plagued our peoples for centuries are declining in many churches. Many church groups—especially independent bible churches—now teach against Halloween and decry the promiscuity of Valentine's Day. Some have tossed out Santa Claus, mistletoe and eggnog from their Christmas observance to focus on the biblical story. We can see Easter (named from the goddess Ishtar) and its associated egg-laying rabbits exchanged for "Resurrection Sunday". Good Friday has been rightly replaced by the Passover. The CoG influence, and the millions of booklets they published, had a lot to do with this. Serious Christians of all stripes are realizing that our holidays should be teaching us and our children more about God and his ways. They should not simply be marketing seasons for businesses to make money.

While the health benefits of eating biblically clean food (Lev 11; Deut 14:3-21) are worthwhile in themselves, the spiritual lessons are far more important: Just as not every animal is good for food, so every intellectual idea and every spiritual belief is not necessarily good for us, either. Some are obvious to everyone: most people do not want to eat rats, skunks or buzzards. But there are other foods such as pork, shrimp and catfish where we need the guidance of God to sort out the good from the bad. Similarly, there are intellectual and spiritual ideas that may sound good—like "free love"—but we need God to show us that they will not work, lest we ruin our lives proving He was right. Avoiding the bad concepts takes work, just like avoiding the bad food. But both are well worth the effort.

Actually Practicing the Above Teachings

While millions of people were introduced to the above teachings through CoG evangelistic media, millions more were also introduced when they met people who kept the Sabbath, attended the Feast days and ate only clean meats. They remember a person who closed their business on Saturday, even though it would have been profitable; one who asked their boss to get the Feast of Tabernacles off, even though it risked losing their job; or the one who was always reading food labels and asking questions at pot-luck meals. When a person did these things and also had the love of God in their heart, it was a powerful testimony.

The CoG groups organized Feasts in every region of the U.S.A. and nearly every country of the world. Nearly all their members observed them. This is in contrast to some other Sabbath-observing groups that may teach about them, but have only limited practice. The trend, now, is for many churches, often non-Sabbatarian evangelical congregations, to observe some or all of the biblical Feast Days—which is a wonderful thing. This writer has met people who have become Christians or began attending a congregation after experiencing the joy of a Feast.

The number of people who have met someone who will not eat pork because they believe the Bible forbids it, also must be into the millions. We need to carry on the witness that God is worth obeying!

Teach Resurrections Rather Than Heaven or Hell when People Die

Atheists and other philosophers make Christians look foolish when they cite the many biblical passages stating that God is love and perfect in His judgments—but that He "tortures people forever in hell" simply because they never heard the gospel message or failed to properly respond to a poor presentation of it. Indeed, some branches of Christianity teach that a person can live a sinful life, briefly accept Christ and/or take various sacraments of the church, and then go on sinning, but still go to "heaven" immediately after they die; whereas a person who never heard about Christ, but lived his life trying to treat others as he would want to be treated (the golden rule), will still burn in the same hell forever as the most wicked sinner.

Fortunately, the Bible teaches better than this. There are numerous scriptures that teach resurrections from the dead for everyone (Ezk 37; Dan 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; 11:23-25; 1Cor 15; 1Thes 4:15-17; Heb 11:35-40; Rev 20:4-7). Clearly there is a "first" (Rev 20:5-6) or "better resurrection" (Heb 11:35) for those who have obeyed Christ in this life. But there is a fair judgment for everyone. And as Christ told the corrupt chief priests and elders: "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God **before** [in time sequence] you" (Matt 21:31). Indeed, these great sinners do have an opportunity to get there, but it may take a while.

These teachings are also now spilling over into mainstream Christianity. Many independent non-Sabbatarian groups now no longer teach the classical "hell" with fire and demons stabbing people. Some teach believers are awaiting a resurrection, as opposed to "your departed grandma is watching you from heaven". This is an encouraging message to those who have lost loved ones, and it shows God to be the just God that He is.

Meetings in Rented Halls and Homes

Many people think a "church" is a building, not a group of people. Indeed they may pride themselves on the fancy buildings and grounds of the "church that they attend". But the Bible never refers to a "church" as a building and never mentions a "church building". Indeed, the collective body of individuals in the Church

has replaced the Old Testament temple (1Cor 3:17; 6:19). By meeting in rented halls or homes, it becomes clear to everyone that the church is the people, and that they can meet almost anyplace.

Also, many traditional churches use most of the money they collect and much of their members' time simply to maintain their building. If the church grows quickly, there is difficulty adding on to the building while using it—or in selling it and finding a new one. If the church shrinks, then virtually all of its resources will be used to maintain its building. Rented halls bypass these problems and allow a congregation to spend what they need on an appropriate facility and to change relatively quickly.

The Bible does not teach against church buildings, but they should not be the focus of any congregation. They have their place when there is a sizable, stable congregation that will use a building for many purposes: services, bible studies, dinners, youth programs, weddings, community service, scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. But the gospel message and the spiritual gifts by which Christ operates (1Cor 12:1; 14:1) can all function in any size congregation even if it is in a home or rented hall.

Free Bible-teaching Media on a Large Scale

Magazines, literature, radio and TV programs, websites and public Bible lectures were nearly all good works by the CoG groups. While some of these things were produced specifically to promote offerings from readers and viewers, there was a core of good Bible teaching, on a wide variety of subjects, in a format that the average person could understand—and show someone else who might be interested. This is a great contrast to many church groups that produce a very short doctrinal statement for their members and leave biblical understanding to their theologians.

Unfortunately, this large body of literature was sometimes treated like a large doctrinal statement, and many CoG members were afraid to find anything in the scripture that was contrary to or in addition to their CoG group's teaching. But the vast majority of people who have read and viewed this teaching simply learned more about what the Bible had to say about a particular subject—a blessing.

The lesson is not that we should preserve all of that old literature and republish it. People are rightfully less likely to read from dead writers—from people who can no longer answer questions, who can no longer comment on the state of the world today. The lesson we are to learn from this is to continue to produce this kind of media outreach, in a way that is relevant to today, answering today's questions, dealing with today's problems and news.

Today, the Internet is clearly becoming the best way to reach the most people for the least cost. The CoG groups' efforts to translate their programs and literature into multiple languages should continue. The gospel message is important for every person on the planet.

Teaching that Both Individuals and Nations Will Be Judged by God for Their Sins

The message of the need for individuals to repent of their sins and accept Christ as their savior is widely taught throughout Christianity. The CoG groups taught that message, but they also taught that God deals with nations based upon their national sins and upon the promises made to the fathers of those nations. This is a Bible truth that continues on into the New Testament! Christ denounced the attitudes of the leaders of His nation and said that God would bring that generation into judgment (Matt 23:36). Indeed, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Matthew 24, Luke 21 and the book of Revelation all make reference to things that will happen to nations based upon whether or not they obey God. The Old Testament contains numerous prophecies about many nations—some of which have not yet been fulfilled. Jeremiah 18:7-10 says that nearly all prophecy is conditional, based upon how nations and kingdoms behave.

It is ironic that in the light of this teaching of national judgment for national sins, many CoGs still taught that a Christian should not vote. The sins of a nation are almost always caused, in part, by the sins of the corrupt leaders who lead the nation. If Christians join the approximately 50% of the uncaring population who do not bother to vote, are not they just as responsible for the corrupt leaders as everyone else?

After all, if this 50% of non-voters would all vote, they could easily elect a candidate that stood for righteousness, rather than vote for "the lesser of two evils"—one from the mainstream parties. The teaching that God will judge a nation based on its national sins means that Christians must use their rulership responsibilities as citizens to vote for a candidate who stands for generally righteous principles—whether or not that candidate has any chance of being elected. Christians should not be fooled into thinking that they can vote the kingdom of God into office now, but they should be a witness to others that there are candidates who are against the godlessness, corruption and immorality that plague our nation. Christians should show that repenting of national sin means voting for a person who stands for righteousness—**not** voting for someone who is likely to win: "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil…" (Ex 23:2).

Today, we must continue to teach the lesson of national judgment—good or bad, and add to it the Christian responsibility to vote for righteous candidates, even though they may be generally unpopular and usually un-winning. The Constitution Party often (http://constitutionparty.org/), Libertarian Party (http://libertarianparty.org/) and others field candidates with a much more Biblical view than the mainstream parties.

Schools for Young People

This writer believes the single greatest value of religious schools is that they **provide a means for young people to fill their lives with friends of similar religious belief**. One of the most important events in anyone's life is making the transition from "child responsible to parents" to "independent adult responsible to God". Yet, some parents do not even think out how they intend to facilitate this, and often their children are the ones that bring about this transition, either by openly rebelling against parents, sneaking around them, or leaving home before their parents expect it.

Children naturally begin to ask questions of others—to learn more than just what their parents have told them all their lives. Even the best of parents still need the help of a supportive community of other Christians. God was so serious about keeping a supportive community in the Old Testament that he commanded the death penalty for false religion, witchcraft, sexual immorality, kidnapping, cursing parents, etc. (Lev 20; Ex 21:16). But these are not our laws today and these problems are rampant in our society. Parents cannot change society, but they can send their young people to a Christian boarding high school or college where they will have a much better chance to develop a relationship with God and resist temptations that would be destructive to their lives.

Sound Bible education along with **occupational education** are two other good reasons to send young people to Christian schools. While Bible education could come from a correspondence

course, and vocational education could come from a secular school, these things are usually better accomplished in a Christian college, and they provide the reason and sometimes the resources for young people to go to a Christian school. (It is amazing that almost no Christians would give money to help a young believer live among other Christians while he matures and strengthens his relationship with God, but some will pay out thousands of dollars to help him get a degree in business administration, whether in a secular or religious college.)

While there are many Christian schools with good moral environments, Sabbath-observing young people are often not well accepted there. So it is even more important for Sabbath-observing groups to provide their own schools. The CoG groups have provided a variety of colleges and other programs which have fulfilled the above three goals. Some lacked accreditation, but that is of value only for the last goal, so the school was certainly worthwhile without it. There have also been some Christian high schools (like Springvale Academy, http://www.springvale.us/) sponsored by the COGs. These fill the same needs and have also been a great blessing.

While this writer is also a believer in home-schooling, he believes that when the teen years arrive, the parents must provide their children frequent access to other like-minded believers. That may involve driving some distance on a regular basis, moving, or inviting other like-minded young people to home-school or even live with your family.

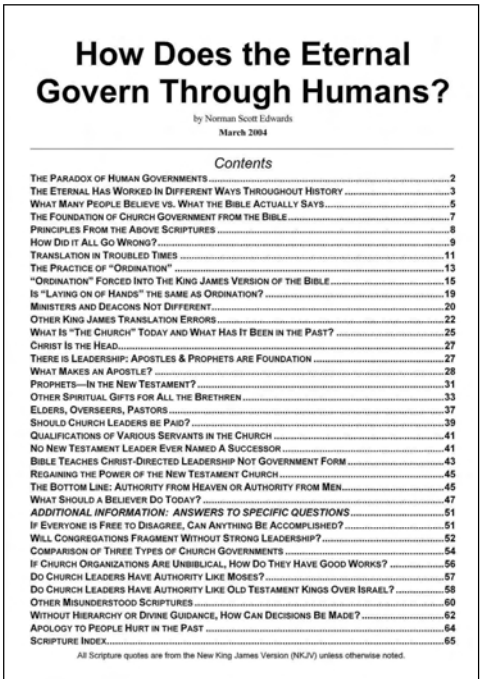
Mistakes of the CoGs

These mistakes were common in most of the groups described in the opening paragraph of this article. While most of the "good things", above, are unique to the COGs, the mistakes, below, are common to many non-CoG churches. That is not an excuse, but a call to repentance and change for all groups that make these mistakes. And just as Christ admonished the seven churches in revelation 2 and 3 to repent of their mistakes while still calling them His churches, let us be careful not to classify anyone an unbeliever because of their mistakes. Rather let us repent of ours, and teach them to repent of theirs.

Hierarchical Government

The writer believes greatest single mistake in the CoGs was undoubtedly the teaching of hierarchical church government. Most of the other mistakes, below, are either caused or sustained by this error. The Worldwide Church of God taught this extensively in the 1950s through the 1980s, even though they never had a booklet specifically teaching the subject. This is not surprising; however, because it would be impossible to teach the doctrine strictly from the Bible. Many of the groups that split from the WCG continued the practice, some bringing it closer to biblical teaching, others making it worse.

This subject is covered exhaustively in Norman Edwards' paper "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?" (servantsnews.com/PDF/govhum.pdf). For this article, we will simply contrast Paul's teaching from Ephesians 4 on the functioning of the Church with the teaching and practice of hierarchical governance:



How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?

by Norman Scott Edwards
March 2004

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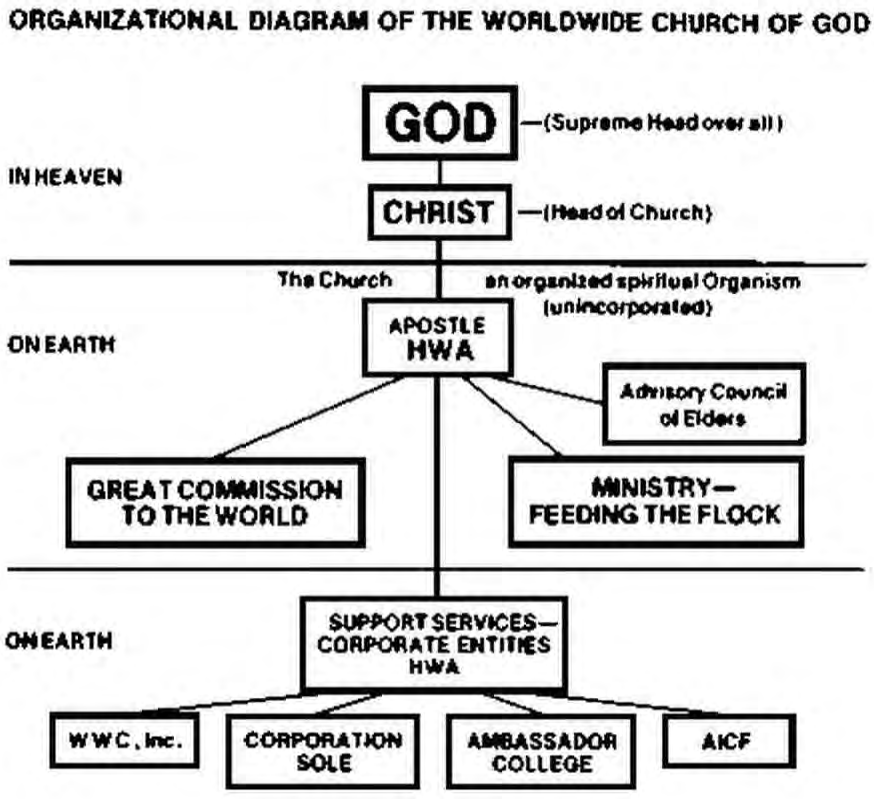
All Scripture quotes are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

This humble article, beginning with its first edition in 1995, now in its fourth edition, forever changed the lives of thousands of people—including the life of the author while doing its research. It was clear to all that the Bible does not teach that the Church is a single human organization. The reaction of most large hierarchical churches was not to refute the article, but to discredit the author and tell their members not to read it. Even so, this writer readily acknowledges that human hierarchy is a common mistake and God has worked in spite of that mistake throughout history and even today. But we look forward to a day of unity! — NSE



The above chart was reprinted from the Worldwide News, March 6, 1981 so that we do not forget the level of error humans can attain. This writer remembers agreeing with this chart when it was first published—failing to apply the basic principles he learned in college management class: middle managers in an organization charts who have very few people underneath them, he should be eliminated. Indeed, if this chart were true, Christ should be fired! In reality, the most awesome and capable Christ personally manages millions of believers who seek Him!

Bible Teaching from Ephesians 4	Hierarchical Government Error
I [Paul], therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (v 1-3).	Unity is not achieved by the Spirit, longsuffering, gentleness and love, but by a central organization that issued a doctrinal statement and demanded that all of its ministry teach the same thing, and fired or disfellowshipped any that dissented.
There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all (v 4-6).	Baptism was necessary to become a member of a particular CoG organization. Anyone baptized by another group had to be rebaptized. In order for people to be under Christ, they were taught that they **must** be under their one human organization.
But **to each one of us** grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men…." And **He Himself gave** some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v 7-8, 11-13)	Rather than Christ himself giving spiritual gifts to all brethren as the Greek emphatically states, hierarchies placed men into offices by decisions of boards based on perceived loyalty, performance reviews, economic factors, seniority and other worldly criteria. Instead of gifts of service, the words at left were used as military-style ranks. Much of the goal was to perpetuate the organization, not to edify the body of Christ. Prophets, whom Christ might have used to rectify these errors, were not recognized at all.
That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (v 14).	Hierarchies "protect" their members by highly discouraging them from reading religious literature from outside their group—rather than helping them grow so they will not be "tossed to and fro" by other's beliefs.
But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the **edifying of itself in love** (v 15-16).	Hierarchies teach that the members are edified by the ministers; the ministers are edified by the higher ranking ministers, the highest ranking ministers are edified by the human head of the church organization, who is edified by God. This is often done through commands, which can be harsh at times.
This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (v 17-18)	Hierarchical church governments are much like the hierarchies of gentile governments, where the ruler was considered supreme—even almost God. The Bible commands even a secular king to read from the Bible every day "that his heart may not be lifted up **above his brethren**" (Deut 17:18-20).
Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ (v 19-20).	Many hierarchical leaders became greedy, receiving salaries that were many times that of the average member they served. Some became involved in sexual sins and members were told that God would clean it up from the top down, bypassing the biblical teaching to reject lying leaders (2Kngs 11; Rev 2:2).

People Outside our Group Are Not True Christians

This writer now finds it difficult to comprehend how so many people could be so narrow as to believe that their group was the only one with whom God was working—but I myself once believed it, so I must be patient with those who still do. Here is a brief summary of the overwhelming Biblical evidence that all Christians are not united in one Church organization:

1. Revelation 2 and 3 describes seven church congregations that all existed within 100 miles of each other in Asia Minor, yet they all had some differences in doctrine and attitude. **Christ calls all of them His churches.** Those who were sinning were told to repent, but no group was denounced as "not the church", nor was anyone told to leave their group to join another.
2. The New Testament epistles contain much correction of serious errors written to many congregations and brethren. Some were involved in idolatry, fornication, wars, mistreating the poor, self-righteousness, covetousness, doctrinal heresies, and all sorts of other problems. These problems even involved breaking the Ten Commandments! **Yet out of hundreds of verses of correction, there are only a very few where the epistles tell us to treat people as unbelievers.** The Sabbath was not an issue in the New Testament, because Christians and Jews all observed it together (Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:2). But today many Christians have been taught error (1Co 11:19; 2Pet 2:1; 1Jo 4:1; Jude 1:4), and most do not understand the Sabbath commandment. Yes, those who love God will be generally keeping his commandments (John 14:15; 15:10; 1Jo 2:3; 3:22; 5:2-3; Rev 14:12), but they may not always understand them and they will sin along the way (1Jo 1:8-10).
3. Paul specifically teaches against Christians aligning themselves with certain religious teachers (1Cor 1:10-15; 3:3-9).
4. CoG groups rely on the Bible translations, commentaries, hymns, marriage literature, home-school books, and

many other resources written by Christians outside of their groups. Most CoG groups produce comparatively little in these areas. The Bible has been translated into nearly every language and distributed to most of the world—by those outside of CoG groups—sometimes at a loss of their own fortunes and lives. Is God doing most "Christian work" through unbelievers? No!

This is not to say that every person who claims to be Christian indeed is one. The Bible teaches that there are many tares—false believers—among the wheat—the true believers (Matt 13:24-30). But the group that refuses to recognize that God is working elsewhere is responsible for all Christian work on the planet. They better get busy!

We Are the True Church

The previous point deals with what CoG members often thought about others; this one deals with what we think about ourselves. When someone does a credible job of using the Scriptures to challenge our doctrinal beliefs, we sometimes resort to saying our doctrine must be right because it has been taught by the "true church"—meaning one or more of the CoGs. But how do we know that we are the true church? Well, because we are the one with the right doctrines! Can you see the circular reasoning? "We know our doctrine is right because we are the 'true church' and we know we are the 'true church' because our doctrines are right."

When we assume our group is the "true church" or one of the "true churches", we become complacent in our work and stop growing. After all, isn't it enough to be one of the .01% of Christians who are in the right group? Does God expect any more? Yes!

> "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).
>
> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service (Rom 12:1).

The people of faith in Hebrews 11, and the apostles' teachings explain Christians would be persecuted (Matt 5:10-11; 10:22-25; 16:24; John 15:19-21; 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2Ti 3:12). The CoG members were certainly persecuted at times in an effort to keep the Sabbath, Holy Days and some other doctrines. But many have found schools, jobs and a social life where these things are not a burden.

In fact, some have learned to blend in so well that nobody perceives them to be much different than the rest of the world. Some CoG members do not represent the forgiveness and love of God as the solution to life's difficulties, but echo the worlds' standard, "more education, better job, more money, better insurance, more possessions, better doctors and psychiatrists, etc." Many CoG members are not known for their stand against murder, immorality, oppression of the poor, the occult and secularism. Those who oppose these worldly ways and uphold Godly ways are also often persecuted—whether they are Sabbath-observing or not. Thinking "we are the true church" often stops us from growing to do the work that Christ would have us do.

Not Recognizing Spiritual Gifts

At least five separate places in the New Testament teach the work of the Church is to be done by members of the Body of Christ with the spiritual gifts He gives them (Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11, 28-13:1; Eph 4:11-15; 1Pet 4:8-11). There are numerous other places were individuals are listed as having certain spiritual gifts: Paul and Peter were apostles (Rom 1:1; 1Pet 1:1); Agabus, Judas, Silas and Philip's daughters were prophets (Acts 11:27; 15:32; 21:9); Paul spoke in tongues (1Cor 14:18); Philip and Timothy evangelized (Acts 21:8; 2Tim 4:5); and Stephen and Barnabas were full of faith (Acts 6:5; 11:22-24).

Unfortunately, many CoG groups replaced these spiritual gifts with a human hierarchy—much like a typical government or business of the world. The leader hired other men, who hired other men, etc. Sometimes these men were Christians with spiritual gifts, sometimes they were shrewd politicians able to talk their way into a good job, seeking ongoing growth in rank, power and money. In most CoG groups, the ministry was expected to have the spiritual gifts—whether they did or not—and the members were expected to pay the bills of the ministry. But the message of the scripture is clear:

> But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift… 11 And **He Himself** gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:7, 11-13).

The Greek in Ephesians 4:11 is very emphatic, it is Christ that gives the gifts. Yes, Timothy was given a gift through prophecy and the laying on of hands (1Ti 4:14), but who inspired the prophecy? Christ, of course. Just as God individually chose His prophets in the Old Testament—they were not chosen by the kings or priests—so Christ gives spiritual gifts in the New Testament—not the civil or religious governments. For some believers, this is a big trial. How can they know whom God has gifted with what? Which evangelists, prophets and exhorters should we listen to and which should we avoid? Did God appoint them or did they appoint themselves?

Can a person appear to appoint himself as a minister? Yes, he can. That exact thing occurs in the Bible. In How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans?, this writer complained that virtually no Bible Translation had 1Corinthians 16:15 translated correctly—that the Greek word *tasso* means "appointed" and should be so translated. Various translations had many different words: "devoted, addicted, set, made, dedicated, etc." This writer was pleased to find that William Tyndale, the dedicated Christian who first translated the Bible into English from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and whose work formed the basis of the King James Version, had that translation right!

> Brethren ye know the house of Stephanas how that they are the first fruits of Achaia and that they have **appointed themselves** to minister unto the saints) (1Cor 16:15, TNT—spelling modernized).

We need not worry. Spiritual gifts are more about serving others than commanding others. Also, we can discern them by their fruits:

> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in **knowledge and all discernment**, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil 1:9-11).

The main lesson we need to learn is to stop looking to church leaders—either in big corporate hierarchies or small local congregations—to have or hand out spiritual gifts. We need to teach that everyone must pray for them—then use them. All kinds of small groups of Christians have used these spiritual gifts to bring the Gospel to distant lands and to teach deliverance from sins to

people in their cities. God is there for us.

Lack of Individual Faith in God to Direct Each Believer

Another spin-off of church hierarchy is the tendency to look to that leadership for how to live our Christian life and engage in Christian service, rather than just looking to God. The Bible is full of examples, in both Old and New Testaments, where people prayed and received answers. It is easy to think: "That is the realm of spiritual giants, the Church leadership. It is not something that we ordinary brethren can do."

That is utterly untrue. The Bible teaches that we are to try to find another person of faith and tale order from them, but we are to personally develop the faith of the servants of God in the Scripture. A Christian today can pray within the will of God and receive an answer (Jms 4:3; 1Jo 3:22). Notice:

> Now all these things happened to them [in the Old Testament] **as examples**, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1Cor 10:11).
>
> **Imitate me**, just as I also *imitate* Christ (1Cor 11:1).
>
> So that you became **examples** to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything (1Thes 1:7-8).
>
> Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; **nor as being lords over those** entrusted to you, but being **examples** to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away (1Pet 5:2-4).

We can see that these leaders were not told to be lords or masters over the people, but were supposed to show them how to do God's work so that they could do it themselves. Even though Paul had to correct many problems in the Corinthian church, he commends them greatly for the work they did on their own—they were examples to other congregations.

> I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— 6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. 7 Therefore **you do not lack any spiritual gift** as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 **He will keep you strong** to the end, **so that you will be blameless** on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:4-8).

We desperately need that attitude—trusting God to take care of us, not church organizations, governments or money.

Prophetic Interpretation

The CoG groups were actually little different than many of the evangelical groups when it came to prophecy. Sure, each group had their own interpretation of biblical prophecies, and each thought theirs was right. But all of the groups tended to correlate the first part of various Scriptures with historic events, then say the rest of those scriptures are to fulfilled in the future—and make prediction from them. Also, all the groups tended to revise their prophetic interpretation when their previous predictions did not work out. None of them had an accurate track record where they publicly prophesied future events for some years, and then showed how they came to pass. Most of the CoG groups did not believe or ask God to send the spiritual gift of prophecy to their members today, **so they had the prophetic interpretation of man, not true prophesying from God.**

This problem is an outgrowth of all of the previous points. **Hierarchical organizations** almost never have prophets because prophets speak directly from God, which may be against the religious hierarchy, as the Scripture often shows. Also, the hierarchy has the authority to insist that only one prophetic interpretation be taught. The members, believing that **other groups are not the church**, do not even look at outside prophetic interpretation where they might be amazed at how different some of it is—and how similar some of it is: Ideas they thought were unique to their group may have been "borrowed" from other groups. When brethren believe **they are the one true church,** they tend to accept their organizations teaching, even if it turns out wrong and has to be revised. And then, not looking to the **spiritual gift of prophecy** and not **trusting that God can care for each individual believer,** they accept the prophetic interpretation of their leaders over direct revelation from God. However, we must accept that God sometimes says things like: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

This writer has been utterly amazed how some people can find one error in another group's prophetic interpretation, and dismiss it as all false and not worth reading. But when there are numerous errors in the teaching of their own group, they will accept one excuse after another: "God allowed more time", "God intended it to go that way once, but He changed his mind so the prophecy had to be changed." This writer is also amazed that some groups claim that they will have divine revelation in the future to know when it is time to "flee from the tribulation"—but they have never had any divine revelation in their group's history. The Bible teaches us to trust God, daily, not organizations of men.

Too Much Talk, Too Little Action

This writer has often joked that the false secular adage "The person who dies with the most toys wins" has been replaced in the CoG groups by "The person who dies with the most truth wins". On a more serious note, when faced with a decision about where to attend Sabbath services, many have said, "We will go where there is the most truth." If Christ wanted to "go where there is the most truth", He would have stayed in heaven! But Christ left His perfect environment to become a servant to us (Phil 2:7). A mature Christian must do likewise (Gal 6:1).

It is an utter mistake to think that one's eternal judgment will somehow be better if one personally knows or attends a congregation with the most truth. The parable of the talents shows that we are not judged by how much God has given us (He gives us His truth), but what we do with what we are given (Christian work) (Matt 25:14-30). The man who was given one talent and did nothing was condemned. What would happen if a man was given 20 talents and produced nothing with them? Could he say "Let me in, Master, because I have 20 talents and those other guys you let in only had 10 and 4 talents? Or would his Master expect him to have gained another 20? To this writer, it is a very dangerous thing to claim that one knows nearly all biblical truth and have very few works.

What did Christ expect His followers to accomplish before He returns? Did He expect His followers to simply know the truth till they die? Or did He expect action?

> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt 28:19-20).
>
> And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 "He who believes and is baptized

will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:15-18).

Did Christ expect every believer or every congregation to do all those things? No!

Are all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way (1Cor 12:29-31).

But he expects us to do **something**. He tells us to desire the best gifts. He reminds us that our work will be tried by fire and we will be rewarded accordingly.

1Cor 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 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. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This article cannot tell you what kind of spiritual work you should do, but it can tell you that it is one of the most important things in your life that ranks right up there with education, job, marriage, children, favorite entertainment, etc. You need to give as much thought about your part in Christ's work as you give about these physical things.

Many CoG brethren do have the gift of knowledge. But they also have other gifts. Knowledge is not the best gift. "…Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1Cor 8:1). Christ could not convey important knowledge to His disciples when they were not ready (John 16:12), but He had already used them for significant work (Matt 10). Even today, much good Christian work is done by people who do not have as much knowledge. We can fellowship and work with people who do not know all we do. CoG groups have frequently split over a single doctrine—one subgroup claiming to have just one more truth than another. Sometimes, these splits destroy the spiritual work they were doing—and that is sad and bad.

This writer would like to apologize for times in the past when he may have encouraged people to split over doctrine without considering the greater good of the Christian work being done. When determining the congregation with which we will attend, we need to consider all that Christ has given His Church to do, and what He has given each person specifically to do—and make our decision based upon that.

The Conclusion of the Matter

So in my last section, of my last article, of my last issue of *Servants' News,* I would like to encourage you with both Solomon's conclusion on life, and Christ's conclusion of the end of Scripture, interspersed with my words to help us apply it to our day:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God [not a church organization, not our minister and not secular society] **and keep His commandments** [both Old and New Testament], **For this is man's all.** [Jobs, money and most of the things we get upset about are not so important.] **For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil (Eccl 12:13-14).** [The Bible teaches judgment for all Christians (Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10) which can bring correction (Luke 12:47-48) as well as great rewards (1Cor 3:11-15; Rev 22:3-5).]

There are no shortcuts. There is no doctrine or secret formula you can learn that will let you do both your own will and get on the Father's "good side". Life is about submitting to God and reaping the tribulation and the blessings which are the fruit of obedience (Make 10:29-30).

He [Christ] **who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen.** [Christ is certainly coming soon for each of us. Our lives are short—there is never time to accomplish all we would like to.] **Even so, come, Lord Jesus!** [This physical life is temporary—we should live our life as an end in itself, but live it for the return of Christ. What should we be doing? Diligently ask God and trust that he will show you.] **21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen (Rev 22:20-21).**

His grace is more powerful, wonderful and real than we can understand. We only need to pray and not faint (Luke 18:1). 🕮

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Calamity to Confidence

by Norman Scott Edwards

How are we to cope with the difficult times in which we live? It seems our way of life could come crashing down at any moment. With government debt that must be described as catastrophic and the worst economy in decades, one would think Americans would want to abandon our present big bank, big business and big government control of our nation.

The world was shocked when Blomberg news revealed $1.2 trillion in secret loans were given to a small group of banks that regularly pay massive salaries and bonuses to their already wealthy owners. That is enough money to give every man woman and child in the USA $4000—to pay their short-term debt, buy a second-hand car or even a year's rent. But it went to the hands of a few. See Internet: tinyurl.com/evil-trillion

Even worse, the US Department of Labor is considering taking over the $6 trillion in IRA and 401k plans and replacing them with a fixed government retirement. See: ow.ly/18Lmy and tinyurl.com/grab-ira

Sadly, many Americans would say: "That's high finance that I don't understand; they probably have to do it". This attitude is part of the problem. America is now finding itself yielding even more control to big government: in the areas of healthcare, food, education and even religion. How will the Believer survive?

> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 **But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.** 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, (2Tim 3:12-14).
>
> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:10).

The keys we need are right in these verses. We know we will suffer persecution, but if it is for righteousness sake, he will be blessed for it. It is our job to live out the teaching of Scripture, and not to worry about when or how persecution might come, but to trust God to go through it.

We do need to understand the **bold** verse above—there are evil people alive today who are deliberately trying to deceive the masses and true believers as well (Mat 24:24). The New Testament and secular history of the following few centuries give us clear examples of the interrelationship between persecution and deception.

When Jesus was before Pilate (Matt 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18), the governor wanted to arrive at the truth, and tried to avoid putting Jesus to death unnecessarily. The situation was similar with the apostle Paul and the Roman leaders who heard him (Acts 23-26). There was little deception involved, mostly a desire for political expediency. In the centuries that followed, the Roman empire later persecuted the early church as a matter of policy because they would not worship the emperor. They were not killed for some false pretense, they were killed because they were followers of Christ.

But when we consider how the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and lawyers persecuted Jesus and his disciples, it is a totally different story. Throughout the New Testament, these evil leaders are looking for ways to "entangle them in their talk", are making false accusations and are looking for false witnesses. John records at least 10 plots to kill Christ before they were successful. The central government conspired to bribe the soldiers who guarded Christ's tomb to circulate a false report (Matt 28:11-15). The Apostle Paul said:

> "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me" (Acts 24:13).

Today's lesson from these two types of persecutions must not escape us: If Bible believers are to be persecuted by Muslims, communists, atheists or a country that strictly views their brand of Christianity as the only true Christianity, it might well be done in a straightforward manner like this: "Bible believers will be sent to camps, or they will die."

But in a nation like our own, which claims to have separation of church and state, religious freedom and many Christian leaders, persecution will involve much deception. People will **not** be accused of being Bible believers, but called anarchists, terrorists, tax evaders, gay-bashers, child abusers (for home schooling or physically disciplining their children), zoning ordinance breakers, etc. There is no complete list of possible false accusations because those opposing God are constantly trying new ways, even spending decades inventing new laws and gradually bringing them into effect.

The basic right of Believers to meet and study together in the USA is now under attack. The First Amendment recognizes the right of Churches to meet and be tax exempt without applying to any government. But since the 1950s, the IRS let churches "better document" their tax exempt status by voluntarily coming under section 501(c)(3). That law also sets restrictions on the activities of the Churches that come under it, but for decades those restrictions were virtually never enforced, so nearly all big churches are now under it. Today, the IRS has a regular practice of examining churches to see if they are complying. See the IRS website: www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=183333,00.html

The IRS tells many churches that they must stop dealing with political subjects or face loss of tax exemption and fines. The definition of "political" seems to get broader all of the time. Anti-Christian groups regularly send copies of sermons, literature and other church messages to the IRS in an effort to have churches investigated. The IRS acknowledges the use of "informants" for this purpose: www.irs.gov/ charities/churches/article/0,,id=181365,00.html

At the other end of the scale, small home churches and Bible studies are beginning to feel attacks. In May of 2009, David and Mary Jones were told by San Diego County to stop their Tuesday night Bible studies, or face fines in the thousands of dollars. A massive e-mail campaign caused the county to relent. See www.wnd.com/?pageId=98895 and www.snopes.com/politics/religion/biblestudy.asp

San Diego county apologized and let the study continue. Even so, the city of Rancho Cucamonga. Calf., made a law against home churches, but in April, 2010, yielded to pressure and backed out of shutting one down by classifying it a "Bible Study", not a church. Orange county fined a family $300 for a 50-member Bible study that created no traffic problems. See web pages: www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=958516 and www.foxnews.com/us/2011/09/21/california-couple-fined-300-for-holding-home-bible-studies/

None of these instances are the results of citizens' long-term complaints against home churches. Home alcohol parties cause far more trouble every day. They are a concerted effort by anti-Bible bureaucrats—possibly bribed by the big boys—to stop the truth. Given the general godless nature of our country, people will eventually tire of hearing about all of these local struggles, and some will eventually be successful in stopping home churches.

This article concludes with five ways people typically react to these and many

other significant problems on the horizon:

1) Ignore the trouble—believe the mass media that everything will somehow work out all right when the next candidate with a better plan gets elected. A believer who does this can expect to suffer and perish with the unbelievers who do not know to trust God over the government.

2) Blind faith in a prophetic scenario. Some have the belief that they individually and possibly even the church has no role in determining future events, but that they are all predetermined by prophecy. There are too many scenarios to mention! Some believe that they or their church will be raptured away to heaven or an earthly safe place—though they have witnessed no such miracle in their lives thus far. They need to understand that Christ expects us to be **doing** His work when he returns (Jer 18:7-10; Matt 24:42-47; Luke 12:42-48).

3) Denigrate or physically fight against those whom we perceive to be evil. Many "conspiracy" publications stir up anger and strife, blaming specific people for problems with no source for information, calling them all sorts of names, or telling their readers have their guns ready to solve the situation. They usually ignore any peaceful solutions, and fail to note that evil is coming upon our nation primarily because of its sin, not specifically because of the people God is allowing to bring the evil. Theudas and Judas of Galilee are examples of this approach (Acts 5:36-37).

4) Hide from everyone. Some try to avoid all confrontation and even all contact with governments, big business, etc.—even if it means great economic loss to themselves or inability to do God's work. They may avoid all computers, cell phones, bank accounts, licenses, air flights, etc. Some try to live in an isolated place where they can grow their own food and hope nobody knows they are there—but even so, satellites see everything.

5) Live an open life of faith, encouraging people to repent of their sins and trust their Creator rather than trust sinful and corrupt religion and governments (Mark 8:15). Support just laws and leaders (Isa 1: 15-25, but acknowledge that God brings evil ones to punish sinning people (Isa 9:16-17).

Let us consider the last three options from a carnal perspective. Governments fear their people—especially religious or democratic ones (Mark 11:18, 32; 12:12; Acts 5:26). Unless a government rules completely by fear (like Joseph Stalin), it must maintain the image to most people that it is doing good, lest it become despised and overthrown. A government can seem reasonable when it publicly squashes those who are combative **(3)**—most people will say they are getting what they deserve for fighting the government. With secretive ones who try hide from everyone **(4)**, governments have the option ignore them if they are truly powerless or massacre them—if few people know they exist, there will be few complaints. But with people who are open and unashamed of their Biblical beliefs **(5)**—ones who might receive divine protection in times of difficulty—they are much more difficult for the government to attack. They are too well known to quietly kill off, and too known to be righteous to easily construe as evil. Even carnal leaders are afraid to fight God (John 19:7-8; Acts 5:39).

Let us consider the last three options from a spiritual perspective. God frequently uses evil, unbelieving nations to punish disobedient people for their spiritual good. When God's judgment for ancient Israel was to serve the King of Babylon, all their efforts to fight or flee that King failed. Lacking any clear revelation from God, it is a mistake for the combative believer **(3)** to think he can protect the nation from evil leaders by force of arms or even political might. The hiding believer **(4)** is not doing Christ's work either. Christ told people of faith **(5)** we must warn others of sin, deceptions and evil (Matt 24:4, 14; Acts 20:31), and be willing to lose our lives in the process (Rom 3:23; 6;23; Matt 10:39; John 15:13). He also told us not to worry about physical provisions (Matt 6:24-34) and made this "radical" statement:

> "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it (Matt 16:25).

We need to set our hearts to serve God, and trust him for either protection or faith to die a martyr. Paul was protected for two years by Rome, while awaiting trial in Rome (Acts 28:30-31), but he eventually was martyred there. Other believers found similar protection from Rome, though some killed later—see the article at right "Why Stand We in Jeopardy Every Hour?" Begin living by faith today, with whatever trials you have, and you will be strong as the more evil days arrive. 🕮

Endnotes for article at right:
Why Stand We in Jeopardy Every Hour?

1 The Mithraic Cult was to large degree an 'underground' religion. It was this cult that gathered and worshipped largely in **catacombs**, a practice mistakenly assigned largely to True Christians. Though Christian gatherings were of increasing necessity held in secret, due to severe persecutions, this was not as common a practice as it had been for generations among Mithras worshippers.

2 Tacitus: 56–117 AD, Roman senator and historian; Irenaeus: 125-189 AD; Tertullian: 122-166 AD; Josephus: 37-100 AD, a Pharisee and official historian under Roman rule.

3 Luke 23:50–53 A man known to have influence with the Roman authorities, referred to historically as a 'Noblis Decurio' (a man of wealth and notability) who was converted, and later an influential witness of the gospel in exile. Joseph was a former tin merchant, traveling often between the tin mines of southern Britain and Judea. Stories abound that suggest the young Jesus accompanied his great uncle on some of these voyages, accounting for some of the 'missing 18 years' between age 12 and the beginning of His ministry.

4 Cardinal Baronius, provides names of at least a dozen individuals in this entourage, Christians all!

5 Modern commenters assume this refers to Jews. The British Royalty is known to have descended from the Davidic line. This since the exile of surviving descendants of the Davidic line who were brought there in the time of the Prophet Isaiah. Claudius evidently KNEW something that people today are generally ignorant of. His aim was to exterminate that legitimate royal line.

6 This Roman general, though pagan at the time, was later converted to Christianity. This union was not one with political motivation as could be said of the other in Rome. This marriage was motivated by love of the very beautiful 'Gladys'. Tacitus writes of this union in his *Annals,* book 13, chapter 32. Gladys was also known for her cultured intellect, also being an extraordinary scholar of the Greek language, writing books in Greek, Latin and her native tongue, Cymric!

7 Tacitus, *Annals*, book 12, chapter 36.

8 Tacitus, *Annals*, book 12, chapter 37.

9 Only the nations of Sythia and Parthia were unconquered by Rome, suffering defeats at their hands. Ironically, distant kinsmen of these in Britain.

10 *Annals,* book 12, chapter 37.

11 This group met in the house of Acquila and Priscilla, referenced in Romans 16:5

12 Paul's comment that Rufus' mother was also his mother suggests Rufus Pudens was Paul's half-brother, that she had remarried Pudentius, the Roman Senator. Paul and Rufus had the same mother but different fathers. Priscilla had been Jewish prior to her conversion. Now, this being the case, would that not make Paul the half-brother-in-law of Claudia? 🕮

Why Stand We in Jeopardy Every Hour?

Considering the Background of Paul's Lament

Amazing Conclusions have been made regarding this Enigmatic Question.
Does the Apostle Paul advocate one person being Baptized on behalf of Another?
Or, Was his REAL point something more practical and entirely different?

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Few of us in this modern age fully appreciate the consequences of embracing the Faith of Christ and becoming converted to Christianity under conditions that existed in the first century. As a result, passages such as a particular one found in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians can pass right by our notice without registering as to their fullest meaning.

Despite an aberrant practice invented by a well-known religious establishment in the nineteenth century, based on the literal idea of "being baptized **for** the dead", (in other words, attempting to effect the salvation of 'other' people, distant deceased unconverted relatives, and the like), this practice had no place in the belief system of the early New Testament Church. The modern idea had no such application with them, nor would it have. This idea, in fact, misses the entire point of what Paul was explaining to them in their time and to us.

Being set within a chapter devoted to explaining a fundamental doctrine of the Church (as identified in Hebrews 6), the **resurrection from the dead**, we should focus on that context as being more the point than simply the commitment of baptism itself, in spite of who we assume it might be for. The passage in question is 1st Corinthians 15:29-31. The chapter itself deals directly with the subject of the resurrection: Christ's first and foremost, and also ours'! "*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And* ***why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*** *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."* Paul continues by illustrating examples of his personal experiences, even having been put in a situation where he had to fight with wild beasts in the arena for his faith! That should direct our thinking in what we are to take him to be saying.

Questions we should be asking ourselves are: How does one person being baptized effect or guarantee the resurrection of another person? If that even was Paul's point. What does Paul mean by, "*I die daily"?* and how is that claim relevant?

In order to adequately comprehend the point of this passage, we have to acquaint ourselves with the political climate of their day. That climate provides us with a major set of considerations.

Threat and Counter-Threat

That **Way**, later called 'Christianity', was at first accommodated by the local culture, but as it spread, gaining in popularity, and as it was demonstrated to be at odds with certain prevailing Jewish beliefs and practices, persecutions began to emerge against it. At first from the Jewish quarter, but later from the Roman political establishment: The latter being the more lethal. Rome imposed its own religion. It required the worship of the Emperor as a deity, to say nothing of the Mithraic Cult, popular among Rome's military. [1] As Christianity began to gain in popularity, the Roman authorities became increasingly alarmed and reactive! These 'fanatics' would not worship the Emperor! This adversarial posture prevailed in the Imperial Roman world for at least the first 250 years of the Church.

Endnotes for this article appear on the page at left.

So, to better comprehend Paul's real point, we should acquaint ourselves with the religious climate of his day. First Corinthians was likely written in 57 AD. Important things were happening in that era having begun some two decades before.

While we're familiar with the Jewish historian, Josephus, known for his meticulously detailed accounts of late first century Jewish history, he had his counterparts, in the Roman world as well, who preserved accounts of historical events significant to Christian history. They would include Tacitus, Irenaeus and Tertullian. [2] We will be considering historical facts preserved by these and other early and reputable historians.

While the following is lengthy, a great deal more could be drawn from the pages of history. I will attempt to limit it to a coherent condensation, while retaining sufficient detail to create for the reader a vivid picture of the severe trials the early Christian community had to endure.

Christianity Takes Root in Britain

Not long after the crucifixion, in the mid 30's AD, a small entourage, including Joseph of Arimathea, great uncle of Christ, were exiled from Judea. Joseph of Arimathea was a former member of the Sanhedrin, one in particular who did not consent to their illegal trial and death sentence of Jesus. [3] With intent to rid the Judea of their potent witness, they were set adrift in the Mediterranean in a boat, without oars or sails. [4] Being a very resourceful individual, Joseph nevertheless sailed the group to Marseilles, France. Then using contacts from his former trade (he being a wealthy tin merchant) the group made their way ultimately to Avalon in southern Britain, where he had many former acquaintances.

It was from this nucleus that Christianity began a rapid spread in Britain. Being outside the Roman Empire, not subject to its incessant persecutions, there was a free and open political environment for the spread of God's wondrous Truth. Within a decade, Christianity had spread to the extent in Britain to where it became a matter of real concern to the Emperor in Rome, seen as posing a threat to the Empire's pagan policies and Imperial security. Little did they know!

The Claudian Edict

In 42 AD, Emperor Claudius, issued an edict to… *destroy Christian Britain, man, woman and child, and its great institutions, and to burn its libraries.* (From this, we can see that it was their learned and free culture that posed the great threat to the Empire.) In this edict, Claudius also proclaimed to the Roman Senate that… "*to accept the Christian faith was a capital offense."* Of special note, the edict also included instructions to kill "*any person descended from David",* which will have special importance as this story progresses. [5]

(We should be reminded that this was more than two and a half to three centuries

before the founding of the Roman Catholic Church!)

To enforce his edict, Claudius then amassed the largest Roman invasion force ever, including some of Rome's top generals, to invade the British Isles. One leading general was Aulus Plautius. Thus began the slaughter and forced subjugation of the British, lasting from 42 AD to the close of the horrible Diocletian savagery of 320 AD, nearly 300 years! These campaigns involved a great and ongoing slaughter on both sides.

It should be noted that the invasion of Britain was the only campaign motivated entirely by the desire to eradicate a religion**:** that of Christianity, at its greatest external source. (It's stronghold in Judea was negated after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but Judea was within Rome's territory.) The intent of the Judean campaign was directed against Jewish political rebellions, not Christianity itself. One can see by the edict being directed against British women, children and their culture, that there was a particular focus to Rome's campaign. It wasn't so much a military threat, it was largely religious.

Claudius' invasion force began a nine-year war in which Claudius' Legions faced frequent defeats, at times suffering massive losses. The British proved to be no easy conquest. After two years of brutal battles, Claudius then sought a temporary armistice, in which the leaders of the British resistance were invited to Rome with intent to seek a peaceful settlement. Those leaders were King Caradoc and his first cousin Arviragus, both formidable leaders in battle against the invading forces of Rome.

During this armistice, hoping to secure a peace, Claudius offered his daughter, Venus Julia, to Arviragus. Here, we see the strange situation, where a Christian king became son-in-law of the pagan Roman Emperor, Claudius! One who earlier had sworn to exterminate Christianity and Britain!

If not strange enough, in Britain, while maintaining the truce, the Roman general, Aulus Plautius, was married to the sister of the British war lord, Caradoc. Her name was Graecina (or Gladys which means 'princess'). So, a member of the British royal Silurian family, a Christian, became married to the pagan Roman Commander-in-Chief. [6]

One can see God's hand in these highly unusual unions. Events that, as we will see, had profound effect on the situation with the soon-to-be-established Church of God implanted in the Empire's very Capitol! The Church in Rome was not founded by apostles from Judea, but rather by Christians, under house arrest, from Britain! As we will see!

Barbarians They Were Not!

The very situation of the armistice and the invitation of the adversary to come to Rome for negotiation, suggests a profound respect for the military genius and determination of these British. Though it was Rome's usual practice to represent cultures against whom they fought as 'barbarian', particularly those on the outer fringes of the Empire, these Covenant peoples were in no way culturally crude or militarily backward. Historical accounts show Britain as having many institutions of higher learning, even prior to the first century. Claudius' edict directed at the destruction of Britain's institutions and libraries is tacit evidence of their importance and reputation.

Caradoc's Betrayal and Capture

With the armistice ended, hostilities once again resumed but under a new general, Ostorius Scapula. The war continued for another seven years, until disaster occurred in 52 involving the capture of the feared Pendragon, Caradoc.

It wasn't on the field of battle that Caradoc was outmaneuvered. Caradoc's forces were, at <u>his</u> final battle at Clune, arrayed against four top generals, including Vespasian, a future Emperor, his brother and his son Titus, who gained fame 18 years later in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Even Claudius himself had rushed to Britain with two more legions to reinforce his lagging Roman army.

Having escaped the field of battle, Caradoc's location was betrayed, and he was later captured. He and his entire family: his father, brother, wife, sons, daughter (Gladys—a different Gladys than his sister mentioned earlier), the entirety of three generations! Tacitus writes [7] that 3 millions crowded the streets of Rome to witness Claudius' triumphal procession parading these royal British captives.

Escaping Execution

While the usual Roman practice was to incarcerate captive enemies in the horrible fetid dungeon called, among other things, the Tarpeian, this indignity was not inflicted on this royal British Silurian family. Nor was the usual practice carried out of later strangling publicly the victims and dragging their bodies through the streets of Rome. Neither he nor any member of the British royal family was subject in the least to any physical indignities! [8] Rather, these were afforded highly unusual considerations. We need to understand why, as this is germane to the story.

We can detect a major consideration in Caradoc's defense before the Roman Senate. (Caradoc was called Caracticus by the Romans).

It is recorded in Roman and British annals that there were 39 pitched battles in the nine years prior to Caradoc's capture, with no clear overall victory on either side. In consideration of that, we then can appreciate the great interest the whole world had in the reputation of this great warrior, who was, with his loyal subjects, able to withstand the finest Legions that the Empire could field. [9] One thing one can say, after 38 bloody battles, Caradoc and his forces stood, unconquered.

A Most Revealing Self-Defense

Such is the nature of modern education, but a narrative well known among British schoolchildren in generations past, is largely extinct among our 'enlightened' societies today. Entering the Senate Chamber, Caradoc (Caracticus), stood before the Emperor, defiant and unconquered in spirit, and in Latin, addressed the Senate with this defense, as recorded by Tacitus. [10] *"Had my government in Britain been directed solely with the view to the preservation of my hereditary domains, or the aggrandizement of my own family, I might long since have entered this city an ally, not a prisoner: nor would you have disdained for a friend a king* ***descended from illustrious ancestors, and the dictator of many nations****. My present condition, stript of its former majesty, is as averse to myself as it is a cause of triumph to you. What then? I was lord of men, horses, arms, wealth; what wonder if at your dictation I refused to resign them? Does it follow, that because the Roman's aspire to universal domination, every nation is to accept the vassalage they would impose? I am now in your power—betrayed, not conquered. Had I, like others, yielded without resistance, where would have been the name of Caradoc? Where your glory? Oblivion would have buried both in the same tomb. Bid me live, I shall survive forever in history one example at least of Roman clemency."*

For reasons not fully explained by later historians, Claudius granted not only the requested clemency, but also provided the family a degree of accommodation, highly unusual in Roman history. <u>We</u> can understand when we know what <u>they</u> understood. There is a history that has become largely unknown in our generations that would explain it. That is no

inadvertent oversight.

The British Palace

Few tourists who explore the ruins of Imperial Rome's greatness are aware of, or care to visit, what was known as the Palace of the British. On the Mons Sacer, called Scarus, is a large residence, which Romans knew as "Palatium Britannicum". The curious aspects of this magnanimous grant on the part of the Roman government is a truth as strange as fiction. Even more significant with the emerging Christian community is **who** lived on these grounds, and what its existence meant to those who dared defy the Empire, embracing the Faith!

First, to the reasons**:** Caradoc's cousin, Arviragus, was son-in-law to the Emperor Claudius, he being married to Claudius' daughter. Second, Claudius' highly regarded general, Aulus Plautius, was married to Caradoc's sister. Third, among the captive Silurian family was a young maiden who captured the heart of the Emperor. Gladys, teenage daughter of Caradoc, known for her exceptional beauty, was adopted by the Emperor Claudius, and was given a Roman name, that of Claudia, a name which Romans were prohibited from using. (The different last letter only indicating gender in Latin). It was unlawful to name a child (irrespective of gender) with the name of the ruling Emperor, without official approval. (Claudia (nee-Gladys) was a fervent baptized Christian!) Perhaps this adoption is partly explained by the Emperor having given his natural born daughter in marriage to the now current foe, Arviragus, who a few years later returned to Britain, which carried on in its fight against Rome.

Emperor Claudius was well aware of Claudia's Christian faith and devotion, and contemporaries were amazed that the terms of her adoption did not require she abandon her faith.

More Legitimate than any Roman

But, more significant than that**:** evidence of which we see in both the Claudian edict of 42 AD and the defense of Caradoc, made personally and passionately before the Roman Senate in 51. In Cladius' malediction against the ***"descendants of David"*** and reflected again a decade later in Caradoc's address, he being world known as "*a king* ***descended from illustrious ancestors, and the dictator of many nations****",* we see a tacit acknowledgement on the part of the Romans of his legitimate rule, with a legitimacy that predated Julius, the Empire's first Caesar, by no less than a thousand years! You see, these ancient peoples very well knew where the Throne of David had been transplanted ('overturned') to. Facts 'conveniently lost' in the modern age! A surviving daughter of King David's dynasty was conveyed into Britain after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah!

Caradoc's self-defense strongly reminded the power-obsessed Romans of his **royal legitimacy** that transcended theirs. Any respect for the God of Israel would have, with this 'in-your-face' reminder, imposed a great precaution on their part. Read Caradoc's appeal once again, with that awareness!

One More Fortuitous Union

In the year 53, young Claudia married a prominent Roman Senator, **Rufus Pudens**, son of Pudentius, also a Senator. Pudens, as he was called, was also an Aide-de-Camp to the Roman general Aulus Plautius from 42 AD, at the start of the Claudian campaign in Britain, and for at least five years.

What could be a more strange circumstance than for the king of Britain to see his sister and favorite daughter married to the principal adversaries, to say nothing of the younger being adopted into the very household of the Emperor. Truly, God works in mysterious, and in this case fortuitous, ways!

The marriage to Rufus Pudens was not in any palace of the Romans, but was conducted in the palace of her family, the Palatium Britannicum**:** the British Palace. It was a Christian wedding, performed by the Christian Pastor, Hermas. Both Hermas (a kinsman of Pudens) and Pudens himself, by this time had become converted Christians. Was the Emperor Claudius present at this Christian ceremony?

Pudens thereafter lived among the other Christians at the British Palace. This was extraordinary, as he was an extremely wealthy man, with vast holdings in Umbria. There their four children were born. Upon marriage, Caradoc bestowed the British Palace upon them. As illustration of the opulence and vastness of this Estate, it is recorded that Pudens brought 400 servants to live there at the Palace. It and its vast grounds will be shown to have an important function in the Church at Rome.

The Early Church in Rome

While all of the British hostages were effectively pardoned, conditions were imposed. Caradoc was sworn to never again take up arms against Rome. He was interned under a 'house arrest' under a parole that lasted for seven years, ending in the year 59. Thereafter, he returned to Britain.

But among the remaining occupants of the British Palace after 59 AD, history records the following**:**

Linus; son of Caradoc and brother of Claudia

Claudia; youngest daughter of Caradoc, adopted daughter of Emperor Claudius and wife of Pudens,

Pudens; Roman Senator and son of a Senator,

Priscilla; mother of Pudens, a Jewess,

Hermas; kinsman to Pudens and first pastor of the Roman congregation at the British Palace.

The four children of Claudia and Pudens; sons; **Timotheus** and **Novatus**, eldest and youngest, and daughters; **Pudentiana** and **Praxedes**.

Of the above, only Claudia died a natural death! The others were all eventually martyred!

Graecina; sister of Caradoc, and her husband, the Roman general; **Aulus Plautius** lived nearby.

The Apostle Paul first came to Rome in 56, three years before Caradoc's parole was to end. It was there that history records that he confirmed Caradoc and Bran, his father. Linus was consecrated as well by the Apostle as the first Bishop of the Christian Church at Rome. (Not to be confused with the apostate church, which was to be established yet another three centuries into the future!)

What is most interesting is the clear fact that the British brought Christianity to Rome in the mid-first century, while the Roman Catholic Church poses as having brought 'christianity' to Britain, though that organization didn't even exist for another three centuries! And, by then, it represented distinctly different beliefs than did the earliest Churches of God.

What Christian Church existed in Rome, prior to the year 51, was small and largely of Jewish background, (functioning under the 'shadow sanction' of their "Jewish" identity) but by circumstance was compelled to meet in secret [11] on account of he Claudian Edict, and before it, the Tiberian ban, which imposed the death sentence on all who professed Christianity. As the *British* congregation grew, the earlier congregation merged into it. It is more than interesting that Peter's first visit to Rome was in the year 44, the same year that Caradoc and Arviragus were invited to Rome under the terms of the armistice. Was this coincidence?

Glory and the Grave!

It is when we have this background that we can better understand the profound anxiety expressed by the Apostle Paul in

the above 'Title Passage'**:** 1st Corinthians 15:29-30. ***"Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"*** In other words, why do we place ourselves into a life-threatening situation continually? These named above, but for one, all dear friends, and even kinsmen of his, were, one by one, over the years, martyred for their steadfastness in the Faith of Christ. In such circumstances, it would be natural to question the advisability or the desirability of becoming baptized. A commitment which itself locks the believer into a double-binding and irreversible decision, with the risk of death at the hands of the authorities, OR death with exclusion from the Household of God in everlasting Judgment, should the believer ever recant!

This situation is the matter Paul is addressing to any who would question why anyone would make such commitment. His justification for putting ones' self into such continuing danger is the assurance of the **resurrection from the dead**, the major subject of chapter 15. It wasn't in regard to one person being baptized on behalf of another, but to replace another, to stand-in-place of another on the front lines of spiritual battle, to replace those who had fallen in martyrdom. Why would a person take on such risk, except under assurance that **this** life isn't what it's all about? We do so striving for Eternal Life, assured of a better Estate. That was Paul's point.

Fresh on his mind, at the point in time that he wrote what he did, was the heart-rending losses of these many close and personal friends. One by one, taken and slaughtered under the brutal persecutions of their day. Behind Paul's lament was profound personal loss, describing a maw into which he himself would eventually be drawn!

Unnamed thousands of Saints also were martyred in the arena. While no Roman soldier would dare arrest any of these of the Pudens household or their guests, the same was not the case with other Christians elsewhere. These of the British Palace, with their contacts in high places, also were instrumental in securing the bloody bodies of many hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of martyred Saints and burying them on the spacious grounds of the Palace. That graveyard remains to this day!

In addition, the grounds of the British Palace provided a plot on which to build the first Roman Church in plain sight. It too remains today, called the 'Basilica de St. Pudentiana', named in honor of the martyred daughter of Claudia Pudens, foster granddaughter of the Emperor and granddaughter of King Caradoc!

In his final salutation to the Church at Rome, Paul acknowledges several of these major players. In chapter 16, he salutes several survivors**:** Hermas in verse 16 is pastor Hermas. Rufus, in verse 13, is Rufus Pudens, the former Senator and husband of Claudia. Puden's mother [12] is Priscilla.

2nd Timothy 4 also makes mention of these in Rome, where Paul was writing from at the time**:** Verse 21 lists Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brethren!

History Reflected in Prophecy

While history may not be the major interest of many of us, this is nevertheless important to us personally. I want to shift now to a most important prophecy, one especially addressed to each of us in this generation. A prophecy that we can not fully understand without an awareness of the historical situation, such as what has been presented here, and many circumstances like it throughout history. It would seem that in our ignorance of the extreme trials of our predecessors, we are lulled into thinking that our unmolested situation is more the norm than was the other. No, in fact, our day is the exception, and will not always remain such!

Killed AS They Were!

Speaking of the end times, the Book of Revelation alerts us to what we should anticipate in our day. Chapter 6, verses 9-11 has this: "*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were* ***slain for the word of God****, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying,* ***How long,*** *O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should* ***rest yet*** *for a little season,* ***until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."*** Here we are made aware that there will be an end-time repetition of the trying situations that the early Christians, and Christians through history, had to endure. We have read the names of many of them! Though kept in Heaven, under the Altar, the 'souls' (spirits) of these martyred Saints are brought back into a state of consciousness, briefly, for the purpose of asking, "How much longer must we wait?" This is what is referred to as 'the end-time martyrdom of Saints'.

Now, in some organizations, it has been posed that these end-time Martyrs are killed for their spiritual lethargy or inferiority. That is to great degree refuted by the exemplary status of those of the early Church, and certainly those who throughout the ages, faced the extremes of ***'dungeon, fire and sword'*** as the old hymn, *'Faith of our Fathers'* reminds us of. No, as the prophet Daniel also explains, these martyred in this late-era are equally **exemplary**, and are afforded the same **high esteem** as we see in Revelation 6. Daniel 11 has this to add, starting in verse 32: "*…but the people that do know their God shall be* ***strong****, and* ***do exploits.*** *And* ***they that understand*** *among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of* ***them of understanding shall fall,*** *to try them, and to purge, and to make them white,* ***even to the time of the end:*** *because it is yet for a time appointed."* (KJV) These are NOT the slackards! They are the people who **do** understand, and who DO major exploits **using** the opportunities and Talents God gives them! Their experiences refine them even further for high positions in God's Kingdom! Chapter 12, verse 10 explains: "*Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."*

Raised in Glory!

Illustrating their Glorified resurrected state, we see in Daniel 12:3 two different categories of Saints: Those who exhibit a general glow, comparable to the glow of the evening sky, and those who stand out as bright luminaries, as stars in the twilight, outshining the general glow of their overall celestial setting. These are the wise, the diligent, those who turn many to righteousness!

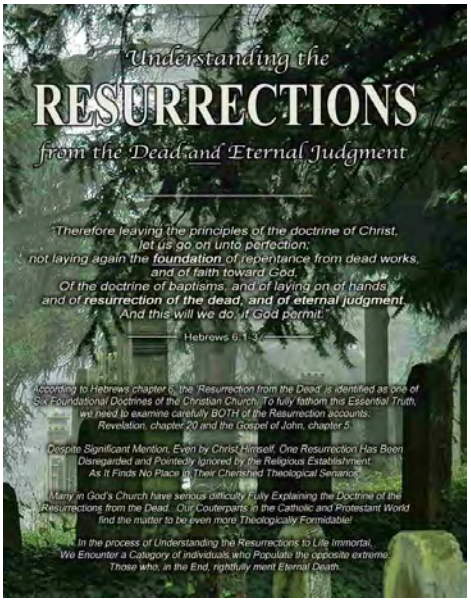
Stay diligent, my friends!! 📖

In acknowledgement, a major source of these abridged historical accounts is the book, "*The Drama of the Lost Disciples"*, by George F. Jowett, Covenant Publishing Co., Ltd, London, England, 1996. The book, within its 241 pages, presents considerable additional detail with historical references too numerous to mention. Copies may be obtained from the publisher, 8 Blades Court, Deodar Road, London, SW15 2U. A worthwhile read!

Recommended free topics:

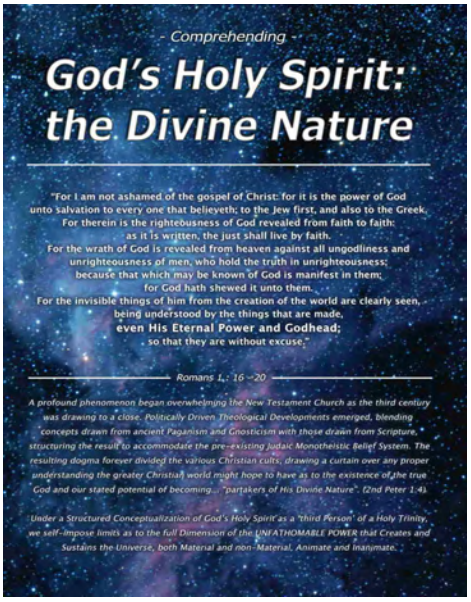
The booklet: "Understanding the Resurrections"
"Considering Laodicea" #111
"Modern Myths of Mithras" #84
"The HOPE of Glory" #83! 📖

Request these FREE Booklets also by Richard Traver: Write **Golden Sheaves, P.O.Box 1411, Clifton, CO 81520-1411** Or visit: http://goldensheaves.org/



The Resurrections from the Dead and Eternal Judgment

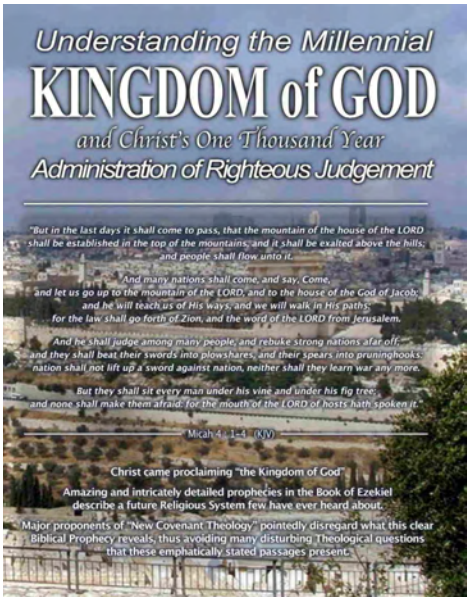
After decades of study, the author presents many under-considered aspects the Biblical Doctrine of the Resurrections from the Dead and Eternal Judgment as identified in Hebrews chapter 6. This 96-page 8-1/2 by 11 booklet considers the personal resurrections of the Saints and the Rest of the Dead, referred to in Revelation 20, who are to be brought back to life after the Millennial Age. Its primary focus is the under-considered personal resurrections as they apply to all humanity, of all ages, not that of Jesus Christ, which is adequately covered by traditional Christianity. It explains why there needs to be more than one resurrection and why they are separated by a thousand years. Many less used passages of Scripture are taken under closer consideration, including the very words of Christ where He relates a period of time in which ancient peoples will rise together and 'condemn' other resurrected societies for their non-responsiveness to Salvation's availability. More importantly, it then addresses the questions regarding those who died, never having been afforded a legitimate opportunity for Salvation and what happens to them as it regards their Eternal Destiny.



God's Holy Spirit: the Divine Nature

A 56-page, 11-chapter booklet that takes a fresh look into the limitless Power that gives existence to all things. While the material Universe is our most tangible reality, there is also a Spirit World, created of and by the omnipresent Spirit of God! While the modern theologian considers the Nature of God under conceptualizations developed sixteen centuries ago, we find what was intended to be a unifying consensus, to be a powerfully divisive factor. While some take an 'anti-Trinitarian' position, it is the intent here to present a 'non-Trinitarian' view, equipping the reader with answers to give to the traditionalists. This booklet steps away from conventional explanations and acquaints the reader with a broader set of considerations. Gods' Spirit functions as the means of existence of all things, material and non-material, animate and inanimate. It accounts for the existence of the vast universe and all that is in it, not only its existence, but its continuing sustenance.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Rom. 1:16-20)



Understanding the Millennial KINGDOM of God

If it weren't for our religions, we might be better able to understand the Bible! Countless passages are rendered confusing or unfathomable due to ideas of men injected into the Theological thought-stream, borrowing from pre-existing religious beliefs, particularly Gnostic and Mithraic Cults, as well as other Theological errors that are 'home grown' within the bounds of what is considered "Orthodox Religion". This 76-page booklet takes a long hard (and perhaps unsettling) look into one of the most deeply rooted fundamental beliefs in all of Christianity. This due to it being one of the major obstacles to understanding the very Core Doctrines brought to mankind with and by the Ministry of Christ. He came preaching "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God", yet our religions have wonderfully misconstrued exactly what that kingdom really entails. It was not to be this evil generation, though its future populace would be living among them, despised and rejected as was He. But perhaps the greater message set forth within the account of Christ's Millennial Kingdom is that it will provide the opportunity denied to the masses of humanity that died, never having had an opportunity for salvation, AND then what happens after that! It's a story no serious, thoughtful disciple of our LORD should neglect.

Learning from a diversity of sources

These are just three of the over 200 booklets and articles available from Golden Sheaves—much of which has been written by Richard Traver, but also be other authors. Servants' News staff has not reviewed all the articles there—not even all of the three booklets here. But from the preceding article and what we have read of Richard Traver's other literature, they appear to be a genuine effort to understand and convey the meaning of the scriptures.

Most people have collections of their favorite music, videos and books, as well as sources of where to get them—and are willing to share them with others of similar taste. Similarly, each believer should have collections of biblical literature that they have studied and found helpful--and know where to get more and be willing to share it with others.

Reading the Bible, praying for understanding and being willing to share how the Eternal has worked with us is the most important means of being "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1Pet 3:15). But since our Bible has been misinterpreted for over 1900 years, it is frequently necessary to have written research to find out and expound the truth of it. Golden Sheaves can be one tool in your tool box in learning and sharing Bible truth. — NSE

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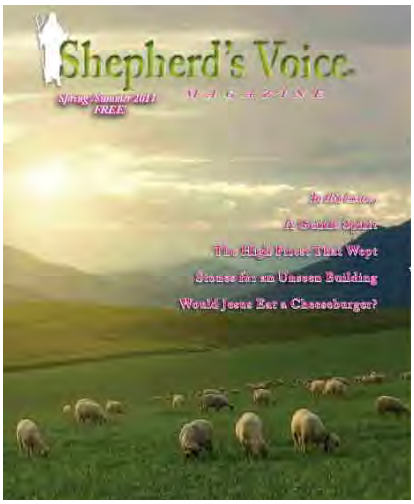
Servants' News to *Shepherd's Voice*

Servants' News readers will automatically begin receiving Shepherd's Voice—within just a few days! A future issue will contain a return card, asking if you want to continue receiving it. Jim Patterson and the SVM staff are a God-fearing dedicated, skilled group able to produce the publication on a regular basis. Norm Edwards will be writing for them.

Send editorial letters to SVM at PO Box 858, Plainfield, IL 60544, info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org. Send circulation requests to SVM, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467 svm@portaustin.net. Offerings may be sent to *Shepherds' Voice Magazine* at either address.

To support Port Austin Bible Campus and its homeless ministry or Church Bible Teaching Ministry's literature ministry (CBTM.info), you may send funds to those names, also at PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467. Thank you! —NSE



"Godly Offspring", continued from p. 14

the truth of Scripture and became baptized. Understanding that marriage can be full of surprises, they worked through various books to try to be as prepared as possible. They married five years after their meeting. Verna feels that God has blessed them greatly because of David's attitude and approach in this matter.

David works for Church of the Great God as the Information Systems Manager and he also writes for the *Forerunner* magazine. He has struggled with type-1 diabetes for 25 years, but knows that God is also using that for good. David and Mikele now have three children, the oldest being 8.

Karen, Verna's youngest, met her husband-to-be online when he, Joseph, was using his sister's Instant Messenger. Joseph's family has been part of the COG for several generations in Oregon. One of Verna's closest friends knew Joseph's dad and his family back in the early 1960s. Karen and Joseph met at a Feast of Tabernacles in 1995, but Karen did not notice Joseph because he was almost seven years younger than she. Later, they became friends and were married in 2009, she at age 27 and he 21. They attend with the Great Lakes Church of God. They have a child, age 6 months.

All of the children attend with a different group. As people and church groups go, some groups may divide or combine, and some of these young people may change to another group—just like most of the older *Servants' News* readers have done. But Verna feels "thankful, humbled, and blessed" that all of her adult children are still largely practicing what they have been taught. None have been involved in drugs, alcohol abuse or premarital sex. They all have worked hard and put their lives into their families, and their families have all stayed together. If the measure of a child's honoring his mother and father is how they end up living their own lives, Verna is greatly honored. Each of her children's families serve congregations/ministries and live their beliefs wholeheartedly.

Today, Verna and Frank have 15 grandchildren, 14 of Verna's and one of Frank's. All but one were delivered by midwives (in the case of independent Darryl and Anne, delivered by themselves) and were home schooled. Karen's baby was born in a hospital because of complications, and is still too young for any sort of school. All of their children know that they were loved and wanted to become parents themselves. Church groups come and go—they never receive eternal life. But people do. To this writer, that is the true success of a parent. After all, the first commandment in the Scripture is to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:22). Even though such thinking is considered archaic by our modern society, it is not to God. And it is more important to God than a lot of other doctrine. In the last book of the Old Testament, God reminds us

> But did He not make *them [spouses]* one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? **He seeks godly offspring**. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth (Mal 2:15). 🕮