

The Journal

News of the Churches of God

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John 8:32

November-December, 2005

Don't look back, advises self-taught archaeologist

By Dixon Cartwright

BIG SANDY, Texas—Ed Lain has seen good times and bad times, many of them in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God of the '50s and '60s. But no good, he says, comes from negatively looking back, from sullenly dwelling on the past, from grumpily obsessing about what could have been.

So Mr. Lain, now 78, looks to the future and, even though he's almost 100 percent blind, persists in his resolve to learn from his experiences and help others.

Mr. Lain visited Big Sandy in August for a reunion of present and former Worldwide Church of God members. The get-together took place, thanks to organizer Judy Biggs, in the building owned by the Church of God Big Sandy.

"Life is good," Mr. Lain told a writer for *THE JOURNAL* during the reunion.

"Of course, I lost Ina Lou to cancer back in 1978, and, sure, I went through a time of adjustment and anger and resentment and all the rest of it. But I learned something during those years, and that is that God does not give up on you. Once He calls you, He's not going to give up on you."

Mr. Lain was born in Savannah, Ga., in 1927 and lost most of his sight to complications from malaria coma and spinal meningitis at age 6.

"I had both of them at the same time," he said, "and at that time they

had no treatment for meningitis. You either died or survived, and usually you wound up being crippled in some way."

As a teenager he attended the School for the Blind in Macon, Ga., graduating in 1948. His interests were drama and debate. He still has the gift of gab. In fact, "if I could make money with my mouth," he said, "I'd be a millionaire."

To make a living, Mr. Lain began taking classes in 1949 at a school that taught piano-tuning.

"Then I went to Atlanta in 1950 and went to work for a former schoolmate who had a piano business."

He worked for a couple of years, then began commuting to near Dunbar, S.C., to help his grandmother and aunt eke out a living while his uncle served in the military in Korea in 1951.

In January of 1952, while visiting with his grandmother, he first heard the voice of Herbert W. Armstrong on the radio.

Definite turn

Like many readers of *THE JOURNAL*, Mr. Lain's life eventually took a definite turn as a result of hearing Mr. Armstrong's broadcast.

"I remember sitting up and running across the radio dial during the police action in Korea, where my uncle was serving," Mr. Lain said. "Of course, at the time there were just beaucoups of radio evangelists. You could hear them all night long on XEG, XELO and XERF."

"There I was drinking hot chocolate and had the ground wire, or maybe it was the antenna wire, wrapped around my ankle to help bring in the stations."

See **FORMER WCG MEMBER** page 7



Ed Lain



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?—Wayne Cole (*second from right*) stands with friends (*from left*) Maria Velasco, Betty Foster and Wayne Weese, all of the Big Sandy, Texas, area. Mr. Cole recently delivered a sermon in which he advised members of the Churches of God to learn to fellowship peacefully with each other. See an article about Mr. Cole's sermon beginning on this page. [*JOURNAL* photo]

COG veteran's sermon counsels members to learn to live with even major differences

By Dixon Cartwright

BIG SANDY, Texas—One of the best-known voices in the history of the Worldwide Church of God and its derivatives preached in a sermon Dec. 17 that Church of God members are too quick to judge—and even shun—each other because of differences in practice and doctrine.

Wayne Cole of Tyler, Texas, who recently retired from a successful real-estate business and who held many posts and responsibilities in the Worldwide Church of God from the 1950s through the late 1970s, preached against intolerance in matters of practice and doctrine. The practices and doctrines he referred to included beliefs involving clean and unclean meats, the weekly Sabbath

and the annual feast days.

In his sermon Mr. Cole, 75, surveyed the history of congregations of the Church of God Seventh Day of the 1940s through the Radio/Worldwide Church of God of more-recent times.

Without ever mentioning the name of the RCG/WCG, he talked of that church and its many splits, especially the separations that occurred in the 1990s.

He spoke of attending as a youngster a congregation of the CG7 in Scrabble Hill, Ore., in the 1940s, when members there exhibited a commendable tolerance for fellow church members "who didn't see eye to eye on every particular doctrine."

But later in his life and in his personal history, while a member of the

Radio/Worldwide Church of God (although, again, Mr. Cole didn't mention by name the RCG or WCG), church members did not show the same tolerance as did their brethren back in Oregon in the 1930s and '40s.

In the WCG's splits that began in the 1970s and snowballed through the 1990s, Church of God members indulged in and "picked at the spoils of this destructive worldwide organization," and themselves in some cases became as intolerant as the "worldwide organization" itself had ever been.

Imperfect preaching of Christ

He quoted verses beginning with Galatians 1:6 in which Paul warns against preaching "any other gospel" See **HAVING UNITY**, page 23

John Robinson, publisher of *In Transition*, dies

AUSTIN, Texas—John Robinson, 60, died Jan. 5 in a hospital here of complications from prostate cancer.

Mr. Robinson, a longtime Church of God member, was publisher of the independent Church of God newspaper *In Transition* from 1995 to 1997; managing editor of *The Worldwide News*, published by the Worldwide Church of God, from its beginning in 1973 until WCG founder Herbert Armstrong discontinued it in 1978; a faculty member teaching journalism and related courses at Ambassador College and the University of Texas at Tyler through the late 1980s; and at the time of his death chief executive officer of Dynamic Resource Group of Berne, Ind., and Big Sandy, Texas.

Mr. Robinson, born in Glasgow, Scotland, held U.S. and British citizenship. He earned a master's degree in journalism from Texas A&M University, Commerce, in 1972. He spoke fluent Spanish. He was an adjunct professor of journalism at Ball State University, Muncie, Ind. He was an elder in the United Church of God and had served as pastor and associate pastor of

the WCG's Fort Worth and Columbus congregations in the '70s and '80s. His first job in publishing was as editor of *The Portfolio*, the AC newspaper, beginning in 1965 in Big Sandy. He had entered AC in Pasadena, Calif., in 1962 and graduated in Big Sandy in 1966.

Among many other ventures over the years, he was a partner with Dixon Cartwright, publisher of *THE JOURNAL*, for three years producing *The Big Sandy & Hawkins Journal*, a community weekly, in the 1980s. He was a pioneer in the desktop-publishing revolution of the 1980s, which included his ownership of a graphic-imaging business in Tyler.

He is survived by his wife of 38 years, the former Alice Rothery; his mother, Margaret Robinson of Tulsa, Okla.; sons John David and Stephen of Austin; a daughter, Rachel Venish of Austin; brothers Mark Robinson of Plano, Texas, and Robert Robinson of Palestine, Texas; sisters Felicity Reedy of Tyler and Mary Perrin of Tulsa; and seven grandchildren.

Mrs. Robinson receives mail at 3517 Mocha Trail, Austin, Texas 78728, U.S.A.



John Robinson

Feastgoers report on their 2005 observances

Following are Feast of Tabernacles reports readers have sent to *THE JOURNAL*. This is the second installment of reports covering the 2005 festival. Members of Churches of God and other Sabbatarian fellowships met at several hundred Feast of Tabernacles sites in 2005, with most observances beginning the evening of Oct. 17.

You still have time to get your report into next month's issue of *THE JOURNAL*. Mail your information to Festival Reports, *THE JOURNAL*, P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A. Or E-mail it to info@thejournal.org. Or fax it to (903) 636-9097.

Photographs as prints or E-mail attachments are also welcomed. Please mention the dates of your observance and the name of the church fellowship or affiliation, if any, or other sponsor of the site.

The following reports are in alphabetical order by Feast-site location:

Reports on three Feast sites

BALLINA, Australia—Ballina is on the east coast of Australia, at the mouth of the Richmond River, and was the site for this year's Feast of Tabernacles for the See **READERS REPORT**, page 4

The Journal mails second combined issue

BIG SANDY, Texas—In this issue *THE JOURNAL* combines the two issues that would normally be dated November and December. September and October similarly were combined.

The reason for the decision to publish two issues for four calendar months is that *THE JOURNAL* had fallen behind in its publishing schedule. This was in large part because the family that publishes this newspaper has for the past 16 months taken on additional publishing responsibilities, which have impacted *THE JOURNAL*'s production.

All subscribers are in the process of receiving the full number of issues they paid for.

JOURNAL publisher Dixon Cartwright said the combining of four issues into two at the end of 2005 returns this newspaper to a timelier production schedule.

Letters from our readers

How can there be any sin in sincere?

In the June 2005 issue of *THE JOURNAL* (page 3) an article of mine was published, "What's on Your Mind? Go Ahead, Say It." In the first paragraph I referred to the word *sincere* as deriving from two French words, *sans cire*, meaning "without wax," as we were taught in the World-wide Church of God.

A man in the United States recently E-mailed me to shed doubt on that meaning.

It turns out that he is quite right and that the stories of merchants covering pots with wax to disguise cracks in them is a misrepresentation of what the word *sincere* does mean.

Quoting from the *Online Oxford English Dictionary*: "There is no probability in the old explanation from *sine cera* 'without wax.'" *Sine cera* is the Latin form of *sans cire* (French).

There are two scriptures in particular where the New King James Version uses the word *sincerity/sincere* in translation, and both shed some light.

1 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV): "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Sincerity has been translated from Greek *eilikrineia*, which means literally "judged by sunlight."

I wonder if what happened was that, when the Greek was translated into Latin by Jerome in the 4th century, *eilikrineia* was rendered *sincerus* (Latin). The Latin never meant "without wax" but meant "simple" or "pure."

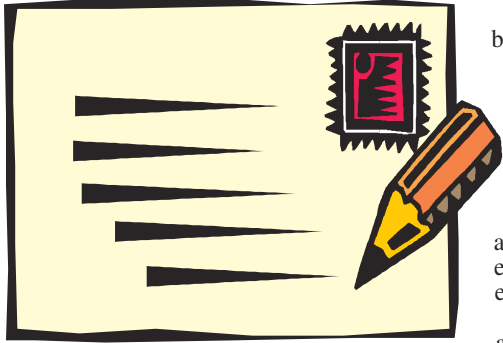
"Most authorities trace 'sincere' back to a different Latin word—'sincerus,' meaning 'whole' or 'pure.' Probably based on the roots 'sin' (one) and 'crescere' (to grow), 'sincerus' originally referred to a plant which was of pure stock—not a mixture or hybrid—and later came to mean anything which was genuine and not adulterated" (quoted from www.word-detective.com/061202.html).

However the story of merchants covering pots with wax emerged, "judged by sunlight" (Greek) does not mean "without wax." Paul was talking about bringing out into the light the deeds of the man mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and judging them (verse 3). Christians should be pure in their deeds, not hiding their activities or motives, but behaving in a way that could be held up to scrutiny.

In verse 8 Paul quotes sincerity along with truth, which reminds me of John 3:20-21, where Jesus said, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Another scripture where the Greek word has been translated "sincere" in English (NKJV) is 1 Peter 1:22: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

The Greek word here is *anupokritos*, literally "not hypocrisy," or "without hypocrisy." To quote from the Bible for Spirit Filled Living (NKJV): "Since hypocrisy originally denoted



the acting in a play, 'anupokritos' signifying a sincerity void of pretension and without putting on an act."

Peter is here talking about the brethren's relationships being genuine, while Paul was talking about the brethren's deeds being available to scrutiny when examined in the light.

Truth is always simple at any intellectual level and can be understood by the most intelligent adult or the most innocent child.

The word *sincere* is still an accurate translation, but in 1 Corinthians 5:8 we miss a large amount of understanding by blinding ourselves with spurious ideas.

I don't think that this revelation detracts from my article as such, but it is interesting, and I am grateful to the American gentleman for bringing it to the attention of Lewis and me.

As a *JOURNAL* writer, I hope to correct errors that may have inadvertently slipped into my writing!

Kathleen McCann
Milton Keynes, England

Gavin's watch

I, and I'm sure hundreds of others, deeply appreciate the labor of love that Ambassador Watch [the Web site at www.ambassadorwatch.co.nz] represented. I'm disappointed (to put it mildly) that it can't go on, but fully

'Truth is always simple at any intellectual level and can be understood by the most intelligent adult or the most innocent child.'

appreciate and respect Gavin Rumney's decision to discontinue. [See "AW's Creator Puts Web Site Out to Pasture," on page 24 of this issue of *THE JOURNAL*.]

The AW site was the place to go for a little sanity, a refreshing reality check and a good bit of humor. Gavin also modeled a healthy skepticism, a quality that is sorely needed among the COGs.

I'm sure Gavin was the recipient of much abuse in his time upon the COG-world stage, and I imagine he was forced to develop a thick skin.

Still, I don't think anyone enjoys being abused, so I wanted him to know that many folks really appreciated the service he provided (I heard from several myself). Most of them probably didn't contact him to tell him that directly, which is a pity, but now he can know, however belatedly.

To call AW irreplaceable is not an exaggeration. We will doubtless muddle through but will sorely miss the good friend that AW had become under Gavin's inspired, inimitable and indomitable editorship.

AW did much good. I believe Gavin helped many people—far more than he may ever realize. He deserves our profound thanks for the long hours of work and the financial sacrifice the site represented. I also want to wish him every success in his future endeavors.

He deserves a break—and our deepest respect and gratitude.

Reg Killingley
Big Sandy, Texas

Prophecy comes alive

Because of the patterns of days, weeks, months and years between major events in the Church of God raised by Herbert W. Armstrong—and the working out of end-time prophecy, which indicate God's hand at work—it may be possible to now know the start of the 1,335, 1,290 and 1,260 days. And possibly of the Big California Earthquake.

Having looked at this for about 12 years, I see the patterns as suggesting that the Big California Earthquake may occur on the 72nd anniversary of *The Plain Truth* magazine, Feb. 1, 2006.

Some of the patterns can be seen under the heading "Endtime Timeline" at <http://www.freewebs.com/usa-in-prophecy/>.

Geoffrey R. Neilson
Fish Hoek, South Africa

I don't care if the sun don't shine

What is the very worst possible thing we could wish on someone? "You can go where the sun don't shine?"

Obviously not. The Churches of God do have a rich tradition of wishing (sometimes with a certain amount of satisfaction) the "third resurrection" on many who have disagreed

with a particular group or minister. But the *worst* thing a COG member can ever say to someone else is to wish him "merry Christmas!"

This year brought a change. I used to support the ACLU in its fight against Christmas. No more. I am against everything the ACLU is for: abortion, secularism, promotion of the gay agenda, women's lib, suppression of Christianity, passivity in response to 9-11, socialized big government, etc. So why should I go along in lock-step with the American Civil Liberties Union on Christmas?

The ACLU and the secular left aren't really against Christmas. They are only against Christianity being in Christmas.

The real war isn't over Christmas per se but over whether Christ is to be allowed in Christmas. Yes, the origins of Christmas are totally pagan, complete with infant sacrifices, pagan orgies, the whole nine yards. It was the winter solstice, Satan's day (or night, as Satan's time is always midnight and the winter solstice is the midnight of "the solar day").

But that's not how Christmas is now celebrated. Let's be honest.

There are positive aspects in Christmas such as the sincere rejoicing in the Western world of the birth of Christ, the ardent desire for peace on earth and goodwill to men, the future conviction that good will triumph and God will bring peace, the attitude of giving and sacrifice, the elevation of the most noble qualities of man of peace, joy, love for fellowman and worship and obedience to God, the triumph of Christianity in Western civilization, the greatest music ever written to praise God and Jesus—the list goes on and on.

Sure, one can look at negative

aspects such as overdrinking (as if to say no one has ever overimbibed at the Feast of Tabernacles), the commercialism and the secular trappings. But these things are just that, secular, and most professing Christians deplore them.

COGs retort that Christ wasn't born on Christmas day. So what? Few people in the world are so ignorant to think He was. COGs say Christmas came from paganism along with Easter, Sunday worship, etc., and all from the Catholic Church, the beast.

That's true but only partly true because Christmas isn't celebrated as the pagan day it once was.

Besides, without the Catholic Church there would be no New Testament preserved, no Christianity in Europe, no religious defense against the Muslims, no pilgrims coming to America to seek freedom to worship their Christian God, and we'd all be still worshipping the pagan gods our ancestors venerated 2,000 years ago.

The Jews, in the book of Esther, set aside the 14th of Adar to be a national holiday celebrating their deliverance from Haman. This is Hanukkah today. It wasn't prescribed in God's holy days in Leviticus, but neither is it proscribed in the Bible.

Christ in John 10:22 apparently observed it, and it is recorded positively in Esther.

So what am I saying; that I've decided to keep Christmas?

No, I observe God's holy days. But I'm not going to be self-righteous and hold up my nose and condemn my neighbors who are doing the best they can with the understanding God has given them and sincerely celebrating the birth of the Messiah and the peace and salvation God has brought through Jesus the Christ.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:10 we have to associate with the world, even though some are sexually immoral, greedy, dishonest or worship false gods (NJB). How much more then should we associate with those who are sincerely keeping Christmas in honor of Christ?

Look at it this way. How would you feel if you were Satan and the day you reserved for yourself for mankind to celebrate is now used by mankind to celebrate the birth of the man who defeated you and will shortly take your kingdom?

Your day has been turned into His day. Your murdering of the firstborn at midnight with all its symbolic mean-

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ing in Exodus has been negated by the substitution of the Lamb, Jesus.

You took the Lamb at midnight, as Matthew records. You entered Judas at night, as John made a point of in his gospel. You murdered Jesus by a horrifying crucifixion.

Guess what. Your victory is turned to defeat. God raised Him to eternal life as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to replace your kingdom of darkness.

In a symbolic type or way, you murdered Him at the midnight of the solar year, your holiday. Yet your efforts resulted only in the resurrec-

See **MORE LETTERS**, page 7

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Columns and commentary

Honor baptism of non-Sabbath-keepers?

The writer is a 37-year-old part-time instructor at Davenport University with an M.A. in history who works as coordinator of office facilities for Lafarge North America. He began attending the Worldwide Church of God in 1986 and now attends with the United Church of God.

By Eric V. Snow

REDFORD, Mich.—Recently some ministers in the Sabbatarian Church of God (COG) movement have accepted the baptisms performed by Sunday-keeping churches as valid in God's sight.

Naturally enough, they may cite the personal example of Herbert W. Armstrong, who was baptized by a Baptist minister during the general process of his calling into the COG movement.

This controversy naturally leads to the wider issue of whether someone can truly be a Christian yet not keep the Saturday Sabbath. Then, if someone can be saved as a Christian while attending a Sunday-observing church, why should he convert to a COG group?

Here it will be maintained that only baptisms followed by the laying on of hands in a group keeping the Sabbath and holy days are fundamentally valid in God sight.

What's the difference?

What makes a man or woman a Christian? Does the Bible itself define how someone is Christ's or not?

Perhaps the most central text is Romans 8:9: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

As Paul goes on to explain, the Spirit is what resurrects a Christian, and gives him eternal life (verses 10-11). The Holy Spirit is a token, guarantee or earnest payment for salvation

(2 Corinthians 5:5). Its presence in a Christian gives him eternal life conditionally.

But we can't directly sense the Holy Spirit's presence in another person, for it's of a distinct, nonphysical, intangible dimension that we can't directly touch, hear or see.



Eric Snow

fellowship to him regardless of his behavior.

Ultimately, decisions about someone's state of conversion have to be based not on words only but on one's deeds as well.

As the apostle John wrote: "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfect. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5).

The fourth evangelist also observed (1 John 2:3-5): "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfect in him. By this we know that we are in Him."

Someone who keeps systematical-

ly violating God's law shouldn't be deemed a Christian, as John revealed: "No one who is born [or begotten] of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born [or begotten] of God" (1 John 3:9; see also verse 7; 2:29; 5:18).

Does God give the Holy Spirit, the presence of which is a requirement for salvation (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; John 6:63; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:24; 2:27-28), to those who systematically intentionally disobey major parts of His law?

What did Peter and the other apostles say? "The Holy Spirit . . . God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

Of course, all Christians will sin (1 John 1:8-10). But a distinction has to be made between two categories of people: It's one thing for people to sin out of weakness while admitting (perhaps only later upon self-reflection or hearing correction from others) that their conduct was sinful.

It's quite another for people to learn about the major laws of God, such as the Sabbath, tithing and the holy days, and deliberately violate them as a matter of intentional, deliberate course.

For, although a Sabbatarian may sin by committing adultery or neglecting the poor, he isn't looking at the applicable laws of God in question and deeming them null and void a priori, which would amount to deliberate rebellion in God's sight.

Even raw ignorance of these laws won't allow someone to have salvation, for the ignorant can't be deemed to be saved even if God may not always assess the full weight of the sins they commit against them (John 9:39-41; 15:22; Luke 12:47-48).

See **BUT WASN'T**, page 23

Cartoon by Earl Cayton, San Francisco, Calif.



"Oops! I just noticed that we framed our dishwasher warranty instead of my ministerial certificate."

Got love? If not, you'd better learn to get it

Mr. Knowles, former managing editor of The Plain Truth, published by the Worldwide Church of God, makes his living as a writer. This article is part of his "Out of the Box" series of columns.

By Brian Knowles

MONROVIA, Calif.—America is an image-conscious nation. The urge to collectivism, with its accompanying political correctness (PC), creates a new ideal image for Americans.

Take, for example, the issue of body image. It's in to be thin, out to be fat. Fat people generally get no love. Nor is fat discrimination an exclusively American phenomenon.

Air India, for example, has warned its 1,600 cabin-crew members to lose weight or face being grounded (*The Guardian*, Dec. 16). Overweight pilots and flight attendants have two months to lose the tonnage or face the consequences. (At a safe half pound per day, the most you could lose in that time would be about 30 pounds.)

An official for the airline reportedly said, "Imagine, if crew members can't fasten their seat belts, how can they fly?"

This suggests that seat belts on the airline may not accommodate the full range of human girths.

According to J. Eric Oliver, author of *Fat Politics*, "fatism," or "size-based discrimination," is endemic in America. He writes: "... There continues to be one group that is systematically mistreated throughout American society—fat people" (p. 60).

In a chapter of his book titled "Why We Hate Fat People," Mr. Oliver says, "In education, fat peo-

ple have a harder time getting into top colleges, are subject to severe harassment and stigmatization by peers and teachers, and, in some instances have been expelled because of their weight.

"At work, fat people have trouble finding jobs, and they are evaluated more negatively, are less likely to be promoted, and are paid less than their thin colleagues.

"Fat people are denied insurance coverage for many medical conditions, and are routinely mistreated by health professionals. Fat people even have a harder time renting apartments" (p. 60).

The author describes fatism as the last bastion of socially acceptable bias in America.

(I disagree. It is also socially acceptable these days to attack Christians and all aspects of the Christian faith. Even Christians are attacking other Christians.

(So what else is new? Internecine wars have been going on since the beginnings of the church, but let's return to our discussion of fat.)

What's the worst that could happen?

Mr. Oliver reports that fat people are stereotypically depicted as gluttonous, lazy or impotent. On television they are typically cast as villains or other tragic figures.

He writes: "... Numerous studies have found that Americans, particularly white, middle-class Americans, exhibit strong prejudices against fatness and fat people.

"For instance, more than a quarter of college students believe that becoming fat is the worst thing that could happen to a person. A majority of college-educated adults think that obese people are weak-willed or lazy ... One study found that two thirds of doctors surveyed thought that fat patients were morally weak, while another study found that nearly a quarter of nurses said that obese patients 'repulsed' them" (ibid. p. 61).

If you're fat, does that knowledge See **A TIME IS COMING**, page 8

Archbishop excommunicates parish

The writer pastors the Church of God Big Sandy and is a regular columnist for THE JOURNAL.

By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—In the Dec. 20 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) a front-page story appeared that caught my attention. The main headline: "A Catholic Parish Pays High Price for Independence."

The story is interesting on its own merit. But the story also reinforced an awakening I had about 10 years ago.

■ The problems found in church organizations among the Church of God movement are found in most church organizations that claim to be Christian.

Ten years ago I went through a metamorphosis.

■ First, I went from believing for 27 years that my church was the "one true church" to believing for about six months that my church had made mistakes that were *unique*.

Although I was sincere, my viewpoint was myopic. (By the way, my personal experience influences me to believe that many of my friends among the Church of God who are still myopic are also sincere.)

■ Next I learned that the problems in my old one true church (and the hundreds of self-proclaimed successors) are similar problems found in Christian church organizations around the world.

Power struggle

The *WSJ* article, written by Suzanne Sataline, described a problem among the St. Stanislaus Kostka Polish Roman Catholic Church (St.

Stans) in St. Louis.

The article mentions how the problem in this particular parish reflects a growing problem in the Catholic Church.

As is a custom of the *WSJ*, there were two smaller headlines that followed the main headline. The purpose of these two smaller headlines is to give a quick synopsis of what's in the article.

The two smaller headlines read:

■ "Dispute With Archbishop Over Property, Control Leads to Excommunication."

■ "Power Struggles Across the U.S."

Why was there a dispute over property in this Roman Catholic parish?

According to Ms. Sataline's article: "St. Stans is one of the few churches in the country that

holds the deed to its own land. In general, dioceses assert ownership of parish property under church, or canon, law."

Later in the article she wrote: "Unlike most parishes nationwide, St. [Stans] kept the deed to its property and is incorporated with a lay board of directors."

How long has the dispute been occurring?

She wrote: "The parish, founded by immigrant Poles in the 1890s, has warred for nearly two years with St. Louis Archbishop Raymond L. Burke."

Parish excommunicated

The dispute came to a head when some were excommunicated. Who

were excommunicated?

She wrote: "The parish has a long history of operating independently. But the archbishop ordered the church to disband its board and place its property into a trust he would control. On Dec. 16, the archbishop announced the excommunication of St. [Stans'] six-member board."

What was the reason for the excommunication?

Here was the reason given: The board created "a schism within the church by hiring its own priest."

The priest was also excommunicated.

Ms. Sataline quoted the reaction of William Bialczek, the board's chairman.

"Morally, everyone in our congregation knows they didn't do anything wrong. It's all about property and money."

Ms. Sataline further described the perspective of the board president by saying: "He [Mr. Bialczek] argues that the archbishop's effort to gain control of St. Stans[] board was really the first

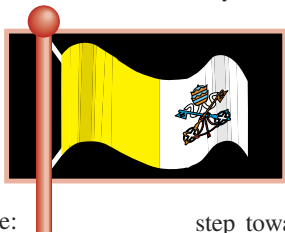
step toward closing and liquidating the parish."

Money issue?

The article spent quite a bit of time describing how the sex-abuse cases in the Catholic Church have affected the Catholic Church in general.

Ms. Sataline wrote: "Catholic dioceses across the country have been closing and consolidating parishes. The archdiocese of St. Louis, which has spent nearly \$9 million on sex-abuse claims and legal costs, closed

See **CHURCH SPLITS**, page 6



When you're out and about on the Web, stop in at

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Readers report on Feast in Canada, Jerusalem, India, Oklahoma

Continued from page 1

Intercontinental Church of God, Church of God International and Living Church of God.

Ballina is the usual Feast site for the CGI so the ICG decided to go there to be able to mix with them. We then learned that LCG members were also having their meetings there.

For the ICG meetings at the Ballina Library, a number of DVDs were made from tapes of Garner Ted Armstrong's sermons at previous Feasts. The Australian GTA tape library has a collection of old Feast videos that go back for 20 years, to Gulf Shores, Ala.

The CGI members met at the Comfort Inn. Ferrel Vincent from the U.S.A. gave a number of sermons, along with Herb Haupt, who is the Australian representative of the CGI. They also showed a special video by Bill Watson and Bronson James about the holy days.

The LCG met at the Returned Servicemen's League Club, with sermons by Dayrell Tanner, who is the Australian director, Bruce Tyler and Robert Tyler, who is the manager of the Brisbane office, Ken McLeod of Perth, and Rod King, Mel Jennings and Roderick Meredith via DVD, who told us that "no other church understands" and that "Petra is protection."

The LCG honors the book called *Mystery of the Ages*, by Herbert W. Armstrong (which includes some of Garner Ted Armstrong's writing from an earlier book called *The Wonderful World Tomorrow*).

Dayrell said the LCG is the remnant of the Philadelphian church and the only ones doing God's work, that it is church policy to not permit recording of the services and it is not the church's tradition to applaud those who give special music.

On the Last Great Day we were told to beware of the Internet.

It was good to meet new people from the different groups and old friends we had not seen for many years. Outdoors we enjoyed the spacious beaches and beautiful scenery that surround the township, which boasts of only one set of traffic lights.

Around the mouth of the river, dolphins can be seen splashing about. There were several dinners organized by the groups and a few barbecues as well.

After the Feast on a visit to the old headquarters of the WCG at Burleigh Heads in Queensland, it was found to have been sold about one and a half years ago and that the WCG has moved to an upstairs office in the suburb of Varsity. *David Moffitt, North Sydney, Australia.*

Seek ye first

BARRIE, Ont., Canada—This year the Maranatha Church Of God celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles at the Days Inn in Barrie with visitors from Toronto, Elliot Lake, Kitchener and Dunchurch. The theme this year was "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God."

On opening night Charlie Sutton advised us to appreciate the Feast, which is a gift from God.

On the first day Ken Parker spoke on the significance of God's temple.

The next day George Merritt encouraged us to never, never give in because all is vanity.

On the third day Charlie spoke on "Seek You First the Kingdom of God."

On day four Ken Parker discussed the four parts of the New Covenant.

On day five Charlie told us the feasts are spiritually rejuvenating.

George Merritt returned on the sixth day to speak on the "Seven Barriers to Our Faith."

On the seventh Day Charlie spoke on "Christ Is Coming to Bring Compassion and Healing to the Nations."

On the Last Great Day a special brunch and forum were held in the morning highlighting four members of the congregation who spoke on the Last Great Day and what it meant to them.

During the final afternoon service a sermon was given by Ken Parker on

"God Called the Weak and Foolish to Become Wise."

We also had uplifting sermonettes each day as well as special music provided by Marilyn Guy and Bob Trotter, which was much appreciated. A catered meal was provided every day that gave us an abundance of food and fellowship.

One afternoon was set aside for youth activities that included "Glow in the Dark Miniputt" and games at Retro Planet. Some brethren took advantage of a walking trail near the Days Inn each morning after breakfast, and the evenings were spent with food, fellowship and games.

We are all looking forward to next year and are already making plans! *Patricia Thomson.*

Scattered brethren

DAYTONA, Fla.—Our group (seven of us) enjoyed the Feast and Last Great Day as follows.

One stayed in Daytona. Two visited with the Miami Church of God in St. Petersburg Beach. One went to Illinois because of a death in the family. Three met in holy convocation at my home, where we enjoyed Bible discussions,

TABERNACLES 2005—*Above left:* Roland Ouellette of the Big Sandy area attends the Feast of Tabernacles observance of the Church of God Big Sandy. *Above right:* John Dickerson and Cathy McAuliffe, both of Austin, Texas, visit the Big Sandy Feast. *Below right:* Brethren of the Church of God International visit outside the meeting hall at the Feast observance in Jamaica. [Photos by Dixon Cartwright and Eric Snow]

music, sermons and good food.

Nothing elaborate, but all was done in faith. *Frank J. Antonello.*

Harrisburg's fall festival

HARRISBURG, Pa.—Focusing on the theme "The Kingdom of God Is at Hand," Pleasant Hills Christian Church, affiliated with the Church of God (Seventh Day), Denver, Colo., hosted its fall festival Oct. 18-25.

Each autumn this congregation participates in a Christ-centered celebration of the tabernacling (dwelling) of God with His creation, past, present and future.

Brethren from Texas, Tennessee and Pennsylvania joined in the activities, which included Bible studies, daily worship services, recreational activities and lots of fellowship.

Speakers included *Bible Advocate* editor Calvin Burrell (Denver); local church pastors Bruce Chesney and Robert Wertz; Bill Hicks of Kingsport, Tenn., director of missions ministries for the CG7; Joe Kirkpatrick of Portales, N.M., and Jerry McClenagan of Amarillo, Texas; and Richard Wie-

expert, and a lady clown who entertained them the preceding night.

The teens had two days of outings with go-karts rides, putt-putt golf, a pizza party and bowling.

The adults enjoyed a game night and ice cream and pie. Overall, my wife said she gained two pounds. We finished the Feast on the Last Great Day with a meal of barbecue, coleslaw, potato salad and baked beans and pies and cakes. *Fred Porter, Hot Springs, Ark.*

This year in the Holy Land

JERUSALEM, Israel—Greetings and shalom in the wonderful names



of Yahweh and Yahshua. I pray that all of Yah's set-apart saints are well.

We just finished what was a most awesome and wonderful Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and, following the Feast, a pilgrim tour of the land.

This year's Feast was a milestone in several ways.

First, we had about 100 brethren with us, and about 60 of them came on the pilgrim tour. This is more than a 100 percent increase from last year.

I was also blessed to perform 16 baptisms at the Jordan River.

The spirit at the Feast was wonderful. We had representatives from 12 countries including the U.S.A., Canada, Great Britain, Austria, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Finland and Israel.

Interestingly enough, these are the exact areas where the 12 tribes are concentrated in their diaspora.

The messages were powerful, and there was truly an overall loving family atmosphere. The only word that many were left with after the amazing experience of internalizing our prom-

'It was good to meet new people from the different groups and old friends whom we had not seen for many years.'

denheft of Barrington, Ill., Northeast District superintendent.

A wonderful time of worship and fellowship was enjoyed by all. Plans are already underway for next year's celebration. *Bob Wertz, New Cumberland, Pa.*

Inspiring and uplifting

HOT SPRINGS, Ark.—We had a wonderful Feast in Hot Springs. We had about 130 brethren who rejoiced greatly before the Lord.

We had beautiful weather for our family day, which featured hotdogs and hamburgers, boat rides and hovercraft rides for the youth and a carnival spaceball ride.

We had fun pickin' and grinnin' and a '50s dance.

We had inspiring and uplifting sermons.

Our teens took part in the youth-day service with special music and in worship services.

There were special meals for the congregation, and all fellowshiped with much enthusiasm.

The children were overjoyed at Tommy Twister, the balloon-twisting

youth day and second annual ladies' luncheon.

Several children received God's blessing at the traditional "Blessing of Little Children." Many prayer requests and blessings received were announced daily during services.

This year God provided several anointings and healings (James 5:14-15) at the Feast site, something that had not happened in previous years. These were especially inspiring to the brethren and caused even greater rejoicing to the glory of our Father God and His wonderful Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also had much more special



music this year than in past years, and much of it was notably by families, couples and children.

These comments since the Feast tell the story of how God's Spirit moved at this Feast of the Lord:

From M.K.: "I plan on being at the Ozarks for the Feast next year. I love the people. Everyone is so genuine and family-oriented. The Midwest part of the country seems to have a love for home, family and country like no other."

From D.W.: "We had a wonderful Feast. I think [name] and [name] were very touched by the outpouring of God's Spirit on the last day. They said

you especially for the beautiful attitudes of sharing, selflessness, brotherly love and friendship permeating activities throughout the Feast.

We were blessed to conduct and witness a marriage during the Feast (Paul Voss and Joan Youngberg), a baptism (John Amorelli), two ordinations as deacons (Robb Harris and Michael Link) and the blessing of two little children (Isaac and Madeline Garrett).

We also enjoyed a talent show during a fun-and-games evening—arranged by Michael Link, with Michael Bannen functioning as emcee, and Norbert, Johanna, Michael and Manuela Link, John and Louise Amorelli, Karen Myers, Aaron Hooper, Kalon Mitchell and Mackenzie Zehrung (with little dog Honey)—participating.

This special event was followed, later in the week, by a western (costume) dance, which was arranged by Michael Link and Cali Harris, with talent display by John Amorelli, Joan Youngberg, Phyllis Bourque, Connie Grade, Dorothy Loraas, Gilbert De Vaux and Honey. Both the marriage and the talent show were videotaped by Michael Bannen and Rhonda Cagle, respectively.

We also enjoyed a beach-access party, in addition to the opportunity for individually arranged activities, such as horseback riding, a visit to the farmers' market in Los Osos, wine tasting and ATV rides.

Highlights were a Friday-night Bible study and discussion at a campfire with our younger members, a wide variety of special-music performances, coordinated by Phyllis Bourque (by Phyllis, Connie Grade, Dorothy Loraas, Joan Youngberg, Aaron Hooper, Michael Link and Mackenzie Zehrung, Norbert Link, and several festival choir presentations), as well as inspiring messages by Edwin Pope, Norbert Link, Dave Harris, Terry Grade, Wray Zehrung, Bill Grams, Paul Voss, Robb Harris, Michael Link, Bob Bourque, Michael Bannen, Gilbert De Vaux and Eric Rank, addressing such diverse topics as God's desire for His people, the many voices of God, the kingdoms of the world and our millennial rule, prayer, finishing our individual and collective calling, and the three resurrections, among many other topics.

All services were transmitted live over the Internet (with the help of Wray Zehrung, Karen Myers, Rhonda Cagle, Michael Link and Kalon Mitchell), and the Feast sermons have been posted on our Website, www.eternalgod.org.

Both the establishments of rented accommodations and the management of the leased church hall were extremely accommodating and cooperative. We are certain that God's protecting and blessing hands made this Feast one of the most enjoyable and memorable Feasts ever. *Norbert Link, Ramona, Calif.*

Brethren from the tsunami area

MADRAS, India—The theme for the Feast was "Dwelling in Unity." I was the only person to conduct the services and give sermons. As a special program we had Bible-reading sessions where I encouraged the people to ask questions. This Feast I made as much as I could as interactive as possible. We may lack good food, but we were filled with lovely fellowship and spiritual food.

Well, I mention spiritual food. I must admit I was only teaching the knowledge I have. I am not a pastor or preacher, but whatever knowledge I

See **FEAST TRAVELERS**, page 5

Enjoyable and memorable

LOS OSOS, Calif.—For the third year, members and affiliates of the Church of the Eternal God celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful area of Morro Bay and Los Osos.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for the diligent work and assistance to make this a most enjoyable and memorable Feast, including the beautiful flower arrangements by Dorothy Loraas and Connie Grade, the supervision of the information table by Bill and Nancy Grams and the activities for our little children, which were arranged by Jule Zehrung.

We would also like to thank all of

Feast travelers meet in hundreds of observances around the world

Continued from page 4

have I taught. What I covered in the messages during the Feast was on:

■ Why we have sufferings in this world.

■ Why sometimes it (the world) attacks us though we may be faithful and loyal to God.

■ What is the meaning of the world tomorrow and how it could be relevant in today's context.

■ Why we should come away from the world during this period to learn more about the truth during Feast time.

■ What happens to our relatives who die without knowing the truth and how that is relevant to the Last Great Day.

The brethren in the Madras tsunami area, Mepur, Ayyalcherry, Vellore, Tiruvannmalai and Kanchipuram, send their regards. We had in attendance a total of more than 275 including children.

The Feast ended without any mishaps, but immediately after the Feast it started to rain. It began a little heavy, then more heavy and finally with a big hurricane (typhoon). In one day it rained 32 centimeters of rain. Even I was not spared. My house, too, was flooded with water, both from rain and sewage mixed. My house still smells.

The story never ends there. The whole state was affected, and the smaller huts and makeshift houses that our brethren live in are broken and need to be repaired.

I wanted to rest after the Feast but I am going to run to this place to see what I can best do to provide some relief.

Well, Satan is not happy about the success of the Feast, so it dampens us to a great extent. We will never give up. Please pray for us in India. The scope for evangelization is so vast, but resources are too poor. Please pray, please. *M.R. Hubert, Madras, India.*

Generally remarkable Feast

OCHO RIOS, Jamaica—In spite of rainstorms and other obstacles, up to 283 people gathered to observe the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in Ocho Rios with the Church of God International (CGI) this year.

A further 18 people would have come for one day, but a badly flooded road caused their bus to turn back.

A special aspect of the Feast came from members of an independent Sabbatarian church, in Spanish Town, which hadn't kept the holy days previously. Those members started to keep the Feast as a group with CGI this year.

Another independent church, in Maroon Town, St. James, led by a man who had learned from the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong and had taught from Church of God literature for 15 years, also chose to attend this Feast site this year.

God blessed this site by allowing the Feast's activities to start and continue almost normally as scheduled in spite of the rains unleashed by what eventually became part of Hurricane Wilma. The bad weather caused landslides and floods that blocked or hindered traffic on many of the roads between Kingston, the largest city and capital of Jamaica, and the northern coastal tourist town of "Ochee," as locals often call it.

At this Feast a remarkable buffet of spiritual food was served up to the brethren in attendance. Deacon Glenford Smith preached two powerful, practical sermons about how we need to live more-disciplined and better lives as Christians, such as by restructuring our hearts and general priorities in life.

We would also need to change the programming of our minds and emotions away from the world's values we held before conversion to agree with our new Christian lives after baptism,

such as by monitoring and then changing what our thoughts naturally drift to when half idle or daydreaming when this reveals a materialistic mind-set.

In his message, deacon Paul O'Connor came up with a striking metaphor about Christians being "pilgrim soldiers" and how this realization should change our attitudes about trials and



FEASTGOERS IN TEXAS—These photos show Feastgoers meeting with the Church of God Big Sandy. Lyna Jane Bryant of Sulphur Springs, Texas (*above*), plays hymns for services. Her husband, Roger Bryant (*upper right*), dines at a local restaurant. *Right*: Virgil Webb of Longview, Texas, visits before a Feast service. See more Feast photos on page 4 and in the September-October 2005 issue of *THE JOURNAL*. [Photos by Dixon Cartwright]

experiences in this life.

The traveling minister for this site, Mike James, used in one message insights from the theories of educational psychology to discuss why people in the world don't "get" God's truth even when it is explained to them.

In his other message, he described how Christians should spiritually live as if they were dead to the world's temptations and pleasures.

In an interactive session with the whole congregation, deacon Christopher Hendricks led a spiritual workshop that encouraged those attending to avoid lazy thinking that would keep us from specifically planning how to exactly overcome specific major long-standing spiritual problems.

After returning from America as a traveling speaker himself, deacon George Ramocan gave a most interesting sermon that explored the meaning of the Hebrew and various Old Testament texts to show that we as holy-day and festival observers already keep the new moons, so no further separate observation when the crescent appears

In the annual Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Presentation, Sandra-Mae Robinson triumphed once again and beat out the four men who aimed to topple the reigning 'queen.'

monthly is necessary.

Showing forth fully his talent as a speaker of both careful intellect and remarkable power, the CGI pastor for Jamaica, Ian Boyne, was in truly excellent form during a Friday-night Bible study that discussed the book of Revelation from two viewpoints.

He described and cited high-level traditional Christian scholarship, including scholars' concessions that the Old Testament in general and even the holy days in particular must be understood in order to interpret this book correctly.

He also practicably applied its lessons to his long-standing theme about the need for Christian self-sacrifice when describing how Christians anciently were denied jobs because they wouldn't sacrifice to the gods and participate in orgies that were connected with membership in guilds that organized the skilled trades, etc.

He then compared their plight to Sabbath and holy-day keepers today being denied jobs because of their faith.

But during this Feast Pastor Boyne felt the need to teach doctrinal truths

more than to preach practical inspirational sermons. So, having researched this subject carefully before the Feast began, he gave a striking set of messages, four in all, that described and developed the typology of the tabernacle, later temple of God, as relevant to the Feast's scriptural meaning.

The tabernacle and temple concepts



are important for bringing new truth to our collective attention. For example, the Hebrew words used in the account in Genesis hint at the Garden of Eden being the first temple of God and Adam as its first priest.

The tabernacle in the wilderness, with its holy objects that correlated with spiritual actualities in heaven, was a temporary dwelling for God symbolically while Israel wandered in the wilderness, which was later supplanted by a permanent temple that Solomon had built in Jerusalem.

The references to Jesus as the cornerstone allude to the temple, as does Peter's comparison of Christians as lively stones being built together into a spiritual house.

Presently, God by His Spirit dwells in individual temples (or tabernacles) of God, meaning individual Christians as they live in the wilderness of this world, who one day will be joined

into His family and completely become God themselves.

Much more could be said about and built upon this set of messages, which give some serious food for thought about what the Feast spiritually foreshadows for our Christian lives and for our glorious future.

This Feast site also provided fun social and uplifting spiritual activities. There was a "singles' mingle" that dealt with the acceptability of large age gaps between men and women in romantic and marriage relationships, such as old women with younger men, before the singles' dance started.

Besides serving up the local cuisine, Jamaica Karaoke Night featured brave men and women willing to dress up and sing like the original artists of famous rock and pop songs of the past.

The Family Fun Show featured many musical acts, poetry readings, and a parade of the customary hats of the world.

Perhaps the most striking two acts of this show were Maggie Grant's original spiritual rap, which worked in mentions of, and even teased by name, various (unmarried) members of the

local Jamaican church, and the synchronized Ashanti dance routine done by six teenage girls set to African music.

In the annual speaking contest, the Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Presentation, Sandra-Mae Robinson triumphed once again and beat out the four men who aimed to topple the reigning "queen" and champion of this contest.

In presentations limited to 20 minutes each, the speakers argued the scriptural case for Christians being willing to stay in a morally (but not doctrinally) corrupt church.

A striking newcomer to this contest, and one of the runners-up along with deacon Derrick Alwood, was Bruce Campbell, a blind local lay member who used a braille manuscript as the notes for his strikingly well-organized presentation.

Activities during the Feast also included a sports field day, a pool party for the youth, a couples' night with rap session, a formal public debate by the youths about the death penalty, a seniors' luncheon, and even organized street evangelism by teens on the streets of Ocho Rios during which they handed out tracts attacking the observance of Christmas.

One woman was baptized on the beach on the morning of the Last Great Day, while meanwhile the brethren who had gathered to watch sang hymns about Jesus' sacrifice that matched the ceremony's meaning.

Overall, this relatively small Feast site provided a generally remarkably high level of public speaking that produced messages of power and serious thought. The musical talent displayed at services and social events was often excellent as well.

Anyone who wants to attend a Feast site that can be fun, uplifting and educational should check out what CGI does in Jamaica each year. *Eric Snow, Redford, Mich.*

Deep Bible studies

PENOBSQUIS, N.B., Canada—Our Feast this year was small but enjoyable. It was a pleasure because my wife, Anne, and I were able to combine the time with a visit from our son and his wife from Alberta and our daughter from Nova Scotia.

The Feast was held in Sussex, which is about eight miles from Penobsquis. It is beautiful country, with soft, rolling hillsides and plenty

of sheep and cattle to grace the landscape.

With only older people at the Feast, we concentrated on some deep and interesting Bible studies. Some of the time was in discussing our free publication, *The Light*, and arranging for wider distribution.

We are now busy in presenting the gospel to different church groups and seniors' groups. We have already been able to present to SDA, Baptist and several seniors' groups. Some SDAs have shown interest in the holy days, and it comes as a surprise to Baptists and others that we serve Christ and meet on Sabbath.

It is our hope that God blesses us with many more years to serve. *Harry Herbert, Church of God Sabbath Day, Penobsquis, N.B., Canada.*

Great Feast

ST. PETERSBURG BEACH, Fla.—What a great Feast of Tabernacles 2005 we had at sunny St. Pete Beach!

To highlight the Feast, powerful sermons were delivered by Tony Fontao, Dwight Harrison, Larry Sharp and Ben

Faulkner. A sermonette was given by Mike Roy. Beautiful special music was performed by Miriam Moreno.

We were blessed throughout the Feast with sunny, warm days. Services were held every morning at 11 at Dolphin Beach Resort. We had the blessing of the little children during the Sabbath service. Besides daily worship services, there was also a Bible study.

All services were conducted in English with simultaneous Spanish translation.

Activities included miniature golf, bowling, a family barbecue and a dinner-dance that was enjoyed by everyone, with good food and great music and games.

We would like to thank everyone who attended the Feast at St. Petersburg Beach. You are the ones who made this Feast a great one. We look forward to sharing the Feast of Tabernacles with you next year. *Tony Fontao, Church of God in Miami, Miami, Fla.*

Warm water, warm Feast

WAGONER, Okla.—The 2005 Feast of Tabernacles at Western Hills Guest Ranch, in Sequoyah State Park, near Wagoner, was yet another in a fine succession of successful and rewarding festivals at this ideal location. There were in excess of 250 registered attendees, with others attending part of the Feast.

We had a busy time with two services the first day and on the Sabbath, then a morning service on all the other days.

All of the sermons were of high quality, as well as our having a couple of well-attended Bible studies.

A wide variety of activities was enjoyed. These included two hymn-alongs, a youth picnic, a teen pizza party, a pontoon boat ride on the lake, a hayride and hotdog cookout, a teen bowling party, a potluck picnic, a family dance, an activities day consisting of a variety of tournaments followed by a hamburger cookout, a family fun show and a youth day.

One or two of the various church groups represented had church picnics at the campgrounds as well.

A baptism service took place Monday afternoon. Two young adults were baptized, Mary Johnson, who turned 20 years old on that same day, and David Csercsics (pronounced Church-check), a 24-year-old blind young man from Canada.

This was his first Feast of Tabernacles, but he has been studying with another blind gentleman, Gene Collins, via Internet for some time now and made his decision at the Feast to make his commitment to Christ!

Gene Collins had graciously sponsored David's flight and hotel accommodations so David could attend his first Feast of Tabernacles.

It's usually the custom at the Feast at Western Hills to use the swimming pool for the baptisms. Since the pool is not heated, it is generally a challenge for baptizer and baptizees to enter the pool and go under that frigid water to rise a new creature in Christ.

But this year Lee Critser of the Tulsa Church of God graciously offered his service to travel back to Tulsa and bring back a baptismal tank. It was then filled with bathtub-warm water, and this year the participants were able to enjoy a warm dunk into the watery grave, and the ministers performing the baptism were also able to remain warm and relatively dry.

The weather started out the first two days to be warm for Oklahoma at this time of year, but then a cool front moved in and the weather was wonderful the remainder of the Feast, with a crispness in the air and the trees beginning to change colors.

It went from warm short-sleeve weather to jacket weather overnight. All in all, we were truly blessed at the feast in Wagoner this year. *Richard Gawith, Tulsa, Okla.*

Essay

Are you searching for truth, or are you trolling for sheep?

The writer, a Church of God member since 1964, is founder of Patriots of the Kingdom (www.patriotsofthekingdom.org), not as a church but as a research and publishing entity with no allegiance to any existing organization of men. Mr. Martin, who has five children and 12 grandchildren, lives on a farm and grows a huge organic garden every year. He is also a photographer and hockey player.

By Myron Martin

BRAMPTON, Ont., Canada—For those who really know their Bibles, the first half of the headline, above (“Are You Searching for Truth, or Are You Trolling for Sheep?”), should bring two scriptures immediately to mind: “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17) and perhaps Matthew 4:4: “It has been written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The question is: Do we really attempt to learn and live by every biblical principle and instruction?

Is it not true that in reality every religious organization of men has a particular focus and often bias in relation to certain doctrinal positions?

Superior attitude

Going a step further, does that not frequently result in both a superior attitude based on perceived knowledge regarding certain subjects or biblical principles?

Setting doctrines in concrete means the mandated “prove all things” principle the Bereans were commended for is no longer perceived as even being necessary, because established positions are simply viewed as beyond question. This attitude sets up an us-against-them mind-set and a self-righteous posturing in respect to other confessed scriptural believers.

Now, let us be honest about this and examine some scriptures that are frequently used as proof texts within the greater “Church of God” cultural background that has shaped our thinking.

Could this be true of organizational positions and/or individual believers’ personal attitudes, affecting their relationship with other believers?

The first scripture that comes to my mind in that regard is Acts 5:32. We have in the past used this verse to justify our perceived spiritual superiority because we supposedly kept the Sabbath and holy days of Leviticus 23, and, since Sunday-keepers do not even pretend to obey these commandments,

ergo they could not possibly have God’s Holy Spirit.

Score one for our side! The problem as I see it is that partisan biblical debaters have the tendency to argue specific scriptures in isolation instead of getting the big picture and considering every verse that may shed some insight on any given question.

For example, would it not be fair to say that Romans 3:23—“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”—should be considered in the context of the Acts 5:32 declaration?

Litmus test

What makes one commandment out of 10 the litmus test as to who is supposedly exclusively obeying the Creator? Are we not, according to Revelation 12:9, *all* still deceived to some degree?

Organizations of men by nature tend to be competitive and frequently use proof-texting to divide and conquer and foster loyalty to a specific group of believers. At one time the Worldwide Church of God claimed to be “the true church” (a term one still frequently hears in certain offshoots). That think-

ministers, he would not address the tough scriptural questions I put to him (I can send you a copy of the exchange on request).

Let’s consider just one more proof text that I believe was, and still is, grossly abused in the Church of God community, which now numbers in the multiple hundreds of smaller organizations, at the very least.

That scripture is Hebrews 13:17—“Obey them who have the rule over you”—which many ministers interpret in practice, if not in actual words, as follows: Whatever we say goes, scripturally and doctrinally, because God puts His doctrines into the church through His apostle.

So the hierarchy supposedly follows a direct chain of command back to the Creator.

But is this sound thinking according to Scripture?

What about scriptures like Psalm 146:3, “Put not your trust in princes nor in man in whom there is no help”? Or “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them”? (Isaiah 8:20).

organized corporation of men, a state of spiritual inertia is often evident.

Many may simply be closed-minded and refuse to believe they could actually have been deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9) about some doctrine they consider foundational and still believe is paramount in assuring their salvation.

Logical arguments can fail

The fact is, someone who has a good relationship with his Creator and Savior and thinks he knows the Scriptures is still counseled to “take heed lest [he] fall”! (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Therefore, if *any* foundational concept someone has built on is actually in error, a deception of our adversary, who knows the Scriptures better than we do, then no matter how logical the argument or how many proof texts are used, the resulting doctrine or belief is still, by scriptural definition, *built on sand* (1 Corinthians 2:10; Matthew 7:26).

On that note, consider the question in the last half of the headline above (“Are you trolling for sheep?”) and ask yourself if the collective Churches of God in recent years diligently focused on reexamining the foundations of their beliefs.

advocate following, as opposed to putting the past behind us and going on to perfection (Hebrews 6) by renewing and redoubling our efforts to prove all things from the Scriptures.

A mature believer who is growing in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) should not fear being deceived doctrinally by listening to or reading a concept different from his current understanding, no matter how skeptical he may be.

Such a one who truly believes God’s Word is truth should submit the question to critical scrutiny in the Scriptures and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to ascertain what Scripture actually says.

Approaching any question or disputed doctrine from a nonpartisan standpoint, the only criterion being biblical proof rather than the teachings of men, we will be amazed at the hidden gems of wisdom we will find.

Have the multiplicity of organizations and ministers not been more focused on corralling sheep and defending their beliefs than they have in proving truth in Scripture?

Where are the fruits?

The almost total lack of new converts being convicted of saving faith should be self-evident. Contrast this sad situation to the history of the early church!

As the old cliché says, if we continue in the same old way but expect different results, we only delude ourselves.

Attitudes need changing, mind-sets need adjusting, things need to be questioned (as the Bereans showed).

By refocusing on humility, admitting error when biblical proof is presented, with a focus on unity in truth by willingly reexamining disputed doctrines with an open mind, division could be reversed.

We might just be showered with blessings and receive an outpouring of the Spirit that would erase the divisions. We should not be willing to settle for unity in error, by papering over our differences.

We should instead put disputed doctrinal issues on the table with a firm commitment to listen to all sides, considering every relevant scripture, following the precedent of the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15.

We must seek a consensus through prayer, fasting and diligent, unbiased study of Scripture. If we did those things, would we not be guided by God’s Spirit to arrive at a true unity in truth?

Will the Ambassador College-trained ministry that has carved up the sheepfold among itself have to die off (as the first generation of Israelites in the wilderness did) before the goal of the Promised Land can be achieved by sincere seekers of truth?



Myron Martin

We must seek a consensus through prayer, fasting and diligent, unbiased study of Scripture. If we did those things, would we not be guided by God’s Spirit to arrive at a true unity in truth?

ing may well have poisoned the well in terms of objective thinking and clear-minded analysis of Scripture.

I have also run across the true-church claim among certain Seventh-day Adventists who boast of having the “Sabbath truth,” yet they, like Sunday keepers, do not (for the most part) observe the high-day sabbaths of Leviticus 23!

SDA correspondence

A recent letter from an SDA pastor’s office contained the following statement: “... The issue of Saturday or Sunday being the Sabbath is going to happen and it will determine eternal life or eternal death for every soul living upon this earth SOON! [emphasis in original letter].”

I had written this particular pastor because he publicly offered (as a self-admitted publicity stunt) payment of \$1 million in U.S. currency to anyone who could prove that Sunday was the Sabbath.

My response to him in essence was that, unless he can provide that same absolute proof that Saturday is the Sabbath, he was setting up a straw-man argument that in reality is partisan in nature.

Typical of most hierarchical church

What about our individual responsibility to prove all things, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance (John 16:13), and then be true to our convictions?

Biblically, can we abrogate our responsibility to prove all things by accepting the teaching of another fallible human being if it goes against our conscience, just because the individual has a title bestowed by other fallible men?

Out of context and into the fire

It is always dangerous to take one scripture alone (and sometimes out of context) and build a doctrine on it. The Creator operates on a principle of any matter being established by two or more witnesses.

Based on my 30 years’ experience in the WCG and a further 12 on the outside looking in, plus my visits with various offshoots over the years and conversing with hundreds of people of a similar background via Internet forums, generating a large volume of mail in response to *JOURNAL* ads, etc., my perception is that spiritual growth is hindered by locked-in concrete attitudes.

Whether based on cherished assumptions, or possibly fear (Revelation 21:8) of potentially being deceived by considering alternatives to what is now believed as taught by a hierarchically

Or do they view themselves as rich and increased with spiritual goods, with no need to consider possible blindness in certain areas they have taken for granted are true and beyond question?

Oh, yes, many advocate holding onto the doctrines as established by Herbert Armstrong, but those advocates can’t even seem to agree among themselves on what those consist of, much less who should be in charge.

The scriptures relative to the second half of the above headline are probably not as well known as the ones cited concerning the first half, again because organizations are no more prone than individuals to considering scriptures that point out their faults. Yet correction of error is one of Scripture’s stated functions (2 Timothy 3:16).

Critical scrutiny

An interesting scripture at Zechariah 11:11 speaks of “sheep traders” or “traffickers in sheep,” depending on what translation you use.

Sadly, I think it could be argued that sheep trafficking is what the breakup of the WCG spiritual empire has degenerated into.

In fact, some believe verses 15-17 of that chapter identify the false or foolish shepherd as the very man some still

Church splits, but this time not a COG ministry or congregation

Continued from page 3

more than two dozen churches this year. Now parishioners from Boston to California are fighting back to prevent the dioceses from tapping the parishes as a source of cash. At stake are real estate, bank accounts and religious artwork valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars—not to mention a hierarchy’s frayed relationship with its flock.”

The article described how the general problems in the Catholic Church have affected the St. Louis area.

Ms. Sataline wrote: “Since 1990, the St. Louis diocese has closed about 60 parishes, including 25 this year, and listed 19 churches for sale. To date, the diocese has spent \$6.6 million on abuse settlements and counseling, and \$2.3 million on legal fees, says the diocese’s attorney, Bernie Huger.”

Governance issue?

The article quoted Msgr. John Shamleffer, the diocese canon lawyer, as saying the effort to bring St. Stans in line has never been about money.

“We don’t need their money,” he

says. “It’s about who has governance over the parish.”

Brief history

Ms. Sataline mentioned the timeline of the conflict.

■ Archbishop Burke arrived in St. Louis in January 2004.

■ In a letter dated March 19, 2004, he asked that St. Stans’ congregants comply with “the norm of church law” by relinquishing administration of all property and moneys.

“It is simply not right that a parish

longer a Roman Catholic Parish.”

■ In October 2004, dozens of parishioners accused board members of acting illegally and labeled them arrogant for ignoring the archbishop’s demands. Fifty to 75 of these critics left for another church. (The article mentioned that the present church has 450 people.)

■ On Nov. 11, 2004, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy sided with the archbishop, concluding that the parish was not complying with canon law.

The archbishop said he imposed the punishment ‘with the fervent and constant hope and prayer that you will be led to repentance and reparation.’

■ St. Stans’ leaders asked that the board be comprised of parishioners. The archbishop refused.

The archbishop said he would allow the pastor and six parishioners of his choice to serve as the board if he, the sole corporation member, had the final word.

The directors turned him down.

■ The board scheduled a vote in January 2005, asking the parish if it should cede the property and money to the archbishop. If the parishioners did not agree, the archbishop warned, “I will consider your refusal to be a final decision not to maintain a Roman Catholic parish.”

Defying him, a majority of parishioners voted not to relinquish the assets.

■ On Feb. 10, 2005, the archbishop placed the six board members

under interdict, a milder punishment than excommunication.

The archbishop said he imposed the punishment “with the fervent and constant hope and prayer that you will be led to repentance and reparation.”

■ In July the board agreed to hire

a full-time priest.

■ In November a Polish priest from the Springfield–Cape Girardeau diocese signed a contract to become St. Stans’ pastor.

■ On Friday, Dec. 16, Archbishop Burke wrote that board members committed the “ecclesiastical crime of schism” and “automatically incur the penalty of excommunication.” The same went for the new priest.

Ms. Sataline describes Mr. Bialczek saying that, if St. Stans gets drummed out of the Catholic Church, it will become independent.

“When this priest comes here and we start having Mass and communion, I’ll have it from him,” he says. “He’s still a man of God.”

Final thoughts

I suppose this article will help church leaders feel justified in taking action against those who do not want to follow the authority of the hierarchy.

But maybe this article will also help those who have been disfellowshipped to realize that there is life after excommunication.

Former WCG member recommends looking on the bright side

Continued from page 1

“I was smoking a cigarette and I heard this man’s voice. It wasn’t what he said. In fact, I don’t remember what he was saying. It was the way he said it that stopped me.

“That was in 1952. By 1954 I was baptized and came out [to Big Sandy] for my first Feast in 1955.”

Feast memories

At the Feast every year Mr. Lain and some friends—including the late Bob Trull and Kelly Barfield, who now, with his wife, Vinita, operates Barfield Antique Gallery in Big Sandy—started a club.

“We used to have what was known as the 2:10 Club during the festivals,” Mr. Lain said. “That was about the only time we got to socialize, because some of us, like me, lived a thousand miles away from the nearest church.

“We were all young and full of vinegar, like a pack of wolves.

“About the only thing they had [on the festival grounds] was the old booths, and we camped out in tents, and it would rain and some of the tents would leak, but we never complained.

“Well, the old redwood building at that time was not even finished. The wind would blow in. Rain would puddle in the floor. We would sit with jackets on. Mr. Armstrong would preach with an overcoat on to stay warm.

“I like to look back at the good times, and those were the good times.”

Out to Pasadena

In 1959, after about seven years of tuning pianos in Georgia, Mr. Lain traveled west to Pasadena, the location of the headquarters of the Radio Church of God and the church-sponsored Ambassador College, both founded by Mr. Armstrong.

He immediately renewed an acquaintance. At the Feast in Big Sandy in 1956 or 1957, he had met Ina Lou Grabbe, who was a student at AC from Silverton, Texas.

Mr. Lain found himself enjoying Miss Grabbe’s company. The problem was that she was dating another college student, and Mr. Lain, gentleman that he was, didn’t feel free to interfere with that budding romance.

“But in 1959 I decided something had to be settled,” he said, “so I went out to California and wound up getting engaged.”

He continued in Georgia making piano owners happy for another year, and in 1960 he moved to Pasadena, intent on marrying Miss Grabbe, a senior at AC.

But the marriage had to be postponed for a few months because of unforeseen circumstances.

“I got hit by a car while trying to cross Colorado Boulevard by Suicide Bridge [the Arroyo Seco Bridge, next to the college campus]. I had a seein’-eye dog. The driver saw the dog but didn’t see me, probably because it was around midnight.”

Mr. Lain wound up in the county hospital with some broken bones. The marriage did eventually take place, in January 1961.

“We built our own piano-tuning-and-repair business there in Pasa-

dena,” he said. “Ina quit her job at the college so she could drive for me. She was a librarian.”

While working in the family business, he began, in 1968, taking classes at Pasadena City College.

“My major was to have been in archaeology and anthropology, and I attended at PCC for one year.”

Mr. Lain cut his college education short, he said, on the advice of a Radio Church of God minister who visited the Lains’ home.

“I was doing fine,” said Mr. Lain, “but the minister looked around and saw that, well, the rug needed vacuuming, and he found out I was working and going to college and taking about 14 hours, and the idea was that, well, your wife needs to be home and keeping house rather than reading to you and driving you around while you go to college.

“So consequently I dropped out.

“I tell you, Ina Lou was fit to be tied. She was a very strong-willed person. She was furious because I quit.

“I quit, frankly, because of the authoritarianism in the church. We always figured the ministers automatically knew what was right.”

Self-taught Hebrew

Mr. Lain got back into school a few years later, in 1974. He took classes in his areas of interest and taught himself other subjects, including Hebrew. But 1974, as many Church of God members will remember, was one of the many tumultuous times in the Worldwide Church of God.

(See, for example, “Ken Westby Talks About the ‘East Coast Rebellion’ of 1974,” *THE JOURNAL*, Jan. 30, 1998.)

“In 1974 things were so bad [in the church] that I just thought maybe my taking classes was a mistake,” he said.

Looking back with his customary mischievous smile, Mr. Lain says one of the worst things church members can do is blame others for any circumstances in their life they are unhappy with.

“So we pulled up stakes and moved to West Texas.”

Cattle can affect piano tuning

Starting over in West Texas, in Mrs. Lain’s home area in Silverton, didn’t immediately work out as well as Mr. Lain had hoped.

“We went from the sublime to the ridiculous,” he said. “We started over in the piano-tuning business. We did fine for a while, but then the bottom fell out of the local cattle market, which caused the bottom to fall out of my business, and I was broke again.”

So eventually, in 1977, Mr. Lain—and by then the family had four children—went back to college, this time West Texas State University, in the Texas Panhandle town of Canyon.

He did well in school, even making the dean’s list with a 4.0 grade average in the 1977-78 school year.

In those days, the Lains would travel in their Ford camper van all over the country on their expeditions to visit interesting archaeological sites, while making a living by carefully raising the pitch of pianos along the way.



AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGY—Ed Lain (*left*) visits with Tom Collins of Denton, Texas, at the Friends Reunion in Big Sandy. For another photo of Mr. Lain, see page 1. [Photo by Dixon Cartwright]

Mr. Lain tuned the piano belonging to this writer several times during the ’70s when he and Ina Lou and their kids would pass through Big Sandy on their many cross-country journeys.

Bad news

But times got harder again for the Lains in 1977 when Mrs. Lain was diagnosed with cancer.

“The last trip we took was down to Glen Rose [Texas] to check out those tracks [supposed footprints of prehistoric human beings]. Ina Lou was getting pretty weak. She passed away in August of ’78.

“I had four children to rear. With the emotions of losing my wife, and the problems in the church, I made it

Thanks to the Biggses “I could sit around in the sunshine and read and go to sleep, and the heart had pretty well healed after six months, although the experience left me a little short-winded.”

After his recovery Mr. Lain and the Biggses moved out to California. The Biggses later moved back to Big Sandy. Mr. Lain still calls California home.

Archaeological collaboration

Mr. Lain has written several articles on archaeological subjects, sometimes in collaboration with his friend Bob Gentet, a former WCG minister who lives in San Antonio, Texas.

“I’ve been on five archaeological

digs in two states,” Mr. Lain said. “Bob and I have always been close since I met him at the Feast in Squaw Valley, Calif., in 1963, because he was interested in science, and my field was science. Piano tuning was my way of making a living; my interest was science.

“Bob and I have collaborated on three articles.”

One article was about the “Calaveras skull” [near Angels Camp, Calif.], another was about the “Nampa image up in Idaho,” another was about the “Freisenhan cave,” near San Antonio.

“I had articles published, including three in *The Journal of the Creation Research Society*.

“I have a computer, so I do research, and I still go to see Bob. Usually we’ll go have a field trip somewhere.”

In California, Mr. Lain lives in Yreka and is active in Toastmasters International and the Siskiyou Writers’ Club and for 10 years has taught a weekly adult Sunday-school class.

One of Mr. Lain’s favorite speeches

at Toastmasters and elsewhere is “Refuting the Theory of Evolution in Only Seven Minutes,” in which he talks about the overwhelming odds against natural selection being able to get the first amino acid right.

“The chances of taking 100 amino acids and getting them right the first time, in the exact order, is 10 to the 130th power, 1 followed by 130 zeros,” he said.

“But, even suppose you get it right, you’ve got only one protein molecule; you have no life. The hypothetical primordial ocean would fall apart the very next instant . . . Your chances are absolutely nil.

“Besides, the fossil record does not support evolution.”

Don’t blame me

Looking back with his customary mischievous smile, Mr. Lain says one of the worst things Church of God members can do is blame others for any circumstances in their life they are unhappy with. The example he gives involves Herbert Armstrong.

“So many people are bitter,” he said. “They look back and they want to blame Mr. Armstrong for everything.

“But nobody forced me into the Radio Church of God in 1952. If it hadn’t been for that experience, I don’t know where I would be, and I do not regret it. If I had to go back, I’d do it all over again.

“I learned a lot. I’ve got an awful lot of friends. I got a wonderful wife out of it. I have gained an awful lot of Bible knowledge.

“Whoever the author of Hebrews was said to not let a root of bitterness spring up.”

At least once in his life Mr. Lain didn’t have such an easygoing attitude about things.

“Yeah, I went through a time when my wife died. For about five years I drank heavily. I literally told God to get out of my life, leave me alone.

“And He just sat back and said, ‘Okay, I’ll wait,’ and finally I reached a point where I said, ‘Okay, I need help.’

“The point is that I know God exists, I know He has pulled me out of the depths of despair, and I know what it is to have that peace that passes understanding.”

Mr. Lain advises doing positive things, thinking positive thoughts.

“Even psychology will tell you that. Paul said whatsoever is good, think about these things. If you think negatively, it can affect your health, certainly your attitude.

“And how in the world can you help other people walking around with a chip on your shoulder?”

Meet the family

Mr. Lain’s children are Sarah Elizabeth Lain of Sunnyside, Wash., born in 1965; Warner Ernest Lain, also of Sunnyside, born in 1967; Steven Edward Lain of Connecticut, born in 1973; and Daniel Roy Dean Lain, Winachi, Wash., born in 1975.

Mr. Lain receives mail at edlain@sbcglobal.net and 885 Sierra Vista Dr., Apt. 310, Yreka, Calif. 96097, U.S.A.

More letters from our readers

Continued from page 2

tion or birth of God’s Son, Jesus the Christ, as Paul states in Romans 1:3-4.

Thus, in a symbolic way, Christmas is the birth of the Christ.

If I were Satan, I would not be happy with Christmas. I’d be backing the ACLU. For those who sincerely observe it, I hope you had a wonderful Christmas.

I know, I know. Some of you are wishing I’d go to where the sun don’t shine.

John Sash
Eldon, Mo.

Correction

Re “UCG Announces Several Changes in Church’s Ministerial Personnel,” September-October issue, page 1:

I think you need to recheck your information on Dave Register taking over the pastoral responsibilities in Pittsburgh and Wheeling. My understanding is that he will be in the home office [of the United Church of God]. Don Henson is losing the Meadville, Pa., congregation from his present circuit but will still be responsible for Wheeling and Pittsburgh.

Name and location withheld

The letter writer is correct. THE JOURNAL inadvertently conflated the information for Dave Register and Don Henson in the list as printed. The information has been corrected in the version posted at THE JOURNAL’s Web site (www.thejournal.org).

A banished one

I am a prisoner of the Lord kept out by UCG for 72 months, cast out on false charges. My prison is not a jail but a pit every Sabbath (Matthew 12:11) in which I wait for deliverance. Though one draws his beast out of a pit, yet my brethren refuse to do it for

me, for no man cares for my soul (Psalm 142:4).

Still, the Lord says, “Tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17).

Therefore remember my bonds for I am a banished one (Isaiah 66:5). I am that which has been driven away (Ezekiel 34:4). I am that which is wandering through hills and mountains (verse 6). I am that for which no one is searching (verse 6). I am prey for the beasts of the field (verse 8). I feed in dry pasture (verse 14). I eat what others have trodden on. I drink what others have befouled (verse 19). I am the lean and emaciated cattle

(verse 20). I wait to come back to my fold (Jeremiah 23:3).

Ned Dancuo
Stoney Creek, Ont., Canada

Carrying doggereledly on

He’s been gone now in years near a score;
He was rich but his heirs now are poor.
Had he been less dogmatic—
Not quite so theocratic—
Then his legacy could have meant more.

Reg Killingley
Big Sandy, Texas

A time is coming of the disappearance of outward appearance

Continued from page 3
encourage you to seek medical treatment?

If you happen to be fat, as am I at the moment, this is not encouraging news. But those of us who have experienced tonnage increases as we've grown older know what it's like to experience fatism firsthand.

Land of opportunity

It isn't just being fat that invites disapproval. You can be rejected for being too thin, too tall, too short, bald, black, female, middle-aged, old or ugly. America is an equal-opportunity discriminator.

Americans want to look at beautiful people on television, in movies and in the workplace.

A beautiful person is, by definition, wafer thin, well-groomed, well dressed in the hippest possible clothes and startlingly good-looking. The farther a person moves from that image, the less love he gets, the more doors slam in his face.

A handsome actor can slip from leading-man roles to character-actor roles in a matter of a few years—once he loses his looks.

Note, for example, Burt Reynolds. (Actually, character roles can be more fun and meatier for actors. They just don't pay as well.)

Culture dictates

The idea that we have to conform to a certain physical image to be approved is a culturally imposed phenomenon. In other cultures fatness is encouraged and even celebrated.

I can remember serving in a congregation in Canada that was approximately 70 percent German. Whenever we'd be assigned a lean ministerial assistant for the summer, the German women would try to fatten him up with tortes and other goodies.

In Germany, in those days, fat was viewed as a symbol of prosperity and success. The German women didn't want their men to look emaciated.

In Cameroon, Niger, the Middle East, the Marshall Islands and various places in Africa and India, fat is where it's at.

Writes Mr. Oliver: "Although Western television images, global marketing, and improved standards of living are beginning to change these perceptions, most of the world continues to celebrate physical largess" (p. 62).

Hollyweird's influence

Much of our image consciousness is driven by Hollyweird, and by advertising. We are conditioned to believe that certain physical images are associated with character deficiencies like laziness, lack of willpower or just plain malevolence.

The fat person in the movies is often cast as an evil, self-indulgent, gourmandizing, wine-quaffing slob who will stop at nothing to get what he wants (remember Victor Buono?).

Or the fatties are cast as stumbling domestics who frequently drop or bang into things, arousing the ire of all assembled.

The beautiful, slim young woman gets the handsome man, the money and the power, while the fat woman is relegated to the depressing backwaters of life.

As we get older, we tend to lose whatever looks we had when we were young. As our metabolisms slow, our weight creeps up. Our hair thins or falls out; our skin dries up, creating wrinkles.

Short people get shorter and tall people stoop. Eyesight fails and we have to don glasses. For many, illness sets in.

Support system or support hose?

As our conditions deteriorate, our support system of friends and relatives edges incrementally away. We are no longer attractive to look at, and we have become high-maintenance.

As age and stress take their toll, our world shrinks. We are driven back down the hierarchy of needs to the

level of basic survival. We are no longer in demand, no longer viable, no longer able to bring in the bacon (beef or turkey, of course).

Junk-mail ageism

As we age, we notice the complexion of our junk mail changing. We start getting mailings from the Neptune Society and various HMOs that want to capture our Medicare premium dollars.

We are encouraged to buy burial plots and mobility scooters and ask our doctors if this or that medicine is right for us.

Churches and other charities encourage us to name them in our wills.

At some point we find that the only thing anyone is interested in is capturing as much as possible of whatever pile of money we may be sitting on, even if *our* survival depends on it.

What friends, relatives and marketers don't get, the government will extract in the form of its death tax, the final insult!

Bottom of the barrel

The progressive discounting of the worth of the individual in our annoyingly superficial, image-conscious, society can have the devastating effect of making one feel unloved, unappreciated and uncared for.

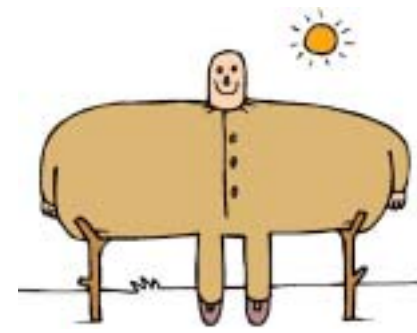
The less we conform to the ideal image of the beautiful person, the more our worth as a person is discounted by employers, the medical profession, marketers, husbands, wives, children and other relatives. Even fair-weather friends may blow away when they find we've become too high-maintenance.

American life is all about image, demographics, money, power and establishments. We the people are a manipulated mass whose major worth

pass away, but the man who does the will of the Father lives forever."

John 3:13: "Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you."

1 Timothy 6:6-7: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."



Luke 12:15: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions."

1 Samuel 16:7: "... The LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his [Eliab's] appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.' "

The heart of the matter

That last quoted verse seems to sum it up. God is not concerned with our height, or lack of it, our appearance, skin color, weight, financial stature, the size of our home, the number of cars we own, the opulence of our wardrobe, our jewelry, our prettiness or ugliness, or our status in society. Rather, He looks at our heart. He wants to see what kind of people we are inside, not on the outside.

A beautiful person is, by definition, wafer thin, well-groomed, well dressed in the hippest possible clothes and startlingly good-looking.

If a person had won the Nobel Prize in science, yet was an immoral, mean-spirited individual, the prize would mean nothing.

Human accomplishment seems to mean little to God. Our outward appearance means even less. What matters to Him is the state of our inner man or woman.

So what if you're fat, frumpy and lacking in sex appeal? Do you think that matters with God?

What matters is a good heart and the good works that flow from it. What matters is our love, kindness, gentleness, willingness to forgive, faith, goodness, mercy and similar qualities.

Some of the most spiritual people dwell in the most unappealing bodies, while some of the most beautiful people have hearts as dark and empty as the bottomless pit.

Who should pray for you?

Let's look at it another way. If you were sick, whom would you rather pray for you: a homely person full of faith or a beautiful person devoid of faith?

Which best represents the Kingdom of God: material wealth and beauty, or godliness and mercy?

It is natural to defer to the beautiful people, to honor them above others. That's a human thing to do. Some churches parade celebrity Christians before TV cameras to boost their own appeal. They seat them in the front row so all can view them as pastoral trophies.

A frump full of faith

James offers a correction to that mentality (2:1-4):

"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby

clothes comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

James then writes: "Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor ..." (verses 5-6).

It should be clear by now that God is concerned with our inner, not outer, qualities. A frump full of faith is better to God than a wealthy, status-hungry, slim, cosmetically beautiful, preening peacock with a "power do" who is no more spiritual than Saddam Hussein on a bad-hair day.

God loves us individually

Perhaps the most important thought of all is that God loves each of us personally. Each of us, no matter our age, color, poverty or appearance, is a cherished child of the living God. God not only loved the world in general enough to sacrifice His Son for it (John 3:16); He loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8).

To rule Israel, God picked a young, short youth named David over his taller, more-impressive-looking brothers. He used a bald-headed prophet (2 Kings 2:23) to speak on His behalf to Israel.

Mary Magdalene, once possessed of seven demons (Mark 16:9), became a part of Jesus' personal entourage.

God raised from the dead a seamstress named Dorcas who had sewn garments for needy Christians (Acts 9:36).

Jesus paid attention to a short man in a tree (Luke 19:1). His name was Zacchaeus and he was a tax-collector. In those days tax-collecting was a despised profession of the lowest social status.

One of the original prophets or teachers in the church at Antioch was a black man named Niger (Acts 13:1). It is quite possible that a woman named Junia, a relative of Paul's, was numbered among the apostles (Romans 16:7).

Heinz 57 accepted

Jesus Christ has received into His body, the church, all kinds of people of all backgrounds, sizes, shapes and descriptions. Paul lists the kind of people who made up the congregation at Corinth: They were "neither sexually immoral or idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy or drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Note the past tense, "were." They had repented of these things and were now "washed" (verse 11).

The point is: God received them, warts and all. Their background in sin meant nothing to Him. What mattered was that they were willing to clean up their acts and get right with God at the level of the inner man. They had been "transformed by the renewing of their minds" (see also Romans 12:1-2).

We are on this planet for but a brief moment. Our lives are mere vapors, transient puffs of ephemeral smoke in the vastness of time and space.

The greatest human accomplishments are dwarfed by the enormity of the context in which we accomplish them. The bodies we have are tabernacles: temporary dwelling places to be discarded after we are finished with them.

Like a change of clothes

At some point we will be "gathered to our fathers" and our bodies lain aside like garments no longer needed.

No matter how fat, skinny, short, tall or grotesque our bodies might be in this life, those bodies will be replaced with a "glorious body" like the glorified body of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

In the world to come, we will no longer be discriminated against because of our appearance, our poverty, our illness, our lack of social status, our race or ethnicity, our height, our glasses, our wheelchairs, our deformities, the kind of car we drive, the size or neighborhood of the house we live in, our looks or even our Christian faith.

We'll have new bodies, new outlooks and new destinies. The sufferings of this sorrowful world will have passed into eternity. Cancer will never again ravage the bodies of hapless victims. Heart trouble and diabetes will be mere memories. The searing pain of migraines, osteoporosis, arthritis and rheumatism will be over and forgotten. Damaged brains and crippled bodies will be no more.

Like cottage cheese

Fat, frumpy bodies with jiggling, cottage-cheese-like cellulite will be replaced with glorious new bodies that will last forever and be a joy both to behold and to live in.

To borrow a line from the Marines, we'll be all that we can be.

John wrote of this glorious future in Revelation: "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Now the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'" (Revelation 21:3-4).

The tears of humiliation, loneliness, rejection and embarrassment will be wiped away, never to appear again. The old order—this one—will be no more. A glorious new order will be brought into being.

"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true'" (Revelation 21:5).

Note the word *everything*! I believe those words. I look forward to their fulfillment.

Stinky world

This stinky world, with its humiliations, its hatreds, its destructive evils and those who perpetrate them, will be a thing of mankind's dark developmental past. The Lord told John that "the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Point is, take courage, have hope; for this ugly, painful world order is on its last legs. It's not forever. It has failed, and it is failing.

Yet out of it God is building a new and glorious kingdom. The new order will bury the old.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes [clean up their acts], that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

Those unrepentant dogs who have made the world the ugly, painful place that it is will have no place in the world to come. Of them Christ says, "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers [i.e., terrorists], the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Revelation 22:15).

With evil gone, and the righteous rewarded, peace will break out and the world will be full of the joy of the Lord. No one in the new world will be ashamed of his or her body. We will share in the glory and wealth of our Lord.

God hasten that wonderful day!

Having unity means learning to live with each other’s doctrines

Continued from page 3

than the gospel revealed by Jesus Christ.”

Mr. Cole agrees with Paul on the need to “preach Christ.”

However, determining who is doing the best job of preaching Christ “is not up to me to decide,” he said. “I don’t worry about that. I don’t worry about who’s preaching the true gospel and who isn’t.”

Rather, “I worry about what I accept and what I don’t . . . It isn’t my business to be overly concerned about every other group that I may or may not wish to identify with.”

He also quoted from Philippians 1 beginning with verse 15, where Paul says he is happy that “Christ is preached” even when He is not perfectly preached.

Groups and individuals who preach sermons Mr. Cole does not agree with are still “preaching Christ,” he said. Even though some of those groups may have “questionable motives,” assume “questionable authority” and even come up with “dubious reasons” for saying what they say, “the fact remains that Christ is being preached, and that fact makes me very happy.”

Mr. Cole said he does not mean to say that people should not have strong convictions.

He is saying, however, that “everyone must be persuaded in his or her own mind about matters of fellowship, about matters of where you can be most encouraged, uplifted, empowered, inspired and blessed, by your fellowship and your meeting together, your assembly before God.”

Mr. Cole did mention that there are groups and individuals among the many COG splits he prefers not to fellowship with. He referred to those while quoting from Matthew 23’s verses concerning scribes, Pharisees and hypocrites.

“I’m not going to name any names,” Mr. Cole said, “and I don’t know that I fully, 100 percent, could identify anybody in this day and age as falling into those categories. But I can tell you this: that any group that wants to scour this world to make converts and to

Agreement and disagreement over doctrine, even important doctrine, are not as important as he once thought they were, Mr. Cole said.

“All it means is we may both have a lot of growing to do . . . But we can respect each other.”

The Churches of God of Mr. Cole’s experience “have been and are very good at focusing on issues that divide rather than on issues that unite,” he said. “We truly really know how to be critical of each other.”

Can’t strong convictions and toler-

Agreement and disagreement over doctrine, even important doctrine, are not as important as he once thought they were, Mr. Cole said.

exercise dominion and undue control, those people come dangerously close” to emulating the Pharisees and hypocrites of Matthew 23.

A uniter, not a divider

“I would like to be a uniter, not a divider, among the Churches of God,” Mr. Cole continued.

He gave as a good example of a uniter a friend of his, Whaid Rose of Denver, Colo., president of the Church of God (Seventh Day) denomination that is headquartered in Denver.

“Do we [Mr. Rose and Mr. Cole] agree about everything? We certainly don’t. Are there fundamental areas in our beliefs where we differ?

“Yes, but so what? Does that mean I’m right and they [the CG7] are wrong?”

ance peacefully coexist? Mr. Cole asked.

“Is it not possible to be firm in personal conviction without the requirement to be critical—yea, even hostile—to others of differing persuasions?

“ . . . I submit that the Scripture tells us that that’s the way it should be.”

Mr. Cole said the subject of tolerance intrigues him because of his own background and the evolution of his attitudes toward church practices and teachings.

Seven proofs of 1975

“Primarily this sermon is an outgrowth of my own personal readings,” he said.

“Every day I try to read a little bit of the Bible . . .” but “in the past I have

been one pretty given to dogmatism.”

In 1970, he said, while he served as regional director for Australia for the Worldwide Church God, Mr. Cole spoke “very dogmatically” during sermons at the Feast of Tabernacles in Blackheath, in New South Wales.

“I was very dogmatic . . . about the end of the age coming in 1972 and that Jesus Christ may indeed return to this earth in 1975,” he said. “I gave seven proofs that that’s the way it was going to be.

“The only thing that was wrong

with it was that it was all wrong. It just didn’t happen. None of it.”

Mr. Cole talked about a church member in Australia who had read the WCG’s booklet *1975 in Prophecy* and as a result shut down a successful business and moved all the way across the island continent to be near the church’s Australian headquarters while waiting for the end of the age.

When 1975 came and went and Jesus did not return, the church member “was highly disappointed, chagrined, disenchanted and hurt when he realized that that was an error,” Mr. Cole said.

The learning never stops

Mr. Cole talked in generalities for much of the sermon: Be tolerant.

Don’t let your dogmatism run away with you. Don’t shun people because they don’t agree with everything you believe.

But he also gave specifics. He spoke of variations of belief and practices including disagreements over whether there is “one God vs. more than one member of the Godhead or the God family,” “calendar issues, matters of divine healing, matters of Sabbath observance” and “holy days” and “the keeping of them,” “clean and unclean meats, tithing” and “many other subjects.”

“I don’t care what subject you put on the list,” he continued. “. . . It is only love that can make [a person] grow to his full stature, for, whatever a man may know, he still has a lot to learn.”

Mr. Cole drew his conclusion: “Be convicted. Be persuaded. Study. Be fully persuaded in your own mind. Be able to give a defense if anyone should ask the question of why you do what you do.”

But also bear in mind that everyone’s knowledge, including yours, “is not perfect knowledge.”

He said he doesn’t advise that you “water down what you believe; we’re not talking about being wishy-washy and having no convictions . . . No, we’re talking about tolerance and respect for each other . . .

“I’m not preaching to you that we shouldn’t be firm in what we believe . . . But let us also understand that others will be as firm as we are” and can come to “a different conclusion.”

But wasn’t Herbert Armstrong baptized by a Baptist minister?

Continued from page 3

48; Romans 1:18-32).

Someone has to know God in order to be saved (John 4:22, 24; 1 John 2:21-27). When proclaiming the truth of God to total pagans in Athens, Paul said God wanted everyone to repent: “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that *all everywhere should repent*, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to *all* [not just some, English Standard Version] men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

God will hear

Consider the main weight of the statement of the man born blind, but healed by Jesus, when replying to his questioners (John 9:31): “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.”

Obviously, someone who is unsaved, but is repenting after being called, God will hear and give him salvation.

Undoubtedly God has been merciful and helps uncalled people in the world who know some of the truth by answering various requests they make. After all, He gives rain to the both the righteous and unrighteous out of a sense of mercy and love (Matthew 5:44-45), even if they may lack the requisite faith and obedience for answered prayer (James 1:6-8; 4:2-3; Mark 11:23-24; 1 John 3:22).

But it’s quite a stretch then to assume God will give the Holy Spirit to those who have knowingly chosen a course in life that systematically and deliberately disobeys various major laws of His.

What about rebaptizing?

True Christians may routinely fellowship with “tares” after they were baptized and received the laying on of hands for the Holy Spirit, and even wash their feet at the Passover, but the tares still aren’t saved.

Does Scripture ever recognize the practice of rebaptizing people?

Notice that John’s baptism wasn’t enough for salvation, according to Paul: “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus” (Acts 19:4).

After hearing this, these people were then baptized in the name of Jesus (verse 5), for they hadn’t known enough the first time they were baptized to be deemed saved by God by it.

So God gave them the Holy Spirit via Paul’s laying on of hands (verse 6).

Not just anyone can be used to give others the Holy Spirit, as Simon the Sorcerer perceived. After Phillip had baptized people in Samaria, Peter and John had to be sent up to give the people the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:12, 14-17).

Besides the initial spectacular miracles in which the outpouring of the Spirit was used to start the Church of

Even if they were just ignorant of these laws, that doesn’t appear to be enough of an excuse to allow them to be saved. If God is truly working with people, He will lead them to greater and greater levels of truth if they humbly accept correction at each level, which means He wouldn’t leave truly called people permanently in Sunday-keeping, nonpacifist churches anyway.

Further, can we honestly believe that churches that allow their members to hate and kill fellow Christians or other people on the battlefield are true Churches of God?

Did not John write (1 John 3:15; see also 2:9-11; 4:20-21): “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”?

Can men who kill other men in war really claim to love their neighbor as themselves, to be practicing the Gold-

Not just anyone can be used to give others the Holy Spirit. After Phillip baptized people in Samaria, Peter and John had to go up to give the people the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12, 14-17).

God with a bang (Acts 2:1-4, 16-18), and which showed a special blessing was upon the first gentiles to come into the church (Acts 10:44-47; 11:16-18), the normal way the Holy Spirit was given was by the laying on of hands (Acts 9:17; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

So then the question: How many Sunday-keepers today were baptized by immersion at a responsible age (say, age 17 or older)? How many underwent the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit after baptism? How many lived a committed, responsible Christian life after being baptized?

Obviously, all those sprinkled as infants or even dunked as young children need to be eliminated as having become saved. But, again, can people who deliberately violate God’s law as a matter of policy, not just momentary physical weakness followed by repentance, be saved?

en Rule, to be turning the other cheek?

The mind boggles at the mental leaps and twists required. Just because a human government allows or orders Christians to go off and kill total strangers who live hundreds or thousands of miles away doesn’t mean such killing is without sin (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

Interesting arguments

Interesting counterarguments to the above reasonings can be presented from the life of Herbert Armstrong, the spiritual teacher God used to assemble His truth together for the Church of God during these end times before His Son returns, and to proclaim publicly a non-Trinitarian Christian Sabbatarianism to more people than anyone else has since the first century

After having been raised a Quaker, part of the Friends denomination, which doesn’t practice water baptism, Mr. Armstrong was baptized by a Baptist minister.

Mr. Armstrong also had a most interesting encounter with a Sunday-keeper who was used by God to heal Mr. Armstrong’s wife, Loma.

The Sunday-keeper lost the gift of healing after later rejecting the Sabbath truth Mr. Armstrong revealed to him (*Autobiography*, Vol. 1, pp. 315, 319, 326-331, 340-344).

But here we’re faced with an interesting issue: How much should we use history and/or personal spiritual experience and/or others’ spiritual experiences to determine doctrines as a matter of theological epistemology?

We need to be cautious about doing so. For example, someone could argue that one can’t trace, using extant historical records, a holy-day- and festival-keeping set of Christians down through all the centuries since A.D. 100.

Therefore, someone may conclude God doesn’t require the festivals as

what Scripture reveals to us.

Therefore, although God has directly answered the prayers of Sunday-keepers, according to various stories I’m aware of, that doesn’t prove decisively that they had the Holy Spirit and were saved.

Rebaptism required

We should require the rebaptism of all people whom God is calling from churches that didn’t keep the Sabbath and holy days, and which allow their membership to serve as armed combatants in wars (or as police officers).

A spiritual line based on biblical standards has to be drawn somewhere between Christians and non-Christians; we can’t just accept as “brothers” and “sisters” all those who wish to label themselves “Christian.”

This process inevitably involves Sabbatarian Christians exercising some level of spiritual judgment based upon others’ outward behavior (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-13; 6:1-11; John 7:24) and beliefs, not just accepting others’ proclamations about their inward faith.

Just because many Sunday-keepers have done good works or made impressive sacrifices in serving God in one way or another, including even dying as martyrs and serving as missionaries in primitive, hostile lands, or obeyed various commandments or biblical principles better than called Sabbath-keepers, that doesn’t prove they are saved.

A number of these people, who ridiculed literal obedience to the Fourth Commandment as legalism even as they obeyed other Commandments literally themselves, may well find these verses applying to them (Matthew 7:21-23):

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

AW's creator puts Web site out to pasture

After five years on the Web, the Ambassador Watch Web site, earlier known as The Missing Dimension, has been “put out to pasture,” says its creator and operator, Gavin Rumney.

The upkeep of the site, at www.ambassadorwatch.co.nz, which took a highly skeptical approach to much that goes on in the various Churches of God, was “hugely time-consuming,” Mr. Rumney told *THE JOURNAL* Dec. 20.

“Twenty hours a week was the bare minimum to keep it rolling over,” he said, “and requests for information and resulting workload was becoming



Gavin Rumney

the issues of accountability in the various churches—both financial and structural—could be aired. After five years I felt that there wasn’t much else to add to that basic message and that it

unmanageable.”

Mr. Rumney, a former Worldwide Church of God member who lives in the Auckland, New Zealand, area, said that, from the beginning, “I wanted to create a place where the issues of accountability in the various churches—both financial and structural—could be aired. After five years I felt that there wasn’t much else to add to that basic message and that it

was time to move on.”

A Church of God member and AW fan, Reg Killingley of Big Sandy, Texas, said that “to call AW irreplaceable is not an exaggeration. We will doubtless muddle through but will sorely miss the good friend that AW had become under Gavin’s inspired, inimitable and indomitable editorship.

“AW did much good. I believe Gavin helped many people—far more than he may ever realize. He deserves our profound thanks for the long hours of work and the financial sacrifice the site represented . . .

“He deserves a break—and our deepest respect and gratitude.”

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Notes and quotes

COG money

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich.—Webmaster Alan Ruth announces that *THE JOURNAL*’s Web site (www.thejournal.org) is posting information on yearly tax returns for several Church of God ministries and other organizations.

THE JOURNAL’s newest section contains financial information, gleaned from free, publicly available sources, for several tax-exempt COG-related outreaches and two of the three biggest Churches of God.

To view the information go to www.thejournal.org/cogmoney.html. See links to data from Ambassador University, the Bible Sabbath Association, Christian Educational Ministries, the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association, LifeNets Ministries, the Living Church of God, Giving & Sharing, the Church of God an International Community, and others.

ACD seminar set for Atlanta

AUBURN, Wash.—Kenneth Westby urges you to mark your calendar so you won’t miss his One God Seminars set for May 19-21, 2006.

The fifth annual seminar series, to discuss and debate the nature of God and Jesus, is scheduled for Atlanta, Ga.

“This Southeast America location will make our seminars accessible to probably the largest group of interested people yet,” Mr. Westby said.

Mr. Westby and his Association for Christian Development are soliciting ideas for specific topics and new presenters, including “an articulate opposition speaker” who would argue against the “unitarian” view.

For more information, visit www.godward.org or write Mr. Westby at westby@godward.org.

Vessels of mercy

WEST BROMWICH, England—Tom Mahon has a new Church of God–related Web site at www.thevesselsofmercy.com.

“It does not represent a new church,” Mr. Mahon told *THE JOURNAL*. The site is “still under construction, but it is up and running.”

Wedding invitation

BIG SANDY, Texas—You’re invited to a wedding. Jamie Melinda Cartwright, daughter of Dixon and Linda Cartwright of Big Sandy, and Robert Austin Payne, son of Jeff and Kathy Payne of Beaumont, Texas, plan to marry Sunday, Feb. 5.

The ceremony will take place at 2 p.m. in the building owned by the Church of God Big Sandy with the bride’s “papaw,” Ellis Stewart, also of Big Sandy, conducting the ceremony.

Help Mrs. McClure

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—Mark Carr of Return to Torah Ministries (affiliated with the 7th Day Church of God) told *THE JOURNAL* recently about a project he and

fellow ministry members have tackled: to raise \$1,200 to move a donated mobile home to help Judith McClure of Metropolis, Ill.

Mrs. McClure, 68, was living in a 36-year-old dilapidated, moldy, unsafe trailer house.

Since Mrs. McClure’s husband, Darrell, died unexpectedly 10 years ago, she has not had the means to keep up her property while working as a caretaker for other people in their residences.

Return to Torah acquired a donated replacement mobile home for Mrs. McClure and needs about \$1,100 to move it to her location.

To help Mrs. McClure, who presently lives in a 10-by-10-foot area of her old trailer next to a gas heater to keep her warm, write Return to Torah Ministries at P.O. Box 70635, Knoxville, Tenn. 37938, U.S.A., or write Mr. Carr at mcarr@returntorah.com. Or call (865) 922-5420.

“We seek to minister to the windows, orphans, to the elderly and those who have a pure love for God and His Son Jesus in their heart,” according to a statement on the ministry’s Web site.

Donations to Return to Torah are tax-deductible in the United States.

Prayer requests

BISMARCK, N.D.—To read and send in prayer requests, ask questions and read answers about the Bible and learn about new archaeological discoveries, visit Darwin and Laura Lee’s Web site, at <http://darwinlauralee.com>.

The Lees’ site, which welcomes “the entire world,” even has pleasant background music.

Friends of the Sabbath British Isles

ABBEYDALE, England—Robert Taylor invites everyone to the Friends of the Sabbath British Isles’ Web site and to the Friends’ international conference Sunday and Monday, May 28-29. Mr. Taylor said guest speakers will include Seventh-day Adventist scholar and writer Samuele Bacchiocchi of Berrien Springs, Mich.

For more information visit www.friendsofsabbath.org.uk or write Friends of the Sabbath British Isles, c/o BSAUK, P.O. Box 2086, Abbeydale, Gloucester, U.K. GL4 4WD.

WCG news

PASADENA, Calif.—An article in the November-December issue of *WCG Today*, the Worldwide Church of God’s member newsletter, announced that Matthew Morgan has taken over the duties of the recently retired Ron Kelly as controller.

An article by Mr. Morgan also mentioned progress on the church’s move to a new headquarters building in Glendora, east of Pasadena.

“Most interior demolition and earthquake retrofitting is complete,” he said, and “plans are in place to begin the task of remodeling.”

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Time-sensitive material