

15327 St. Cloud
Houston, Texas
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Dr. Herman L. Hoeh
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Dear Dr. Hoeh,

Recently I forwarded to Mr. Larson Briggs various reproductions which I accumulated in Plainfield. Included were xeroxed sheets as well as tapes of diverse places, names, dates, etc.

I spent over a week in Plainfield. The officials there made me most welcome. Evidently they are accustomed to visitors desirous of researching their files; in fact they mentioned the fact that several SDA historians had been by. As I mentioned before the Historical Society is a storehouse of information. It is very well organized. This of course aided my research greatly, but the very bulk of material available demanded a much longer span of time for detailed research than I had to devote to it this time. I do feel we already know all the important information available in SDB's major works relative to Church of God history. Any growth in our knowledge of SDB history and its relationship with the Church of God will come from: 1. various holdings at Plainfield not found elsewhere, 2. SDA periodicals of the mid 1800's, 3. Church of God periodicals, diaries, minutes, etc. The first are of course available at Plainfield. The second are found at Andrews University and in part at Loma Linda. The third and most vital are in part found in Stanberry, but will soon be moved to Denver and perhaps xeroxed, but more likely microfilmed; and the New York Public Library contains most of the Bible Advocates from 1907 to present. (It was in the New York Public Library that I found in the Bible Advocates of c. 1907 a Mr. and Mrs. Gilstrap living in Ceres, California advocating to the readers the observation of all the days of unleavened bread. Others at this time were advocating so-called "British-Israelism".)

Various SDB works reveal some of their churches went over to the Adventists. I was particularly interested in the records-minutes-of these churches. Although the records were listed as on file, when read it was discovered the records were not those of the churches which merged into the Adventists-Church of God group, but were the records of SDB churches which were afterwards raised up in that same city, therefore called by the same name. Obviously the original record book was kept by the merging group. What became of these churches is a question for which we have not yet ascertained answers behind which are definite proofs. Indications are very strong that some of them associated with soon-to-be Church of God (7th day) leaders. Now obviously these churches are not those which did not join the General Conference c. 1806.

The truth appears to be that those churches which did not join the Conference did not because they could not. They were not permitted to join because they were fellowshipping first-day members. Other churches which did not join did not at that time but soon they did so. The only churches which could have remained outside of man's organization for proper reasons might have been those around Philadelphia associated with Able Noble. These were an entirely separate group of Sabbatarians maintaining only contact with the SDB. We are dealing with three groups of Sabbatarians:

1. The Hamford, Newport, General Conference group
2. The Ephrata, German mystics
3. The Able Noble "Quaker" group

The Noble group had nothing to do with the Conference. By 1806 only two or three of "his" churches were in existence. What happened to them? No one knows. No SDB book makes their history plain. Mr. Rodgers at Plainfield, when asked, said none of their historians had ever really made a study of them. Yet it must be remembered that the Noble churches do not tie in with the English Sabbatarians: Mill Yard, etc. Noble is said to have learned of the Sabbath in America. He then led some Quakers into this truth and began to raise up several churches around Philadelphia and later two or three in South Carolina-Georgia. I am inclined to believe for various reasons the Noble churches possessed more of the true doctrines than did the other groups. I think it was through his influence that more truth was made known to the "Newport" group.

The truth of the whole matter must be that despite the attempt at organization some of those members continued to constitute the Church of God. After all, the Church of God (7th day) did the same thing in the late 1800's and they continued to be the Church of God. No doubt it was not a move toward God's government. It was an attempt to cure their problems through the wrong medicine. But the condition they were in previous to this organization was wrong, too. They had been isolated, little, independent factions struggling to do things their way. So instead of tracing the churches which did not join the conference and ignoring the ones that did (as this leads us to dead ends and churches so weak they entertain first-day people) must we not see where the Conference churches take us?

Most of them lead us nowhere! Just to further depeneration. But as one reads their history one can see the true doctrines appearing over and over again. Many of these conference people rejected the Trinity. Some denied eternal hell-fire. Other people rejected the immortal soul. Some tried to adopt a government from the top down--they left the Conference c. 1850. Some individuals observed the correct Passover. Out of this loosely knit group of churches a few individuals whose names we have become leaders and members of the Adventists and later we find some of them in the Church of God (7th day).

It seems that God for some reason raised up a new people in the North-Central states and Mid-Western states through which he would preserve and restore His truth. Various SDB's who were worthy He led into this new group thus establishing direct continuity back to England. Certainly some of the Church of God leaders came through the Millerite Movement, some were even SDA, but many were not associated with either (some preached against Millerism and SDA'ism). Evidence proves our history can bypass the entire Millerite Movement. Incidentally it appears to be a fact that

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very few SDB's were even affected by the Millerite fiasco of 43-44. But MANY were affected by the Advent preaching of a Millennium and unconscious state of the dead in the late 1840's and 50's!! But this was a far different message than that delivered by the non-sabbath-keeping Millerites! And more importantly a far different message than that of the E.G. White visionists!!

It is obvious to me that if the 18th century Newport-Westerly church were here today and had to select which of us were their descendent (SDB or Church of God) how could they pick the millennial, trinitarian SDB church?

Incidentally, Dr. Hoeh, I have before me the mention of a Sara E. Armstrong and Susan M. Armstrong of Clarence, Cedar Co., Iowa taken from the HOPE OF ISRAEL c. 1867 (now BIBLE ADVOCATE). They were Sabbath-keepers of the Church of God. These two sisters had a niece Emily J. Martin of Tulleyvine, Carvine Co., Ireland. Susan and Emily died c. 1867. Susan was 18 years old and died of typhoid fever. Perhaps you would know if these Church of God members are any relation to Mr. Armstrong. If there is a connection I would like to know.

Having a part in preparing the history of the Church of God has been a thrilling opportunity, succeeded perhaps only by the fact we are also making it. Thank you for the trust you showed in me in this enterprise.

I remain in your service,

Phillip Arnold