

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

◇◇◇ Brother,

Hook's books are in our in church library along with a lot of other selections. Yes, we are selective on what we put in the library. But we are always looking for opportunities to put more in there. I would entertain a list of good books, or even a book. I (a preacher of almost 50 years) have placed my entire library into the church library, and invite other preachers who are ready to go home to consider putting their books in a church library.

I enjoy your articles and was amazed to learn of the number of copies that have been printed and distributed around the world. People are hungry for something more than tradition.

Keep up the good work, Gary Flom Box 1061 Torrington, WY 82240

◇◇◇ Cecil,

I have personally heard Bush lie on TV several times when he says things that just are not true. A half truth is a whole lie!

Please don't talk about talk shows to me as each day I hear the Republican attack dogs "spin" their lies and filth. Limbaugh & Hannity are two of the worst spinners on radio. The mode of the Republican's is attack, attack, attack!!! It doesn't matter if it is true or not just say it enough and people will believe it.

I am really disappointed in you Cecil as I thought you were smart enough to see through the Republican line of half-truths.

I do think brother James had a lot to say about the rich, not to mention brother Jesus. I am on some chat rooms with people who are mega rich Republicans and they have made a killing off this disaster already but are whining about the money the government will spend helping the people who have everthing. God will have a special place in Hell for those who think like this and most are Republicans. Since you don't seem to see through this issue clearly, I am beginning to doubt your views on other things. -Texas

◇◇◇ Brother Hook,

Thank you for your dedication and devotion to the things of God. I just joined the group. I have read some of your writings in the past and God has used them to enlighten me.

I pray for His continued blessings on you and for the strength to do all that He has in store for you.

Jeff Riddle

◇◇◇ Amen to your essay of 21 September! It seems a bit strange for people like you and me to now feel the need to say, " yes, I do understand the gracious gift of Calvary...but let us not forget that in our teaching the unbeliever, God's absolute justice must be shown!A. C. Oliver

◇◇◇ Cecil.... It is too bad that you do not have either the time or inclination to apply the keen insight you have so remarkably demonstrated in the scriptures to politics. If you did, you would soon realize that "W" is as much of a political opportunist and

hack as any Democrat. I could give you a VERY long list of Bush and his administration's lies...but to what point? You don't want to acknowledge it anymore than "old path" CoCers want to acknowledge what you write about scripture. And while asking us not to be hypocritical, in the same post you attack Cindy Sheehan while asking us to focus on what we share in common instead of what divides us! I only take you to task on these things because I truly believe you are and have been an incredible asset to our Lord's church and that when you speak many listen. My advice would be to leave the things of Rome to the Romans and focus your writings on the things of Christ. Remember, o venerable sage, our kingdom ain't of this world!

Your brother in Christ and His freedom, Jim Abb Michigan

◇◇◇ Hello Bro. Cecil,

It was great talking to you today. You are, in fact, BRILLIANT!!!

Thank you for your love, kindness, friendship and fellowship and also thank you for your wisdom and instruction. In Christ, Anthony

◇◇◇ Two of my friends that I gave copies of FREE IN CHRIST many years ago told me recently that reading it changed their lives forever. Your thoughts and perceptions that you share have opened many eyes and hearts. I can never thank you enough. Parxy Oklahoma

◇◇◇ Brother Hook, This is to let you know that I continue to enjoy reading your articles and have been keeping many of them in my files. God bless! s. magkachi saboy

Hello Cecil, My name is Sandy and I am a sister in Cincinnati, OH. I am rereading your book "Free In Christ" which is exactly what I've needed. I am thoroughly enjoying it as well as being challenged by your book. I am convicted by all the legalism and potential legalism that is in my walk with the Lord.

I actually was converted in a main-line (traditional) church of Christ in 1980. Then from 1981 -2002 I was part of the International churches of Christ. Have you heard of it? Well if you have then you know all the good, bad and ugly of it all. I learned so many phenomenal things while in this ministry such as learning the Scriptures, evangelizing and studying the Bible to help people come to a faith and become a baptized believer (disciple/Christian) and help "teach them to obey everything". I won't deny that there were some very wrong teachings and wrong use of authority etc.....so there is joy and pain as I look back over the 22 years in that ministry.

My family and I are now a part of a "main-line/progressive" church of Christ and the people are very, very loving. I am grateful for total acceptance and love that they have extended to me and my family. we are struggling though as there are many differences such as the people having a lack enthusiasm; lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, aren't sharing their faith or inviting people to church and really don't have deep relationships that include prayer/confession/accountability etc. We are pushing through all that and believe the Lord will help us to build great relationships etc.

What has surprised/shocked us is that there seem to be many people who feel that if someone has been baptized from a Baptist doctrine...they see them as a sister/brother. I know that the Baptists teach and believe that they are "saved" when they ask Jesus into their heart and then they are baptized at some point "as an outward sign of an inward

grace". So...from all that I know...their belief is the prayer (sinner's prayer) is when they cross over from darkness to light, whereas the Scriptures clearly teach that when our sins are forgiven that is the point in time we cross from darkness to light. Fellow brothers/sisters won't say "they are lost" or need the gospel.....they've been baptized and it isn't up to them to judge. I agree about not judging,... but aren't we to assess who is and who is not in need of the truth? Isn't it important knowing that only the blood of Christ is what saves/cleanses us and that happens in baptism...not via a prayer. As we both know it isn't the baptism that saves...it's our faith that when we are in baptism (it symbolizes us participating in Christ's death) we are dying to ourselves, being buried with Christ (that's the point of being cleansed/forgiven) and raised to a new life, receiving the Holy Spirit.

I was wondering what your perspective on this very one point is. I don't want to be tied to any legalistic man-made law and I cannot see myself accepting (at this point) anything different... though I'd be willing to listen. I'd appreciate your time and insight. in Christ, Sandy Jacoby

<<<< Cecil, my brother, Just a note here, to tell you how much I enjoyed reading "End-Time Prophecies" All Fulfilled. What a Joy, what a treasure. (What a pot you've stirred!!!) I have to wonder if our Father in heaven rejoices to see his children set free, if it makes Him just as happy to "free us" from the bondage of men's (and our own) thinking. I have to believe it just makes Him so happy when His kids are rejoicing over His gifts to us.

I have spoken recently with my Florida mother about some of "these things" and just talking about the "Lord's return" as being already fulfilled – hooboy!!! That gets her going! (May the Lord open her heart/mind and enable me to be a patient teacher.) As you might imagine, I have spoken extensively with my brother about the spiritual nature of the kingdom and the events surrounding 70 A.D. –his eyes are starting to open! I sent him selected reading materials – but he hasn't seen your "End-Times Prophecies" yet. I would like to get about a half-dozen copies to pass around. Hope the enclosed amount is enough. Thanks so much, brother, for sharing all the Lord has shared with you. Take care – love and blessing to you and "the Princes" that live with you. – Texas

<<<< Both excellent and timely, Brother Cecil, were your comments on the old, old argument. I have often thought how fortunate in all this hullabaloo that what counts is that I believe with all my heart that God is--and that I am His child!!! Yours in Jesus, Aline

<<<< Dearly beloved in the Lord, sometimes (but not often), out of the fiery ashes of debate a seed of truth takes root and blooms. Hang in there! Your brother and servant by reason of Calvary, Neal

<<<< Thank you very much for the mot recent Freedom's Ring. I believe it was a superb description of the beginning and following matters. I recognize you as a very deep thinker and would like you to put your mind to thinking about the benefits of a complete faith in Jesus Christ and of what having that kind of faith avails us. I happen to have that kind of faith, I think. With love in Christ, George

<<<< Great essay! Thanks for your many contributions to the Lord's work, and your willingness to question...Jim Haugland

ecil

You sound like a Gnostic. You know the Gnostics could not believe in the fleshly god or his resurrection. It was a miracle. Do you believe it happened? How about the seven plagues the parting of the sea? 6-7 day creation is right in there with the flood and the ark!

I believe in miracles!!!!

How did you learn so much science!

Did you ever take nuclear physics; I did at an Ivy League school. Because of $E=mc^2$ the speed of light relates mass energy and time. Carbon dating is science and it uses C the speed of light to date fossils. Einstein as, smart as he was, thought the speed of light was a constant. Within the last year or so this has been proven wrong

The EPFL team has brought applications of slow light an important step closer to this. Using a technique called Stimulated Brillouin Scattering, the researchers were able not only to slow light down by a factor of three from its well established speed of 300 million meters per second in a vacuum. They have also succeeded in speeding it up - making light go faster than the speed of light.

Now if a team of French scientists can slow or speed up the speed of light could your god? And, if he could do this he could literally create the world in 6-7 days using his laws already in place. Of course it would be a miracle

You are trying to avoid miracles, but God put them there so you would collide with them. Miracles yet to come will surpass the ones that have happened. I can't wait

Oh what about DNA --- the vocabulary to describe DNA is data bank , library Knowledge base, Did your scientist heroes like Darwin know about DNA?

And I know the dna of monkeys is similar to the dna of humans And a ford mustang is similar to a 10 wheeler (pistons, crank shaft)
But a mustang is not changing itself into a 10 wheeler.

The evolutionist needs time for a monkey to change into a man With 6 day creation there is not enough time.

I respect you lack of faith, you only need a mustard seed worth

God Bless you
Tom

UNPUBLISHED notes

<> Thank you so much for writing these books. I feel so much more love toward others knowing we have more in common. I don't feel pressured to tell them they're lost because they don't believe as I do or the CofC teaches. Because I feel less pressure, I have more desire to love. Now I can concentrate on seeking the ones who really are lost. -Benton, KY

<> Your website is great and very useful. I've bookmarked it. Keep up the good resources. Best greetings from Germany - Helmut

<> Hey Cecil! This is my first time to visit your site and I love it . Ray and I still talk about our retreat in Montana with you and Robert Roland and the other Christians that weekend in the mid-90's. The freedom that we learned was available to us was your gift to all of us and the greatest we had received except for God's Grace through Christ at baptism. Your books have been such a blessing to us in helping us with new understanding of God's word. Thank you Cecil and say Hey to Lea for us! -Katy Lupton, Sheridan, WY.

<> I am 32 yrs. old and just beginning to question some of my life-long beliefs. Any words of advice or encouragement are welcome. -Crystal Boyter
<claimsrep@hotmail.com> WV

<> Nice Site!! -Philip Rickwood <philip@our.net.au> Devonport, Tas Australia -

<> I just wanted to thank Cecil Hook for sending me some of his books when I was in college a few years ago. They helped me through a time when I began questioning the Churches of Christ doctrines and attitudes. Sometimes I think I could have given up altogether on Christianity because of the negativity and anger I experienced from my church upbringing. It was great to hear a positive message of hope rather than condemnation. I'm now attending a Disciples of Christ church, which has given me a greater appreciation of the Restoration Movement (a movement I used to disdain because it led to the church as I knew it). I attend the church where Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone joined ministries, and it is different from churches of Christ (very different interpretation and view of scripture, which is refreshing). I've passed on Cecil's books to others from my home congregation where I grew up and they are passing them on as well. Thanks for your perspective on things! -Suze <suzie@insightbb.com> Lexington, KY .

<> Great site, thanks! -Henry, Coral Gables, FL

<> I have really enjoyed reading "Free in Christ." It, along with God's help, has changed my life from legalism to freedom in Christ. Thank you for blessing both me and my husband with this book. I was given your book by a dear friend; now I am

buying one to share with someone else. I pray that God will work thru this book to change their life as it has mine. -Yolanda, AL

<> Very good, very helpful. -Tim Lewis, <tlewis@jaengineering.com>
Huntsville, AL

<> Dear Cecil, I am always delighted to hear from you, and it hurts my heart to know that you and Lea are in declining health. I know we can't get out of this world alive, but you have been such a blessing to so many people that it is difficult to realize that you are reaching limitations. Be assured that you are much loved and appreciated by Christians all over the nation and perhaps the world. You will be remembered for setting Christians free who were already free but didn't know it, and certainly not joyous about it. Thank you for all the good that the two of you have done. God will surely bless you. Love in Him, -Iris McAnear, Decatur, AL

<> I would like to compliment you on this book (*Free In Christ*). I have grown up in the Church of Christ and I have learned a lot in the past 3 years. It's really sad what we allow ourselves to become. If we would keep our focus on the right things (love and grace), we wouldn't be stuck in following law. There are a few people I know that should read your book. A lot of us need our eyes opened! Our hearts need thawed! - Arizona

<> Good Afternoon! We are Pastor Michael and Sabrina Raibon of Safe Harbor Christian Church, Safe Harbor Christian Ministries, in Kissimmee, Florida. Your website is truly a gift from God! WE AGREE WITH YOU 100%!!! Words will never be able to express how much you have blessed and encouraged our spirits. You are an answer to countless hours and nights of prayer. We don't need to tell you how much testing and hostility we have received from other churches and brothers and sisters in Christ. So we ask that you pray with us and for us that God would grant continued boldness, courage, strength and wisdom to move forward in Him come what may. We welcome and would appreciate a word of encouragement from you as you are led at anytime. Our congregation is a little over a year old (in it's foundational stage) and we have diligently prayed that God would establish us a foundation of His Truth and His Righteousness, a foundation that is solid, unlike any other, not built on the religious traditions, doctrines, hypocrisy, heresy and the sin of man, and that He would build upon it in His Way and in His time for His Glory alone. We believe we are forerunners and one of the few remnants of a "faceless" generation. And, it is our desire to be TRUE worshippers, who worship the Father in Spirit and in TRUTH. If you have any books or reading materials that we can order please email the link or the order form to us. Thanks so much for speaking the TRUTH! Have a blessed evening!

<> Cecil: I more than approve of your stuff, I approve of YOU, brother! (I may be guilty of being like the little 5-year-old boy who was thought to be mute. One day at breakfast he suddenly said, "This toast is burnt." His mother exclaimed, "Hallelujah, it's a miracle! But why haven't you spoken before?" The little boy replied, "Everything's been ok up till now!") I have seen some of the reader responses you publish, and they all seem to be glowing accolades. I figured you get plenty of that, and that your time to

read and respond is limited, so I generally only write when I'm having difficulty with something. Forgive me if I have given the impression that I don't approve. I believe in you, Cecil, and I am glad to be in fellowship with you in pursuit of God and His Truth. I consider you to be a mentor and liberator of many, one whose final years have been dedicated to discovering what matters to God and sharing that with His people. And I gratefully and unashamedly embrace fellowship with anybody who cares about the things God cares about. Love and respect, Lance Campbell

◇ I'm so thankful for your work. I continue to pray for you daily. -Julie, Indiana

◇ I love this article (Our Purpose on Earth). I'm not a scholar, but sometimes I read something that seems so clear to me, and I felt that way when I first read Rev. 4:12. That creation of man (and woman) was such a pleasure to HIM, and He even designed us in a way that would make it possible to experience that same pleasure. Being a mother, I feel closer to God, because I can understand HIM. I feel the greatest pleasure I've experienced is being loved by and loving the sons I have given birth to (with the help of their father). The love I feel for them is indescribable. I would give my life for them. And HE did. Would it be too simple to say, he wanted the love of a family, of children? -Emily Ketcherside, San Antonio, TX

◇ This is another one of those for which I had to say "Thank you" (Our Purpose on Earth). I agree 100% It seems that C. S. Lewis had written something along these lines, about "enjoying" Him. I can't remember where now, except in his book, "Meditations on the Psalms." Further, isn't that in the (gasp) Apostles' Creed -- enjoying Him. I pray you to keep on keeping on for a long, long time. -Jeanie, <jmayhew@preferred.com>

◇ I am writing to thank you for all the help you have been to me over the years. I just want you to know that I appreciate you sooooo much. I am sorry that the financial situation of the Freedom's Ring, etc. is not so good right now but maybe my small contribution will help in some way. -Mary Joyner, Granbury, TX.

◇ I have enjoyed so much reading The Death to the Custodian, and have now started on The Twisted Scriptures. We live in a town where it is so legalistic I feel like I am drowning. I had a conversation with our young preacher, and I told him that we spend more time worshipping the worship service than we do worshipping God. I told him that we are under grace and not under law. He proceeds to tell me that we are under the law of grace. I didn't think you could have both!! He is so set in that mindset that I do not think anything could budge him. The only ones that the elders will listen to are the ones who have always run things. One of our friends was told that this is the way it had been for 50 years, and they didn't like new people coming in and trying to change things. We drive about an hour on Sunday morning to a congregation where you really feel like the spirit of Christ is in the minds of the people. I long to be close to a local church so I can feel like I have that support. My husband was sick for 5 weeks and I was sick for 2 1/2, and the only people to call were two women the first week. Not one elder called. We went back and people ask if we had been sick. It was in the bulletin. Anyway, thank you and like-minded people for giving us something to hold on to. -Arkansas

<> "You know EVERYONE is ignorant, only on DIFFERENT SUBJECTS !!" Thanks for putting your guest book out so we can leave a message. Thanks again! [:-) -Margo, Via Con Dios M. Lou, LA, CA.

<> Dearest Brother and Sister Hook: Thank you so much, as partners in Christ for allowing his Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen you in your proclamation of how to have Liberty in Christ. I truly believe your eye-opening, heart-warming work, Free In Christ, is words of holy inspiration. I am a 61 year old man, baptized Church of Christ member 41 years. During the past 6 years I have had some of the same revelations that you revealed in your work. So many wonderful perspectives and understandings of who God expects us to be as Christians, you have so boldly placed in print.

As Christians we have the Holy Spirit helping us when we allow him to. I feel this book is a continuation of the Holy Spirit's guidance in my service as a Christian. I also feel God's word teaches that his Holy Spirit works through his disciples to enlighten, strengthen, and give hope to one another. Again, thank you so much for such a breath of fresh air for our smothering brotherhood! Through your book, I'm continuing to grow in Christ, as I study his word with a better comprehension. -Mississippi.

<> Every seeker should read "Free In Christ." -V.Kay MacManes LoveJKQ@aol.com> Machesney Park, IL

<> Yes, I really enjoy reading your material. I read your book, "Free in Christ" nearly 10 years ago in a group setting with some folks from church and it really rocked some boats, but I must say, it changed our lives for the better. (The congregation) is much more free in Christ than it used to be, Praise God!) -Signed

.<> Thank you for your work. For the past year I knew that something was wrong with my church but right with the Baptists. It was a love for Jesus Christ. I couldn't resolve some of the inconsistencies of "necessary inference" and how it was selectively utilized. Thank you for your book "Free in Christ." I have only started reading it, but it affirms what I knew in my heart and was seeking to find on my own. Your years of exploration have saved me years of searching. Thank you again. -Galen Garrison, Tampa. FL

<> Dear Cecil, Good morning, I am a recent convert to the Catholic faith. I was raised in a small Church of Christ here in the panhandle of Texas. I did not find your article offensive in the least (Priests, Celibacy, and Pedophilia). I don't agree with some of your conclusions such as how the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary came about, but I do find your insights into the celibacy of the priesthood and how homosexuals can be attracted to it interesting.

The Catholics I know realize that the celibacy of priests is strictly an issue of tradition and that it does not have much Biblical support and could be changed by the Church, although I doubt that it will.

Thanks for your thoughts, Cecil, and keep thinking. You and your writings have helped me in numerous ways and have been instrumental in God's leading me to where I am

today. May the Grace and Peace of Jesus be with you and your family. -Davin Winger
dwinger@gruver.net

<> Cecil Hook has been a long time inspiration to us during our many struggles while my husband was an elder in the church of Christ. We found so much hypocrisy and the other elders met "in secret" without Tom because they were conspiring to fire a young minister who dared to question the theology of churches of Christ (sectarian viewpoints). The church had started with 7 families, grew to over 120 and now since we continued to support this young minister (outside of this group) has dwindled to around 30 or so in attendance. This body has no intention of evangelizing our community, but rather remains "cloistered" and segregates themselves from our brethren in other churches (because "after all they have the truth"). We were privileged to have met many wonderful men and women of God at Blue Ridge Encampment in North Carolina for many years. While there we met Rubel Shelly and are ardent subscribers to "Wineskins" magazine. May God richly bless Cecil Hook, Rubel, Mike Cope, Bill Smith, and others who are braving the winds and remaining in the firing line with the Churches of Christ. A former deacon (now evangelist in Church of Christ) refers to the "Yellow Pages" churches of Christ....as we all (who take the name of Jesus) are in His church. We are happily worshiping and active now with the Christian Missionary Alliance church nearby. Many "hurting" people are finding Christ, his free (to us) salvation, and most loving grace! God Bless. Francia (and Thomas) Engle
<flrengle@bright.net>
Wapakoneta, OH

FR 145

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

[Many weeks have passed since I share your responses. These are from welcome letters, email, and the Guest Book. They are selected at random. Surely, you can identify with some of the writers. I have abbreviated some at the loss of many amenities and kind wishes. There are plenty more for another edition which I plan to send very soon. Sincere thanks to each of you for your prayers and supportive notes. -CH)

<> Thank you for mailing the books I ordered. I can't seem to read them fast enough! I've had many of these same thoughts for many years. You are doing a good work. Keep it up! -Jan, Noblesville, IN

<> I have finally found somewhere to go to that feels the way I had felt growing up but no one really ever discussed these things. The church as I knew it faded, and I feel the light has been turned on! I knew it was out there, it has always been in my heart. - Emily, MARIETTA, OH

<> Howdy all. May God continue to lead you on into all His Truth in His Holy Spirit. :) Love from Mumble. -Nadine Tauri <nadineis@maxnet.co.nz> New Zealand -

<> You are 30 years older than I, and your thinker is much better than mine. At one time Jesus was awarded a compliment that the common people heard Him gladly. Well

I believe you share the same gift. You have made so much scripture more understandable to me. I am grateful for the effort you still put into teaching. Hope this (a donation) helps in printing those books you talked of in today's Freedom's Ring. Also thanks for mentioning Bob Rowland's new book. Though I was born much later than you all, I remember getting electricity, used the outhouse till I was in 7th Grade, going barefoot on the farm in the summer, squishy chicken poop between my toes :-). That should be a fun book. Yes! Bible prophecy deals with redemptive history fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus' listeners. -Clair Pecinovsky, Cresco, IA.

<> Praise God, you have a site to be Blessed by. -Lewis Paulhamus,Jr
<cb4jesusmininc@enter.net> Wind Gap, Pa.

<> I have just read your e-mail on "blood" and its role in the "life" of a Christian. It was excellent. I teach a Sunday School class, the "over-the-hill" gang as I like to call them, and I have told them often that, if I were asked to choose one single thing which is essential to life as a Christian, as blood is essential to the life of a human being, it would be LOVE OF GOD. First iterated in Deuteronomy 6 and oft repeated throughout the scripture, it was pointed out by Jesus to be the foundation of all the law and the prophets, the supreme commandment. Thank you for being there, Cecil. I enjoy and am instructed by your Freedom's Ring letters. - Orin F. Schwanke, Leonard, MO.

<> I would like to thank you for all the encouragement you have been to me through your continued efforts of teaching God's Word. It has meant so much. It has helped me to appreciate God and what He has done and thus helping my faith. I have never written, yet read so much, and how many out there are like me? Please continue to do this work as long as you see the Lord sees fit for you to do so. Grace and wisdom to you. -<sjjfarms@nemontel.net>

<> Cecil, I greatly enjoyed FR # 130 -- the applications to 'lifeblood' are rich. You, like Paul, use great plainness of speech. No fancy words ... people, all people, should not have to do mental gymnastics (interpretation) just to understand what should be made plain in the first place. YET, that is exactly what modern religionists have done. They conceal (garble) the message in terms many do not readily understand. No wonder so many are turned off, turned away, or just confused rather than enlightened. Who could embrace such a thing? Thank you for sharing the things of GOD, the good news, with such great simplicity. It is to your credit ... and to the building up of us all.... in love....through Him who first loved us. -Gary Nunn, San Antonio.

<> Nice site. Very well done. -Johnny <stymiee@hotmail.com>
Pine Hill, NJ

<> Bro. Cecil, thanks so much for your wonderful ministry. I have shared your books and weekly emails with countless people through the years....you may never know the outreach you've had until we all meet around the throne. God bless, Glenda McDougal
<gcmcdougal@hotmail.com> Greenwood, AR

<> Have been given a few books by a good friend of mine who became my mentor some time ago. Since he was called home by the Lord, I will be getting in touch with you for some of the books he lent from time to time. Most bookstores in this area do

not carry your books. Thank you for the work you have done to seek out the truth. Though I have been an elder in the church of Christ, there are none in this area that I moved to. I plan on working in the Church of Christ here which is denominational. I have taught some classes locally and they want me to work with them. I will take on anything that I can further the cause of Christ in TRUTH not compromise.

<Stuart.W.Smith@att.net>

E.Otis, MA.

◇ Mr. Hook, I read your book "Free in Christ" in 1991 and it blessed me. I met you at Jubilee in 1995 and that was an honor. I know you have faced critics a plenty - but I thank you for standing for freedom and SEEKING Biblical truth with a passion. I am not ashamed of my church of Christ heritage, rather I seek to serve the Lord and Him only. Not unwritten creeds of man. Thank you for this web site, there are plenty of materials that I will read that I have wanted to read and you have placed on here. Thank you! -matthew pittman <deejaydr@yahoo.com> Columbus, OH.

◇ Great site, lets keep this one going. <xboxmodchip1@yahoo.com>

◇ Nice site! keep up the great work! Bye. -kontaktanzeigen

◇ I noticed two messages here from my cousins, Francia & Emily and wish to add my comments. My mother is 89 years old and because I no longer attend the Church of Christ she worries that "my soul is lost". This is very sad to me, for she genuinely grieves! I've been trying for years to explain that I am indeed a member of the body of Christ even though I don't attend the 6th & Washington C of C! I have written a book entitled "*From Bad Girls to Righteous Daughters*" which details my (and others') experiences with God's awesome grace. I believe with all my heart that Jesus is Lord! Thank you for breaking out of the religious traditions! -Mary Ann Sandstrom <mas1422@wirefire.com> Marietta, OH

◇ Greetings to you and your guests. Love what you've done with your site. As an educator I can say you have great communication skills. -Catherine. La Mesa, CA.

◇ The other day, as I was reading one of your "Faith" installments, it occurred to me that Paul had a face-to-face, unique encounter with the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus. He SURELY believed at that point and was repentant of his past actions. Afterwards, he prayed for THREE days. Was he brought into a saved relationship with God by that prayer? (If he was not saved by the "sinner's prayer," I do not know who would be.) Apparently, he was NOT yet saved; because, after ALL that praying, what was he told he STILL had to do? "Why are you hesitating? Get up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Wonder why he was told that if he was saved immediately following his rather extensive "sinner's prayer"? Thus, we have a very clear example that the "sinner's prayer" is not an effective means to salvation -- just as you have said numerous times. I wonder why the "sinner's prayer" folks never noticed (or failed to acknowledge) that clear counter-example before? - <lochamy@aol.com> TN.

◇ I've just been reading your treatises on being justified by faith. They are good but long. Feel free to correct me if I am wrong, but in a nutshell are you saying: (1)

confess/accept Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, (2) repent/turn from one's sinful lifestyle and commit to follow Jesus' teaching daily, and (3) be baptized (immersed in water) as a final act of obedience in the process? This is not to exclude the fact that a person's life will henceforth bear the fruits (works) of a Christian believer. I am 67 years old and a retired public school and industrial teacher trainer. I try to reduce things to the lower possible denominator although some things take more explanation than others. - <swdavis@flash.net> Arlington, TX. (Right! I know you also mean that it is not just a ritualistic formula but it involves obedience from the heart.)

◇ I'm coming to you again with another request for some copies of Free In Christ. The message is spreading and I am excited. I have opportunity here at this church to build a work based on Free In Christ (Biblical) principles. The old legalistic hardliners have about all died off. A few of the women that are left are still very prejudiced and won't let blacks into our fellowship. One woman told me, "A few more of us are going to have to die before that happens." Well, they're almost all gone. I don't want to feel guilty that I'm taking advantage of a church by leading through a transition to freedom. I'm tired of toeing the party line and I'm making that very clear and, so far, it's being accepted well. (He ordered more books.) As we change, I want all of the men to understand the foundation that we are building on. From there, I believe we can build a local work that is strong in the Lord. Brother Hook, I really appreciate your ministry. It has changed my life. I'm becoming a radical Christian and, even though change is hard because of my ultra-conservative background, it feels great. Lord willing, I can pass the feeling on, to the glory of God. -Randy, AL.

◇ Just found this website and love it. Thanks. -Mickey Slack
slickymack@hotmail.com> Sarepta, LA.

◇ We are enjoying reading the latest books that I ordered from you. They all just get better and better. Also, thank you for sending *Beyond The Sacred Page*, by Edward Fudge. Very good book. Sorry it is no longer in print. My wife and I feel so blessed that you have come into our lives. May God bless you in your work and continued service to the Lord. (He ordered twenty more books of four titles. ch.) -Greenville, MS.

◇ A friend passed along your book, Free In Christ, last week during Sunday morning services. I confess when she handed the book to me, I thought that this was probably just another book that would attempt to make the case for something or another that was one's hot button for the month. Much to my surprise, I found your work to be stimulating, well done and dealing with many of the issues that have damaged the Church of Christ across the last fifty years.

While brought up in the Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, TN and married to a woman whose dad has preached for 60 years in that group, we are all too painfully aware of the issues that have ripped, destroyed and alienated the brotherhood across this country. We have seen our own families struggle with the hypocrisy that we profess to each other while blindly we criticize and destroy those around us with our own blindness. Thanks for your work. -Robert, Columbus, GA.

◇ I hope life is treating you good. It saddens me to hear from you that your strength is diminishing. I enjoy your newsletter and I would miss your encouraging and

insightful writings if you get to the point where you can no longer write. Cheer up!
You still provide more encouragement by your newsletter than most of us would in a
lifetime. -Moises Lujan. (You may order free copies of Libre En Cristo, a Spanish
version of Free In Christ, from this partner in ministry, Moises Lujan, P O Box 972205,
El Paso, TX 79997; Email: <LUM0446@aol.com>)

(Cecil Hook; October 2002) []

FR 127

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

[Your notes continue to cheer me. Thank you for your kindness. I think sharing them cheers you also. So here are some more. You understand that these are hastily jotted messages rather than being carefully edited for content, style, and grammar. CH]

<> Dear Cecil, Thank YOU for this wonderful ministry! Before the Lord led me to your website, I was in the very dangerous spot of being a legalist. I read "Free in Christ" and was so blessed! I speak of you to others, not only as of a believing brother in Christ, but I think of you as a special friend because you have shared yourself in your books. If you are ever in San Antonio, I would love to meet with you and your wife. ~Aida Terzich

<> Thank you for the wonderful books. My only disappointment is that I did not read them when I was about fifteen years old. Much grief would have been saved. Yet God has his purposes, and my passion for Him has been renewed. Keep up the good work. -Steve, Dickson, TN.

<> I want to thank you for your website. I plan on reading more of it as I get time. I am 20 and grew up in the COC. My dad is a minister and graduated from Bear Valley. Since I was 16, I have been questioning my beliefs. I live in a very rural area and had a difficult time finding a church that agreed with my beliefs. It was not COC. My parents have since told me that I am going to Hell for not remaining COC. This has caused a great deal of pain for our family. Why can COC call themselves Christians when they can be so hypocritical? I attended Harding University for 2 ½ years and got into many discussions with my professors that ended with, "I'm the teacher, that's why." I guess what I'd like to say is, just "thank you." You have shown me hope. -Dana

<> I am reasonably sure you hear this all the time, but I wanted to say it myself. Thank you for investing the time and having the integrity to write and publish this book (Free in Christ). It has been a tremendous source of encouragement and hope for me and friends as we struggle toward a better relationship with God through a better understanding of the Law of Christ, and as we wrestle with those who do not see... . May God bless you in your continued work. -Rob, FL

<> Dear Cecil: I am writing you to tell you what a great blessing you have been to me. I felt that I was at an end or that I must be going crazy! My heart ached deeply for God's Church. I felt like I was being slowly boxed in. Then Rod, whom you have talked to recently by phone, told me about

your website. He and another friend showed me some of your books. Rod lent me "Free in Christ." This is exactly what I see and how I feel. My wife and I have slowly been being discouraged but you have given us a renewed hope that we are truly not alone in person or with Our Gracious Lord. It is amazing how we can be tricked and be made to feel that we are powerless but we know this does not come from God! I am going to read all your books and proclaim them and that God is in charge from the house tops. Thank you again, Cecil, looking forward to staying in touch and working with you and our Lord Jesus in His Vineyard. Love always in His Service, Kevin Ashmore <kashmore@telusplanet.net>, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

◇ From Freedom's Ring Discussion Forum: This morning I was reading through some of the messages here and wanted to recommend an excellent book for everyone's edification and enjoyment.

The book, published by Cecil, is Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship. It is a collection of fresh-air articles by the late Carl Ketcherside and Dr. Leroy Garrett. I really do want to get across that if anyone reads my article here and wants to go further into the thinking behind this site, this is the book to get. I have never read a book that answered more long-held questions and that lifted my mind and thoughts like this book did and does. When I'm riding the bus to work or when I have breaks during a workday, I pick up this book, read from it, and it really lifts my spirit. I've read this book a number of times and it is fresh to my mind and energizing to my spirit at each reading.

I've written about this book before here and just thought it's time to write about it again in case there are any members of this Discussion Forum who might not know about it. - stevec

[Thanks, Steve. I feel the same way about this book of 350 pages. I can commend it without flattering myself, for it is all selected material from these two courageous writers. Every chapter is vital and there are startling revelations for most COC folks. For instance, "The Sand Creek Address," by Carl Ketcherside reveals a defining point (a sort of birthdate of the COC!) in 1889. Order from me at \$12.00 plus \$1.50 for mailing orders under \$30.00. I have only 30 copies of this printing. The price will have to be raised considerably for the new printing.]

◇ Thanks for alerting us to "The Death of Custodian." I just finished it - can't believe I had not read that one before. Cecil, it had such an impact on me. I think I understand love - as I relate to everyone I meet - better than ever. Reading that little book has left me with a greater sense of my need to really love some I've shunned before. This has made me realize what an ongoing challenge it is to really love. I won't belabor this - just want you to know how touched I am by the contents. You bless my life. -Kay Scott, Georgia. <skscott@bellsouth.net> [Kay was a lovely teenager in our congregation in Port Neches, Texas in the early sixties.]

◇ [A response to "Before Faith Came - Faith Has Come"] It was by the gospel that they were saved while (just like Cornelius & family, for while Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all that believed. This was before any water was applied by Peter's ignorance, for Peter like you, still had rituals, ceremonial object lessons as primary, forgetting that they were only types and SHADOWS OF THE REALITIES THAT WERE TO COME, regeneration of Titus 3:5, [not by works of righteousness, ie. water baptisms, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing {Baptism} of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit], the same as the baptism of repentance, the baptism (spiritually) that changed ones mindset. OK? A WORK OF GOD NOT OF MAN'S HANDS. YOU ARE BEATING A DEAD HORSE!) Etc. -unsigned. [And who would want to sign a note of such ignorance and arrogance as to say Peter was ignorant and in error! Why perform such logical gymnastics (in the extended note) in order to deny the validity of baptism? There is no record in the Scriptures of God or the Holy Spirit ever saving anyone directly without any accepting action on the part of the believer. The Spirit fell on Cornelius' household to convince Peter that Gentiles were to be accepted rather than to save them or indicate that they were already saved.)

◇ Thank you sooo...much (for books sent). We are still sharing and trying to tear down "strongholds". Please pray for my husband who is a minister. He has been sharing these truths for the past several months w/a coc congregation who has for the most part been ultra conservative. To say the least, they do not like what they are hearing. Neither are they willing to study and examine the scriptures for themselves. My husband recently accepted other believers into our fellowship w/out requiring that they be "rebaptized" into another denomination. This is causing quite a "stir". I think some of them want him to leave because they feel he is teaching false doctrine when, in fact, what he is teaching is truth. But they will never know. In the coc we have been so convinced that we are the "owners and sole interpreters" of what is truth until everything else is rejected. He rode around for about two hours after services last night contemplating whether he should stay or go? Please pray for us..... -Signed. VA.

◇ Just want to say I love your questions and the depth of thinking they provoke. I try to follow all your reasoning but confess that I am not very scholarly and am better at singing all the verses to "Mary Had A Little Lamb" than I am at unraveling complex issues. However, I do believe that others will see my faith by my works (which won't save me) and that baptism is so beautiful it makes me cry. Your newsletter is the first thing I go to on my mail list and I thank you so much for continuing your service to Christ in this way. May He be glorified in all we do. -Susie Prater
<Sprater@webtv.net>

◇ I am so happy for discovering this website. My wife and I had been attending many Churches of Christ congregations and we indeed appreciate the consistency in their call for a radical restoration and return to Biblical Christianity. But as we progressed in the duration of our fellowshipping

with these churches, we noticed many less-than-ideal traits in their doctrinal stances. These churches tend to be very rigid in their beliefs, that they are the only authoritative interpreters of the truth, and, as a result, they tend to be judgmental and prejudiced against those brethren who might have held a slightly different viewpoint from theirs. What has become of the old restoration adage: IN ESSENTIALS UNITY, IN THE NON-ESSENTIALS LIBERALITY, BUT ABOVE ALL CHARITY? It is really very pathetic to see Churches of Christ unnecessarily dividing among themselves over trivial issues such as: one cup vs. multiple cups,/ wine vs. juice,/ leavened vs. unleavened bread,/ instrumental worship vs. non-instrumental singing, etc. and etc! These churches forgot to consider that to divide the Church which is the Body of Christ is more sinful than their trivial reasons to divide it. Apostle Paul himself exhorted us to always keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in almost all of his epistles. There were also so many instances that my wife and I noticed rigid and un-Christian legalisms in the way they treat the women in the church. The women were being marginalized so that they were not being given opportunity to offer their spiritual gifts and talents for the benefit of the church. They were prevented to fulfill their ministry as part of the Body of Christ. Did not the Apostle Paul say that Christ has already broken the walls of division in the Church and that there are no more distinctions between Jews and Gentiles and between women and men for all are one in Christ our Lord? Did not the same Apostle Paul say that we should always live in the glorious freedom which Christ has set us free and that we should not anymore get entangled with the yoke of slavery and legalism? I am really very happy to have found a kindred mind in your website. I am praying that you will continue to preach the gospel of Freedom in Christ to those who are still in bondage of legalism, prejudice, rigidity and judgmentalism. I am looking forward to a Church of Christ which loves with the heart of the Saviour, whose elders do not lord over God's flock but, instead, take care of it, a Church of Christ which is committed to sound doctrine, joyful living, spirit-filled worship, and full of love for the unity of the brethren. Keep up your good work. I am always praying for you. May your website continue to open the eyes of the brethren in the Churches of Christ to the call of freedom, love and unity in the Body of Christ. May God richly bless you AMEN! - Henry Francis Bibera Espiritu <henryfrancis@churchseek.net> Cebu City, Cebu PHILIPPINES (Professor of Philosophy, U.P.)

◇ I find your site very interesting. I believe God has called me to understand (and live) the depths of legalism vs His grace. Being somewhat of a perfectionist, I got under "the Law" early on in my Christian walk. This spelled disaster. But through God's lovingkindness and wisdom, I have deeply come to know the difference between Law & Grace. Actually, I don't believe one can truly and fully understand one without the other. Thank you for this site. May the movment of Restoration continue! God Bless, -Paul Miner <pminer@bellsouth.net> Atlanta, GA.

◇ I think you hit a "home run" with your article on adultery !!! Really, you have shed LIGHT on a subject others of us have "avoided"... God bless

you and Lea MUCHO - and I'll pass along the article... Have used the extra
"Free in Christ" books you sent to good advantage, also. In Him, -Gary

(Cecil Hook; June 2002) []

FR 121

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

[Your letters mean much to us. We share some of them here thinking that they touch on things relevant to you. Space limits us, so we choose some that are representative while omitting some equally interesting. Most are positive. Some seek answers to questions. A few are critical. All are read even though we do not have time to give lengthy replies. CH]

<> Dear faithful Bro. Cecil, Just a vote of confidence from an eighty-one year old female child of God: Your probing questions keep us alive, awake and aware -- of how much there is to learn, of how much growth still awaits us -- and how precious is the providential gift of our minds. All glory to our powerful, loving Creator! Yours on the way home, --Aline Edson, Ingram, TX. [Aline, you are a beautiful example for those stuck in tradition, for the alarmists, and for those who fear any change.]

<> I am so happy to be able to know that others have had a lot of the same concerns and questions that I have had for so long. Thank you for your website. --Heber Springs, AR.

<> I read with great delight your last article on the community church. My husband and I have discussed this many times. Our church has been consistently growing over the past 5 years and we will soon surpass our available room in our auditorium (which brings another set of problems - how to grow?). Our observations have been that we are not necessarily saving more souls but, in fact, sheep stealing. Don't get me wrong, we do not actively pursue other church of Christ people, but they come here because it is a pleasant place to be. We are concerned with how we will ever reach our community.

I was also excited to see that you had been in Bible Study Fellowship. I too am involved in BSF. I am amazed that someone with your knowledge and upbringing would go. I really admire you for that! I am completing my third year of study this year, and am successfully involving other women from church in this study. BSF has not only helped me but my marriage as well, as I try to involve my husband in what we are studying by sharing my questions and thoughts with him. We have both grown by me being in this wonderful program. Thank you for being such a willing servant of God! Your example shines so bright! --Tracy, Noblesville, IN.

<> Dear Brother, Complex society does NOT equate to loss of freedom! Where in the world did you get that? Society, complex or simple, requires order. Order requires proper behavior. Proper behavior stems from proper attitudes and values. Civil government can only keep chaos in check. It can never create order. It can never give freedom, but it should secure it. For you to assert that we should assent to the violation of the law of the land by our servants because society is "complex" is an abrogation of duty as a citizen of this country and a slap in the face of those who have sacrificed much to secure that liberty. You may want your children and grandchildren enslaved to civil government, but I can assure you that is not a happy circumstance and it will ultimately become a brutal one. You say you remember freedom and you are old enough to have lived in relative freedom. Most Americans today have never lived free. The government now

regulates or controls everything we do and takes 70-80% of our livelihood for the privilege of doing so. You are supporting a system that, step by step, is repeating the atrocities of Hitler's Germany but at a level that makes Hitler look like a slacker. It is time to wake up and smell the coffee. Your citizenship is a matter of stewardship before the Father and I pray that you will begin to be more judicious in exercising it than is reflected you comments. It is ironic that such statements would even appear in a newsletter with freedom in the title. I enjoy the newsletter and appreciate the challenging questions, but you need to give this freedom issue more thought. Peace, --Jim Wade

<> Cecil, Appreciate your article about Israel and Palestine. Somehow I think our well intended Christian futurists are going to be responsible for getting the rest of us committed to defending holy dirt and the resulting war will eliminate many innocent souls. Come to think of it, we have already started that war. So many unnecessary distractions. The devil is so smart. -- Gordon McElvany, Rockport, TX.

<> Thank you very much for the book, Free In Christ. I read it with big interest and found deep revelations in it. Missioners (from Texas) established our small church in Varna, Bulgaria. We try to preach faith in Jesus and your book will help us very much. -- Signed

<> It is in the simplest, most obvious observations that the greatest, most liberating truths gush forth and refresh tired minds like mine, and renew our perspectives on God's intent. Your article on immersion is just that. After writing and preaching on the beauty and glory of baptism, it's a tremendous relief to read this perspective you've offered. Slap myself and say, "Well, DUH!" Thank you again, Cecil, for cutting through the layers of old paint to expose the true grain of God's message. --Signed. Bangor, Maine.

<> Enjoy your page. Sometimes I agree with you and sometimes I don't. I believe its good to look at different points of view. --George Mckee <gmckee@kiva.net> Bloomington, IN

<> Thanks. "Am I being silly? It is our corporate silliness that has plagued us." I agree. Is there a difference between our own silliness and that of the Pharisees? I don't see any... . Fluctuating spirit: "Does the indwelling Holy Spirit ebb and flow... ? The power of God is in us at all times, not just when we are assembled." I agree. I always say, "we don't go by our feelings, but sometimes its nice to feel what you're going by!" Offering thanks for meals: "Then why not offer thanks for the coffee and donut at coffee break? Just meddling!" Thanks for meddling. If we don't ask ourselves these kinds of questions, we're sure to turn irrelevant, unreal and "silly." I appreciate your words. Respectfully, Brother Lance

<> I recently subscribed to the freedom ring newsletter. Those that I have received have been very poor. The last one which involved some quotes about the book of Revelation seemed to serve no purpose. The date of the book has always been in doubt and apparently good arguments can be made for different dates.

Am I to conclude that Ron McRay believes that the date of authorship is between AD 68-AD70. Am I to conclude that Cecil Hooks agrees with this. The purpose of quoting Ron McRay is not clear to me.

The newsletter that I have been receiving are poorly written and poorly edited. It appears that they are being done hastily and little thought is being given to the question: will the reader

understand and benefit from the content of the newsletter. [This is an unedited copy of the letter to which this reader signed his name as president of a specific “hi-tech” corporation. “Oh, to see ourselves as others see us!” My work needs editing while his short note has at least ten errors of grammar and spelling!]

◇ Thank you so much for the prompt response to my order. I scanned through I PERMIT NOT A WOMAN TO REMAIN SHACKLED and am so excited about what I saw. I think it will be very enlightening! --Linda, Tomball, TX. [A growing crowd is finding it so.]

◇ I have been greatly enjoying the online book "I Permit Not A Woman...". It has been quite exciting and refreshing to find that there are other thinking Christians who dare to question our CofC traditions. I have been criticized in some small local groups for challenging the assumption that we have already arrived at the totality of Christian correctness in our doctrines and practices, and for suggesting that open study, examination and thought might lead us to new conclusions. Thank you!! --David Berry, Springdale, AR

◇ Dear Brother Cecil -- I noticed that you seemed to be “for” having one of those “VeriChip” electronic chips installed! Am I correct? What if we could be possibly wrong, and this IS the “mark of the beast” ---could it be possible we don’t have the total understanding and that Revelation IS literal? And to take this “mark in our hand” would mean eternity in hell? I think it is not for me! Please expound! Thanks. --Sharon. [The first sentence of Revelation says the things revealed there were to soon take place. They were fulfilled in less than ten years! So we do not have to fear the mark of the beast. Relax and don’t pay attention to all the scary stuff being predicted by would-be prophets.]

◇ Cecil, I have all your “Free In Christ” books and they have been a tremendous blessing to me. I pray that God will continue to bless your work and that he will give you many more years. We need you! -WLS, Texarkana TX.

◇ Hi i am Tradanius I am a17teen yrs old young preacher I do not agree with you about the ucoc I am a member of the Church Of Christ the church that in the Bible. If you Believe what you say set up a meeting with me and some brother if we are in error. lets call bible things by bible names. lets do things in bible ways.If you are a True Christian you would. I am one I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus christ with all the false doctrine you are teaching. My number is (901)947-4555. I'll give you two weeks today is the 15th. I willing ready and able. with the word of God. Iwill see how serious you really are about the ucoc. Hear from you in two weeks maybe. -Tradanius [Surely, some of you preachers are reminded of your youthful zeal when you thought you could set everybody on the right track! This young man in Memphis posted this message in my website Guest Book for the world to read. It is copied here without my editing with no fewer than thirty grammatical errors.]

◇ I read Tradanius Beard’s note about debating our long time friend & one time pastor, Cecil Hook, and want him to know that Cecil Hook has been bringing the Word of God to people for over 60 years. You question his being a Christian. Cecil is the closest to being what a Christian should be than anyone I have ever known in my 65 years on earth. God will truly take him to heaven when the time comes, never doubt that. As a young man you should know Cecil is 83, and can not debate everyone who chooses to question him. He takes care of an ill wife & spends each day answering mail. Please study his books and be not arrogant. As a teenager you should learn from your elders. I appreciate your spirit & love for Christ, but do not hinder others by

being legalistic. God bless you in your search for truth. Love, Myrtle Clark, TX,
<omieof3@hotmail.com> .

<> Just a note regarding the young man, Tradanius Beard--although I commend him for thinking of spiritual matters at his young age, he should realize that what he has been taught up until now is just the "company line". He does not have the spiritual maturity to think for himself yet. I ask him to put his arrogance behind him and to keep an open mind. --Robert Loe, Mansfield, TX,
<robertloe@hotmail.com>.

<> I can't tell you how refreshing it is to find an open minded Christian. I don't mean someone that is moving away from the 'faith handed down', but rather someone that questions the tenets of the faith to see if they stand up to the scrutiny of sound doctrine. I say this, not only as someone that has come to the same conclusions in my own studies, but as one that for many years had to guard himself from the assaults of the Orthodox hierarchy for daring to hold such 'heretical' views. I commend you for your veracity and scholarship. Thank you. --Bradley R. Chappell,
<BearChappell@msn.com>, Tucson, AZ. [Brad is gracious. Having searched through some disappointing associations with Christians, he has now become a Buddhist.]

<> Thank you for your website, it is wonderful to know there are people who love God enough to continue to look at and study His Word with an open mind and heart. A friend of mine told me about this website. I pray God will continue to Bless You! - Kevin Ashmore, Edmonton, AB Canada, <kashmore@hotmail.com>

<> I am an elder in a First Christian Church/Church of Christ located in a remote barangay here in Angeles City (in the Philippines). A friend from an accapella church of Christ gave me a copy of your book, Free In Christ, and I found the subjects discussed in many chapters to be surprisingly sharing my own personal understanding of what a man should know and understand in order to acquire salvation. Most topics discussed, especially the "Gospel and Doctrine", are impressive and I would like to share this with our members in the congregation and to some of my friends. May I kindly please request you to send me free copies that I can distribute in the church? --Eduardo. [This brother was sent an M-Bag containing 15 copies of Free In Christ plus about two dozen assorted other books I handle. A gift from you who support this ministry.]

<> Dear Cecil and Lea, Thank you for your time and effort in your book. You helped me move away from "the church" doctrine and to focus on Jesus. May we always search for truth. Many blessings to you. -Wanda, Brenham, TX.

<> I have been studying the preterist viewpoints lately, and I have a couple of books concerning the Parousia. One of them was written by J. Stuart Russell. I find the book very well written, thorough, and it seems to cover every detail anyone would want to explore concerning the Lord's second coming having happened in the first century A.D. I find myself drawing all sorts of conclusions, "puzzle pieces" fitting together, and much more sense being made concerning N.T. prophecies and their fulfillment. If this view is valid, it blows my previously held beliefs concerning the Lord's return RIGHT OUT OF THE WATER!!! --Fred, Denton, TX. [A fast-growing number of students will heartily agree with you.]

<> Dear Bro. Cecil & Sis. Lea, Read your book (Free In Christ) sent to me by Ron McRay, editor of Eschatology Review. I enjoyed your book and agree with many of the things you wrote about -- Love God, Love men, that becomes the key. Love through our works shows our faith in

Jesus. Love is the end of the law. I've seen through denominations for some time and became a follower of Christ, not of man and his pie-shaped religion. I thank and talk with the Lord every day, not just 3,600 seconds on Sunday. God has become the center of my life -- my best friend. No one loves as he does. I have learned through His love how to love, "for He first loved me." Many rules of man take the body of Christ away from the Living, Loving God. I LEARNED TO LOVE THROUGH GOD'S WORD WHILE IN PRISON AND SEEING ALL THE HATE HERE. I LEARNED TO LOVE THROUGH THE HATE I HAVE SEEN AROUND ME. God showed me through prison life how important love for family is. God bless the two of you. - Frank Melfa, Auburn Correctional Facility, NY.

(Cecil Hook; May 2002) []

R 100

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

Your mail is always welcomed and read with interest. I do not always have time to give proper response to it all. Of the many notes which have come since my last column of this heading, I have selected a few that express views and feelings that are representative of others. Most of these are excerpts. All were signed but, not having sought permission, I will not reveal the identity of the writers.

<> "May God continue to bless your ministry. I cannot overstate the blessings and comfort that your writings have brought into my life. It is truly liberating for me to learn that I am called to be neither a watchdog of the public morals nor a guardian of doctrinal purity." -Michael, in Justin, TX.

<> "I especially want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the marvelous way in which the Lord has enabled you to ADJUST yourself and He has further enabled you to be in a continual state of BEING AWAKE, or no less than NOT unconscious, or un-teachable in your long life. So, please accept my compliments to you, for you and the way God has allowed you to put into print the very things that you have been able to SEE throughout the long life God has given you. It is simply SAD that so many preachers (ministers and elders included) have allowed themselves to be IRON-FISTED and CONCRETE COATED wherein nothing is capable of penetrating their 'shield of faith' (as I am sure they think it to be) and therefore they have become about as archaic as anyone could possibly be." -Bill in Lancaster, OH. [And we wonder why congregations shrink. -ch]

<> "Kindly send me inspirational Christian books that you might have to help me in my spiritual life. I desperately need these books, yet they are so expensive here; and we have a foreign currency shortage here in Zimbabwe which means that I am not able to buy them from other countries. Even second-hand ones will do. Thank you for your assistance. May you prosper in the spirit as I also prosper through these books." -Lillian Madiye, Zimbabwe. [Free books were sent to her. There is a limitless hunger for literature in some Third World countries. It is much less expensive to send the written word than missionaries. World Bible School is the most effective outreach of our time. Why not become involved in your own private ministry in it.]

◁▷ “I enjoy receiving your Freedom’s Ring emails. They always challenge my thinking and provide me with new and fresh ways of looking at God’s Word. I am the minister of the church in Abbotsford, British Columbia and always appreciate the encouragement of those who have walked in the steps of Jesus longer than I have.” -Norm, Everson, WA. [Norm, you and many others encourage us by your gracious notes. Like most of my readers, you appreciate challenges rather than just confirmation of status quo.]

FANTASTIC!! AWESOME!!

◁▷ “Dear Bro. Cecil, Greetings from the East! I have been wanting to write to you for a long time now. I am an Asian missionary living in northern China. My ministry focuses on bringing the message of God’s grace to the house churches of China. We operate seminaries as well as various training and support programs for house church pastors and leaders.

“It was only in mid-1999 that I stumbled upon your site and have been on your mailing list ever since. I want you to know that your ministry has not only blessed me tremendously, it has also brought great comfort and freedom to many thousands of Chinese believers in the persecuted house churches of China, unbeknown to you. That’s because I have incorporated your teachings into our seminary syllabus and training programs. The grace of God truly knows no barriers of race and culture!

“On behalf of the house churches of northern China, I want to say "Thank you", and may the Lord bless you with many more good years to feed His flocks. Only heaven knows how far your teachings have gone to set the people of God free to enjoy His love and forgiveness. Your brother in Christ, John K.

“p/s Please advise how I can sow into your work. Also I’d like to know how to order a copy of "Beyond the Sacred Page" as I do not live in the States. I have a forwarding address in Singapore and I am willing to cover any expenses incurred.” Your brother in Christ, John K. [Only God could give such outreach to this ministry in which so many of you are partners. Full use of our materials has been offered. I am awaiting further response.]

◁▷ “Dear Brother Hook, Howdy! From Montana. I just want you to know that Christ’s work through you has shown me freedom and love that I felt were possible, but could never achieve. My life has been so blessed, so blessed!, enriched and enlightened because of your courage to question and seek. I don’t know if I have the words or if there are words to express my feelings for your courage and love in Christ.

“I often time think about your loving and supportive bride, Lea. What a blessing she has been to us all for supporting your thought process and your courage. It speaks volumes for her courage and love for truth and Christ. Know that you are both loved -- deeply!”
[You are a blessing to us! Thank you.]

◁▷ “I receive your Freedom’s Ring email and love your articles on eschatology.” -Larry, Mesquite, TX.

◁▷ “I hope all is going well for you and Lea. I always enjoy your newsletter. I can’t help but think that you have caused many to take a new look at eschatology, just as you have made so

many rethink the legalistic bondage set forth by the c of c (and other denominations). It all boils down to freedom in Christ which is eternal life, true life.” -Love, Greg in Oregon. [I am pleased that so many are investigating with me without fear in this area of preterist eschatology which has been by-passed so long.]

<> “If the source of the word ‘denomination’ is from the verb ‘to denominate’ -- which means to set aside a particular name or expression for EXCLUSIVE use above ALL others, then the Church of Christ is the most rigid denomination going. And using ‘church’ instead of ‘Church’ is a laughable child’s game which changes nothing.” -Ron, Bayfield, CO.

<> “My question is: What does a Christian do when there is nowhere left to worship? All of the black congregations here are cut from the same mold. As my husband is white and I am not, it is difficult to find a place of peaceful worship. It is just a fact that in the South, black churches are more likely to accept couples like us. The congregations here have gotten to the point where they are teaching church rather than the gospel. There are all kinds of awful, sinful things going on, as well. If you question any of the practices, you are labeled and shunned.

“I have been staying home and having Bible studies with my family (grown children and grandchildren). They are all members of the same Baptist church. I have tried going there but the teachings are just too farfetched. They don’t teach Bible at all, just opinion. The children realize that there is a problem but have not yet been persuaded to leave. Its hard to teach them about the true church and not have any where to take them. I have gotten them to visit the COC but there was so much bashing going on that they were completely turned off. I have prayed for the Lord to put me in a place where I can worship him in peace, spirit and truth. But I have either not received an answer or have not been able to understand the answer. Probably the latter.” A Sister in Mississippi. [Sad! Realistic! Who can reform all those ills? Starting over at home may be the answer.]

<> “You have probably heard this many times through the years, but I simply wanted you to know how your books have helped me to realize how to apply scripture to finally ‘back-up’ what I have always believed (without the ability to prove it). At last, I am finding the true ‘peace that passes understanding’ and learning in black and white to actually live ‘Free in Christ’ within the ‘liberties’ He has give each of us. I am so ashamed of the ‘legalistic’ attitudes I once professed. However, I do ‘know’ only one thing for sure; my Father has known my heart and that I always wanted and prayed for WHATEVER His will is and NOT my own; and He has answered those prayers in His time, not mine. He always blessed me and my family so much. God is Good! I love Him and I thank Him for your ability. Keep on keepin’ on!” -Jeni, in Branson, MO.

<> “You have done so many things for people who are trying to reach spiritual maturity, and I appreciate your efforts. I received several of your books to share with friends, and I always read your welcomed emails. May the Lord bless you in all that you do for his cause.” Iris, Decatur AL.

<> “Thank you so much, Cecil, for all the spiritual insight you have given over the years to those of us who struggle to take hold of that freedom that is in Christ.” -Bob in Crestview, FL.

<> “The days go swiftly by as we can attest to, but this day is very special to those of us who appreciate and love you and Lea. The two of you have reached many milestones with the ultimate still awaiting, to be together with all of the saints of all ages. I have had the blessing of

meeting and sharing precious moments with the two of you at Jubilee in Nashville, Tennessee. Though the miles between are many, you are in my prayers and heart. I am forever grateful for your help in my growing in The Lord Jesus Christ.

“I hope this is a wonderful day of celebration for the two of you. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY"
[written for our birthdays on Nov. 22 and 24] and may the Lord continue to bless you from the gift of his "AMAZING GRACE".

“Thanks very much for the books. I already have a need to give others away and continue to be excited when I get feedback from those who read them. Your work in this ministry is truly a gift from God.” - Because He Lives, Darrell G. Goforth in TN. [It is beyond comprehension that God has sent so many of you wonderful people -- his best people on earth -- into our lives. He sustains us through you, our partners.]

(Cecil Hook, November 2001) []

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WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

“Thanks for the wonderful, informative and Biblical teaching on legalism. The cross is hewn out of the tree of life, not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If salvation (justification) is obtained at the tree of life (Jesus), how can sanctification be ‘achieved’ at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? One brings forth life and the other tree brings forth death. The evangelical church is mostly trying to get holy at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sorry. Wrong tree. Thanks again for your excellent teaching.” - Mike Murphy, <Aslan903@aol.com>.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated your writings through the years. You have a gift to lucidly present your case, and to cause one to consider his own place before God. I have especially enjoyed your several writings on the end times.” -Indianapolis.

“Just wanting to drop a note to you to let you know how much I enjoy these past Freedom’s Ring articles you wrote on heaven, resurrection, Christ’s coming, etc. You have such a good way of expressing thoughts and teachings in print. So much of the Bible makes more sense now, and I don’t think about living in fear of the “last day,” or the antichrist. Jesus is present... “the dwelling of God IS among men.” It has given me a whole new outlook on life ... love it!” -Iowa

“I have just finished reading the fourteenth chapter of ‘I Permit Not A Woman... To Remain Shackled’ and I could wait no longer to send an e-mail saying how thrilled I am to have read it. I always felt ‘we’ were missing some key information when teaching about women being in subjection to men, but I didn’t know what it was! Now I do, thanks to this wonderful book. I want to look up every verse quoted, and revel in my new feeling that God does not rebuke me for wanting to share my understanding, though men likely will.” -Susie Prater <Sprater@webtv.net>.

“Thank you, Bro. Hook, for your insight into the TRUE message of the Gospel. Your distinction between ‘Good News’ and doctrine was particularly helpful. I admire you for your courage to think and speak freely among brethren who can be as vicious as the Pharisees of old!” -Orlando, FL.

“I can only imagine how much fire you’ve probably come under from some brothers and sisters in the church, but I have to tell you that you’ve done more than you’ll ever know to encourage me to continue in my search for God’s real truth. Had reached the point in our local congregation that I was ready to completely give up -- that nothing I could ever do would be good enough for God, or in some cases, for His ‘chosen’ people, either.

“have finished reading your book, ‘Free In Christ.’ Inhaled it, would be a better expression. Now I plan to go through it at a more leisurely pace so I can study and annotate. Wish I could buy it for every member of our congregation here. Thank you

from the bottom of my heart for your humility and your love for a people who have wandered so far off the path God set out for them. I will be praying that your ministry can touch many hearts and bring about a change that cannot help but be beneficial and healing.” -A Sister, Safford, AZ.

“I am the preacher for the (name) church in Nashville, TN. I just wanted to drop you a note of thanks, and a note of encouragement. I’ve read your Freedom series and feel tremendously blessed. I’ve encouraged others to do the same, and the responses I’ve received have been very positive. Keep up the good work. God IS making a difference through your ministry!”

“I enjoyed reading your article this morning and am glad that I have a copy of James Stuart Russell’s book “The Parousia.” There is a lot of reading in this book and a very challenging book indeed. Like the books you have written, I am having to look at everything totally in a different way in which I had never seen it before. The way in which Russell presents his interpretations of the events certainly seem to fit. In reading anything such as this, I tend to take the other side, which says ‘prove it’ to me. In reading about the destruction of Jerusalem one can hardly imagine anything worse. The first time I read in detail of the outcome of Jerusalem it made me physically and mentally sick. So all those teachings of parables you mention are fitting to that time.” <r patton 2000@yahoo.com>

“I just wanted you to know I enjoyed your newsletter on prophetic parables. You did a good job. I hope there are readers who will grasp the truths you are presenting. The parables are all so rich once you see that all prophecy had been fulfilled by AD 70. Isn’t it amazing how we can see things so wrong for so long? But once the truth shines through, the result is illumination! It is so easy to understand why it was called the Good News. You made me think about some things I hadn’t considered before. Keep up the good work, and may God bless you always.” <logos@ViaFamily.com>

“Dear One in the Lord, please keep your ‘wonderings’ and other writings coming our way. I hope to continue to be edified by you until the Lord calls one of us home. When we meet before the Lord, I hope to have time to give you a big hug for all the learning and joy your writing has given me.” <Wenhudd272@aol.com>.

“Every time I think you can’t top Cecil Hook, you top Cecil Hook! That one yesterday was a ... a doozie, for lack of a better word. Keep on keepin’ on, brother, you get better as you grow older.” -Florence, AL.

“I am not sure where I heard this, it could have been on our site, but isn’t it true that most, if not all religion, falls into only two categories -- law or grace. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and some Christian faiths practice salvation by works. ‘For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’ We need to hang those words over the entrance to every church building. Sometimes the shortest and most simple of scriptures are the most profound.” <tantex@trip.net>

“Your thoughts on this subject (fulfilled prophecy) may have been long in coming, I don’t know. I know, for me, the light you shed on the subject is something I can embrace wholeheartedly. I started to see these things for the first time a year or so ago. I had asked for understanding on the subject for a long time and had wondered at so much of

what I'd read and re-read -- then, John Eoff gave me a copy of a little book that changed my thinking entirely. It suddenly all began to make sense -- the pieces began to fall in place -- the various writings, statements, and even The Revelation itself -- all these began to make perfect sense for the first time!!! It was the most exciting and revolutionary thing I'd ever heard. I couldn't stop thinking about the numerous passages of scripture that suddenly became illuminated.

"The little book? It was 'Behold, I Am Coming Quickly.' Many questions were answered for me that night and it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to view the scriptures as I previously did. So many things take on a different outlook from this "preterist" (if I should need to give a label to it) point of view. The truth is it eliminates the fear factor so rampant in our world -- the grandiose religion schemes whereby we have been duped into thinking that what has already past is yet to come! Thank you, Cecil, for an outstanding job on a subject many have yet to embrace." -Gary Nunn, San Antonio <gnunn@satx.rr.com>

"Please tell me how to order the book, 'I Permit Not a Woman...T Remain Shackled.' It sounds just like the book our church needs. We are once again looking at scripture to try to unlock they mystery of woman's role in the church, but we're not getting anywhere. A fresh approach would certainly be appreciated.

"I enjoy your work so-o much. We (my husband and I) have been in the COC for over 20 years but we were not raised in the COC. I have been able to find freedom in Christ again after being brain-washe for so many years. I realize now that I allowed it to happen because I was not praying and studying the scripture for myself. We are still in the COC only because we are seeing many, many changes for good in our congregation. It still has a l-o-n-g way to go, but at least the Holy Spirit is recognized as living and working in each of us -- it took a long time to get to that point." -Signed.

"MY BACKGROUND IS the following: I grew up in the family of atheists in Ukraine. In 1993 when the group of missionaries from KY, TN, and AR came to Ukraine, I heard and obeyed the Gospel. Very quickly I got involved in the active work of the Church. But more I grew in understanding, more I realized that my faith was based on some boyish enthusiasm rather than on some deep convictions. I started asking questions but got no responses from COC people. Actually, I did get responses but they were all so alike as if all these people grew up in the same "denomination" and were taught the same thing. That's when it hit me. These COC people represent nothing else than another "denomination." I am not raising the question of rightness or error, that is a separate subject all together. But "theology" all all these people, credo, if you will, is so alike that once you step a little bit to the right you are not recongnized as one of them any more. It was very strange to me and not good for my faith, frankly speaking. I started doubting. After a period of total unfaithfulness the Lord brought me back to my knees. I realized that I denied Him because of what other people say and practice. How foolish of me. I started searching on my own. Visited other denominations, worshiped with other Churches. Now I am trying to understand if it's possible for a person to find that "Ideal" Church where I can associate myself. Or anywhere I go I will see mperfections of faith (note that I am not saying "imperfection of behavior". That is inevitable anywhere you go). Meaning that all denominations, and all Churches are wrong at something. If this is true then how do I select "the most innocent wrong"? I hope you understand where I am coming from. Thank you very much for sending your

book to me. I pray that God will bless it and that you will be able to teach something through it." -NY.

"PLEASE ADD ME to your monthly newsletter subscriber list. I have enjoyed your comments on the "time factory" described in the New Testament and would enjoy reading more about the preterist viewpoint. Sadly, such a viewpoint is denounced in many churches of Christ and I am fearful of bringing the subject up without careful consideration of those present." -Houston.

"THANK YOU FOR SENDING the books. It was refreshing to talk with you on the phone and to be reminded that reform comes from within. Sometimes, especially over here, it is so easy to feel alone and that no one is sharing in your struggles. I know that believers everywhere are wanting to be free in Christ and that is something else it was nice to be reminded of. May God continue to bless you in this work." -Okinawa.

"I AM MINISTERING for a small church. It has been dead for ten years. I know, I was a member and its preacher ten years ago. While in Memphis seeking other paths, I ran into the new concept of Cell Group ministry. From that experience I looked into scripture as if for the first time and saw things I could not believe were there. I have been delving into the issues raised by Acts 2:42-47 and by 1 Corinthians 14:26 and was losing the fight before a relative of one of my members gave me your book. It has spread like wildfire in a number of days and is opening doors for the real Gospel." -VA.

"I WANT TO THANK YOU for these books. My husband has shared them with many people. I wasn't raised in the church but I have gained valuable and much-needed information from reading "Free In Christ." I'm so thankful for my husband who is so patient with my lack of knowledge and the books have helped."

"I HAVE NOW COMPLETED your book and I must say it is an eye opener, and amusingly enough quite a bit of it reads like the early Campbell and Stone material. How far we have strayed. One thing that I find interesting, especially in the light of Romans 14, is the fact that, although the Jerusalem Conference decided that Gentiles did not need to become Jews to be Christians, there seems to have been no time when the leadership said that the Jews would have to stop being Jews. This means that from very early in Church history we had two radically different styles of activity in the assembly and lifestyle. In fact many of their individual choices would have been absolutely diametrically opposed and would have amounted to sin in the eyes of their brothers. And yet in Christ all were one, even in their diversity. May He continue the ongoing work of restoring men to that understanding."

"I HAVE RECEIVED the M-Bag of books last Friday. I was surprised and very glad that you also included the book that I have asked you (The Stone-Campbell Movement). You know, many (preaching) school library don't have a copy of that book and other books that you published. That's why many of Filipino preachers don't really know the true motive and purpose of the Stone and Campbell Movement. Many believe that we are only for restoration and not for reformation. As of now, I started to contact those young people and young professionals that have met in the recent Youth Camp. And I'm ready to distribute it to them. They promise that they will read and study it carefully. Thank you very, very much, Cecil, for your continued support through the books that you are

sending to me. And you can be sure that it will be received by many Filipino preachers and members! May the Lord bless you and take care of you." -Jhun Ma, Philippines.

(Cecil Hook, July 2001) []

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WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

(If one sees no positive results from his efforts, it is likely that he stop that endeavor. That does not mean that one works for praise, but that affirmation from others encourages one to work with determination. Your generous expressions dispel any thoughts I may have of letting up. Thank you. These notes are shared with you who support this ministry to give you assurance. It is hoped they will encourage new readers to consider our messages of freedom. You may be saddened by some and thrilled by others. All these notes have been signed by their senders; however, I have not taken time to gain permission to use some of them; therefore, I guard their anonymity. Some have been shortened. ~CH)

MONTANA. I am very grateful for your courage, your love of God and man, and for your book, “Free In Christ”!! Amen, Brother Hook, Amen!! I walked away from legalism last week. I found freedom in Christ last Sunday. That very day, I was given your book. Tonight I understand why I walked away – I need to be “free in Christ.” It’s been a long time coming! I’m tired, but I’m free – free – free at last!!! ~ signed.

MASK@INTRASTAR.NET. I appreciate your fresh view of the Word. I hope it spreads like wildfire. ~ Wayne Mask, Crockett, TX.

PHILIPPINES. I received this morning the special package containing the packet of “Freedom’s Ring.” Thank you very much! I’m planning to photocopy it and give it also to other interested preachers and members. We will have a seminar about Unity this coming March and April. I know that is a big help for us. About the books you have sent me, I have finished distributing them to others. I know some of them have written to you already. I cannot give you the names of them because they are so numerous, but I can give their congregations: Baguio Church of Christ, Alabang Church, Nueva Ecija Church, Muntinlupa Church, Pampanga Church, Pasay Church, Paranaque Church, Las Pinas Church, Lagro Church, Cubao Church, Cavite Church, Taguig Church, and Muntinlupa Church of God (They were formerly members of our church.).

Slowly the churches here are changing for the better because of your books (FIC). Many are now being enlightened. Our inter-congregational meetings and fellowship which were formerly filled with discussion about church controversies are now filled with plans to accept other churches and serve the world by spreading the pure Gospel. Hope you can still send me books for distribution. We will also have our National Youth Camp in April. It is very good for the young people to read your books also. God bless you and keep you, Cecil. ~ Jhun Ma. (Jhun has already distributed 2 M-Bags of books – 192 books – and another M-Bag of 100 books is en route there now. These are given mostly to preachers. What an amazing opportunity!)

JW1922@AOL.COM. Brother, you are correct, we are “free in Christ” deeper than we will ever know in this life! May this revelation continue to manifest itself in growth and open love. ~ Joe and Vella Weirrick, Reeds Spring, MO.

SEATTLE. Last week I received a copy of your book “Free In Christ” from our dear friend. What a wonderful and insightful book. I have thought these thoughts for a long time now. I am so happy to see it actually written and spread throughout the land. I was raised in a pretty strict Church of Christ background in the Portland area. And even as I was growing up it just didn’t make sense to me that we were the only little church that was going to heaven. Thank you, Lord, I do know that is just not the way it will be.
~Bonnie.

ERICDENISE@AOL.COM. This is a great site. Thank you, God, for giving Cecil the power he needs to stand on your word and break the strong holds of Satan. May God bless you. ~ David Bowling, West Haven, CT.

BRAZIL. Thank you very much for your willingness to help me be free!! I’d like to ask you some questions and advice to see if you can help me. I don’t know if I already told you, but I’m a disciple here in Brazil, serving with a group that “denominate” themselves as Church of Christ. I’m playing with the words, because I have also done this ! I also believe we speak of other people (denominations) and sometimes we are in the same boat as they are. Frankly, some things you say I cannot understand very well yet, but I’ll keep going. Please, my English is not so very good. I hope you can understand. Be patient with my very poor vocabulary! ~ Signed. (This sincere brother had a number of questions. He is supplied with my materials which he is reading with eagerness and caution.)

TAMPA, FL. Thank you so much for your encouragement. I will be praying for your ministries. It means a lot to me to hear of other Christians who struggle with these same issues and battles against tradition. I pray that I will not be full of pride as I deal with them. It is time for change, and I hope God will use me and help me to see where to begin here in my own life and how to help others. We have to change our hearts! ~ Signed.

ONALASKA, TX. Cecil, I liked those (my silly bits in “Still Wondering” -CH). You know when all around you seem to be losing their heads over politics (of course I’m keeping mine. HaHa), I get your letters and teachings, and all is right with the world. I thank you for being on my internet. Have saved every one you have sent. They never grow old. Also learn something new every time I re-read one of them. You are timeless. Keep those things coming. ~ Signed

ONALASKA, WI. (!) Reformation is a never-ending work in progress due to the tendency to entrench and stop growing. Because reformation challenges the status-quo and calls for change, people feel threatened, so they resist. Therefore, reformers must make haste slowly for maximum gain. ~ Kyle Simplot <kylesimplot@juno.com>.

A PREACHER. Thank God, I am free in Christ .. finally. We are still working on it .. we haven’t arrived yet. I have been the most legalistic preacher you ever knew (30 years

worth). My wife and I have been working our way toward freedom and away from ritualistic practices and judgmental spirits for eleven years now. It has been difficult, but we will never turn back to a legalistic system. I just finished reading your book "Free In Christ." .. You have changed our lives forever. ~ Signed

CALIFORNIA. Cecil, I just want to tell you again how helpful your book and Ketcherside's two books were to me. Just outstanding, thought-provoking, and uplifting. I'll get some more books from you when I'm able. ~ Signed. (Sent him other books for you who donate to this effort.)

HOWARDJF2001@YAHOO.COM. Wow! You sure are smart in the way you wrote those things about divorce. I know when my wife divorced me and then I tried to get saved, oh boy! Well, years passed (fourteen) and all I got was a lot of built up anger toward my fellow church members who didn't seem to have any mercy on me. I go to a conservative pentecostal church. Wasted my life with depression plus could never expect any of the so called pentecostal blessings. And of course was a second class citizen. My life was just wasted. Also I never did find a Jesus that I really cared to know. Never could understand how they could condemn me for life. I was young. ~ Jesse Howard.

BPHUSBAND@AOL.COM. The influence of the thinking and scholarship that I have seen at this site is much needed within the C of C. Bless you all and your work. ~ Paul Husband, Saugus, CA.

CALIFORNIA. Although we have been through the fire recently, we also find ourselves in an exciting time of our life. My husband and one other elder recently resigned from a COC congregation here - the main issue being legalism. We are, for the first time in our married life (nearly 30 years) searching for a new church home based on our beliefs rather than the sign over the door. I pulled down your first four books from the shelf and will be revisiting issues, rereading scripture to see what it does and (sometimes more importantly) doesn't say.

Thank you for your work in bringing the message of freedom in Christ, especially to members of churches of Christ. We anxiously look forward to what the Lord has in store for us next. We appreciate your prayers. We are finding others who are thirsty for the freedom message, but we pray also for the congregation we've left behind. ~ Signed. (She bought a great order of books for her use and to distribute.)

SPRATER@WEBTV.NET. Just found this site and am thrilled with the prospect of fascinating study. I'm an old reader of Sentinel of Truth, The Examiner, and Free In Christ. I was raised as a CofC preacher's kid, and was so shocked when I learned that I was wrong about some major doctrines, that I have been adamant about very little since. Greetings, brothers and sisters. ~ Susie Prater, Kilgore, TX.

WBURDET1@FLASH.NET. Just found your site. I'll be back! Bill Burdette, Board Chairman, Leland Christian Church, Mableton, GA.

JSS SS40@HOTMAIL.COM. I have been a member of the Lord's Church since July 20, 1994. I realize that I am still only 19 years old and I DEFINITELY don't claim

supreme knowledge in the scriptures as some of our brethren have implied that they do over the years, but I simply DO NOT understand how that you can determine any practices to be scriptural or unscriptural when you disregard what scripture clearly says about a topic. In my study of the Bible I have found a particular inconsistency between what it teaches and what your site advocated. I am particularly disturbed by the view certain articles uphold on Baptism. Acts 2:38 and many other passages of scripture CLEARLY teach that baptism is essential for our salvation. If anyone truly accepts and believes the Bible to be the inerrant and complete Word of God we cannot “monkey around” with what it says. The Lord prayed for UNITY in His Church. The only way to attain unity is to return to the Bible and not human opinion. We cannot reduce the truth to make it more palatable to our personal tastes and desires. Another deep question of mine is your reference to worship in regards to the partaking of The Lord’s Supper. The Bible teaches that the early Church obviously partook of the Supper in remembrance of the Lord’s sacrifice with frequency. Why shouldn’t we allow passages of scripture like Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7 stand as demonstrations of what the primitive Church did? Why can’t we be satisfied and content with what scripture teaches. It obviously teaches that The Lord’s Supper was a commanded, vital part of worship that was obviously observed on the Lord’s Day. I don’t feel that upholding what the Bible teaches is “Legalism,” but human opinions and ideas not laid out in the pattern of scripture are very dangerous. When you downplay or disregard a part of the Divine Word and interject human teachings regarding the work, worship, and leadership roles of the Church you are likened unto the foolish man spoken of by our Saviour in Matthew 7:26 who built his house upon the shifting sands. Etc. ~ Shannon Seaton, Dresden, TN.

COVINA, CA. I’m a Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor and I do recognize that millions or thousands of us are still legalists/Galatianists. Let us pray for one another. ~ Gary Carabat, <carabatg@yahoo.com>

LYNCHBURG, OH. It is refreshing to know that there are Christians who think like I do. It is a wonderful feeling to not be so condemning of everyone else, for once. My spirit feels stifled though where I am at; and I’m unsure what to do about it since I am a preacher’s wife and cannot leave the situation at this time. I want more, and I feel guilty for wanting more. I know God is working the situation, and that’s what keeps me going. He knows my desire and my heart. I would like to talk with others who feel like I do. ~ Libby <NRB45@hotmail.com>

NASHVILLE, TN. I’m fascinated by this site. I’m seeking the truth and freedom in Christ. It’s a big step from my comfort zone! ~ Debbie Hart, <debbiehart4god@yahoo.com>

CHESTERFIELD, MO. I am thankful that there are “pioneers” within our fellowship (non-instrumental) who, in the face of ridicule and persecution, continue to delve honestly into the Word. While we have been slow to accept the sinfulness of our sectarianism, I believe the corner is being turned. I pray that, in my generation, I will see many Churches of Christ become true restoration, non-sectarian churches of Christ. ~ Ken Ware, <kware45476@aol.com>.

MIDLAND, TX. Over a year ago, I started reading Cecil Hook’s books, and I feel such a relief that what I felt in my heart for several years was shared by others. Several of our

brothers here have now read the books, especially Free In Christ, and our entire family of God has made important changes. I have noticed a greater demonstration of true love for each other and probably more importantly, for those we meet and see each day. When you experience the grace that God intended for us, the burdens of legalism start to vanish away (as it should), then true freedom comes. I say thank you, Brother Cecil, and the other authors that have assisted us with this change, and I am so happy to see others in the Guest Book that feel the same way. ~ Philip Click <popclick@aol.com>.

SANGER, TX. Keep up the web data/information. Many believers are reading and passing this info to others. ~ J. W. Sebastian, <papa100@hotmail.com>. (April 2001)
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FR 60

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

LUBBOCK, TX. We have been attending services at Vandelia Church of Christ (Lubbock, TX) and have enjoyed the fellowship so far. They seem to be really interested in exploring the scriptures and trying new things. Currently there is an “Ambassador” program, where each Sunday a group of families from Vandelia go and visit a given local Christ-centered church of any denomination – Baptist, Methodist, Christian, etc. We let them know in advance that we wish to come if it is all right with them. Once there we do nothing special other than let them know we support and love them as brothers in Christ. Sometimes a representative from the group is asked to say a few words on behalf of Vandelia. But basically, it is just to let them know we are there for them and share their sorrows and joys. On a somewhat sad note a couple of Churches of Christ that were also visited were not as welcoming as the others that we have visited. –Brian Robinson <RICHARDR@asbonlin.com>.

PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA: I have visited your site and encourage others to read it. Priscilla Hendricks <scilla_za@yahoo.co.uk>

BAKERSFIELD, CA. I read and will read again “Free In Christ” because you deal with some of the very issues that I have struggled over for many years. I about had to pick my jaw back up after reading about the Lord’s Supper in Acts. I had never read it like that before but had taken what had been offered in the pulpit and at the table as gospel and fact. Unfortunately for me, I had taken many of these “issues” and made them points of division with other brothers. But over the last few years I have reconsidered many of my “stances on issues,” have grown in love to my Lord and those around me. Your book reinforced and encouraged that change. - <cajohn03@pacbell.net>.

MARION, VA: WOW, what a great place to read. This site is greatly appreciated. - Dreama W. <dw@smyth.net>

NEUVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES. I am in the Church of Christ for more than 30 years. Reading the book was a “liberating” experience. I must say I do not agree one hundred percent in some areas, but I felt the loosening of pharisaic shackles in church

traditions I had embraced all these years. I am a tent-maker preacher ministering to the Bayombong Church of Christ. I earn my daily bread as Professor at the Nueva Vizcaya State Institute of Technology, a state-run institution of higher learning. I am on scholarship leave pursuing my doctorate.

I am interested to have the other books. I have already used some portions of your book, duly acknowledged, in a series of studies on Love which I conducted. I will be a speaker in a Youth Camp a week from now and I will deal on freedom in Christ. Your book came at the right time. -Roberto Brana <rjrb10444@yahoo.com> (Books of various titles sent free.)

<WHEELER 345@HOME.COM> I have just this morning finished reading your book, Free In Christ, and I must say THANK YOU! I feel like someone who has been handed the key that they have been searching for many years. Not just handed the key, but told, "Yes, there is a lock that needs to be opened!"

I, like you, have been raised as the "strictest of Pharisees." My father has been a minister in the Church of Christ for nearly 50 years. I have been indoctrinated in our best Christian schools and attend a very "conservative" congregation. I have always endorsed "our" beliefs, but have always had nagging questions. Our inconsistencies and legalisms have always bothered me. Over the last few years, our congregation has become more and more exclusive. I have always felt that "something was not right," but it is hard to figure out what that is when no one wants to admit there even is a problem. Your spirit of love and compassion is wonderful! Your ideas are so simple, yet SO earthshaking to us "traditionalists!" I could barely put your book down. -Signed.

LATINO@TCA.NET: Cecil, I wish I could believe you are spiritually motivated but I cannot. I sense a ton of ego that drives you to the extreme you have gone to in your denouncing and condemning brethren. I can only speak from what would lead me to the extreme you have gone to. -BB

TENNESSEE: Thanks for the "Free In Christ" books you sent me. I read your book many years ago, and struggled with, and delighted in the ramifications that it means. I was so curious, and in such need of a more loving interpretation of our Christian walk, that I subscribed to your newsletter. It was to me very helpful and eye-opening. I wish you were still able to publish it, but mostly I thank you for it.

In time I was able to believe that many of the things that I had been taught, and had accepted, and taught others, was wrong-headed and lacking in love. I began to see why I had struggled with some issues like marriage, divorce, and remarriage. I never had felt good about alternatives and choices we allowed for hurting people in those situations. Eventually, I ordered some books for free distribution from you and again I thank you for them. Most of them were received well and were appreciated, but not all. Now I have finally gained enough courage and faith to use your book in Sunday School. Signed.

FRYDEK-MISTEK, CZECH REPUBLIC: Great stuff to read here. Freedom in Christ is so important. Keep up the good work. God bless you! Yvonne Sramek <Yvonka@aol.com>

BRET@HTCOMP.NET: I am a christian and my family and I try very hard to follow the word of God and study and go to church. WE are members of Christ's Church, and as I was reading some of the chapters in your book I had a very big problem with some of the things you are teaching. I believe we should all be sensitive to others and gentle in trying to educate them in the word, but not compromise it to make others happy. Yes we should feel good about what we are doing but not change or twist God's word to make ourselves or the world feel better about everything. I just get the feeling that many things you suggest stray from the word. Divorce is a big issue, and the marriage bed is to remain undefiled. In the new testament it is clear that you can only divorce and remarry if your spouse has committed adultery. And you may remarry if your spouse dies. We are continually warned not to let false teachings in, no matter how disguised they may be. The Church of Christ has been rigid in the past, but also remembers God's precious promises. I feel you are further inhibiting God's work by criticizing people who are trying to closely follow his word. Women in the church is also a point on which we disagree. Etc. -Kristy

MINNESOTA: I want you to know what a continued blessing your monthly e-ministry continues to be, Cecil. Thank you for your faithfulness. -JW

VIRGINIA. Please pray for my husband and me. He is a minister for a local congregation here where the church of Christ is ultra conservative and legalistic. I fear it won't be long before he will be "labeled." It is sad that others have accepted or confused "restoration doctrine" as New Testament doctrine. We are emailing other ministers and friends your website to view. Again, it is refreshing to see that you and others have taken the time to study the word objectively, not from "restoration smeared glasses." Be encouraged. There are collaborators whom you've never met that love and appreciate you. - Signed.

JFRANZ@VIPSCORP.COM. I am blessed with astonishment with your forthright honesty and humility to declare the things you did in this newsletter ("One True Church"). They brought tears of Christ's love to my eyes to read your words. I will forward this to many who will revel in such openness and display of love for others to declare your mistakes the way you have. This is the only way that can be used to reach others, the truth in spirit and love, not in selfish motivations. The world has seen enough of the selfishness of mankind, and not a single Christian can disguise it from the world, for the world is generally more keenly aware of such tactics and sneers every time they see a Christian being anti-Christ like. -Signed.

PENNSYLVANIA: I was looking up legalism in my search engine and found your site. Do you have any article besides "The isms of Legalism"? It was a good help to me. My fellowship is sinking deeper into legalism. I want to minister to them before we drown. One leader now says we are not to eat with unsaved if asked. Oh well. Hope you can help. -Signed.

IRISMC@BELLSOUTH.NET. You have been such a blessing to me in my walk toward holiness. I've always known in my spirit that there was something missing in my conservative Church of Christ background. Even the "mainline" church I attend now has many vestiges of legalism. Our Ladies Class was given over to our minister to teach because we women were teaching about angels and the Holy Spirit. .. Thank you and

Leroy Garrett, Edward Fudge, and others for not giving in to legalism and the zest for power to speak in the church. May there always be other voices for the cause of freedom in Christ. It is wonderful to be free!. -Signed.

MEMPHIS, TN: Cecil, Keep up the good work. I am forever a part of this movement, because I am totally FREE IN CHRIST. I will always keep you and Lea in our prayers. - THE HOPE MINISTRIES FAMILY, Kenneth Allen <bibleboy42@yahoo.com>

AYOHO@CJNETWORKS.COM. If you like, in addition to the books for my own library, I would be most honored to distribute any copies you care to send. I often connect with souls that are frustrated with legalism and authoritarianism from many branches of the Lord's people and especially those from churches of Christ. I, as you, I'm sure, enjoy brother Fudge's writings. Those writings as well as yours have helped me to accept anyone who trusts Jesus for the gift of life as my brother who needs encouragement. I will most diligently give any books you send to these precious souls just as I have done with the copies I enjoyed at my time of need. It's a wonderful thing to see God bring opportunities into our lives. -Signed.

FLORIDA. What a wonderful piece in the latest Freedom's Ring! Once again, I am humbled by and in awe of (dare I say?) your inspiration. Thank you for sharing those thoughts regarding inspiration of NT Scripture. May all of us revere, honor, and love the Message and not the text that carries the message. <willcoxpj@aol.com>

SOMERSET, KY: An answer to prayer...after 35 years in the church I have just recently found enlightenment after a careful openminded reading of the entire Bible and an humbling of myself in prayer. The conclusions I was reaching are a mirror of the thoughts that you have expressed in the chapters I have read tonight. I look forward to reading more. Of particular interest was the comment about our need to stay and forbear rather than start a new religious order of "our own kind." <donmoss@kih.net>.

HOOD RIVER, OR: I have read a couple of your books. Excellent! It is refrshing to see that I am not alone in my way of thinking. I just wish that more people would open to seeing the way of freedom in Christ. -Brent Henderson.

CUSHING, OK: I have read your book, "Free In Christ." It has given me true happiness in knowing that as a Christian growing up in the Church of Christ, I always felt as though we were the modern-day Pharisees. I feel so much better knowing that I am not a sinner for not agreeing with the legalistic system that I was raised in. -Terry Morgan <trmorgan@cushingmsk12.ok.us>

LUBBOCK, TX: I enjoy reading the things you write and say. The different points of view are often "mind-expanding" but never in contradiction to God's written word. Thanks. Jimmy Clark <jnc65@juno.com>

FR 51

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

[**WE WILL CONTINUE THIS FEATURE** in our email issues. For me to publish letters from others who agree with me seems self-congratulatory, I confess. Aside from a bit of pride, I publish these letters and notes so that you may be encouraged by them. In them you can see that you are not alone in your situation. You see that others have felt as you feel and that they have found happy solutions which you may also enjoy.

More notes may be read at my web site Guest Book. Some discussion group messages are included there which are more critical. I receive very few personal notes that are critical. I suppose other critics have just marked me off, except perhaps the few who may have stronger egos than I ! Anyway, I feel no obligation to include messages that are not constructive.

These messages are informal, hastily written without being edited by the writer for publication. We appreciate your taking time and interest to write. Now, we will share these. CH]

FORT SMITH, AR: The things I have found on this site so far are a Godsend and an answer to many prayers concerning the church of Christ. -Steven Breshears

GREENVILLE, SC: Cecil, your writings have been a blessing to my life. I began reading your stuff around 1996. I knew that the coC had a lot of fallacies, but had not quite put it together. I began to talk with a lot of people that God was bringing into my life, and they too helped me to learn about the FREEDOM in CHRIST. I now live a joyous life bent on serving the one who made me free!!! I don't do it out of obligation or habit, but out of love. My journey is not complete, for I surely haven't learned it all. I do know this: God is love, and wants all to know that love. -Steve Sebastian.

BAKER, LA: You recently sent me a copy of your book, Free In Christ. OH MY GOODNESS!! I haven't completed it yet, but I had to sit down long enough to write to say thanks! I don't believe I have ever read a book that spoke to me like this one has. For so long I have dealt with these issues you have written of. As I sit her reading, I find myself shaking my head in the affirmative way! Amen, is a word I have been saying frequently with each page.

I have been a part of the "Christian Church" for most of my life. I did spend 5 years in an A Cappella church recently. I saw much of the same "problems" in both congregations. I have experienced legalism to the extreme in both places. I have now been convicted of

legalism within myself! Thank God!! I have been on a personal search in the last year. I've been looking for freedom from the teachings of my youth that I know in my heart don't match up to the word of God. While in this search, I actually had an "elder" tell me that I had to make up my mind and if it meant worshipping at another church to make it up quick! I told him I was seeking God's will and that I was waiting on the Lord to instruct me more clearly. He actually told me that I should wait somewhere else. My wife and I agreed that we should and left the church after a short time.

This is what I fear the most – that congregations fail to see the liberty we have in Christ, that we somehow choke out the excitement and zeal folks have by gripping our fingers around the very throats of those who truly love God. I have seen this in action too many times and it truly scares me. It is my prayer that God continues to convict me on what I need to do to make a difference. -Terry Johnston. {He wished for books to distribute. I sent 26 copies as a starter.}

ROLLA, MO: I am looking for the Cecil Hook that wrote the book, "Free In Christ," back in the early 80s. If I have found the right person, I would like to have more copies of the book. I have one I got at the Tulsa Workshop several years ago when you and Mrs. Hook had a booth there. I can't tell you how much this book has meant to me. What a blessedness to be freed from the legalism and judgmentalism I grew up with! There are several people I want to share the book with and would like to have at least 12 copies if you still have them. -Signed.

BRENHAM, TX: Many people are reading your book in our congregation. I believe people are starved for grace and freedom! -Signed.

MANILA, PHILIPPINES: I finished reading your books. The last two books, Free to Accept and Free to Change are very excellent and well written. I think some of the other missionaries who have read your first book (Free In Christ) have not grasped your idea, that we don't need to start another new denomination. What we need is a reform and a willingness to accept other brothers who differ from us. Some here who read your book became proud and quickly changed their names and excludes fellowship with us. But we other preachers here are doing our best to maintain the unity we have in Christ in spite of our doctrinal differences. There are still many preachers here who are asking for your books (FIC). Hope you still send me more books. I'm willing to distribute it to other preachers. Some of them are surprised to learn that it is free. -Signed. [I have sent this brother two M-Bags of books as gifts from you partners. This is in addition to the other brother mentioned below. They are friends. This is a wonderful opportunity in the Philippines. Pray for their progress and unity.]

CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES: I am pleased by your response to my letter. In fact, we have a group here composed of young preachers trying to eradicate the traditional teachings in the church. It's timely that I've got to read your book. If you could send me some of your books, that may be useful in carrying out our aims, I'll appreciate it so much. -Signed. [I have mailed him 50 copies of FIC and 50 other titles for distribution

to eager young preachers. Those books are gifts from you who are partners in this ministry.]

BREVARD, NC: What an extraordinary article - Is The Church Composed of Denominations and Sects? "A sect claims to be the whole dollar" is a classic Hook-ism. You do make me laugh at our ridiculousness, even though it is not really funny, but it is ridiculous.

God does seem to increase your spiritual understanding and the ability to express it in words, so any of us who chooses to, can understand. It is so freeing to recognize that:

No one can "make me" violate my conscience. I have to do that myself.

All of God's chosen in Jesus are part of His family and we can ignore them or choose to refuse to fellowship them, or say they do not believe the "right" stuff, so they are not, but we are still part of the "same" family with one another because God has placed us there, and that is whether or not we are a part of an exclusively-denominated group or not.

(Some like to say, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder, but that doesn't stop them from doing so, when it suits their doctrine!)

How does the world know we are His? Because of our love shown to one another (John 13:35). Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7). It sounds like love and acceptance from us to others are dear to God.

Please keep your words coming. God's wisdom keeps shining through. - Sylvia West. [Sylvia and Bob West have encouraged our ministry greatly. They are gracious people who truly show the love of God in their attitude. Bob is the creator of the familiar THEOPHILUS cartoons.]

MEMPHIS, TN: Hello, Cecil, I received your book from Kenneth Allen and I am so happy that I am Free IN Christ. Keep up the good work. God is truly blessing you. - John Whithead

SNYDER, TX: Years ago I was walking through the lectureship tent at ACU and someone handed me a book called "Free In Christ." I saw that it was written by a Church of Christ minister and went to my office at the church and set aside. Little did I know that I would find in it an individual that would encourage and affirm the longings I have always had for the truth. Thanks to Cecil and Lea for years of service in the Kingdom. May God bless you as you respond to His call to serve, be served and love each other. You are in my prayers. -David Hampton.

ALAMOGORDO, NM: I have really enjoyed reading through the articles on this site. They have caused me to rethink a lot of the doctrine that we have always been taught. Thank you so much!! -Shelly Maxey.

OMAHA, NE: If you wrote this book to get other people thinking about their religious views, I believe you have accomplished that goal in regards to my life. Since reading your book, "Free In Christ," I have begun to challenge several aspects of my spiritual life. I sincerely thank you for challenging me and making me realize that I have not studied to show myself approved. -Signed.

ROGERSVILLE, AL: My son ordered your books. I am reading Free In Christ. I praise the Lord for people like you. It took me some time to read this little book. I wanted to read the Scriptures too. May God bless you and your wife in your work. -A sister.

WASHOUGAL, WA: I should say that, if it isn't obvious, I believe this book is inspired by God to lead us into a deeper walk with Him and unite us together. I borrowed the book from a friend thinking at first it would be so good for my husband to read, he being for some generations a church of Christ "member." I was not raised in a religious home and have for some time felt it wrong to put a "label" on our building and on ourselves, which automatically relieves me from any responsibility to commune with those outside my "label." Many other things you talked about in your book have reflected my views. How wrong I was, though, to think the Lord put this book in my hands ONLY to pass on to my husband! It was for my heart also, as I have, without realizing it mostly taken a legalistic view on some things. I wish to pass the "word from the Lord" on to others. -A sister.

NO ADDRESS: I appreciate your opinions as projected over the e-mail lines of communication. However, it seems that your comments and most other commentaries speak as though the truth can only be told by that one effort. I sincerely pray that all who read any commentary on any scripture, including yours, will recognize that it is only opinion of interpretation that they are reading, and not direct inspiration. Let us simply go to the Word and not rationalize our beliefs with some one else's non-inspired ideas. Thank you. -Signed. [Dear Brother, I agree that one should take my words and your words as commentary. Any explanation beyond the reading of the text is commentary. Even the text we choose may be to erroneously support an opinion.]

BRAZIL: This is Carlos. Jay from the Nazarene Friends indicated you as a minister in the Church of Christ. I'd like to know a little bit about you and your relation with the Church of Christ, and I also want to ask you some questions. Would you like to help me? I'm from Brazil. I'm a disciple of Jesus here and I'm always studying the Bible. -Carlos.

NO ADDRESS: I just finished another wonderful article (Is the Church Composed of Denominations and Sects?). You can write it better and say it better, but, over the years, I have arrived at the same conclusions as you on this subject, and I'm sure many others

have. I was a preacher in the church of Christ for 35 years, but was truly fired. Now they want nothing to do with me, even though I have a wonderful relationship with the Lord. I don't condemn them, but they condemn me. That is all right, but not the best way. I now meet with a community church. As you suggested, I don't agree with everything they believe, but I would not continue to attend if I were not truly blessed each Sunday. It is sad when Christians are rejected because they have grown out of some of the traditions of their group. I have arrived at the same conclusions about the name of the church and everything you brought up, even innocent children not being in the Lord. When little children want to partake of the Lord's Supper, why should I stop them? They are probably better off spiritually than I. I'm thanking the Lord for your teaching. What a blessing! In Him, Darol.

BRENTWOOD, TN: Thank you for your words of encouragement. I have just begun to receive your newsletter each week by e-mail. For the past few years, I have begun to be uncomfortable with the condemning spirits in my local congregation. That unrest led me on my search to clearer meaning of the scriptures unencumbered by traditions and opinions of men. For my unrest, I am now deeply grateful.

Your writings along with those of Carl Ketcherside, Barton W. Stone and others like him are helping me each day. At this point in my walk, I feel overjoyed at all that I now know (I still have a far distance to go), but deeply bothered by the condemning nature of those that call themselves "lovers of God."

I recently read from Carl Ketcherside in his autobiography of the struggle he went through - the deep study, meditation, and talking with the Lord. I, too, am on that same road. It is not uncommon for me to awaken in the early hours of each morning and talk with the Father. I believe He hears my struggle and will continue his work with me. I believe that when we put aside our individual opinions, dogma, etc., only then will we see the cross before us. May we all hide behind that cross so that Christ then can be glorified. Again, thank you and I will continue to be an avid reader. -Laura. [] (November 2000).

