



# United News *Philippines*

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News of the United Church of God, *an International Association* - Philippines

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February 2004

## Messrs. Baker and Meeker Visit the Philippines

### Visit to Tacloban, Leyte

The Leyte Park Resort in Tacloban City became a mini-F.O.T. site when about 80 members in Leyte, including 25 to 30 new ones, combined for a whole-day Sabbath service with the presence of two visiting ministers from the U.S. last January 31.

Many gave positive comments, particularly those who had attended for the first time. They have observed how UCG conducts services, and witnessed the warmth and closeness that prevailed among God's people.

The new ones took a variety of our publications which were displayed on a table near the entrance of the service hall. Some asked if we still have copies available or if there was an obligation to pay. A relative of a member commented: "We should have joined their church earlier."

For the members of UCG in Leyte, one word can best describe their feeling—satisfaction. Satisfaction because it was a plan that was most fulfilled. The background of this was an assurance that not long after the Feast, the Church leadership through its representatives will visit them. They were doubly satisfied and highly appreciative of the fact that their guest was not only Mr. David Baker, the senior pastor of UCG in the Philippines, but also Mr. Joel Meeker, a representative of the Council of Elders.

Mr. Baker and Mr. Meeker gave split sermons in the morning service. Mr. Baker spoke on the subject of the promise made by Jesus Christ that He will come for the second time to liberate mankind from Satan and

See "Tacloban," page 4



**Messrs. David Baker and Joel Meeker (seated third and fourth from left) with some brethren during the combined Sabbath service in Tacloban, Leyte last January**

### Visit to Davao City

Philippine Senior Pastor David Baker and Council Member Joel Meeker arrived at the new and beautiful Davao City International Airport in the afternoon of Monday, February 2, for a quick visit here. They arrived aboard a connecting flight earlier that day, fresh from their Sabbath visit to Tacloban and tour of the City that Sunday.

On the evening of their arrival, they were hosted for dinner at the Office rooftop garden by the Macaraeg family. Early the following morning (Tuesday), they were accompanied by Davao Church Pastor Edmond Macaraeg in a visit to two nearby members' home to take some pictures of the actual living conditions of the members. Then, they proceeded to the Church Office to take some pictures, and footages. After an early quick lunch, they proceeded to the airport to catch their flight for Manila.

### Visit to Manila and Corregidor

After arriving Manila on Tuesday afternoon, they had dinner with Manila Church Pastor Rey Evasco with his wife Cynthia and Northern Luzon Church Pastor Eriz Dizon with his wife Teresa.

Early the following morning, they headed for a visit to Corregidor Island, which was historically the last stronghold for the combined Filipino and American forces shortly after the start of World War II in the Pacific.

Thursday, they left for Hongkong to meet with UCG members there as well, after which they headed back home for the U.S. ■

—Reported by Edmond Macaraeg

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## Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

### A Few Stops Along the Way to the Philippines

Greetings en route to the Philippines! Mr. Joel Meeker and I are traveling together through India and Thailand on our way to the Philippines. I departed my home on January 13 and Mr. Meeker departed from his home on January 15. Mr. Meeker was traveling to India via Mauritius and we planned to meet in Bombay or Mumbai as it is now called. I traveled to India via Thailand.

I arrived in Madras, or Chennai as it is now called, Friday afternoon, January 16th. That evening I spoke to a small group of Sabbath keepers at the home of Michael Hubert. About half of the group is baptized. I spoke on the subject of our calling and the fact that we must be called, chosen and faithful.

Saturday, January 17, I traveled to a small village at the outskirts of Madras and visited a small group that is beginning to learn about the Sabbath. I spoke about the decision of Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and how that decision has led to the religious confusion of the world.

Before leaving Chennai, I left Michael Hubert with a CD containing our Bible Reading Program. I thought our reading program would offer these two small groups a structured approach to studying the Bible.

Sunday afternoon, January 18, I traveled to Bangalore and met with a prospective member by the name of Paul. Paul's father began receiving the Plain Truth in 1968 and raised Paul based on the truth he understood from *The Plain Truth*. (Interestingly, Paul's father never contacted WCG). Paul is fully aware of the Sabbath and Holy Days as well as the paganism involved in many of the "Christian holidays." He receives our publications and has downloaded and read most of our booklets. He also listens to the sermons posted on our website. Paul would like to be baptized and we have been counseling via email. We covered a number of scriptures on repentance and faith during our meeting. Hopefully he can be baptized in the near future. He would really appreciate your prayers about his job. He

is a computer programmer by profession but is having difficulty finding work.

Monday morning, January 19, I met with a couple of former members of WCG. I have known them for many years. They left WCG a few years ago and are currently attending the Anglican Church. They have some hurt feelings in the way they were handled in WCG shortly before they stopped attending. They indicated that they wished UCG had a congregation in their area.


Monday afternoon I traveled to Pune to meet with a prospective member by the name of Prakash. I met with Prakash, his wife and his wife's brother from 6:30

to 9:30 p.m. Prakash is a former Hindu from Gujarat. When he converted to Christianity his parents and friends abused him to the point that he left his province and everything that he owned to settle in Pune. He checked out Catholicism and Pentecostalism. Two or three years ago he heard a broadcast by Gerald Flurry on a television station in India. He wrote and requested literature from Flurry's organization and through that contact has read much of Mr. Armstrong's material. He contacted UCG via our website and has read much of our literature.

I have been corresponding with him since August 2003. Prakash is excited about the truth. During our meeting, we discussed the history of the church and God's Word. Had his young daughter not been so tired, our discussions would have continued beyond the three hours. Prakash and his wife have requested to be members of UCG.

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**“Editorial,”** continued from page 2

Tuesday afternoon, January 20, I traveled to Mumbai. Joel Meeker arrived at 3 a.m. on January 21. After a few hours of sleep we took a brief tour of the city of Mumbai. Thursday morning, January 22 we flew



**Mr. David Baker with brethren in India during Sabbath services in Madras (above) and Aizawl, Mizoram (below)** (photos by David Baker/Joel Meeker)

to Calcutta. After checking into our hotel, we took a brief tour of the city visiting the tomb of Mother Teresa and the grounds of the Victoria Monument. Friday morning, January 23 we flew to Mizoram. We arrived at the Lengpui airport at 1:30 p.m., and were met by three members of the Church of God (Israel). The Church of God (Israel) has requested to become a part of UCG. From the airport we drove to the capital of Mizoram, Aizawl. We had to register at the police station because Mizoram is a restricted area in India. Foreigners cannot enter this area without the approval of the government in the form of a Restricted Area Permit (RAP). After registering at the station, we traveled to the home of some Sabbath observers in Aizawl. This family observes the Sabbath but does not observe the annual holy days. After a brief visit we drove four to five hours to Kolasib arriving at approximately 7 p.m. After an enjoyable meal and wonderful fellowship, we retired to the government tourist lodge for the evening.

Sabbath, January 24 we attended morning, afternoon and evening services with the Church of God (Israel). I spoke about our calling in the morning and Mr. Meeker spoke about “Seven Keys to Answered Prayer” in the afternoon. After the afternoon service we visited the site of their new church building, which is currently under construction. Afterwards we visited

the homes of some of the members of the Church of God (Israel). In the evening service, P. C. Lalvuana spoke about the true gospel. After the service I showed some slides of my family and photos taken during the F.O.T. in the Philippines. Sunday, January 25 we spent the first part of the morning visiting more of the homes of the members. After a meal we conducted a Q&A for approximately three hours. We answered a number of biblical questions such as the correct date for the Passover and Pentecost, circumcision, the Great Tribulation, the Place of Safety, and the location of Christ’s headquarters during the millennium. We also gave an overview of the United Church of God in terms of our mission and structure. Mr. Meeker gave a PowerPoint presentation on GCE, COE and Home Office operations. After the presentation we met with the elders of the Church of God (Israel) to discuss their request to become a part of the United Church of God. Mr. Meeker was able to relate his experience in working with the Remnant Church of God. We pointed out that there were some doctrinal differences as well as practical differences between UCG and the Church of God (Israel). It was decided that we will spend more time getting to know each other and will continue to dialogue with each other in terms of our differences and concerns. The elders of the Church of God (Israel) stated that their desire is to seek to become a part of UCG. After dinner Mr. Meeker showed a video presentation on the work in French-speaking Africa.

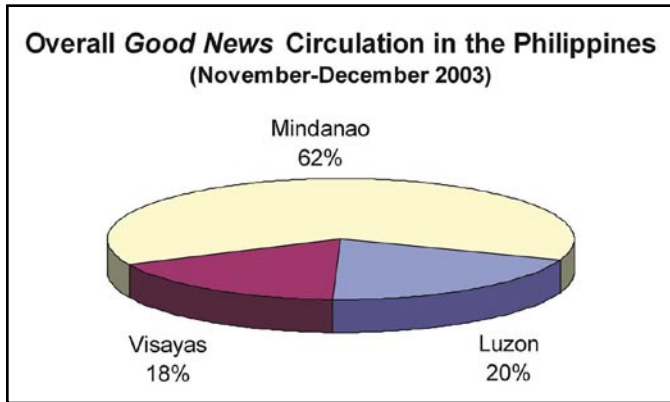


Monday morning, January 26 we interviewed P. C. Lalvuana about the history of Sabbath keepers and the Church of God (Israel) in Mizoram. After an enjoyable breakfast we said farewell to the church members and embarked upon the two-hour trip to Lengpui airport. Along the way we observed the beautiful scenery of Mizoram with its bamboo foliated mountains. As

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## Nov/Dec 2003 Good News Circulation

Area	Mailed	Distributed	Overall
Luzon	1,638	200	1,838
Visayas	1,120	500	1,620
Mindanao	2,787	3,000	5,787
(Combined)	<b>5,545</b>	<b>3,700</b>	<b>9,245</b>



### “Tacloban,” continued from page 1

to establish the Kingdom of God. Mr. Baker used the analogy of a promise made by General Douglas McArthur to return and liberate the Philippines from the Japanese forces during the early stage of the Second World War. Mr. Meeker gave a sermon entitled the “Paradoxical Commandments” with ten points on how to do the right thing even if others will not.

We then had a buffet lunch shared by all who were present. For the second half of the afternoon service, Mr. Meeker presented pictures of the Home Office building, its staff, and its various facilities. Mr. Baker on his part presented his latest travel in India where Mr. Meeker met him before proceeding to the Philippines. He also showed some photos taken from last year’s F.O.T.

The following day, Sunday—with our two deacons in Leyte, Candido Merino and Raul Villacote, their wives, and a number of brethren—we visited the site where Gen. McArthur (with then Philippine President Sergio Osmeña and his party) landed to fulfill his promise to return. We then toured the Sto. Niño shrine in Tacloban built by former first lady Imelda Marcos.

Mr. Baker and Mr. Meeker also took the opportunity to visit some of the brethren for more fellowshiping. Mr. Meeker recorded the events throughout their two-day visit with his video and digital cameras.

We sent off our two U.S. guests in the morning of February 2 to board a Cebu Pacific flight bound for their next destination, Davao City. All in all, the Tacloban visit was a big success by God’s blessings for His work in this part of the world. ■

—Reported by Florante Siopan

### “Editorial,” continued from page 3

the road snaked along the steep slopes of one of the mountains we were reminded of the potential danger of the terrain. As we rounded one curve we passed the scene of an accident from the previous evening. A large truck had veered off the road and over a precipice resulting in the death of three people. We arrived in Calcutta in the late afternoon and departed for Thailand at 1:45 a.m. on Tuesday, January 27 to visit the Youth Corps volunteers serving at the Legacy Institute. (Legacy Institute is a school that was established to teach young people from Thailand, Burma and other parts of Asia such subjects as English, speech, music, computers, basic Biblical instruction and agriculture).

We arrived in Chiang Mai at 10 a.m., exhausted and spent the afternoon and evening with Leon Sexton, director of Legacy Institute. Wednesday, January 28 we visited the Legacy Institute and spoke with the students and teachers. Mr. Meeker and I gave them a brief report about the areas in which we work. After sharing lunch with some of the teachers, we observed them teaching their classes and tutoring some of their students. In the evening we enjoyed dinner together at a riverside restaurant in Chiang Mai. During the meal we were able to discuss some of the challenges that our UYC volunteers faced. Thursday, January 29 we met with Leon and Gloria Sexton and discussed some of the challenges they face in running Legacy Institute in Thailand. Thursday evening we visited with the UYC volunteers and afterwards enjoyed a lovely meal with the Sextons. Early Friday morning, we departed Chiang Mai and transited through Bangkok on our way to Manila.

I look forward to seeing some of you during our brief visit to the Philippines. I hope to spend the Sabbath with our brethren in Leyte during this visit. I wish I could visit all the pastoral areas during this trip but it is just not possible due to so many stops along the way. It is my desire to visit northern Mindanao during my next visit. ■

## Distribution of Regular Publications

Area	UN	WNP	VT
Luzon	30	30	36
Visayas	50	50	25
Mindanao	190	190	100
(Combined)	<b>270</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>161</b>

The statistics above represent the number of *United News (UN)*, *World News & Prophecy (WNP)*, and *Vertical Thought (VT)* publications distributed to members in the Philippines on December 2003. **UNP**

## Handmade Paper-Making Workshop Held in Bukidnon

by Jovy Gumban

The United Church of God congregation in Kiara (a municipality of Don Carlos in the province of Bukidnon) hosted a seminar-workshop called “Handmade Paper-Making Technology Demonstration” last December 16, in the school compound of the Bocbob National High School (BNHS), in the barangay of Bocbob (adjacent to Kiara). Volunteering to jointly coordinate the activity in behalf of the BNHS were church members Mrs. Jovy Gumban of the science department (Chemistry major) and Mrs. Naressa “Nadie” Rico, faculty vice-president and clinic-in-charge. The workshop-seminar itself was conducted by Elbert Gargar, a licensed professional agriculturist and church member presently residing in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur.

The said seminar-workshop was participated in by 60 students from different year levels, plus 15 faculty members, and six other members from the Kiara congregation. Since the process of making paper involves many stages and procedures, it took one whole day to achieve a finished product. But because of the novelty of both the process and the product, all attendees were all eyes and ears throughout, with the students showing full enthusiasm in participating, especially during the hands-on phase of the workshop—which also served as the output for the seminar.

Due to the success of the affair, the Bocbob National High School thanked the United Church of God for the opportunity to co-host, present, and share this useful technology to its students and faculty, as well as the community at large. ■



**A demonstration of handmade paper-making**  
(photo by Edmond Macaraeg)

## Overcoming the Mountain One Step at a Time

by Dan Jorgensen

There is something about getting out into the mountains that is irresistible. A recent hiking trip to the top of the highest peak in Luzon provided some challenge. I really would have rather gone at a later time since I lacked some of the usual gear (like a sleeping bag and a backpack). But the experience was to prove worthwhile in spite of the difficulties. Some opportunities come when we may not be fully prepared. But they are not to be passed up.



As hiking trips go, this was one of the easier trips of which I have been involved. Since that first hiking trip with my father when I was about seven or eight years of age, I have backpacked many hundreds of miles in varied geography in several countries. Each trip has its own “character,” its own unique challenges and triumphs. This recent trip to the summit of Mount Pulag was no different in that respect.

Mt. Pulag (or Pulog) is situated roughly in the center of the Mt. Pulag National Park. This national park was established in 1987 and is a treasure that deserves the protection that has been enacted through laws. The park can be accessed by several routes and our party chose to enter by probably the easiest route. After all, the five people who comprised our group were not exactly in the best physical condition for a strenuous hike.

The trip initially started without us even putting on our packs. We received a briefing and instructions at the Mt. Pulag National Park Protected Area Office (PAO) in Ambangeg, Bokod, Benguet. The rules and regulations were explained and we paid all the fees (and I have never encountered so many fees anywhere else I have hiked).

Once we departed the PAO, we started walking up the road. The road immediately started climbing from Ambangeg but we were rather fortunate that a truck happened to come by and we were offered a ride. That turned out to be a big help as it meant we only had to hike the last half of the distance rather than the

### Baptisms for January 2004

This calendar year started with two baptisms; one in Cagayan de Oro City Church last January 25, and another in the Davao City Church last January 30. The two baptized individuals were Mr. Inocencio Cruz and Miss Cheryl Igloria, respectively.

—Reported by Edmond Macaraeg

See “Overcoming,” page 6

**“Overcoming,”** *continued from page 5*

entire 16-20 kilometers. A cold night was spent at the ranger station. While it was beginning to show signs of deterioration, we had cooking facilities, toilet, and ice cold spring water. The fact that there was no electricity seemed not to be an inconvenience at all. And one could ask, “Is it really a hiking trip if all the comforts of home are available?” Why go hiking in the outdoors if one has to bring all the “stuff” from home?

In the morning, we proceeded up the road toward Mt. Pulag. The peak actually is situated in a series of mountains and from below it was not completely clear which peak was actually the highest. But the trail was relatively easy. I say that because I have hiked in many mountainous places where it was almost impossible to hike on foot without mountain-climbing gear. But whether the trail (terrain) is easy or nearly impossible, every hike has the same basic requirement. You cannot get to the top of the mountain or to that great fishing get-away without taking the first step. And then the next step, and the next, and so on. Every hike, whether one kilometer or 100 kilometers, requires one step at a time. So it is with this life.

Something I have noticed over the years of hiking is that every person has his own pace. Some people go like the wind up the mountain. Others plod along like a turtle, slowly but surely. Others seem to fly up the trail but soon get tired and have to rest frequently. On this trip we had folks hiking several different “speeds.” An important lesson I learned quite some time ago is that one should hike at his own pace. When everyone tries to hike at the same speed, there are problems. Either the fast hikers are frustrated at the slow pace, or the slow hikers are left very far behind the speedsters. By hiking at one’s own pace, everyone will get to the same destination, but not necessarily at the same time, unless they quit. But that was NOT an option for us.

Herein is a lesson of life, not just of hiking. The Christian journey is all about overcoming “mountains” on the way to “the mountain of the Lord.” We read in the Bible about the “hike” that we are on. It says in Matthew 7:13-14 that the way to life is through a strait gate and it is narrow and very few find it. Our path, or trail, if you will, is not easy. It is a challenge. Even on a relatively easy trip like the hike to Mt. Pulag, we struggled physically. After a few hours, the legs begin to ache. And the heart rate is so fast it may seem like one

is going to run out of breath. And the backpack seems to get heavier and heavier, digging into the shoulders. But we continued, one step at a time.

On some hiking trips one cannot see the destination until one arrives (such as a secluded alpine lake). But on this trip, we could see the mountain (Mt. Pulag) once we crested a ridge about an hour’s hike from the ranger station. With each step, we drew closer to the mountain. But the trail seemed to be longer than we expected. As we later discovered, the distances listed on the signs were misleading as they were not the actual distance of the trail but the “direct” distance. The temptation to stop, especially when it seems like the mountain is just as far away as it was several hours ago, is very real. But then we reminded ourselves that the hike was not complete until we reach the summit. This was why we came.

After setting up a camp, we made our final assault to the summit. The trail followed the nearby ridges, circling around the canyon but gradually rising. This made the hike fairly easy. However, when we reached the last 200 to 300 meters, the trail became steep and difficult. And that is so often the case, it seems. The last is the hardest. But we kept going, one step at a time. Then suddenly, we were at the summit. And all the struggles and pains were forgotten for a while.

There is something that just cannot be put into words when you sit on top of a mountain peak above everything else. For a few moments, we were above the whole island of Luzon, even above the clouds. It was an inspiring and terrific view. On the afternoon when we reached the summit, there was a sea of clouds in every direction but the mountain protruded through the clouds in warm sunlight and it seemed like we were viewing the scene from a bird’s-eye view.

The hike of life to the Kingdom of God is a long, tiring, and sometimes seemingly impossible journey. But we know because of the promises of God that we can make it. We do not attain the eternal inheritance in one day, nor do we achieve it in a single effort. Just like climbing the mountain, it takes time and continuous effort and is accomplished one step at a time. As the going gets steep, our pace slows. But we are never to quit. Every mountain is conquered the same way—placing one foot in front of the other until the summit is reached—one step at a time. How was your progress today toward the mountain of the Lord? ■



**Dan Jorgensen (in checkered shirt) with his group on the peak of Mt. Pulag, Luzon’s highest**

# Do You Know The Origin of Valentine's Day?

by Edmond Macaraeg

*Valentine's Day is one of the most loved tradition which is celebrated every 14th day of February. Do you know its origins, and how it became a so-called Christian celebration? More importantly, what does the Word of God say about such celebration?*

Usually, red and pink plus heart-shaped objects are chosen to represent this day. In addition, little chubby infant-looking naked creatures with little pairs of wings at their backs and a small set of bow and arrow in their hands called Cupids complete the motif.

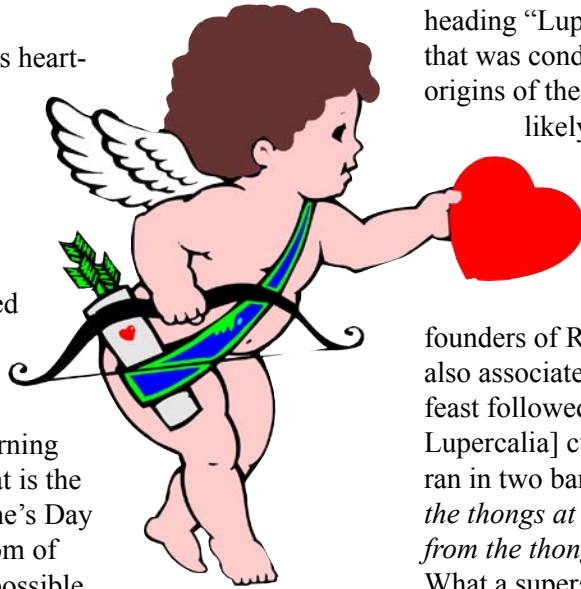
It is time we ask some very important and fundamental questions concerning this popular celebration: What is the relationship between Valentine's Day and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God? Or what could be the possible relationship between Valentine's Day and Jesus Christ or God the Father? Of course, the answer is: Absolutely nothing! As a matter of fact, the word "valentine" cannot even be found in the entire Bible!

These shocking facts should shake and wake people up! However, equally astounding is the reality that most people—including noted legal luminaries, scientifically-minded scholars and even theologians seem oblivious to the truth and are virtually asleep! Truly, a formidable spirit of deception has blinded most of humanity (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9).

## Origin of Valentine

The *American Heritage Dictionary*, third edition, defines the noun "valentine" as a type of greeting card, or a special gift sent as a token of love, or it could refer to a person singled out especially as one's sweetheart on Saint Valentine's Day.

The *2001 Britannica Encyclopedia*, standard edition, gives these facts: "[date] 3rd century, Rome; feast day February 14; [Valentinus] name of two legendary martyrs... One was a Roman priest... who suffered martyrdom during the persecution of Christians by the emperor Claudius II Gothicus... The other, bishop of Terni, Italy, was martyred, apparently also in Rome...



*It is possible these [two] are different versions of the same original account and refer to only one person."*  
[Emphasis, mine.]

## Lupercalia

While we have found the origin for the name, we need to know the source of the customs associated with this celebration.

The same *Encyclopedia Britannica*, on the article heading "Lupercalia" states: "ancient Roman festival that was conducted annually on February 15... The origins of the festival are obscure, although the

likely derivation of its name from *lupus* (Latin: "wolf") has variously suggested connection with a primitive deity who protected herds from wolves and with the legendary "she-wolf" who nursed Romulus and Remus [the legendary founders of Rome]. As a *fertility rite*, the festival is also associated with the god Faunus... The sacrificial feast followed, after which the Luperci [pagan priests of Lupercalia] cut thongs from the skins of the victims and ran in two bands around the Palatine hill, *striking with the thongs at any woman who came near them. A blow from the thong was supposed to render a woman fertile.*" What a superstitious myth!

Other reference works affirm that in ancient Rome, this pagan feast day was known as "Lupercalia," or the "feast of Lupercus." "Mid-February was traditionally believed to be the start of bird-mating, and thus considered an ode to the *god of fertility*, and a *celebration of sensual pleasure, as well as to meet and court prospective mates*... When the young men wanted partners for the dancing... they drew the names of girls from a bowl, and many times they became sweethearts." This custom went on for hundreds of years. Even present tradition involves showing affection to the extent wherein it is common knowledge and practice for most to be lax and allow some type of license to the commission of immoral or licentious activities—in honor of the spirit associated with this day.

## Efforts at "Christianization"

When increasingly more pagans affiliated with the brand of Christianity adopted by the Western Roman Empire, they also brought their favorite pagan customs, including this "feast of Lupercus." With the Roman Church now having gained a stronger foothold, it set about substituting pagan traditions with Christianized names. But it was not easy.

See "Valentine's," page 8

“Valentine’s,” continued from page 7

In fact, Pope Gelasius I, originally outlawed this pagan festival called Lupercalia. As can be expected, he found great difficulty in abolishing this well-entrenched, centuries-old custom of the pagans. To solve the problem, he simply replaced the name of that pagan celebration with the name “Feast of Purification” in A.D. 494. Thus, “Lupercalia” became known as the “Feast of Purification” and was later called “St. Valentine’s Day.” In effect, it is the same dog, but with a different collar.

Confirming this process, the book titled *Chambers’ Book of Days*, Volume 2, describes what happened: “the church [meaning the Roman church] endeavored to amalgamate, as it were, the old [pagan practices] and new religions.” The steps involved: “transferring the heathen [pagan] ceremonies to the solemnities of the [Roman] Christian festivals, to make them subservient to the cause of religion and piety.” Commenting on the outcome: “The result has been the strange medley of Christian and pagan rites...”

### What Does God Say?

Obviously, our beliefs and conduct should not be based on what the ancient pagans did. Therefore, what does God have to say in matters of adopting pagan customs and beliefs?

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 says, “When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them..., and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; *you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*” [Emphasis, mine]

Are we faithful enough to follow God rather than the established traditions of man, even if such will lead to a very narrow, difficult, and unpopular road? (Matthew 7:13-14). What else did Jesus say concerning the subject of human traditions and worship?

Mark 7:6-7 reads, “...Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines

the commandments of men.’” We read here that it is possible to claim to honor God, and still be worshipping Him in vain.

### Is Love Not of God?

Some may somehow still reason that since Valentine’s Day represents love, and that since God is also love; then it is okay to be part of this popular activity of love.

This of course, is faulty human reasoning—which according to the Bible “is *deceitful* above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9) [Emphasis, mine].

Instead, let us see how God defines love; in contrast to how humans sometimes define love—especially most Valentine-types of love—which may be more properly translated as “lust.” This word simply refers to the selfish, immoral, and carnal desire which is usually expressed sexually. Not that sex is wrong per se (because God is the creator of it), but its proper place is only within marriage—not outside of it lest it becomes sin.

So, what does God say about love?

John 15:10 says, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

Did you notice the link between love and commandment-keeping? How many preachers in this world would believe these exact words of Christ? Did the apostle John change his mind about keeping God’s commandments toward the end of his life, as Christians supposedly grew in doctrinal understanding? Let us read what he still believed in toward the end of the first century.

1 John 5:2-3 says, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Most preachers say that God’s commandments are a “yoke of bondage,” and are thus obsolete. But these and other Scriptures are very clear! Whom would you rather believe?

This world’s problem of being under a worldwide blanket of deception and sin will soon come to an end. Notice Isaiah 25:7, “And He will destroy on this mountain [government] the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” May God speed that day of this world’s deliverance from Satan’s influence and all types of paganism in this world! ■

