

The Journal

News of the Churches of God

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2008 One God Seminars host Trinity-Unity debate

By Dixon Cartwright
SEATTLE, Wash.—Ken Westby's conferences are known for sparking debates. But this time the One God Seminars included on their agenda a formal disputation between a Trinitarian and a unitarian.

Two young men—Sean Finnegan for the Jesus-is-not-God side and Brant Bosserman arguing on behalf of the believers of one God in three persons—did their best to sway conference attendees with their arguments in the 2,000-year-old dispute about the nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

That was on June 1, 2008, in a conference room in a Seattle hotel.

But leading up to the great debate were presentations from 10 men and one woman, all of them arguing for the oneness of God.

Oneness in this case referred to the concept that only God the Father is God and that Jesus, although the Son of God, is a separate being whose life did not extend into past eternity.

Organizer Mr. Westby, who lives in a Seattle suburb with his wife, JoAn, believes "there can be no more important knowledge than that about God Himself."



Ken Westby

The knowledge about the Creator is important enough to Mr. Westby that he began his seminars in 2002 in Seattle. Since that year locations for the annual events have included Virginia, Texas, Georgia, New York and Ohio.

This year, the seventh, took Mr. Westby and colleagues back to Seattle for two days in the Embassy Suites hotel near the Seattle-Tacoma airport.

Most of the presenters at the conference were Sabbatarian Christians, but not all.

Then who?

The first speaker was Rick Richardson, also of the Seattle area, who wrote the book *Origins of Our Faith: The Hebrew Roots of Christianity*.

Mr. Richardson presented "If Not God, Who?" To answer his question, he cited Bible passages and interpretations to show who Jesus believed He was. For example, Mark 8:29 has Jesus acknowledging He was the Messiah.

Daniel 9:26, John 7:31 and John 11:50 indicate that Jesus, although believing He was Messiah, also believed He would die. Mr. Richardson asked: Just who did Jesus think He was?

"Jesus believed He was a Messiah that dies." That is, in line with Jewish tradition, Jesus was Messiah ben Joseph, the suffering Messiah.

The King James virgin

Noel Rude of Pendleton, Ore., pre-See CONFERENCE, page 21



WORSHIPFUL PRAISE—The praise team in the Kingston congregation of the Church of God International in Jamaica leads a lively praise-and-worship session during Pentecost services June 8, 2008, in Kingston. **From left:** Tahlee Subaran, Shawna Risden, Aldith Smith and deacon Christopher Hendricks. The Kingston CGI congregation, with an average attendance of 220 each Sabbath, boasts the largest congregation of members of a group derived from the Worldwide Church of God who as individual members were never a part of the WCG. See the article beginning on this page. See more photos on pages 22 and 23. [Photo by Bernardo Beckford]

Jamaican elders and laity willing to defend beliefs in debates with other Christians and nonbelievers

The writer is pastor of the Church of God International in Jamaica.

By Ian Boyne

KINGSTON, Jamaica—A record 366 people turned up for Church of God International (CGI) Pentecost services June 8, 2008, in Kingston while about 100 persons attended Pentecost services at the other end of the island in St. James.

That two deacons, former politician and senator George Ramocan and engineer and transformation coach Glenford Smith, were being ordained as ministers on that day added to the delight of CGI Jamaican members, who have experienced phenomenal growth in the Church of God movement that on the whole, regret-

tably, has been on the decline.

Not so with the Jamaican CGI.

The Kingston CGI congregation, with an average attendance of 220 each Sabbath, boasts the largest congregation of members of a group derived from the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) who as individual members were never part of the WCG.

In fact, an examination of the detailed figures given for WCG congregations worldwide published in the WCG publication



Ian Boyne

Together: Worldwide Church of God News, indicates that the Kingston CGI congregation is larger than any single congregation of even the mother church, the WCG, which once had more than 100,000 in attendance worldwide and 1,000 members on one Caribbean island alone (Trinidad).

None comes close

Even in the populous Latin American region, no congregation comes close to the Kingston CGI's figure of 220 average attendance (which does not account for our total attendance).

The largest of the ex-WCG groups, the United Church of God, according to a report by Kingsley Mather at the May general conference of elders in See RECENT, page 22

Book reveals the previously untold Babylon connection

Mr. Knight is an author and historian and member of the Church of God (Seventh Day). He resides in Nampa with his wife, Rosita, and daughter Jessica. This is the third in a series of articles based on his latest book, *Spirit of Antichrist*. In this month's installment he explains the results of his new research into the origins of the modern Catholic Church.

By Alan Knight

NAMPA, Idaho—In our first volume, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, we presented the story of gnostic Christianity and how so many of its doctrines survive within Protestantism.

Many readers have no doubt wondered how Catholicism fits into the picture. Now, in our latest volume, *Spirit of Antichrist*, we address the history of the Roman church and biblical passages that directly refer to how that apostasy got started.

First let's understand what is the essence of Catholic salvation theology.

Critical Protestants

Many in the Churches of God movement came from Protestantism, and Protestantism constantly criticizes the Catholic Church for what it regards as legalism. Indeed, Catholicism over countless centuries has had problems with legalism. But that is not the essence of Catholics' concept of salvation.

The essential mechanism through which Catholic believers access salvation is sacramentalism.

The word *sacrament* refers to the holiest rituals of the church that bring its participants into direct contact with God.

The most important sacrament, of course, is communion.

By means of communion, Catholics believe, the faithful of the church come into direct contact with Christ, actually ingesting the real essence of Christ that is present in the bread and wine.

Spiritual side

For non-Catholics not accustomed to the idea that Christ is literally present in the bread and wine, this may seem backward and primitive, almost superstitious, certainly not very spiritual.

But a spiritual dimension does indeed pertain to this belief. The idea behind the idea is that, when a person participates in communion, he comes directly into contact with Christ.

But, most important, through that contact Christ's spiritual nature is imparted to that person.

See GREEK PHILOSOPHERS, page 5



Alan Knight

Women thankful for UCM Alabama conference

By Wesley White

FULTONDALE, Ala.—Upward-soaring gas prices did not seem to deter enthusiastic participation in the 2008 United Christian Ministries (UCM) Women's Conference July 18-20, 2008.

Ladies came from faraway states such as Texas, Connecticut and Michigan for the fellowship, food, fun and inspiration.

The conference is sponsored each year by United Christian Ministries. This year's, with the theme "A Christian Woman's Walk With Christ," happened at the Fairfield Inn in Fultondale, a suburb of Birmingham, Ala.

Though UCM founders Ray and Peggy Wooten have moved to Indiana from Alabama, they plan to hold the UCM Women's Conferences in the Birmingham area each year.

Fifth year

This is the fifth year for the UCM conference, which (like the annual

Big Sandy Women's Conference) has its roots in the Dallas women's conferences begun by Linda Hardy White in 2000.

This year ever-gracious emcee Aggie Jacques of Brevard, N.C., led the assembly.

Friday evening opened with a fellowship time and a dinner buffet of salad fixings, breads, meat, cheeses and desserts.

The special activity of the evening, led by Mrs. Wooten and Rebecca Blevins, both of Roanoke, Ind., focused on the ingredients of a "friendship garden."

Each attendee received a special card outlining her garden group (peas, lettuce, squash, thyme, etc.) and including discussion points on things like "squashing gossip" and "finding thyme" for each other.

After discussing the topics as small groups, each group made a presentation to the larger assembly and then "planted" its produce in

the friendship garden.

Saturday morning opened with rousing congregational singing, led by Linda Carter of Birmingham and Heather Kemp of Virginia Beach, Va., and special music by Sharon Ledy of Spring Arbor, Mich., who sang "Where He Leads."

Specific music

The keynote speaker, Carol Boyer of Perry, Mich., encouraged all to listen to the specific music God has for each of us and to follow His lead as life-long dance partner in her presentation titled "Dancing Through Life."

After more congregational singing, June Felix of Alabaster, Ala., presented "Love Letters From Jesus," reminding the group of the importance of messengers of God's love in this sin-weary world. She ended by singing "Thief of Always."

After a hearty lunch of sandwiches, potato salad, chips and brownies, See WOMEN REPORT, page 4

The Journal adds to 2008 Feast listing

For the latest listing of Feast of Tabernacles observances for 2008 sponsored by Church of God ministries and individual members, see page 20 of this issue of *THE JOURNAL*.

Almost 200 Feast sites in several countries will play host to the annual observance.

Most sites will follow the traditional Jewish dates for the festival, which this year will be Oct. 13-21. But check the listing for details because several observances will follow other systems to determine the dates.

If your site isn't on this month's list, *THE JOURNAL* encourages you to send in your information as soon as possible.

You may E-mail, fax or snail-mail info@thejournal.org, (903) 636-9097 or P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A.

Friends meet for annual AC reunion

The writer, who operates a construction company in San Antonio, Texas, attended Ambassador College, Big Sandy, in the late 1960s.

By John Dickerson
HOUSTON, Texas—Several former Ambassador College students met at a Pappa's Seafood House in Houston May 31, 2008, for a dinner party.

We called it an AC minireunion. Russell Bettis, who has lived and worked in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for 25 years, visits the United States each June, and for the past few years old friends have gathered in the Houston area for an evening of food and drinks when he's in town.

Three of our old friends who used to meet with us are deceased: Gilbert Woody and Berlin Guillory, both of the Houston area, and Eddie Holdren of Bryan, Texas.

This year I tried to invite former students of AC in Big Sandy, Texas, whom I could find in the vicinity. Some of us had not seen each other in 40 years!

The people attending included: Phil Arnold, Houston; Russell and Kim Bettis of Kuala Lumpur; John and Cathy Dickerson, San Antonio, Texas; Tim Gibson, Hendersonville, N.C.; Ron and Lynn Lohr, Houston; Art Mokarow, Montgomery, Texas; Farrell and Jane Moughon, Katy, Texas; Everett Oakley, Houston; and Julie Robinson, Liberty, Mo.

The table arrangement ended up



AC REUNION—Several Ambassador College alumni, spouses and friends attend a minireunion in Houston May 31. **Photo 1, from left:** Russell Bettis, Julie Robinson, Tim Gibson, Cathy Dickerson and John Dickerson. **Photo 2:** Everett Oakley. **Photo 3:** Lynn Lohr, Ron Lohr, Farrell Moughon and Jane Moughon. **Photo 4:** Phil Arnold. For names of attendees not pictured, see the article on this page. [Photos by Kim Bettis]

like an old Ambassador Club setting so we could all speak to each other.

Russell Bettis and I and our wives sat at the head table and acted like emcees.

We invited all present to tell their life stories after Ambassador College for as long or short a period as they wished.

The evening was enjoyable. We all had a great time listening to each per-

son's story and talking individually.

We do this every year, usually the first Saturday night of June, somewhere in the Houston area.

So contact me if you would like to attend in 2009. You can E-mail me at txndwnunder@yahoo.com or call me at (210) 394-0614.

(See also "Farewell to Gilbert the Unforgettable" by Phil Arnold, *THE JOURNAL*, Aug. 31, 2003.)

CEM-Tyler COG rumors a 'nonstory'

By Dixon Cartwright
TYLER, Texas—When a *JOURNAL* editor heard rumors of a "falling-out" involving Ron Dart and the Tyler Church of God, this newspaper asked Larry Watkins of Big Sandy, Texas, business manager of Mr. Dart's Tyler-based Christian Educational Ministries, what was going on.

Mr. Watkins, who along with Mr. Dart is an elder who attends the Tyler church, responded by E-mail Aug. 28, 2008, that "the only 'falling-out' has been that, because of what I feel is a very small minority, but very vocal number of members, complaining of CEM 'controlling' the TCOG, Ron resigned from the 'Theology Committee' of the TCOG."

"Theology Committee" is Mr. Watkins' term for the elders who serve the

Tyler church: John Reedy (pastor) and Mr. Dart, both of the Tyler area, and Mr. Watkins.

The committee, Mr. Watkins said, was formed years ago by a unanimous vote of the congregation to manage the church's speaking schedule and related activities.

Two entities

"Ron and I both have done all we could to try and keep an 'arm's length' between CEM and the TCOG just so something like this would not occur," said Mr. Watkins, "so this is just another step to further separate CEM and the TCOG as two completely separate entities."

The church has scheduled a business meeting after the Sabbath service of Aug. 30 to discuss the existing bylaws, a formal registry of membership and the possible use of a supermajority for some decisions by the congregation, he said.

Also up for discussion: the congregation's new building, whether to file for nonprofit recognition by the Internal Revenue Service (churches in the Unit-

ed States are not required to incorporate, and to date the Tyler Church of God, founded in 1996, has not done so) and the makeup and duties of the Theology Committee.

"It is now and has always been CEM's intent that the TCOG be totally operated and governed completely by the members of the congregation and that CEM have no authority of any kind over the TCOG," Mr. Watkins said.

"The only 'involvement' currently between CEM and TCOG is the previous agreement and request by the congregation to coordinate the speaking schedule and the agreement to record services for CEM's service ministry to scattered brethren."

A nonstory

Mr. Watkins, who described the recent events and rumors as a "nonstory," said Mr. Dart plans to travel more in the near future to other congregations.

"But that was something we had been discussing and planning for some time and just happened to fall at the same time" as the discussions of the CEM-TCOG relationship, Mr. Watkins said.



Larry Watkins

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Thanks for reading *THE JOURNAL*!

Notes and quotes

Stockholm syndrome

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—Bill Jacobs of LifeResource Ministries thinks Christians in extreme circumstances can find themselves susceptible to Stockholm syndrome.

The phenomenon is the psychological tendency of a hostage to bond with, identify with or sympathize with his captor, explains the latest Merriam-Webster *Collegiate* dictionary.

The condition is named after the "bonding behavior" of hostages held captive after a bank robbery in Sweden in 1973. Even though the robbers strapped dynamite to the hostages and locked them in a vault for five days, the hostages were sympathetic with the robbers and helped them resist the police.

Later some of the hostages set up a defense fund for the thieves, and a hostage married one of them.

What's that got to do with Christians, including Church of God members?

Mr. Jacobs will tell you as part of his series "Mental Health and the Bible."

To receive a printed copy or audio recording of the presentation, visit liferesource.org or write LifeResource Ministries, P.O. Box 66540, Albuquerque, N.M. 87193, U.S.A. Or phone (505) 890-6806. E-mail Mr. Jacobs at bjacobs@liferesource.org.

Feast in the park

WOODSTOCK, Ill.—Truth on the Web Ministries invites everyone to its Feast of Tabernacles observance for 2008 at scenic Keystone State Park, near Tulsa, Okla., Oct. 15-23, 2008.

"This park makes for close-knit fellowship, with its cabins laid out in close proximity to each other, as well as being a wonderful place to drink in the beauty of God's creation," Brian Hoeck told *THE JOURNAL*.

Services will take place in the park's community building and will include led prayer, hymns, special music, sermons, Scripture readings and Q&As.

Children ages 4 and up will discover daily classes similar to Sabbath school.

For more information visit www.truthontheweb.org.

Contact Mr. Hoeck at brian@truthontheweb.org; (815) 337-0102; or 511 Meadow Ave., Woodstock, Ill. 60098, U.S.A.

Philippine Feast

CASLAMBA, Philippines—Enrique Gabuyo announces the Church of the Living God in Christ Jesus' Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day observance in Baguio City Oct. 16-23, 2008.

"If someone is interested to keep the Feast with us, they are welcome," Mr. Gabuyo said.

Write Mr. Gabuyo at cogemg007@yahoo.com or 398 Kinsville Subdivision; Calamba, Laguna 4027; Philippines.

Painting the egrets white

PASADENA, Calif.—If you've visited the former Ambassador College campus in California in recent decades, you had to notice the impressive egret sculpture in front of the Ambassador Auditorium, owned for several years now by Harvest Rock Church.



Photo by Harry Curley

Until recently the egrets were the color of the metal that sculptor David Wynne made use of to create the work of art in 1967.

JOURNAL reader Harry Curley of Altadena, Calif., sent recent pictures of the sculpture and fountain to *THE JOURNAL*. Behold, someone had painted them white. See the accompanying photo.

Wayne Cole will speak at Guardian Feast site

PASADENA, Calif.—Guardian Ministries plans a Feast site for Squaw Valley, Calif., at which one of the speakers will be long-time Church of God member and elder Wayne Cole of Tyler, Texas.

"We are privileged to hear from [Mr. Cole] this year. We'll be posting the fascinating titles to the seminars and the sermons in the next month on our Web site," David Antion, founder of Guardian, said.

For more information visit www.guardian-ministries.org, or write Guardian Ministries at P.O. Box 50734, Pasadena, Calif. 91115, U.S.A.

Grace Communion Seminary

GLENDORA, Calif.—The Worldwide Church of God is promoting its Grace Communion Seminary at gcs.ambassador.edu.

The Web site says GCS is "a business name of Ambassador College (AC), a California non-profit religious corporation," founded in 1947 in Pasadena and transferred in 1990 to Big Sandy, Texas. (The Texas campus, the last of three, closed in 1997, three years after it became Ambassador University.)

GCS limits its educational programs to graduate-level courses in pastoral ministry.

"All programs are open to academically qualified men and women who desire to expand their education in biblical studies and theology and their service in pastoral ministry in the evangelical tradition," says the Web site.

The site lists Russell Duke, who was the last president of Ambassador University, as president of GCS.

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Time-sensitive material