

History of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God

Assembled by CM White
Version 3.0

Introductory Comments

In the article *Passover and Holy Day Observances since the First Century*, I point out that the observance of the Holy Days among Christian Sabbatarians can be tracked each century, for the most part, since the birth of the New Testament Church.

Having virtually died out by the nineteenth century, the interest in *all* of God's Law and the Holy Days among various Sabbatarians began to stir sometime around the middle of that century. These seeds were sown and later watered by authors such as Greenberry G Rupert who began to promote them as applicable to Christians. As a result, interest in them began to grow.

Meanwhile, many Protestant scholars wrote about their meaning and typology and continue to do so to this day (they often don't fully understand their meaning, but at least make a good attempt at this). One of many such authors was the famous Louis Talbot who wrote about *The Feasts of the Lord* (1943) and there were a number of such authors preceding him and thereafter. I mention him as Dr Herman L Hoeh listened to his radio programmes and was following him about the time of his coming across *The World Tomorrow* broadcast.

Holy Day Observance Prior to Herbert W Armstrong

In the article *Holy Day Observance since the First Century*, there are a number of references to various Sabbatarian groups which observed these days, or at least some of them.

In the USA an unattached group in Philadelphia observed Passover including footwashing in 1845 (*History of the Church of God (7th Day)*, p. 66¹). One early Sabbatarian Adventist was David Arnold who believed in an annual Lord's Supper/Passover². James and Ellen G White were aware of this practice but evidently did not agree with such a practice.

¹ According to John Kiesz's article "The Continuity of the Gospel," *Bible Advocate*, 12 August 1963:

"Most of the brethren observed the Lord's Supper or Communion and feet-washing at various times, although a group in Philadelphia began practicing the keeping of the Christian Passover in about 1845, and a brother in Illinois advocated the commemoration of the Lord's death at the beginning of the 14th of Abib in about 1867. Before the turn of the century, all of our assemblies had come to the conclusion that Communion of the Lord's Supper should be observed annually on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew year." (p. 25)

² According to *Captains of the Host* by W Spalding (an SDA), Sabbath conferences were held 1847/48:

"So the Whites went to New York. It was their first meeting with Hiram Edson. Bates, Gurney, and Chamberlain also attended from New England. The meeting was held in David Arnold's barn, at Volney. About thirty-five were present, all who could be collected from that part of the State. But there were nearly thirty-five different creeds; "there were hardly two agreed." David Arnold evidently had imbibed some of the heterodox views of George Storrs' party ... **objecting to the celebration of the Lord's supper except at the time of the Passover**, of which he said it was the continuation. Many other errors were brought forward by different ones, and the conference was in discord." (p. 176)

Sabbatarians in West Virginia observed Passover in the 1850s (*A True History of the True Religion*, pp. 201, 203; and "Has God's Church always kept the Passover?" *Reviews You Can Use*, March-April 1993, p. 32³).

There was also the Seventh Month Movement which arose within the Seventh-day Adventists in the mid-late 1800s. The Seventh Month Movement was edging toward accepting Holy Day observance but it never took hold. It was recorded that even Ellen G White thought that the camp meetings of the Adventists should be held in a similar fashion to the Feast of Tabernacles.⁴

In addition, many other groups observed the Feasts⁵. During this time period, Owen Crozier, a Millerite preacher, published the article "The Sanctuary. Part One of Four. The Law of Moses," *Day-Star, Extra*, 7 Feb 1846⁶. Apparently the article was an attempt to explain the meaning of a couple of holy days, and in particular Atonement.

In the Church of God movement some advocated Passover observance in articles in Church periodicals (1872, 1884, 1885). As such it is obvious that some in that Church observed the Passover in the late 1800s⁷ (*The Journey*, pp. 182-3⁸ and "A Synoptic History of the Churches of God in the Latter Days,"

³ From *A History of the True Religion* we read:

"Concerning the Passover, or the Lord's Supper, in at least one assembly of the early Sabbatarians in West Virginia, the following is illustrative: 'March 21, 1853, it was voted that communion service be held once in twelve months 'on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month'; i.e., on the evening of the Passover.' --Idem, p. 201.... The diet of some of the early Sabbatarians in West Virginia, can be understood from the following extract concerning the South Fork of Hughes River Church in 1842: 'In their efforts to follow the mandates of the Mosaic law, the flesh of swine for food was placed under ban. Mutton and beef tallow took the place of lard in cooking. A few of the more well-to-do used olive oil.'--Idem, p. 203"

⁴ In fact, an article *The Midnight Cry* by Samuel S. Snow a Millerite he wrote that the Feast of Tabernacles was "a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb; which will be celebrated in the New Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God which is to be with men". (Vol 1, No 1, 22 August 1844, p. 4). So attempts at understanding the Feast typologies has long roots.

⁵ "26 religious organizations, most with no WCG links, teach WCG-like doctrines" *The Journal*, Issue 26.

⁶ "The Sanctuary. Part One of Four. The Law of Moses," *Day-Star, Extra*, 7 Feb 1846 .

⁷ *The Hope of Israel*, 16 July, 1867, pp. 22-23 (by T Hamilton) in an article "What kind of Wine did our Savior use when he instituted the Lord's Supper?" which indicates that they were debating how to observe the Passover at that time.

⁸ In Robert Coulter's book *The Journey* he wrote that from its founding:

"the Church had no uniform practice for holding its communion services. They were held whenever circumstances seemed appropriate to its clerics." (p. 182)

Coulter then discusses several examples of the "whenever" practice. Then he writes:

"But in 1872, Samuel Davidson wrote to *The Hope* [ie *The Hope of Israel* periodical] that he believed the Church should conduct its communion service annually at the time of the Jewish Passover ... Davidson's polemic was met with such favor, Editor Jacob Brinkerhoff of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, successor to *The Hope*, began publishing a spring date in the paper for the Church's annual communion service. His arbitrary listings of the date for the Lord's Supper met with the approval of the Church, and it began in unison to hold its annual Lord's Supper on that date." (p. 182).

"A member of the Church in Texas was visiting relatives in Washington, D.C., and went to the Congressional Library, where he discovered the perpetual calendar for Hebrew festivals. He identified the future dates for the Passover and shared that information with Editor Brinkerhoff. With that information, Brinkerhoff began to publish the actual date of the Jewish Passover festival as an appropriate date for the Church's annual Lord's Supper service." (pp. 182-3)

"Brinkerhoff wrote [in 1884], 'The Israelitish passover was instituted upon the 14th day of the first month, and was annually observed at that time [of Jesus' crucifixion] by the Israelites. It was at that time of the year that Jesus observed the passover, and ... at the same time instituting the Lord's Supper and changing the emblems of the Passover ... The March 10, 1885 issue of the *Advocate* announced the date of the Lord's Supper service: 'The 14th day of the first month (Passover) occurs this year on the night after Sunday, March the 30th, according to Roman time ...'"

"An annual communion service began as an informal practice initiated by a discussion in the open forum of *The Hope* magazine in 1872. In early 1917, A. N. Dugger incorporated it in his revised doctrinal statement. He wrote, "The Lord's Supper as Christ instituted it, should be observed yearly, that the wine and bread are typical of His spilled blood and broken body" (p. 183).

In an article "What's in an Ordinance?" *Bible Advocate*, Sept-Oct 2018, Robert Coulter wrote:

"After the Church of Christ in Michigan (former name of the Church of God [Seventh Day]) was organized in 1858, and her congregations grew, she began holding quarterly weekend meetings that rotated among her churches. They began on

Facts of Our Faith, p. 18⁹).

Later, in the Church of God periodical, *The Bible Advocate* (1907),¹⁰ a letter was published advocating Holy Day observance, although that Church does not advocate their observance (later Andrew N Dugger privately observed the Holy Days from the 1950s¹¹).

Friday evening with an opening preaching service, followed by a full day of preaching on Sabbath, and concluded with observing the Lord's Supper and foot washing on Sunday afternoon before dismissal...

But beside the quarterly meetings' observance of a communion service, ministers of the churches of Christ in Michigan and the churches of Jesus Christ in Iowa held communion services whenever they felt the occasion called for it...

Eventually Brinkerhoff learned of the perpetual calendar for all the Hebrew festivals, and he published the actual date of the Passover as the date for observing the Church's annual communion service. He announced the date for the annual Lord's Supper service for 1885 in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* magazine:

"The 14th day of the first month (Passover), occurs this year on the night after Sunday, March the 30th, according to Roman time." (p. 8)

Richard Nickels in his *History of the Seventh Day Church of God* (chapter 5) noted:

"The issue of when to observe the "Lord's Supper" has been another constant issue of dispute in the Church of God, Seventh Day. A passing mention of a January, 1865 observance of communion in the Hartford and Casco churches is the only communion record so far discovered of the early Michigan period."

⁹ "It is also of great interest to observe from the records of the Marion Church of God, that in 1870 they adopted foot-washing and communion to be held each quarter; and the first report of an annual observance was in 1899 ... There is evidence that the Lord's Supper was observed annually long before 1899. **All of this is an indication of how truth gradually came to front in the Church of God**, in spite of the confusion caused by Satan." (p. 19)

¹⁰ Letter in the *Bible Advocate* from Sister Katie R Gillstrap advocating the observation of the Days of Unleavened Bread (p. 251). There was also an article in a 1916 *Bible Advocate* by GW Sarber advocating these days:

"Sarber Supports Annual Feast Days

In 1916, G.W. Sarber from Knox, Indiana wrote in the *Advocate* supporting the annual holy days. He mentioned that Pentecost is 50 days from Nisan 16, the Feast of Tabernacles is the 15th day of the seventh month, and the eighth day of Tabernacles is also a sabbath rest. "These are the feasts of the Lord, and from the Bible standpoint they are as binding upon the sons of God at this present time as they were when God commanded them to Israel of old." The editor, A.N. Dugger, included a caption stating that "Every writer is held responsible for their sentiments."¹⁶⁶ (Richard Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, p. 138)

Reference details: Sarber, G. W. (1915). "Dividing the Word of Truth," *The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom*, 25 April, p. 361; Sarber, G. W. (1915). "The Passover," *The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom*, 24 Aug, p. 620; Sarber, G. W. (1915). "The Passover," *The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom*, 27 Sept, pp. 685-86; Sarber, G. W. (1916). *Annual Feasts to be Observed*, "The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom", 1 Aug, p. 553; Sarber, G. W. (1916); *Annual Feasts to be Observed*, "The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom", 8 Aug, pp. 564-65.

¹¹ According to the Kapsinendet Church of God 7th day New Jerusalem

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=571571866307438&id=318737091590918

"Feasts in the Church History

The Church of God 7th Day in her history was not a feast keeping organization. Even before the division between Church of God 7th Day and Seventh Day Adventist, the feast issue was controversial and elder James White (Husband to Ellen G. White) wrote an article in *The Present Truth* of 1849 rejecting the observance of feast days. The issue of feasts in available histories so far, was first introduced in the Church of God 7th Day by an independent minister by the name G.G.Rupert. It's said that Mr. Rupert used to keep the feasts and at times used to write articles in the church paper of the time (*Bible Advocate*, of May, June and July 1913) advocating for the feasts observance.

In 1916, G.W. Sarber from Knox, Indiana wrote in the *Bible Advocate* supporting the annual holy days.

The Church of God 7th Day, in early years of 1860-1930's never advocated for the observance of the feasts, though they celebrated the Lord's Supper without the feasts of unleavened bread on eve of 14th of Nisan. In 1917, A.N. Dugger (the famous leader of the church in the 20th century) wrote an article "What the Church of God Believe and Why?", in Article 21 he stated that the commandments nailed to the cross included only animal sacrifices, and yearly Sabbath days that were governed by the day of the month, new moons, feasts and other holy days, referring to Ephesians 2:15, Hebrews 9:10-12. According to Church of God historian, Richard Nickels, "the holy days were to be latent issue within the Church of God, accepted by some, but rejected by many. Though the official church position was against them, some supporters of the Church of God continued to believe and keep them, yet still maintaining Church of God membership."

It was latter through elder Herbert W. Armstrong who again started preaching and advocating for the observance of feasts in our latter day histories. Elder Armstrong came out strongly, preaching and publishing articles supporting the observance of the feasts in today's church. He explained the meaning of each feast in relation to today's church and new covenant. The Church of God was not ready to accept his teachings and doctrines of which feasts was just one of the many, this led him to break from the Church of God and started his own congregation which was latter known as Worldwide Church of God. This in fact explains why all churches that broke from Worldwide Church of God keep the feasts.

Greenberry G Rupert probably began to keep all the Holy Days in the late 1880/90s while still in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Refer to his articles in the *Bible Advocate* listed below and his *Remnant of Israel* periodical. His church group was established around 1902/03 after exiting the SDAs and became loosely aligned with the Church of God.

Richard Nickels wrote the following concerning Rupert in his article *The Remnant of Israel*:

“Rupert’s most famous book was *The Yellow Peril*, a 530-page work on prophecy, which sold for \$2.25 in 1911 ... The third edition is dated 1918. The book was advertised in the *Bible Advocate* (published by the Church of God, Seventh Day) of May 27, 1913, and the ad was possibly the earliest mention of Rupert in that source. *Yellow Peril* was also advertised in the *Bible Advocate* of November 9, 1915.

In scattered issues of the *Advocate*, which are still available, there are several articles written by Rupert. For the issues of May 27 and June 3, 1913, he wrote a series on “The Book of the Law.” The issues of June 10 and 17, and July 8 and 15 of the same year all contain articles by Rupert, showing that the laws of God are not “done away.” On page 506 of the *Bible Advocate* of June 17, 1913, is Rupert’s unique chart on the “Laws of God,” later reproduced in his own *Remnant of Israel* of February 1916.” [*Bible Advocate*, XLVII (June 17, 1913), 506; *Remnant*. I (February 1916), 2] (p. 3)

“His articles in the *Advocate* on the Holy Days are amazing. A.N. Dugger, the editor, allowed these articles to be printed, if indeed he had the power of control. Stanberry never accepted the Holy Days, but was given a convincing presentation of them in 1913 by G.G. Rupert.” (p. 4)

So, Rupert advocated the Holy Days and wrote about their meanings in the following editions of *The Remnant of Israel*: June 1915, July 1918, April 1919, June 1919, Sept 1919, Sept 1921. After his death in 1922, his successors similarly advocated Holy Day observance in the same publication in the July 1925, March 1928 and Sept 1929 issues. The publication ceased in 1931.

His writings and teachings were well known in Church of God circles in the 1920s.

Another group were the Strangites, a Mormon offshoot, which advocated the Sabbath and feast days since 1848-50 (“James Strang and the Sabbath-keeping Mormons,” *The Sabbath Sentinel*¹²).

Others included Charles Taze Russell and George Storrs who observed 14 Abib Passover in the late 1800s. They were not Sabbatharians, but held to a number of truths and part-truths.

Passover observance on 14th Abib gradually became established doctrine of the Church of God and was incorporated into the *Statement of Beliefs* in 1917 of the General Conference of the Church of

It happened that in 1950’s elder A.N. Dugger migrated from America to settle permanently in Jerusalem, Israel. **While in Israel, it’s evident that elder A.N. Dugger started keeping and observing this feast days.** Though he kept them, he never came out strongly to preach their observance by other people, this is apparent from the way he used to answer questions from his followers who wanted to know if they too should keep the feasts. One of his answers was, “...feasts and holy days of Israel are not like the gentile ones, as the Israelites celebrates and commemorates the mighty redemption from the Almighty. The question here should not be if we must keep them, but the question should be, will the Heavenly Father be happy with me if I join His children in celebrating His mighty works?” From such answers, elder Dugger left many of his followers in a great tussle of whether to or not to observe the feasts and to date many of his followers still argue over the holy days.”

¹² “James Strang and the Sabbath-keeping Mormons,” *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Sept-Oct, 1999.

God (*The Journey*, p. 183¹³).

The True Jesus Church is a Chinese Sabbatarian group practicing Sabbath and Passover observance since 1917. Apparently, they have roots in the Seventh Day Baptists. Another is the House of God which observed the Holy Days since 1917.

Church of God, Arran Island, Scotland observed all Holy Days according to John Morgan in an interview with Margaret McKormack¹⁴. In addition, some English Sabbatarians in the early 1900s also observed all the Holy Days ("Deaconess baptised in 1918, Evicted by Sunday Worshipers", *Worldwide News*¹⁵).

Clarence O Dodd, initially an associated of Herbert Armstrong, kept the Holy Days from 1928¹⁶ as did several other small Church of God groups¹⁷.

The question arises whether Mr Armstrong had any communication with others about these days prior to he and his wife began to observe them. It would seem that Mr & Mrs Gilstrap may have been crucial in this regard:

Here is the information on the Gilstraps by Richard Nickels:

"In 1907, a letter in the Advocate from Sister Katie R. Gilstrap reveals that she and her husband were Seventh-Day Adventists, but came into Church of God beliefs because Seventh-Day Adventists would not accept the Passover. She wishes "Brother [J.H.] Nichols" could visit them, as they live in an isolated place and have no contact with Church of God brethren. Mrs. Gilstrap noted that Advocate readers would probably not see the need of still keeping the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the two Sabbaths (March 31 and April 6 of that year, as she calculated, which is a day ahead), but she and her husband believed Christ and the disciples kept them, and we should too, referring to Acts 12:3 and 20:6. Mrs. Gilstrap was pleased to see from the last copy of the Advocate that the Church of God people would keep the Passover of 1907 on the "correct" time, on the 15th night. She notes that they formerly kept Passover on the night of the 14th, and is happy to see a church not bound up in a creed that doesn't turn from past errors. The Gilstraps had kept the Passover since 1893, but knew of no one else who kept it at the time they did. Subsequently, Brother Nichols, De Ford and a Dr. Reed took up this truth, De

¹³ The doctrines of the Salem church in its 1933 schism with Stanberry included this one first published by Editor A.N. Dugger in 1917: "Statement 19: The Lord's Supper is to be observed annually, on the beginning of the Passover, the fourteenth day of Nisan according to the Hebrew calendar." (p. 281)

Robert Coulter noted in the article "What's in an Ordinance?," *Bible Advocate*, Sept-Oct 2018: "The annual observance of the Lord's Supper on the date of the Passover became an official doctrine of the Church of God when Andrew N. Dugger, president of the General Conference, included a doctrinal statement in his revision of its doctrines in 1917.

But by the 1920s, Dugger was teaching that the Lord's Supper must be observed precisely in the evening following the thirteenth and at the beginning of the fourteenth day of Nisan, according to the Hebrew calendar." (p. 9)

¹⁴ There were Scottish Sabbatarians in the early 1900s which kept the Holy Days. Source: *Church of God in Scotland* by John Morgan, Melbourne, Australia and "Margaret (Meg) McCormack, 1916-2012" by Brian Convery et al.

¹⁵ "Deaconess baptised in 1918, Evicted by Sunday Worshipers", *Worldwide News*, 4 March 1985, by Jeff Zhorne.

¹⁶ According to Richard Nickels: "Clarence O. Dodd states that **he began to keep the Passover in 1928, and immediately began keeping the other Feast Days of the year.** "After being thwarted in a determined effort to teach the importance of keeping these Holy Days in the group in which he was then affiliated," Elder Dodd "broke away and inaugurated a magazine to proclaim the importance of this great Truth."

Dodd had been instrumental along with A.N. Dugger during the 1933 Church of God, Seventh Day split, helping to form the Salem, West Virginia faction. He served as Secretary-Treasurer through the spring of 1939. When the church reacted strongly in opposition to his Feast Day teaching and asked him to resign, Elder Dodd began a new magazine in March, 1937, in order to continue to teach the keeping of the Feast Days." (*Origin and History of the Sacred Name Movement*, p. 1)

¹⁷ Unfortunately, some rather strange groups observe the feast days, such as World Mission Society Church of God. You can read their beliefs here <https://watvwelcome.org/en/truth/>

Ford wrote it in Azazel, Dr. Reed in Gleanings, and both later in the Advocate [footnote 153 - *Advocate*, April 4, 1907, p. 251].¹⁸

The Advocate of that same year also carried a letter of an Elder Richardson of London supporting observance of Passover on the night of the 14th, March 28 of that year. J.F. Flory of Lemoore, California kept the Passover with ten others at his house. First they had a supper, then washed each other's feet, had the bread and cup, and sang an hymn." [footnote 154 - *Advocate*, April 16, 1907, p. 259]¹⁹

One wonders if the Gilstraps had any relationship to Greenberry G Rupert? Did they have any influence in convincing Herbert Armstrong to observe these days given that they had observed these days since 1893. J. G Gilstrap became a Church of God minister and remained so into the 1920s. In fact Katie Gilstrap wrote an article on the spring holy days and their relationship to Christ's crucifixion and she and Mr Armstrong corresponded about the Passover vs Lord's Supper issue (Mr Armstrong's letter to Katie Gilstrap, *HWAP Collection*). This led him to look further into the issue and may well have led him to look into and subsequently observe all the holy days.

Katie Gilstrap wrote at least one article discussing how the spring Holy Days meshed with the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Herbert Armstrong's 1928 letter to Katie was in response to that article.²⁰ Perhaps as a result of her influence, Herbert Armstrong started in the spring of 1928 an intense personal Bible study of the Holy Days. The record of this study has been preserved in his personal papers. His study apparently led him to start observing Unleavened Bread by the spring of 1929.

During the 1920s and 1930s, members of the Church of God discussed and debated doctrinal issues openly; read as widely as they were able in those days; subscribed to Church of God publications; had access to libraries; and in the 1920s telephones were fairly common. So, knowledge of the Holy Days would have been swirling around the Church of God fringes and practiced by some as you can see from the article.

For instance, Herman L Hoeh in a sermon on church history delivered on 14 March 1953 at Pasadena, California, stated:

- The holy days were kept by a few in the Church of God with headquarters in Stanberry, Missouri and had some understanding of these days
- Mentioned that Wayne Cole's uncle on his mother's side held to the 'British-Israel' doctrine

The reader can listen to the sermon [here](#). The information declared above commences around 16:30 minutes.

However, the time had come for the 18th and early 19th century watering of the seeds of the Holy Days truth to engender growth. When Herbert W Armstrong and his wife Loma began observing these Holy Days in 1927, others were already doing so (such as the Remnant of Israel group) and this belief was seeping into the Church of God at that time, though it did not have a stronghold and was not officially accepted. In fact, in many quarters, it was rejected.

Others also joined with him as he explained in a *Plain Truth* article:

¹⁸ Full reference details: Gilstrap, K. R. (1907). "Letter Department, From Sister Katie R. Gilstrap," *The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom*, 9 April, p. 251.

¹⁹ *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, chapter 9.

²⁰ Herbert W Armstrong's *Letter to Katie Gilstrap*, 3 May 1928. *HWAP Collection*, Item 3690, Box 10.

"In July 1933, Mr. Elmer Fisher, who lived six miles west of Eugene, asked me to preach a six-weeks' campaign of evangelism at the Firbutte one-room country school. This schoolhouse was in a sparsely settled community. Considering the small population, my efforts were blessed with unusual success. This campaign ended with several newly baptized converts. **I had presented the truth about the annual Holy Days and Festivals to the Oregon Conference brethren, but they "laughed me to scorn" (Matt. 9:24). Now, for the first time, I had newly converted brethren who immediately accepted this truth.** A small church of 19 members emerged as the parent church, later to become the Worldwide Church of God." ("What every reader needs to know about the Foundation, History, Authority and Doctrine of the Worldwide Church of God", *Plain Truth*, February 1978, p. 2) [emphasis mine]

When the Church of God split in late 1933, Herbert Armstrong went with the faction which regrouped with head office in Salem, West Virginia and led by Andrew N Dugger.²¹ In mid-1937 their board voted to withdraw Mr Armstrong's ministerial licence.

According to The Church of God (seventh day) form letter *The Herbert W Armstrong Association with the Church of God (seventh day)*, this revocation was carried out in 1938 primarily over Holy Day observance (though other doctrinal issues such as British-Israelism was also in the mix, though not expressed in the revocation):

"The Church of God at West Virginia held a business meeting at Detroit, Michigan 5-10 May. At 1pm, 7 May they discussed HWA's article on the Feast days. At 10am, 10 May it was decided to revoke his ministerial licence, but it was in 1938 he was asked to turn in his credentials." (letter to David Hostetter, 16 January 1972).

Nevertheless, he ploughed on and over time his efforts bore great fruit and the meaning of them gained a greater and greater clarity – far greater than his predecessors.

In his booklet *History of the Church of God (7th Day)* John Kiesz makes mention of the holy days: Year 1934 - "there was a wonderful campmeeting held in Salem during the time of the Feast of Pentecost, and another one at St. Joseph, Missouri in the fall of during the Feast of Tabernacles. Many new and independent Sabbath-keepers were added to the fold for the next several years, but troubles soon arose."²²

Year 1935 - "there was a blessed and success-full campmeeting held at Jefferson, Oregon; and the fall campmeeting was held during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles at Galena, Kansas."²³

Over the next few decades Feast of Tabernacles attendances soared until they reached a peak in 1985 of 150,000 globally. God evidently blessed the Work and much fruit was produced.

Below is an outline of the growth in attendance of these days in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God. However, alongside that Church were many other much smaller groups also assembling on these days, but these particular groups did not bear much fruit²⁴.

²¹ After initially rejecting the observance of the Holy Days, Dugger later came to accept and observe them. Many of the groups in Africa that sprang up due to the missionary efforts of his elders, currently observe these days.

²² *History of the Church of God (7th Day)*, p. 88

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ You can read about the early Feast of Tabernacles observances in a series of articles "Hammer Family's History Parallels the RCG/WCG's" by John Warren in *The Journal*, Sept-Oct, Nov, Dec 2014, Jan, March 2015.

Appendix: Attendance Figures at the Feast of Tabernacles

By C M White

My notes together with the articles referenced below, show the following attendance figures:

- 2 from 1927-1933 (Mr and Mrs Armstrong)
- 21 in 1934
- 46 in 1940
- 40 in 1945
- 90 in 1950
- Over 150 in 1951
- Over 450 in 1952
- Approx 1,000 in 1953
- 1,507 in 1955
- 2,800 in 1957
- 4,000 in 1958
- 5,500 in 1959
- 7,996 worldwide in 1960
- Almost 10,000 in 1961
- 31,462 in 1965
- Over 40,000 in 1967
- 71,967 in 1970
- Almost 97,000 in 1973
- 150,000 in 1985

Extracts from *Good News* magazine articles (emphasis mine throughout):

"You Will Have to Experience the Feast of TABERNACLES!"

By Charlene Glover

Good News, 1951 Dec, pp. 13-14

"Your Duty to Teach

Herman Hoeh climaxed the Festival with a challenge to all present. All of us who realize the truth must be ready and able to give an answer at all times for the hope that is within us - to be able to teach others! Instead, most of us have need that we should again be taught the elementary principles of God's Revelation to Man. Many of us have been guilty of studying only to benefit ourselves, not thinking of the need to help our children and others we may meet in this life, much less realizing that we are training ourselves now to aid those whom we shall not see until in the age to come. We can't really profit unless we learn for the purpose of helping others, not just pleasing ourselves with the truth. We were challenged to study co make this year the most productive in our lives." (p. 13)

"The attendance this year was over one hundred fifty as compared to somewhat over ninety last year [ie 1950]."

=====

"Hundreds Hear Vital Messages at Feast of Tabernacles"

By Thomas Ham,

Good News, Dec 1952, pp. 5-6

"On the evening of October third, **over 450 of us** from about twenty states gathered into Seigler Springs, California, to observe the Festival of Tabernacles" (p. 5)

=====

"Greatest Feast of Tabernacles 1500 Years!"

(author unknown)

Good News, Nov 1953, pp. 1-2

"More people attended than any Feast of Tabernacles held by the Church of God, so far as we know, for more than 1,500 years. Altogether, **approximately ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE** were there.

The first few days fifty or more people paid for meals and left without registering, and more than 800 registered during the first half of the Festival. Another hundred or so came for the last two days, so that approximately a thousand people were in attendance. It is to be regretted, however, that not more than about 650 were in continuous attendance for the entire eight days ...

On the last Great Day of the Festival ... At 9: 30 in the Illuming Herman L. Hoeh and Isabell Kunkel were joined together by God as husband and wife, Dr. C. Paul Meredith officiating. It was a beautiful, sacred ceremony.

At 2: 30 in the afternoon Norman Smith and Charlene Glover were principals in another impressive and beautiful service officiated by Herbert W. Armstrong, in which God bound them for life as one flesh." (p. 1)

=====

"Greatest FEAST in Centuries!"

By Garner Ted Armstrong

Good News, Nov 1957, pp. 1-2, 12

"**About 2,800 of God's people** - the largest number in many hundreds of years - heard dynamic, inspired messages from God's servants during the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. Especially for you brethren of the Church who were unable to attend, we bring you this report of those eight joyous days!

GOD'S OWN PEOPLE-from over forty states and two foreign nations gathered together on our tabernacle grounds near Gladewater, Texas, in the largest and most successful Feast of Tabernacles in many centuries!" (p. 1)

=====

"Over 4000 Attend Feast of Tabernacles!"

By Garner Ted Armstrong

Good News, Dec 1958, pp. 1-3, 12

"This past fall thousands of God's people gathered at the huge tabernacle building near Big Sandy, Texas for the annual Feast of Tabernacles. Multiple hundreds of them had come to a Feast for the very first time!"

=====

"Over 5500 Attend Joyous Feast of Tabernacles!"

By R C Meredith

Good News, Nov 1959, pp. 1-3, 8-9

"Among the others who contributed their musical talents to this festival were Mr. Dwight Armstrong,

Mr. Armstrong's brother, who has composed so many of the hymns we sing in our own hymn book. Mr. Dwight Armstrong displayed great feeling in his beautiful violin solo work. His wife, Karen Armstrong, thrilled the congregation with her beautiful soprano solos." (p. 2)

=====

"The Greatest Feast Ever!"

By Garner Ted Armstrong

Good News, Nov 1960, pp. 1-3, 5-6, 9-12

"This fall, about **7,100** were packed into the huge building [at Big Sandy], and it was FULL!" (p. 1)

The article also contains the following statistics: 250 in England (p. 5), at least 475 in Northern Rhodesia (p. 5), 104 in Australia (p. 5), 444 in the Philippines (p. 5) and 40 in St Lucia (p. 6).

=====

Mr Armstrong's predicted Feast attendance figures

Coworker Letter, 20 November 1958, pp. 2-3

"... when I began figuring attendance for the past 14 years, and the rate of increase, it began to appear that WE MIGHT OUTGROW EVEN THAT IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS!

I think you will be interested in the approximate attendance figures. Starting with 1945, we were holding the Festival at Belknap Springs in the Cascade mountains in Oregon. At that time the broadcast was just starting to go national on an every-night basis. All the members who attended, up to that time, came from Oregon and Washington, where we had been on the air since 1934, and where I had been continually holding personal evangelistic campaigns. But only a handful of people came for the entire eight days of the Feast--about 40, with perhaps 20 or 30 additional on the weekly or annual Sabbaths.

In 1946, attendance was about 50, or a 25% increase. Following are attendance figures and percentages of increase for each year since:

1947 - attendance 65 -- 30% increase

1948 - " 75 -- 15% "

1949 - " 90 -- 20% "

1950 - " 110 -- 22% "

1951 - " 150 -- 36% "

By this time the Church in Pasadena was growing, and a few brethren from the Middle West were attending. We had now completely outgrown Belknap Springs. In 1952 the Festival was held at Seigler Springs. in California. There was a 200% increase, with 450 in attendance--a large increase from the Middle West. God showed us by many unusual circumstances that the PLACE for the Festival, which HE chose to place His name there, was now the present Tabernacle grounds where we had built a small Tabernacle for the Passover Festival. It should be held in a warm climate or the SOUTHERN part of the United States, and Gladewater is about half way from coast to coast. That fall we began to enlarge the original Tabernacle, and another big increase appeared in attendance with about 750 there most of the time, and more for the Sabbath days. This was a 67% increase. Now that a NATIONAL membership was attending, a gradual and steady increase continued.

1954 - attendance 1050 -- 40% increase

1955 - " 1500 -- 43% "

1956 - " 2100 -- 40% "

1957 - " 2750 -- 31% "
1958 - " 4000 -- 45% "

Since the first year at the present location, the yearly increase has averaged 40% a year over the year before. Now, suppose we continue to AVERAGE 30% a year increase, which is less than the average has been for 14 years. The average increase for 14 years has been 47%. Even this very year there was a 45% increase. Many of our members think it will CONTINUE to increase by not less than 30% a year. IF THAT HAPPENS, just look at the astounding result: By year after next--just two years in the ENLARGED Tabernacle, which will seat 7,000, we would have 6,750 in attendance. We would have to enlarge the Tabernacle again for the next Feast in 1961, when we would have 8,800 attending. The year after that, 1962, attendance would be 11,400.

Then, in 1963, there would be 14,800
" 1964, " " " 19,200
" 1965, " " " 25,000
" 1966, " " " 32,500
" 1967, " " " 42,250
" 1968, " " " 55,000
" 1969, " " " 71,500
" 1970, " " " 93,000
" 1971, " " " 121,000
" 1972, " " " 157,000

Does that take your breath? IT DID MINE! No use figuring any farther--for if our calculations are right, 1972 will probably be the last year of this great work--we will then have to be taken to a place of safety by God's divine power, or suffer the Great Tribulation. This is figuring into the future as far as it is in the past. In the past we have AVERAGED 47% increase per year. This is figuring a 30% per year increase for the NEXT 14 years.

But I do not believe the attendance will continue to increase even by 30% a year. I expect to see the PERCENT of increase begin to slacken off somewhat from now on, until attendance finally levels off. It is very possible that the PERCENT of increase from now on might go something like this: 1959, 30%; 1960, 25%; 1961, 22% with 8,000 attendance; 1962, 20% increase; 1963, 20%; 1964, 18%; 1965, 15% with 15,650 attendance; 1966, 10% increase; 1967, 7%; 1968, 5%; 1969, 2%, and levelling off by 1970, with an attendance of about 20,000."

Appendix: Looking back on early Feasts

The Portfolio, 21 September 1995

“The Spirit of God was there in real power ... working a spiritual revival in every heart, guiding the program by the power of God to the wonderful climax of the final afternoon on the Last Great Day of the Festival when seventeen, mostly newly converted and baptized, and added to the Church by the Spirit of God, were given the right hand of fellowship.”

Herbert W. Armstrong commenting on the 1948 Feast of Tabernacles, October 31, 1948 Co-Worker Letter

**By John B. Heath
of *The Portfolio* Staff**

By the early years of the 20th century, the festivals and Holy Days of the Bible began to take on renewed significance in several Christian circles.

It is possible that observance of the Holy Days was first taught as Christian observances in modern times by G. G. Rupert, a minister of the Church of God (Seventh Day), although many ministers in that church were not in favor of keeping them. As early as 1916, Mr. Rupert published material promoting the observance of the Feast, as well as the other Biblical festivals and Holy Days.²⁵

By 1927, Herbert and Lorna Armstrong — perhaps through the writings of Mr. Rupert—came to feel the personal need to observe the Holy Days of the Bible—including the Feast of Tabernacles. From 1927 to 1933, the two kept the Feast privately in Eugene, Oregon. After the parent congregation of the Worldwide Church of God was formed in 1933, the members of the congregation joined the Armstrongs in observing the Feast beginning in 1934. That year, the nineteen members of the Eugene congregation met with the Armstrongs at the Jeans Schoolhouse on the outskirts of Eugene on the first Holy Day and the Last Great Day.

During the early 1940s, the Feast was held in the church—owned facility in Eugene. Feastgoers stayed in tourist cabins in the area, and came from as far away as California and Washington. While members from out of town attended all of the events, many of the Eugene members were only able to attend on ' the Holy Days and/ or night services due to work conflicts.

During these early years, Mr. Armstrong often brought in guest ministers – from the Church of God (Seventh Day) minister who now lives in Canon City, Colorado, assisted Mr. Armstrong with Feast responsibilities from 1939 to 1945. On days when Mr. Armstrong had to be away due to broadcast responsibilities Elder Kiesz took over services.

"Herbert could not always be there. He'd say 'John, you take over when I'm not here,'" said Elder Kiesz. "We had good meetings in those days."

In 1945, Mr. Armstrong began to see how the Feast could be used to celebrate the millennial reign of Jesus Christ described in the book of Revelation.²⁶ That year, the Feast site was moved from Eugene

²⁵ Note: Rupert was *not* a minister of the Church of God (Seventh Day) but an ex-SDA senior minister who started up a group called *Remnant of Israel* around 1902. He loosely associated with them, but there was little co-operation. Also, he was not the first to teach these days in modern times but probably promoted them more than others did – CW

²⁶ "And then in 1945... I think you never heard of the history of why we keep the Feast of Tabernacles; and why we keep all these days, and what they mean. In the public library in Eugene, Oregon (and I think it was one of the commentaries), I saw something. Someone could see that in some way these annual festivals of God pictured the SPIRITUAL creation of man.

to Belknap Springs, a hot mineral springs resort in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon (Eugene would once again serve as a feast site during the 1980s and early 1990s) which is referred to in the *Good News Letter*, 2 Jan. 1945. It- was Mr. Armstrong's desire to have the Church celebrate the Feast in a peaceful, natural setting, away from the distractions of everyday life.

The 1948 Feast was the first to be attended by Ambassador students (the 1947 Feast ended just two days prior to the Opening of Ambassador). All seven students attended. Meals were served under the supervision of Ambassador's house mother, Sister Annie Mann. Educational films and home movies were shown during the evenings. It was at this feast that the hymns of Dwight L. Armstrong were first introduced to the Church as a whole. Mr. Armstrong described those first twenty or so hymns as "carrying a dignity and character of divine royalty—songs befitting the regal splendor of a King..." (HWA, *Co-worker letter*, p. 2, Oct. 31, 1948). The Feast was held in Belknap Springs for the final time in 1951. A student's account published in the December 1951 *Good News* described the Feast as including sermons on prophecy, the significance of the Holy Days, and explanations of law and grace. Ambassador students assisted with speaking, song leading, and special music responsibilities. A sermon by Herman L. Hoeh, then a recent Ambassador graduate, encouraged Feastgoers to be prepared to teach others the truths of the Bible.

In 1952, the Feast was held in Siegler Springs, California. This site was outgrown after only one year.

In 1953, the Feast was held in Big Sandy for the first time. Since then, it has continued to be held there every year except 1979 and 1994. For several years, all activities were held in what is now the library. Baptisms were conducted in the pond located between the library and the original men's dorms. Feastgoers camped on the sites of the Administrative Annex, the women's dorms, and the area north of Booth City. When the Redwood Building was outgrown, Mr. Armstrong considered building a bowl-shaped amphitheater in a natural depression where the golf course is now located. Those plans were abandoned, and the Field House was built.

Thirty years after Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong began observing the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast was celebrated by the Worldwide Church of God at two sites simultaneously for the first time. In addition to Big Sandy, the Feast was kept at a site in England. Since then, the Feast has been celebrated in many locations - from cruise ships, to mountain resort towns, to white sandy beaches, to jungles deep in the heart of Attica. Although many aspects of the Feast have changed, the celebration continues to be an integral part of the religious life of most Ambassador Students.

FEAST SITES: 1927-1956

Year	Location	Note
1927-1933	Eugene, OR	Mr. & Mrs. Armstrong alone
1934-1944	Eugene, OR	w / Eugene congregation
1945-1951	Belknap Springs, OR	
1952	Siegler Springs, CA	
1953-1956	Big Sandy, TX	Longest running site

Now, God had started a creation in the human family. The first was the physical creation. That started with the first man, Adam. The spiritual creation was started with the second Adam. Jesus Christ is called the Second Adam. He called people out of the world that had built by the first Adam, influenced entirely by Satan. And I want to go into a little of that in just a few moments. But I want to continue with this history just a moment.

This article, as I remember, didn't give the whole thing. It just mentioned that the spiritual creation began with Christ, and that the Passover was the first event to happen in the spiritual creation. And then I could see that the Days of Unleavened Bread represented putting sin out of our lives; and it just naturally unfolded, and God opened up the meaning to me." (HWA Sermon, *Rely on God*, 6 April 1985)

Appendix: Extracts from *Mount Zion Reporter*

The following is extracted from the *Mount Zion Reporter* article advocating Feast observance (c 1980s). The author of the article, Naomi Fauth (deceased) is wife of Gordon Fauth, successor to Andrew Dugger.



The following is extracted from a 1972 edition

chases these forbidden meats with the intention of eating them, this disobedient act proceeds from the heart. It is not the actual eating that defiles. When Eve ate the forbidden fruit she was defiled before she reached the forbidden tree; and even before she plucked the fruit. Her sin proceeded from the heart. Many drunkards uses this same scripture for an excuse in drinking liquor. This however produces wrong thoughts in the drinker, and acts of sin.

QUESTION. —

✕ Please explain all the feast days of Israel.

ANSWER. —


The "Feast Days" or holidays of Israel are different from those of any other nations because of her long past history and miraculous leadings by the direct intervention of Heaven. No other nation on earth has holidays to commemorate Heaven's direct intervention and miraculous deliverance. The "Feast and Fast" days of Israel stem from such events. As Israel was then the chosen nation, the people of Elohim, there surely would be nothing wrong for His people whoever, or wherever they are, to keep these Holidays in mind, and follow Israel in commemorating them with fasting and prayer.

QUESTION. —

Why did the Saviour command the apostles to pray about the Sabbath, not to take flight from Jerusalem on that day when He knew the city would not be destroyed for many years?

ANSWER. —

This is a very hard question to answer by those who do not reverence this same Sabbath now, but who have substituted in its place the day of the Sun Sunday, set apart as a day of rest by the Roman emperor Constantine to please the heathen Sun worshipers. The Saviour knew the people would have to carry burdens from their homes when they fled to the mountains as He commanded them to do, He always revered the Sabbath during His ministry (Luke 4:14, 15), and He knew it was the only



A general view of Jerusalem can be seen the seated

The Con

Articles in this series:

- *Do Church Eras Exist?*
- *History of the Fair Chance Doctrine*
- *History of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God*
- *History of the Place of Safety Doctrine in the Church of God*
- *History of the Plain Truth magazine*
- *History of the World Tomorrow Broadcast*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Ministerial Conferences*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Foreign Works*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Publications*
- *How the Israel Identity truth entered the Church of God*
- *Notes on the Third Resurrection Doctrine in the Church of God*

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.originofnations.org

www.friendsofsabbath.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

Our purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.