

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 1 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be April 1995

“For with the judgment you judge...”

There are many Biblical cautions about judging others. At this time of doctrinal difficulty, encouragement is needed more than condemnation.

The title is taken from Matthew 7:2. The previous verse flatly states: “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Yet we find other scriptural commands to make judgments:

“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:2)

“...Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?” (1Cor 6:5.)

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge” (1Cor 15:29).

“...You have tested [tried] those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev 2:2).

Are the scriptures in conflict on the issue of judgment? No! There are times when we are to judge, and times when we are to withhold judgment. There are two apparent cases when His saints are called upon to make judgments: 1) **when they are asked to judge an issue by another** and 2) **to determine if others are teaching truth**. This last category of judgment is usually a personal issue; we are to decide for ourselves who is teaching truth. We are not to take it upon ourselves to examine the sins of others, to pronounce a judgment or condemnation, or to proclaim their sins to the public. In this article, we will look at each of these concepts in a little more detail.

If It Is Not Your Case, Do Not Judge It!

It hurts when we see others make mistakes. Sin hurts the sinner as well as the victim(s). Righteous indignation is a nat-

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“...You shall be judged.”

We must each personally realize that we will be judged for what we do—we cannot use the greater errors of others as an excuse for our own sin.

When a person first began to learn the basic truth of the Bible, there is often a great personal struggle trying to obey. He or she may need to discontinue Sabbath jobs or activities, clean up his or her diet or vocabulary. Each person certainly must learn to view his or herself in a completely different perspective—as a person that needs the Eternal for forgiveness, salvation and new life.

But as the years go by, the “first love” for the truth of many tends to fade. As long as we show up for services, continue contributing and do not “rock the boat” the other brethren seem to be happy with us. If, in addition to this, we are spending a reasonable amount of time in prayer and Bible study, we can easily become very content with ourselves. But is that what our Father expects of us? Are we being judged for what we do now?

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). Not only are deeds important, but also our words: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12:36-37).

While it is the sacrifice of our savior that will ultimately make us clean in the day of judgment (1Jn 4:17, Rev 1:5), we are still accountable for what we do now. We will be rewarded based on what we do in this life.

Wonderful Lessons in Luke 12

The entire chapter of Luke 12 con-

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Ten Principles of Bible Study

Bible study should be a vital part of our lives. These 10 principles, derived from the scriptures and combined with years of experience should help in your search for understanding.

1. The things of God are spiritually revealed. (1 Cor 2:10,11); therefore ask the Eternal for His holy spirit (Luke 11:13). The holy spirit will teach you all things and guide you into all truth (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). It will not speak from itself, or in words which man's wisdom teaches, but it will compare spiritual things with spiritual things, scripture with scripture (cf. John 16:13, 1Cor 2:13; Isa 28:10). It "will bring to your remembrance all things" (John 14:26). It "knows the things of God" (1Cor 2:11); it knows how to properly compare spiritual things with spiritual things (1Cor 2:13).

2. Get all the scriptures. "One witness is not sufficient testimony" (Num. 35:30) By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established (2Cor 13:1). This does not mean that we do not believe statements contained only once in the Bible, but it means you cannot leave out scriptures that have a bearing on your topic of study. You must take

the whole Bible in its entire context, before you can come to the knowledge of that particular subject from the Eternal's viewpoint.

3. Check the context. In order to understand any scripture thoroughly, in its context, ask and answer all the following questions: **What? When? Where? Why? Who? How?** No verse should be interpreted in isolation from its context. Both the immediate context and the larger context may need to be carefully considered. *Who* is the scripture about. *Who* is writing it? *And to whom* are they writing? *What* is this passage about? *What* is happening? *When* did the events described here take place? *Where* did these events happen? *Why* did these events happen? *Why* did the author write this passage? *How* is something to be done? Or *how* does the author illustrate his point? *How* does this apply to me?

4. Seek the meaning of the original language. Translation is an art, not a science. Translators must choose words

based on what *they think* the writer meant. Use several Bible translations to see if there are other possible meanings. Use a Hebrew or Greek concordance to see where the same word was used elsewhere in scripture.

5. Do not establish doctrine based on a single Bible help. E.g., Strong's word number 5590 defines the Greek word *pneuma* as the "rational and immortal soul," implying that man is, or has, an immortal soul—probably a personal belief of the author. Yet, in referring to mankind, 1 Corinthians 15:53 says that "this mortal must put on immortality." Also, we read "in Adam all die" (1Cor 15:22) and "[Jesus Christ] alone has immortality" (1Tim 6:16).

6. Study the historical setting and background which produced the writing. Make use of Bible dictionaries, atlases and encyclopedias.

7. What does the Bible say? Always ask and answer this question. E.g., John 3:6 is saying that flesh is flesh and spirit is spirit; and 1 Corinthians 15:50 says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Therefore, the church cannot be the kingdom of God.

8. Let the Bible interpret the Bible. Meanings are derived by usage and by context—not by etymology. Good lexicons supply references to contextual usage for our study. Study words in contexts.

9. Do not put vague scriptures first. Difficult and apparently ambiguous verses should always be understood in the light of the many verses that are perfectly clear.

10. The Bible never contradicts itself. "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). "For I am the Lord, I do not change" (Mal 3:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). If any particular scripture seems to contradict another scripture, either your understanding of the particular scripture or the translation that you are reading is incorrect or misunderstood.

compiled by James R. Calvert

Vol. 1, No. 1 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be April 1995

Servants News is published monthly by *Friends of the Brethren*. Subscriptions are free to individuals interested in obeying their Creator as described in His Word. We believe His law is the basis for living a life that is pleasing to Him in harmony with our neighbors. We believe the holy spirit gives us the power to live such a life as long as we continually repent of our sins and accept the salvation provided through our Messiah and Savior. We believe in living "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

We believe the gospel should be given freely: you may copy any or all of this publication and give it to others. *Friends of the Brethren* is financed by donations and has no ties with any of the other organizations listed in this publication.

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Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-address stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We do not publish materials that attack individuals or organizations, nor do we publish materials that claim there is only one human organization through which the Eternal works. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles and letters to:

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*“And this **Gospel of the Kingdom** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end willl come.”*
—Matt 24:14

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of man comes.” —Matt 10:23



God has opened some incredible doors for us! One of them is talk radio. We must act fast to take advantage of these opportunities. Strike while the iron is hot!

While talk radio has existed for years, it has recently surged in popularity. The once-expensive telephone connection hardware can now be found at some of the smallest local radio stations.

The American people are just not as interested in the taped radio/TV presentation anymore. We know that the "creative" media master can make day look like night, bad look like good, or anything else he so desires given enough time to carefully prepare a script and employ the latest technological tricks. We have heard and seen it done from Hollywood for 30 years. And now we see it from Washington DC.

Live presentations are where it's at. You cannot hide behind carefully constructed deception. People tend to trust you more if you're not afraid to face the mike live. It's just you, the listeners, and God; no expensive production costs. Those interested in learning more will have a local person to contact.

The greatest advantage to live talk radio is instant communication. Take what myself and a call-in guest speaker were doing the other day. He was speaking about a fundamental Bible topic from the comfort of his own home in another part of the country. We were having a conversation with which close to a million Las Vegans had the option of listening into. Any listeners with questions could call 731-1230 and get immediate answers. Instant gratification! No six-week wait! For every person that calls in, there are usually hundreds of others listening. The same questions a caller asks have probably entered many of the other listeners minds. So for every single caller that receives an answer, many are edified. And if no one asks your question, you can always make the call yourself!

The work God does often mirrors society. In the 30's, 40's and 50's, America was making a transition from a rural society to a centralized corporate America. Herbert Armstrong had a desire to want to reach more than just a few thousand people in Western Oregon. He formed a large, centralized, hierarchical organization that did the work through the traditional means of his day: mass communication channels like TV, radio and print. Now, communications technology has advanced to where everyone can be an independent contractor. Corporate employees put in their hours sitting in front of word processors in home offices connected by a modem. More pioneering individuals run their entire operations this way. Quality publications can be pro-

duced with home desk-top publishing equipment. Near-instant written communications are possible via Electronic mail.

Talk radio and cable TV are fulfilling Andy Warhol's pronouncement that in the future everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes. Regular Joe's make their voices heard nationwide by dialing up Rush Limbaugh live on the air. The class "clown" can now reach millions by mailing a tape of his best shenanigan to America's Funniest Home Videos.

Although it is another subject, I cannot let this article end without mentioning radio's big brother, television.

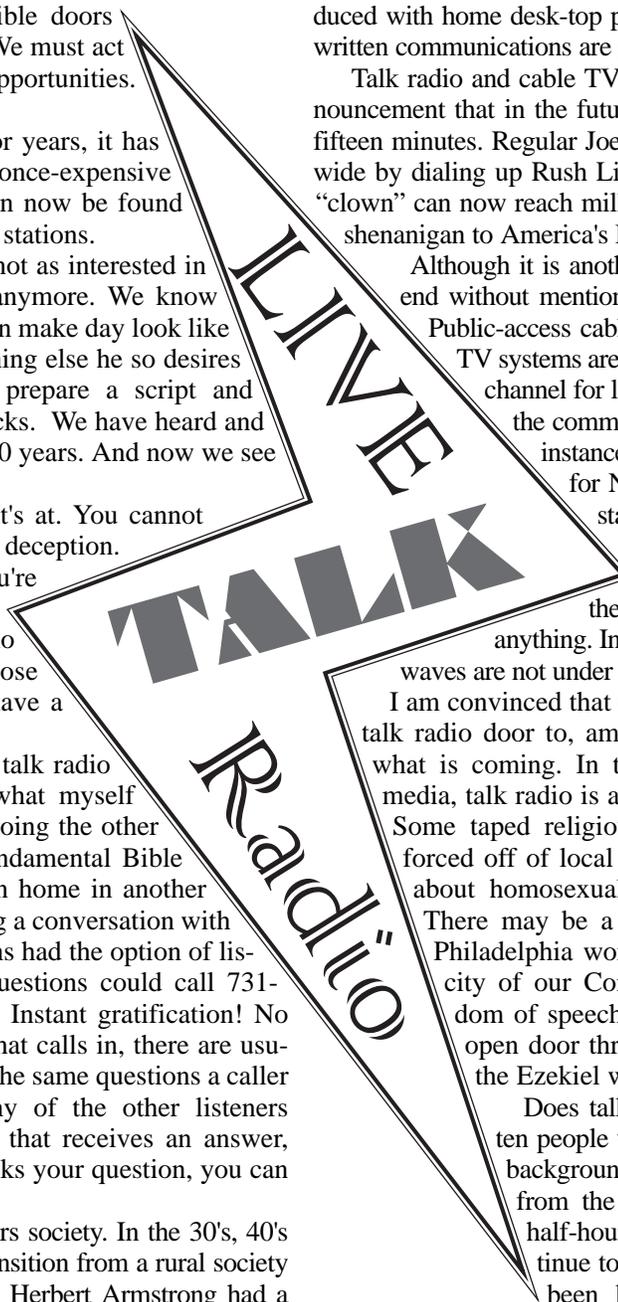
Public-access cable TV is another open door. Cable TV systems are required to provide a public-access channel for local use. This allows individuals in the community to voice public concerns. For instance, the United Artists cable system for North Hollywood, California, has a state-of-the-art studio and production facility. They supply equipment and crew free of charge! And they'll let you go on the air and say anything. Interestingly, the public access cable-waves are not under the jurisdiction of the FCC.

I am convinced that God has swung open the massive talk radio door to, among other things, warn Israel of what is coming. In this day of propagandized mass media, talk radio is a bastion of truth and free speech. Some taped religious programs have already been forced off of local stations for what they have said about homosexual lifestyles or political policies. There may be a tie-in with free speech and the Philadelphia work. Philadelphia is the birthplace city of our Constitution, which instituted freedom of speech and worship. Free speech is an open door through which the Good News and the Ezekiel warning message must go.

Does talk radio bear fruit? So far, at least ten people with no previous Sabbath-keeping background have begun keeping the Sabbath from the efforts of The Eagle Show, my half-hour weekly program. About five continue to do so on a regular basis. One has been baptised. While this may seem small, the cost per person is far less than most "big media efforts." The air-time has been provided to me in exchange for working a difficult-to-staff graveyard shift.

I would be most interested in talking with or helping out anyone interested in doing a similar thing in another city. You can reach my voice-mail box at any time: **702-263-5852** or write to me, Lee Clark, at **1115 S. Casino Center #132, Las Vegas, NV 89104.**

—Lee Clark



Statement of Purpose for *Friends of the Brethren*

Friends of the Brethren exists to help individuals and other organizations fulfill the missions given to the Church: to personally grow in grace and knowledge, to preach a warning to the world, to preach the Gospel to those who will hear it, and to feed the brethren. **We believe that the Basis for His work must be first spiritual, not organizational or financial.**

The only authority we have is from the Bible and the Holy Spirit (which is never in conflict with the Scriptures). We do not believe that the Eternal works exclusively or even primarily through us. We do not claim to have “more truth” than anyone else. The Eternal works through whoever will yield to Him and obey His commands (Isa 66:2, 1Cor 1:26-31) In addition to our own Bible study, we learn from a variety of teachers.

We publish literature with which we can find no direct scriptural or logical conflicts. When there seems to be more than one reasonable way of understanding a certain doctrine or group of scriptures, we may publish more than one view. We will probably publish some things that are in error—we are fallible humans still in the process of learning. We realize that the Messiah taught “with authority,” not as the scribes in his day (Mark 1:22.) If we had the authority of the Messiah, we would teach in the same manner. Unfortunately, we have seen many teachers teach with “great authority” then later change their teaching or be unable to answer scriptural challenges to it. The Messiah never had these problems—He never had to issue corrections. We believe it is better to admit that we are still learning, than to teach with great authority and be wrong.

We want to learn from others. We read and reply to letters we receive that seriously try to show us our mistakes from the scriptures. There are questions we are not able to answer now. We believe that the Spirit of God reveals truth as we are “able to bear it” to anyone who seeks with all their heart (Deut 4:29, John 16:12, 1Cor 3:2). We hope to accomplish our goals by these specific objectives:

1. **Publish Servants’ News.** This free monthly newsletter is the primary vehicle used for accomplishing the other objectives. It is also intended to help provide a sense of community among scattered members—publishing births, marriages, deaths and news of local congregations.
2. **Provide access to Bible-based literature** on a variety of subjects for the converted person. Emphasis is placed on each individual’s need to bear fruit, not on following a particular man or group. We write some literature ourselves, and recommend literature from a variety of other groups. Anyone is free to contribute to this body of literature—contributions will be assessed on their Biblical accuracy and usefulness to others—not on the notoriety of the author(s). Literature will be mailed free of charge. We also plan to make it available on the **internet** and/or

a computerized bulletin board.

3. **Help brethren find Sabbath-keeping congregations** where they may fellowship. These may include various organizations or meetings in homes. We plan to maintain a list of cities with congregations and telephone contact numbers.
4. **Assist local congregations.** This includes publishing sample plans for services, hymn books, methods of inexpensive non-profit incorporation, etc.
5. **Plan Festivals.** We provide access to festivals held by groups that will accept any of the Eternal’s people. We will list feasts based on multiple calendar systems since many serious Bible students differ on this issue. We may organize our own site if there is enough interest.
6. **Help small groups preach the Gospel.** We provide literature and contacts to help small groups or even individuals reach out by radio and television. Existing methods include live talk radio, airing pre-recorded radio programs with a “trailer” giving a local address and phone number, and public access cable TV—costing as little as \$10 per show.
7. **Help feed those that hear the Gospel preaching.** We provide access to basic literature that can be used to teach unbaptised and newly-converted people. This literature will come from a variety of sources. It will contain the name of the author, but will also provide a place for a local group to stamp an address and telephone number.

While all of these programs are in their beginning stages, each one has been successful in at least one location. It may be months before all of these programs can be implemented in the way we would like to see them, but if the Eternal is willing, we will keep working at it until it is accomplished.

We will not call ourselves a “church” or an “assembly” because it is the Eternal that has His assembly of “called out” ones. While the scriptures certainly refer to “churches” or “assemblies” in individual cities, too many people have become confused when a national or worldwide organization calls itself a church; **they begin to think that a certain organization is the one true Church.**

We will teach what we understand to be the truth in plain language that can be easily understood. Our literature is truly free—it can be copied and redistributed by anyone. We will not attempt to control local congregations or gospel-preaching operations. Even the apostle Paul did not try to stop others from preaching from a wrong motivation (Phil 1:14-18).

We believe that each person is responsible for what they do with their spiritual gifts. “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then **He will reward each according to his works**” (Matt 16:27). 



News from Local Congregations



This section is for short articles or letters about activities of local congregations. We will mention local congregations as they form or as we learn of significant news. Groups listed in this section may have some doctrines or policies which we cannot justify from the scriptures, but we believe most of them are a reasonable place for fellowship with the brethren. We believe the holy spirit will guide you in your fellowship decisions if you will study and ask.

Please send your stories to Servants' News, PO Box 6516, Springdale, AR 72766.

United Churches of God

Ray Wooten and over a score of other long-time ministers have seen the need to continue to be good shepherds, teaching the truth and doing the work that the Eternal has given to his saints. Although he is over 60 years old, Mr. Wooten gave up his retirement to continue to serve the local brethren and to help other congregations continue to teach the truth. He has expressed his hope that ministers everywhere will have the courage to teach what they believe to be true and to consider first their obligation to their Father and also to their congregations.

Mr. Wooten believes that local congregations are best served by organizing and incorporating (if necessary) on a local basis, then working together on a national or international basis in areas where a larger group is more effective. Some of the other men in contact with him are in the process of setting up their own local congregations.

Mr. Wooten meets in Birmingham with about 175 people each Sabbath. You may contact him for more information at **205-822-8938**.

Worldwide Church of God Texas

George E. Crow, a Houston, TX attorney and several other professional men have formed a corporation known as the Worldwide Church of God Texas. Their purpose is to complete the paperwork necessary to form an organization to essentially continue the work that the Worldwide Church of God did for many years.

The corporate bylaws are different in some areas to prevent a few men from reversing the doctrines of the organization (as we have recently witnessed). The bylaws vest control of the corporation in the board of directors—also called the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders would be made up of all “ordained” elders and any necessary additional advisory personnel. The council selects corporate officers, approves all ordinations and approves removal of ministers.

If the holy spirit moves the leaders and their congregations in this direction, then Mr. Crow and his associates are ready to serve. For additional information, contact George Crow, 1519 Miller Ave, Katy, TX 77493, 713-391-9564.

Kansas City Congregation

Gerald Weston, David Burson, and over 200 other people have been meeting independently since the middle of March in Kansas City, MO. Members drive from a number of outlying areas to meet with a congregation that believes that the law (including the Sabbath) was given to us because it is good for us and our neighbors.

Mr. Weston and many long-time members are considering the possibilities of working with one of the larger organizations. For more information, contact Mr. Weston at 816-228-2035.

Joplin & Neosho Missouri

Over 40 people have been meeting each Sabbath at the home of **Karl Beyersdorfer** in Southwestern Missouri. They have outgrown the capacity of their home and will be meeting in a hall in the near future. Mr. Beyersdorfer can be reached at 417-623-8888.

Sabbath Rest in the West

LETTER: March 14, 1995

Dear friends,

One of our associates provided me with a copy of your recent letter and publication. Thank you very much!

I never cease to marvel at how our heavenly father manages to provide “like minds” in various parts of the country for us to fellowship with. Your approach sounds virtually identical to that which we have taken in the past two years. We have taken slightly different names—we refer to ourselves as the “scattered brethren”.

We currently have 9 regulars meeting in our homes in Oregon and there are nine more in Southern California. Others in New Mexico, Wyoming, Illinois and Canada.

Our feast last year on the Oregon coast was attended by 51 people and what a glorious feast it was.

We would very much like to hear from any and all of you, and we would like to share some of the things we have been doing with you. Of course, we would like reciprocity from you.

I am enclosing a copy of our latest publication. As you can see, we encourage any and all to participate. Please put me on your mailing list, and advise whether you wish to continue receiving the *Scattered Brethren*.

Continued on next page

Sincerely,

—Bob Strelow, 2951 SE Fuller Rd #47, Portland, OR 97266, 503-777-9262.

RESPONSE: This letter was answered with a telephone call. We agreed to remain on each other's mailings list and exchange literature and other information.

Meeting in Montana

LETTER: March 21, 1995
Dear Friends of the Brethren,

My son [name withheld] received a letter from your group the other day. I must say that as being former members of the WWC of G. we were very impressed with what you had to say. We had discontinued our membership in the fall of 1989. We have been meeting with a few other former members since then every Sabbath. The few things that you have mentioned in your short letter were very encouraging because all of these items we have been discussing in great detail. It was very uplifting to see others from another area that are of "one mind."

We are interested to see what your views are on other matters such as 1 Cor 14:1 and all of that chapter. Also, on Eph 5, especially 5:21.

[In your letter] on page 2 paragraph 3 under "Does the Eternal work through one man or one organization" you say Moses commanded the people to choose the wise, understanding and knowledgeable "persons". Please explain; my Bible says "men" in verse 13. Are you trying to be politically correct or was this an inadvertent error?

We look forward to your response.

—J.T., St. Ignatious, MT

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement. We believe that 1 Corinthians 14 and other chapters tell us a lot about how Sabbath services should be conducted. Many "Church of God" organizations today have based their services on the protestant model instead of looking to the scriptures. We intend to write an article on this subject. **We would be interested in hearing from others who have studied this matter.**

Ephesians 5 and the questions of authority and submission are the topic of another article that is nearing completion. No one should ever exert their will upon another just because they are "in charge." From our Messiah's words and life example, we see that the purpose of authority is service (Matt 20:26, Phil 2:6-7). We find no scripture where a righteous person holds up his office or occupation as a reason for others to obey (never "do it my way because I'm an apostle"). I understand Ephesians 5:21 to mean that we should submit to anyone "in the fear of God"—if anyone shows us what the will of the Eternal is (usually via scriptures), then we should hear them, regardless of position.

The use of "persons" was inadvertent. The Hebrew word there is *enowshe* which has a meaning like the English word "man." It usually means adult males, but can be extended to include everybody. It is translated "people" in Jonah 3:5 and persons in Zephaniah 3:4. I think it is unlikely that the "captains" included any women. Men were given the primary leadership role in Genesis 3:16. Sometimes, when men would not stand up to do their job, women such as Deborah, Jael and Abigail did it for them (Judges 4-5, 1Sam 25). I believe men have largely misused their authority over women just as they have largely misused other positions of authority. They will be held accountable for this abuse. However, 1 Timothy 2:12 and other scriptures show that leadership responsibilities should be given to men if one is available to do the job. Again, this is the subject for another good article.

Places to Fellowship

The True Church (assembly of believers) are those people with the holy spirit. The Eternal's people should not create divisions among themselves based on the particular corporation or leader they support or learn from (1Cor 3). We all have a need to fellowship with the Eternal's people and do the work that He has given us to do. That can be done with or without a corporate organization.

Individual circumstances such as distance, family size, health and age

affect our options for fellowship. Our own Biblical understanding of doctrine is another crucial factor. We will probably never find a group of people that we agree with on everything. We should find a group where we can have a peaceful working relationship and where differences do not have to become points of constant division (see Romans 14).

Below, we list a number of organizations with many Sabbath-keeping congregations across the country. Some welcome any seriously interested visitors, others may insist you meet certain requirements before attending. Our experience has shown that the acceptance given to visitors varies tremendously even among congregations of the same organization. If you say, "they wouldn't want me to attend with them," and never ask, you have not been a peacemaker (Matt 5:9). If you ask to attend and the organization refuses you, then they will have to someday explain whether or not they were causing division.

Church of God, 7th Day [Salem WV]. PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426. 304-782-1411.

Church of God, International. P.O. Box 2530, Tyler TX 75710. 903-825-2525

General Conference of the Church of God 7th Day. PO Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. 303-452-7973.

General Council of the Church of God (7th day). 1827 W. 3rd St. Meridian, ID 83642. 208-888-3380.

Global Church of God. PO Box 501111, San Diego CA 92150. 619-675-2222.

Philadelphia Church of God. PO Box 3700, Edmond OK 73083. 405-340-7474.

1995 Sabbath-Keepers Directory

Hot off the press! The 1995 *Directory of Sabbath-observing Groups* is now available from the Bible Sabbath Association, RD 1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737. This book lists many small groups too numerous

Continued on next page

to mention here. While some groups in this publication would appear unacceptable to many of our readers, this book is a great aid in finding a place to fellowship or people to correspond with. BSA requests \$12 for one book post-paid. Multiple-copy discounts are available.

If you discover a group that is not in this directory, Friends of the Brethren would appreciate hearing about it. We will attempt to maintain a file for the benefit of others looking for a place to attend.

Tape Ministries Available

If you are not able to fellowship with a Sabbath-keeping group that feeds you, there are organizations that will send tapes on a weekly basis, plus provide other literature. While we do not endorse every teaching of these organizations, we feel there is much to be learned from them:

Christian Biblical Church of God.
PO Box 1442, Hollister, CA
95024. 408-637-1875.

Church of the Great God. PO Box
471846. Charlotte, NC 28247.
800-878-8220 or 704-544-2100

Congregation of God Seventh Day.
PO Box 2345, Kennesaw, GA
30144.

Cornerstone Publications. 3802
Olive Street, Texarkana, TX
75503.

This list is by no means complete. There are many others. Also, most of the larger organizations listed under "Places to Fellowship" have cassette tape programs.

Feast of Tabernacles

A number of organizations and individuals are making arrangements for the Feast of Tabernacles this year. We encourage everyone to ask for the Eternal's guidance and then attend in the place He leads you. If you are looking for a place to attend, there are a number of groups that will welcome anyone that is seriously interested in participating. We will all need some patience this year

as many people are changing the group with which they fellowship—accurately estimating attendance and facilities needed will be difficult.

We will publish a list of sites accepting members without regard to their corporate affiliation. **If you know of other sites that are open to any of the Eternal's people, please let us know and we will be glad to list them here.** We expect a much larger list for the next issue. In addition to this list, some of the organizations listed under "Places to Fellowship" may allow you to attend one of their sites.

The festival dates are listed with each site as multiple calendar systems in use among the Eternal's people. Please be sure to verify that the dates of the Feast you plan to attend correspond to your understanding of the Eternal's calendar. *[We are not trying to say that one calendar system is as good as another; Many individuals have sincerely studied the scriptures and arrived at different conclusions. The Eternal honored alterations to his festivals when the intent was good (2Chr 30:1-3,20,23,27) but condemned those with an evil intent (1Kngs 12:32-33,13:1-3). It is not our job to judge people for the understanding they have deduced from the scripture on this rather complex subject.]*

Feast Sites in Order by State:

Florida, Destin. October 9-16.
Contact James Rector, 3802
Olive St, Texarkana, TX 75503.

Oregon, (coast). Details to be finalized soon.

South Carolina, Myrtle Beach.
Contact John Pinkston, PO Box
2345, Kennesaw, GA 30144.

Texas. Details to be finalized soon.

We have leads to several other sites which will be announced in the next issue.

Change Coming for the Ministry

Only a few years ago, many (but not all) of our brethren believed that the Eternal worked primarily through one organization. They believed that

the organization would continue to grow in truth and they should follow their minister as long as he appeared to be following headquarters. They believed that God "backed up" any decisions that were made and if they were wrong, He would correct them.

This concept has been shattered. Most brethren now realize that the Eternal does allow deception among his people to see who is with Him (1Cor 11:19). They realize that they cannot simply sit back and accept whatever comes out of their leader's or minister's mouth as the Truth. They must "try the spirits" (1 Jn 1:4). Members are going to want to see scriptural proof before they change doctrines or practices or before they obey an apparently arbitrary command of a local minister. After so many just men have been "disfellowshipped" for simply talking about the same doctrines they had believed for 10 years, fear of disfellowshippment from a human organization has also faded.

As most ministers are now seeking to work within organizations where they cannot be removed by one man for any reason, so members are seeking congregations where they cannot be removed by one man for any reason. Now that there are multiple similar organizations, it is unlikely that members will remain in an organization that treats them unjustly.(as defined by scripture).

We encourage men that have made their living in church organizations to examine themselves and ask "Will I be an effective leader if members are not forced to follow me?" How can a member, whose minister commanded him to quit his job to keep the Sabbath, trust a "minister" who will not oppose major errors just to keep his job? If you cooperated in disfellowshipping members for clinging to the Truth, can they now look to you as a reliable source of truth?

The scripture is clear: each man's work will be judged and a greater judgement falls on the leaders (1Cor 3:11-15, Ezk 24:7-11, Jms 3:1). While it may be possible to fool many of our subordinates and associates, we cannot fool our Father in Heaven.

The Eternal Has Not Given Up:

THE SABBATH . . .

A friend had recently given me copies of two papers that attempted to minimize or abolish the need for converted people to keep the Sabbath or abstain from unclean meats. I found the position of these papers untenable for several reasons.

First, Heb 4:9 clearly states that “there remains therefore a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God” (literal translation). I believe that in this verse the Greek word *sabbatismos* (“a keeping of the Sabbath”) has a dual reference: (1) a *literal* reference to the seventh day weekly Sabbath, and (2) a *typical* reference to the seventh millennium as a 7th day weekly Sabbath based on the 1,000-year day teaching of 2Pet 3:8. However, as Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown explain, the *typical* reference does not do away with the *literal* reference (emphasis added): “This verse [Heb 4:9] indirectly establishes the obligation of the Sabbath still; for **the type continues until the antitype supersedes it**: so legal sacrifices continued till the great antitypical Sacrifice superseded it. As then the antitypical heavenly Sabbath rest [i.e., the seventh millennium] will not be till Christ, our Gospel “Joshua,” comes to usher us into it, the typical earthly Sabbath must continue till then.”

Second, we have scriptures proving a New Testament observance of both the annual and weekly Sabbaths. Concerning the annual Sabbaths, over 50 days *after the crucifixion*, God honored the annual Sabbath of Pentecost by sending His holy spirit (Acts 2:1-4). In Acts 18:21, Paul expresses concern about keeping “this coming feast in Jerusalem.” (The fact that Paul was concerned about being *in Jerusalem* for the feast strongly suggests a reference to one of the

three annual pilgrim feasts.) Acts 20:6 indicates that the Days of Unleavened Bread were still in effect. IN Acts 20:16, Paul hurries to be in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost. In 1 Corinthians 5:8, we have an actual New Testament command to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Concerning the New Testament observance of the weekly Sabbath, we have Paul’s example. In Acts 13:14, when Paul and his party came to Antioch, they “went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.” The Gentiles of Antioch begged Paul to preach to them “the next Sabbath” (verse 42). Acts 17:2 says that it was Paul’s custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Acts 18:4 says that Paul reasoned with both Jews *and Greeks* in the synagogue every Sabbath.

Third, it is incorrect to call the Sabbath and the holy days “old covenant forms of worship.” The old covenant was not ratified until Exodus 24:7-8, yet the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted in Exodus 12. And the Israelites were given the seventh day Sabbath in Exodus 16. In Exodus 16:27-28, when some of the Israelites went out on the seventh day to gather manna, the Eternal asked Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”

and

CLEAN MEATS

Therefore, the weekly Sabbath and the holy days were in existence before the old covenant was ratified.

Fourth, Bible prophecy indicates that the weekly Sabbath and the holy days will be observed under the New Testament during the millennium (cf. Isa 66:23; Ezk 44:24, 45:17,21,25; 46:1,3,9; Zech 14:16,19)

Finally the idea that “Christians that don’t keep the Sabbath aren’t any less Christian” is simply not supported by scripture. Most of professing Christendom observes Sunday as their day of worship. For many years many people have understood that Sunday worship is the “mark of the beast” (Rev 19:20). A *Biblical* interpretation of the symbols found in Revelation 13:2, together with the events of actual history prove that the beast of Revelation 13;2 is the Roman Empire. The “mark” of this beast is nothing less than Sunday worship. In AD 321, Constantine, emperor of the Roman Empire, made Sunday the official “day of rest” and people were forced to universally accept it. We know from history that the Roman Catholic Church, the 2-horned-lamb dragon beast of Rev 13;11, by exercising the authority of the Roman Empire (Rev 13:12), forced people to accept Sunday worship. In AD 365, the twenty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea anathematized all who

would "Judaize by resting on the Sabbath."

Does Sunday worship mean anything to the Eternal? "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev 14:9-10). True Believers are supposed to get the victory over the "beast, over his image and over his mark" (Rev 15:2). While the papers I read indicated that we should not accept the discomfort of poverty to keep the Sabbath, the scriptures tell us that victory over the beast may literally cost us our heads (emphasis added): "And I saw the souls of *those who had been beheaded* for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or in their hands" (Rev 20:4).

In brief, if true Christians are not worshipping on Sunday, then they must be worshipping on God's seventh-day Sabbath.

Reasonings allowing the breaking of the Sabbath to keep one's job are entirely humanistic; they are not based on God's word. The Eternal's servants had "trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, they were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb 11:36-38). These humanistic positions make a mockery of these examples of faith. He is saying that we cannot trust the Eternal to bless us and take care of us when we obey Him.

Eating Unclean Meats?

Statements such as "the scriptures do not require Christians to abstain

from unclean meat" are hard to comprehend. Look at the millennial prophecy found in Isaiah 66:16-18 (emphasis added): "For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many. 'Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst, **eating swines' flesh and the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together,**' says the Lord. For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory."

If the dietary laws had been repealed, no creature could be described as "the abomination."

This is a prophecy for the near future. How can the Eternal describe something being eaten as "the abomination" unless the very dietary laws are still in full force and effect that tell us exactly which creatures are dietary abominations? If the dietary laws had been repealed, no creature could be described as "the abomination," now or in the immediate future. The Hebrew for "abomination" here is *sheqets*, the same word that is used eight times in Leviticus 11, the chapter describing unclean meats. The abomination is still the abomination at the beginning of the Messianic age, thus proving that the dietary laws have not been repealed.

A New Testament witness that unclean animals are still unclean can be found in Revelation 18:2. This text describes Babylon as "a cage of every **unclean** and hated bird." According to the dietary laws of Deuteronomy 14:12-19, birds like the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, and the raven were not to be eaten. They were to be con-

sidered unclean. Therefore, how could the holy spirit inspire statements about unclean and hated birds if such distinctions were no longer valid?

What I see happening among some of the "Churches of God" today reminds me of what happened during the Maccabean era among the Hellenizing Jews; there are some exact parallels. The apostate Jews were profaning the Sabbath (1 Macc 1:43) and the feast days (v. 45). (The books of Maccabees can be found in a translation that includes the "Apocrypha." They are useful for their historic value.) The orthodox Jews "fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. Wherefore they chose rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats (vv.62,63). They did not stop obeying the Eternal because things got difficult. The apostasy of the Hellenized Jews led to the calamities suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc 1;11-16; Dan 11:30-31). Those that repeat that same apostasy today will likely suffer under the "man of sin" (2Thes 2:1-4). It is not a matter of the apostasy reaching a certain "fullness" (Dan 8:23). I do not know what constitutes this "fullness," but once it is reached the beast and the man of sin will appear.

The Bible predicted that there would "be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies" (2 Pet 2:1); that these untaught and unstable teachers would twist the scriptures (2 Pet 3;16); and that they would depart from the faith and give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy (1 Tim 4:1). "Many will come ... and will deceive many" (Matt 24:5).

These are strong words, but they are all from the scriptures. Deceived people think they are doing the right thing, they do not know they are deceived. Everyone needs to study the scriptures and pray to our Father for deliverance from deception. Do not trust us or anyone else to seek the truth for you.

—James R. Calvert

How Should We Bear Fruit?

Most religions of the world teach in some way that there are two classes of people: an “ordained” ministry or priesthood responsible for teaching others—harvesting their Father’s fields, and a lay-membership responsible for physical service and financial support. What does the Bible say? For what kind of fruit is each person responsible?

Before we begin talking about bearing fruit, we need to establish the scriptural need to bear fruit. “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, **that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples**” (John 15:1-8)

What happens if those with the Holy Spirit do not bear fruit? Our Father, like a good man tending an orchard, digs about us and puts in some manure (Luke 13:6-9). If we, in this life occasionally feel as if we are getting more than our share of digs and manure, this may be what is happening to us. The purpose of these trials is not to make our lives miserable, **but to help us bear fruit.** We must remember that we have a purpose for being here. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Pet 2:9). Revelation 20:6 shows this priesthood

will continue into the thousand years of Messianic rule.

Rewarded According to Works

Salvation comes by grace, through faith, not because of our works (Eph 2:8-9). But the purpose for our salvation is so that we can do good works (Eph 2:10). Indeed, we will be rewarded according to the works that we do: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. **If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1Cor 3:11-16).

This concept is illustrated through the parable of the minas. While the parable is long, every word is worth reading. It should be “required reading” for anyone that feels there is no real work that can be done now.

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much

every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me’” (Luke 19:12-27).

Now that we can see that we must bear fruit, what kinds of fruit can we bear? Some kinds are well known and written about often; others we may not discuss as much as we should. We need to understand all of them to be an active part of the Eternal’s work.

Praise to the Eternal

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to

God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15). Singing songs, reciting poems, and offering prayers are things very pleasing to the Eternal. The largest book in the Bible is essentially a collection of praises to our Maker. When men such as David and Hezekiah were very near death, what did they promise the Eternal in exchange for their life? Did they promise to "be good?" To do great works in His name? No. They promised to sing Him praises if he redeemed their life (Ps 6:1-5, 30:8-10, 88:10-18, Isa 38:3,18-20).

While not all have musical skills, many do have skills that they are not using. Almost everyone can read the Psalms and praise God in personal prayer. Some have skills for writing that they should be using. While it should be **our** best effort that we give to the Eternal, there is no scripture that says we cannot praise the Eternal because another "does it better." Even though there are many religions that make great shows of praising God while teaching little of his truth, that should not stop us from David-style, energy-filled praises. The scripture supports this (2Sam 6:12-22, Psalm 98, 148, etc.). We should encourage each other in these areas, rather than be "scale of 1 to 10" judges.

Personal Righteousness

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Gal 5:22-23). This is a familiar scripture and rightly so. Everyone wants friends and neighbors that are like this. We should all strive **to have these fruits**. There are at least three other scriptures that plainly show that righteousness is a fruit to be desired (Phil 1:11, Heb 12:11, Jms 3:18). The thirteenth chapter of Corinthians leaves no doubt that we can have all kinds of other great works and if we do not have **love for our neighbor** (which is the fulfilling of the law—Rom 13:10, Gal 5:14), all of our other great works are nothing.

A study of each of the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5 would be quite

valuable, but many other writers have written on this subject and this article will take more time with some of the less-studied areas.

Truth

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord" (Eph 5:8-10). This passage mentions three fruits. Goodness and righteousness were included in the previous section, but truth is something different. A person who is drawing near to the Eternal and obeying Him will begin to understand more truth.

"However, when He, the **Spirit of truth**, has come, He **will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). It is interesting that neither the scriptures nor the leadership are listed as the path to **all truth**, although certainly His word is Truth (John 17:17), and we are commanded to study the scriptures (2 Tim 2:15).

Proverbs 23:23 tells us to "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding." Since Bible translators have not always understood the truth in what they were translating, we sometimes need to try our best to find the meaning of the original writings. We learn what it means to "buy the truth": multiple translations, concordances, word-books, histories, etc. Once we learn some truth, we should give it away to those who want it. Do not pester people that do not want to hear it (they may not be ready yet—John 16:12) or your "new truth" may be a mistake. On the opposite side, truth should not be a money-making proposition. If we have freely received of the Eternal, freely give (Mt 10:8).

Financial Support

Scriptures about this fruit include 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Rom 12:8, 15:25-28 and 1 Corinthians 9:6-14. Most people who have been within a

church organization for any length of time have heard more than enough about this type of fruit.

People are Fruit Too!

This title is not an insult to the human race, but a summary of the many places where people who learn the Truth are called the fruit of those that the Eternal works through to teach them. "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, '**The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few**; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold I send you out as lambs among wolves'" (Luke 10:1-3). John 4:35-38 records a different but similar story; the fields being "white and ready for harvest."

Paul refers to those he has taught as "his fruit" in Romans 1:13: "Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles."

The parable of the sewer appears to fit into this analogy (Matt 13:3-9, 18-23). Seeds are scattered in many places, but only those on good ground grow. "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt 13:23). A good seed produces more seeds like itself. For a man whose fruit is to bring others to the truth, does not this mean that during his lifetime he should teach 30, 60 or 100 others? And for those that do not teach directly, should we not be a positive influence on 30, 60 or 100 others?

Who Bears the Fruit?

We are all responsible to bear fruit. Some fruits are individual, and some can be harvested as a group. "Personal righteousness" we must bear ourselves (though some organizations have tried to "enforce righteousness"

with a myriad of enforced regulations). Most of the other fruits can be achieved on either a personal or a group basis.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.” (Matt 21:28-32)

The Messiah was addressing, among others, the chief priests in the temple. If there was an equivalent to a “big church organization” at that time, it was them. They could trace their genealogy back to Aaron and show how the Eternal commanded them to be teachers of the people (Mal 2:7). By contrast, John the Baptist was an “independent upstart.” Though the son of a priest, he had simple taste in clothes and food, and he spoke not at the temple, but in the wilderness. He spoke against the established leadership (Mat 3:4-10). But who will enter the kingdom of God first, those that listened to the organization historically established by the Eternal (the priests, now corrupt), or those that listened to a preacher of the “way of righteousness”?

While large organizations too often lead people astray, do not think that small organizations or individual efforts automatically stay on track. The New Testament has plenty of stories of individuals and small groups that became lost on their own ideas and did not bear fruit (Matt 19:16-22, Luke 14:16-20, Luke 13:1-2, Acts 19:13-16). Read these stories if you have any doubt!

More than once I have seen people discover that their organization was

“wasting” more than half of the funds that came to it. They stopped attending and supporting it—planning to bear fruit themselves. When difficulties and trials came along, their efforts ceased altogether. Their first estate was better than their last. **It is better to be a part of a big organization that is 50% effective than to look directly to the Father for leadership but end up doing nothing.** We must never forget Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 3, quoted near the beginning of this article: “If **anyone’s work** which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” If your “work” is largely contributing to another organization, then you should find out if that organization is bearing fruit. If your work is as an individual or small group, you must stay close to the Eternal and be diligent to keep moving forward.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:7-10).

He Is the Vine, We Are the Branches

We must always remember that all of the articles, exhortations and other diligent efforts we can muster will not produce good fruit unless it is done by the power of His spirit. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

If a branch is well-connected to the vine, it will naturally bear fruit. All the fruit needs is the light of Truth and room to grow, the vine provides everything else. A shaded branch that gets no light or a crowded branch with no room to bear fruit may have to be moved to a new location on the vine. A good husbandman (the Father) will

often do this very thing. It may “hurt” the branch when it is cut off and the branch may bear little fruit that year—many of the resources of the branch are devoted to restrengthening its connection with the vine. But later, the branch is far more productive than it ever could have been in its former location.

The lesson we can learn from this analogy is to not resist the Husbandman if it is time for Him to “move our branch.” It may be in our best interests to begin serving in another capacity, with a different group of people, or in a different place. It is easy for us to be comfortable where we are and think that we must always be there. But if he moves us to a new place on the vine, then we should not long to be in the old location but settle in to our new location, redirect our leaves to catch the sun, and take advantage of the new opportunity to bear fruit.

Other people may recognize that their branch is in a “tight place” and “ask” the husbandman to move them elsewhere. They are elated when they move to a new place on the vine. But once we have a new place, we need to be about the business of bearing fruit, not about the business of looking for yet another place.

There is no “perfect” place on the vine. Some places receive morning sun, others afternoon sun; some places have lots of wind, others do not; some are visible to the outside world, others are shielded. A branch may need to be moved more than once in its lifetime for it to keep bearing fruit, but a branch that moves every year (or more) is unlikely to bear any significant fruit.

If we are not in a place where we can grow and bear fruit, we need to ask the Husbandman to put us in a place where we can do it. Once there, we make sure we have a good connection with the vine. The fruit will come. We need not worry about other branches that appear to have more or less fruit—the Husbandman will tend to them. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

—Norman S. Edwards



Letters & Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. We include our response to each letter in this type-style. With long letters, we may answer each paragraph as the letter proceeds rather than deal with all of the topics at once. We have selected a title for each letter for easy reference. If writers supply their own title, we will be happy to use it.

More Grace, Less Law

LETTER: March 21, 1995
Dear So Called Friends,

Our friends do not write us anonymously. Especially with unsolicited propaganda attacking our true friends, and Christians as Paul defined them in Rom 7. Why do you not sign your names to your correspondence? Are you afraid? Are you ashamed to preach the gospel of *Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace and peace* (Rom 1:16; Eph 6:15, Acts 20:24)? Why are you only comfortable preaching about “the old covenant law” as if it were that which saves. In my opinion your letter is riddled with borrowed archaic collection of proof-texts for support of old covenant type obedience to the law.

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter that well-defines your understanding. We did not put any names on the letter because we felt the message was much more important than the messenger. We have not withheld our names from any that asked. We are not afraid to preach all of the good news (gospel) mentioned in the Scriptures. In the Bible we find the expressions “gospel of grace,” “gospel of peace,” “gospel of the kingdom,” “gospel of Christ,” “gospel of God,” and “gospel of salvation.” The world has witnessed hundreds of years of the preaching of a Gospel of grace without the gospel of the kingdom or the law or God. “Christian” nations sent their armies to fight each other, with the blessings of their “new testament” ministry—neither looking to the Biblical law that could prevent the conflict. “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your

faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 3:18).

We do not consider any part of the Bible archaic. If we are misusing scripture—reading in meanings that are not there, please let us know which verses you are referring to. We cannot “improve upon”

His word.

LETTER: All Christians agree on many important issues, but you seem unable to see anything but the differences. Many of us have been there - done that - & repented. Emphasis on “obedience to the law” rather than obedience to Christ is divisive. You hate the changes involving Sabbath observance and dietary practices. These seem to be your “great commandments.” Have you forgotten Proverbs 6:16-19 - the seven things God hates and refers to as “abominations” (KJV). Do you find Sabbath-breaking, eating pork or shrimp mentioned here? Note carefully *what is included* in verse 19 (and many other places including Galatians 5:20) “**sowing discord among brethren.**”

RESPONSE: We do not try to emphasize differences, but when we are talking about fundamental issues, truth and error are going to be different! Our Messiah said “Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division” (Luke 12:51). We see one reason why He allows some divisions in 1 Corinthians 11:18-19. The scriptural teaching regarding Sabbath observance and dietary practices has not changed. Some, like David and Paul, have loved the law (Ps 119:97, Rom 7:12) and benefited from it. We encourage others to follow their practice.

The very same Hebrew word for **abomination** (*tow'ebah*) used in Proverbs 6:16 is also used in Deuteronomy 14:3: “Thou shalt not eat any **abominable** thing.” A description of what to eat and what not to eat follows this verse. Proverbs does not say “only seven things,” so we must conclude that these eight things and many others expressed elsewhere in the Bible are all abominations to the Eternal.

The *great commandments* were quoted by our Saviour from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18; “...on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”—the entire “old covenant” is based on love of our Father and our neighbor (Matt 22:36-40.) We believe in living by “every word of God” (Matt 4:4). Sowing discord is lying or deceiving oth-

ers into believing they have differences that they do not have. (e.g. Bob the Sower tells Mary that he thinks John does not like her.) Our effort is to teach significant Biblical truth and let individuals make their own choices about their beliefs, friends and congregational attendance.

LETTER: How can you justify what you are doing in light of Phil 1:15-18? Paul taught the value and importance of preaching Christ, even when for wrong motives! Yet you attack the WCG, a Christian group, because in *your opinion*, it preaches *too much about Christ* (through whom alone is salvation - Acts 4:12) and too little about the law (though which no one is justified - Acts 13:39, Rom 3:20, Gal 2:16; 3:11&24; 5:14).

RESPONSE: We rejoice as Paul did in Philippians when Christ is preached. Anyone that reads his words is learning truth. While we feel many “Christian” groups do not understand His message, the world has benefitted by the many Bibles, histories, and other writings they have made available. We do not attack specific groups, but teach what we read in the scriptures. We believe that salvation comes from His grace, not from our keeping of the law. Through the power of the holy spirit, we can keep His law and eventually, “you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48).

LETTER: You want the law/Sabbath/holydays to be the sign/badge of your discipleship? That is your prerogative. Who has forbidden them you? I love and observe them too, but they are not the sign of my discipleship. These are no more forbidden than is eating whole wheat flour or avoiding doctors. You are free to observe the law -- any or all of them. But **you will never be free, from a scriptural standpoint, to stir up division among brethren!** And none will ever be justified by obedience to the law. (Eph 2:8-9)

RESPONSE: The Sabbath is given as a sign to show that the Eternal has set us apart (Ex 31:13); our love for the brethren is a sign that we are His disciples (John 13:35). The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul... (Ps 19:7). The Feasts are a time of joy (Deut 16:13-15). We and many others have believed these truths for 20 or more years. Within the last few years there has been great division as new teachers have ceased teaching these truths and began teaching a Gospel of “accept Christ and don’t worry about what he taught.”

Continued on next page

But our Saviour has a purpose in these divisions (1Cor 11:18-19).

LETTER: Although I can certainly respect any honest effort to follow one's conscience as they feel God is directing it, it is difficult to respect those whose conscience permits criticism of Christians whose "sin" is overemphasizing *Christ*, and stressing what he and the apostle emphasized -- love your neighbor as yourself. All who want to be respected must **obey Christ**, stop attacking Christians, and upgrade any law-centered message to a **Christ-centered message**.

RESPONSE: Thank you for your respect. We respect your sincere presentation. We respect the sincere efforts of billions of people over the past 2000 years that have taught a Christ-centered message and taught others to love their neighbor as themselves. When their love corresponded to the Eternal's love, this was a wonderful thing. Unfortunately, without the law, people often do not know how to love the Eternal or their neighbor. I have talked with people that have studied the Greek words for adultery and fornication and believe there is nothing in the new testament that prevents a single person from having sex with multiple partners as long as there is "love" in the relationship and it is not "perverse." I have talked with homosexuals that see no scriptural need to change their ways as long as they are trusting in Christ's grace. "Christian" nations have a very poor track record for loving their neighbors—they lost the knowledge of what sin is (1Jn 3:4). We emphasize the law because most English-speaking people know about the Savior, but they do not know about the value of the law.

LETTER: Please *put an end to suggesting that anyone who does not agree with your doctrinal view, lacks honesty and integrity in their personal bible study*. It is arrogant, and your denial makes it no less true. The book of Acts with its' history of ever-present honest controversy (and some not so honest) led the church to understand the importance of tolerance (Rom 14), and at other times to doctrinal changes and growth in the early Christian church (Acts 15). Your approach slams the door to honest discussion of issues which could promote growth, and help inspire stronger **faith driven works which glorify Christ!**

RESPONSE: We are not sure which of our statements you are objecting to here.

We tried to make it very clear in page 6 of our letter that we did not have all of the answers. We do not believe in pronouncing public judgments on individuals or organizations (see first article on page 1 of this issue.) I think many need to grow in doctrinal toleration as described in Romans 14, but 2John 7-11 shows that when people no longer believe Christ was here in the flesh, you should avoid them.

LETTER: I look forward to the time when all will *understand* the admonition to "**speak the same thing...that there be no divisions**". Is salvation really so complicated? Is it more than life changing faith in the resurrected and active *Jesus Christ* as a result of His supreme sacrifice - made for the forgiveness of sin (pride, selfishness, vanity, greed, etc. or absence of love), demonstrating his awesome love for us in terms we humans can easily understand? (John 15:13 no greater love...lay down life for sabbath?)

RESPONSE: I, too, look forward to a time when we can all speak the same thing—probably the thousand years when the Messiah will rule and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Isa 11:9). If what our Father wants of us is as simple as you describe, the Bible would need to be only one chapter or maybe one book. But He gave us 1189 chapters. Concepts are "here a little, there a little" and most of us must study in "another tongue" [English, not Hebrew or Greek] (Is 28:9-11). Even after the understanding of salvation, Paul told Timothy that "from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, [only the **Old Testament** existed] which are able to make you wise for salvation..." (2 Tim 3:15). John 15:13 does not require us to lay down our life for the Sabbath, but Rev 14:9-13 probably does. It is very clear in these verses that it is better to lay down your life rather than accept the "mark of the beast." Even if Sunday-worship is not the "mark of the beast" we still must be willing to die rather than accept that "mark." I believe what the opening chapters of this book say: it was given so His servants would know what is happening, and there is a blessing for reading this book and **keep- ing [doing] what it says**.

LETTER: *I pray this letter might strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ.*

—R. W., Murfreesboro, TN

RESPONSE: Thank you for your genuine concern. May the Eternal bless you as you continue to study and "live by every word of God."

—Norman S. Edwards

Pleased to See Initiative

LETTER: March 15, 1995
Dear fellow servant,

Mr. David Truan of the Seventh Day Christian Assembly of the Church of God (Knoxville, Tennessee) gave me a copy of the letter you sent to him. I found it to be well written and Biblically sound. I took it upon myself to fax a copy to my Christian brother and pastor, Mr. John Pinkston, of the Congregation of God Seventh Day in Kennesaw (Atlanta) Georgia. I hope that you don't mind.

While I am always pleased to learn of another person of like mind spiritually, I am distressed at the circumstances which are forcing many brethren to leave the organizations which in times past have served to take the Gospel to the called ones. I am thankful to see that some few are taking the initiative to reach out to others in an effort to unite for fellowship and Bible study. May the Eternal bless those efforts with success.

I have enclosed an audio tape of a sermon I gave on February 18, 1995 in the Kennesaw church. Just that morning an article appeared in the Knoxville newspaper regarding how changes in the Worldwide Church doctrine were causing large decreases in income and liquidation of many church holdings. We had been hearing even more disturbing reports of enormous losses of members who apparently had reached the end of their ability to hang on in the face of drastic changes in doctrine and policy. May the Eternal protect each one and provide fellowship, and even growth, as a result of these trying times.

I pray that God will bless you with increased understanding and spiritual growth. Please let me know if there is any way in which I may be of service to you.

Sincerely in Jesus Christ's name,
—Kenneth W Swiger, TN

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter, tape and prayer. We have heard many "disturbing reports" as well, but we encourage all of our readers to get first-hand information wherever possible. Some of these "reports" are inaccurate and overblown. We hope others will join with your approach of asking the Eternal to protect each one as he sees fit.

—Norman S. Edwards

20 Tough Questions

LETTER:

March 10, 1995

Friends:

I recently received your mailing of 2-27-95. Apparently it is specifically targeted to members of Worldwide. [1] Who puts people in a church? [2] Who takes them out? [3] What comes from God? [4] What comes from man? [5] Are people led or misled? [6] How do we know how and where God works? [7] Can different organizations declare that their brand of truth is correct and all others are wrong? [8] Can each cite scripture that proves they are right and every one else is wrong? [9] Can each cite miracles, healings, blessings, circumstances and happenings that prove "their" truth is correct? [10] Can the Bible be used to prove that two opposite opinions are correct? [11] Can men pour their heart out to God in earnest and humble prayer and study and then end up with the wrong "truth"? [12] Is simplicity in Christ so complicated that men cannot understand or agree upon it? [13] Does organized "religion" answer these questions? [14] Do men have to follow the right organization to be saved? [15] Where is God in all this mess? [16] Are the answers to these questions clear as mud?

[17] How much consideration should someone give to an anonymous mailing from an unknown organization that is ashamed to even sign their name to what they have written? [18] How did "Friends" get my name and address? [19] Did they have permission, legally and ethically to obtain my name and address? [20] Or does God wink at such things as long as it is done in their opinion for His glory?

—P.C., Nebraska

RESPONSE: Congratulations on writing our most inquisitive letter to date. We feel your questions are good and they are on the minds of many people at this time.

(1) "But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (1Cor 12:18). The Church is the "body of Christ" (1Cor 12:27, Col 1:18,24).

(2) Our Father has promised to finish the work he began in us (Phil 1:3, Heb 13:5). No man can separate us from our Savior (Rom 8:35-39). If we willfully sin, we can lose eternal life (Heb 10:26)

(3) Our Father gave us his Son as a sacrifice for sins (John 3:16) and He gives

us His holy spirit (Luke 11:13). He gives us his word which shows the way of Salvation (2Tim 3:15-17).

(4) We are required to repent and be baptized to receive the holy spirit (Acts 2:38). We are required to "live by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). (While we do not physically carry out the instructions for animal sacrifices or stoning of adulterers, we read and understand these things to know the gravity of sin.) Most of the scripture is about things we either need to know or need to do. We are required to "overcome" the ways of this world (1Jn 5:5, Rev 3:5, 21:7)

(5) People are both led and misled. You can find examples of good and bad leaders from Genesis to Revelation. Yes, there are false leaders apparently "in the Church" (2Cor 11:13-14, Gal 1:6-9, 2Thes 3:6, 1Tim 4:1-3, 6:3-5, 1Jn 4:1-3, 2Jn 7-11, 3Jn 9-11, Jude 5-19). The Ephesian congregation was praised for finding their false apostles to be liars, (Rev 2:2), the Pergamos church was criticized for putting up with those that taught the doctrine of Balaam (Rev 2:14). Good leaders can be a great help to the people, but we are individually responsible for what we do (2Cor 1:22).

(6) The Eternal works in many different ways, with great power and many people (Ex 3-20), to a "small voice" and with only one man (so he thought) (1Kng 19). There is one common thread: the Messiah said his followers would "bear much fruit" (John 15:1-8). These fruits may take on the form of personal character improvement (Gal 5:22-23), service to others (Rom 15:25-28), praise to the Eternal (Heb 13:15), or teaching the truth to others (Rom 1:13). Even if a tree has stopped bearing fruit, the Master may "dig" and "dung" it, then give it some time to begin bearing again (Luke 13:6-9). In short, you cannot easily tell where the Eternal is beginning to work, where he is working, and where he has stopped working. Our purpose should not simply be to find where the Eternal is working and "hang around" there, but we should make sure that we are personally bearing fruit and look for the place where we can most effectively serve.

(7) It is easy to find an organization that declares its brand of truth correct and all the others wrong. This becomes truly amazing when you find such statements are made without any attempt to understand the beliefs of "all the others." How can you know that no one else believes what you believe? **I can find no scripture that states we will be saved,**

judged, or rewarded based on the organization or teacher we follow. We are strongly influenced by the company we keep, but it is our own character by which we will be judged. The man that came to the wedding without a wedding garment was in the right place (a "right" organization?), but he was not personally ready (Matt 22:2-14). Many claiming His name will not be accepted (Matt 7:21-23). On the other hand, there are "a few names even in Sardis [a "bad organization?"] who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." (Rev 3:4).

(8) A favorite tactic of many groups (especially tiny ones) is to show how they understand one doctrine correctly and how others teach a Satanic counterfeit. Some groups go on to declare all others as "inactive," "dead," "Laodicean," or "Satanic" churches. If we can learn any lesson from Revelation 2 and 3, it is this: **a congregation can have error, and still be used of the Eternal; but "to him [an individual] who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"** (Rev 3:21). I have never seen *any* "Church history" that shows a group of people that have had the same doctrines for nearly 2000 years. While we should all strive to understand and obey the scriptures, I cannot find where 100% doctrinal correctness is the sign of His people.

(9) Miracles were certainly a sign of our Savior's ministry (John 3:2). Yet, the great ministry of John had no miracles (John 10:41). The Messiah said his followers would have miracles (Mark 16:17-20), but false prophets will do the same (Matt 24:24). Miracles show that a powerful spirit is at work, but they should never be used to "prove" that doctrine is correct: "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and that sign or the wonder of which he spoke to you comes to pass, saying, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut 13:1-3).

(10) I have seen long papers showing from the scriptures that the Israelites killed the passover lamb at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan and other equally long scripture-filled papers showing it

Continued on next page

was at the end of the 14th. Obviously, the lambs were only killed at one time. Some (or possibly all) of these papers are using the Bible incorrectly. On the other hand, I have seen many expositions of the "seven churches" in Revelation 2 and 3. The prophecy of Elijah in Malachi 4:5-6 gives no hint of two fulfillments, but the Messiah said Elijah "is coming" and "has come" (Matt 17:11-13). With prophecy parables, and some other lessons, multiple fulfillments or multiple correct explanations are possible.

(11) Daniel fasted and prayed as most of us never have (Dan 10:1-3). After he was given the truth, he was told that he would not be able to understand it (Dan 12:8-9). Paul initially spoke as though the Messiah would return in his lifetime (1Thes 4:17), but later realized he would die (2Tim 4:6). Herbert Armstrong kept Pentecost by three different methods (Sivan 6, Monday, Sunday) with apparent sincerity each time he looked into it. The holy spirit will lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13), but there is no promise of exactly when. We are responsible to seek truth (Matt 6:33), but we are only minimally accountable for truth we have not been given (Luke 12:48).

(12) The simplicity of Christ can be summed up in the two commands to love the Eternal with our whole heart and love our neighbor as ourself (Matt 22:36-40). Yet we are commanded to live by "every word of God" (Matt 4:4). The Eternal has big plans for the future (Ezekiel 40-48, Rev 21-22). You do not want to hire a builder that knows only the two fundamental principles of building.

(13) When organized religions grow large, there is a temptation to become primarily concerned with the number of people and the amount of money coming to the organization. Like people, some organizations resist the temptation, some succumb. Some organizations will attempt to answer these questions, and others are convinced they have most of the truth and there is no real need to answer this kind of question.

(14) We can find no scripture requiring adherence to a specific organization or teacher for salvation. (See point 7.) Rather we find Paul's admonition not to create factions following different teachers (1Cor 1: 11-13, 3:1-21).

(15) Where is God? "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer 17:10). He is there to see what we will do, but he is also there to help: "Ask,

and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt 7:7-8).

(16) The answers may not be as clear as we would like them to be, but they are as clear as they need to be. It seems easier for us if all we have to do is attend and support the one "right" organization. It is a little more scary when we realize that we will be judged by what **we know** and **what we do with it**.

(17) We were not ashamed of our names: we freely gave them out to any that asked. We did not put any names on our letter because we hoped our readers would look at the scriptures to see if these things were so, not make a judgment based on their opinion of the authors, whether it be good or bad.

(18) *Friends of the Brethren* collected names and addresses from a great many sources. We cannot be certain how we obtained yours.

(19) We do not know the original sources of every name and address that came to us. We know of no laws that were broken in the process. As far as ethical questions are concerned, there may be conflicts between corporate ethics and Biblical ethics. The most important thing to realize is that those that take it upon themselves to teach others will receive much greater judgment (Jms 3:1, Matt 18:6). The writing of our first letter came after much prayer and fasting. I am far more concerned about the fate of other teachers (with corporate mailing lists at their fingertips) that are supporting doctrines that they know or at least should know to be in error.

[20] Does the Eternal allow his own law to be bypassed for a good purpose? Sometimes! When Israel was sinning by adulterous relationships with the Midianites, Phinehas, the son of the high priest killed a guilty man and woman for doing this (Num 25:6-13). The law required that two or three witnesses be present to put anyone to death (Deut 17:6-7). The Eternal did not condemn him for his zeal, but promised the priesthood would stay in his lineage forever. Similarly, David was allowed to eat the showbread when none other was available (1Sam 21:6). On the other hand, Uzzah reached up to steady the ark of God while it was on a cart, and he died (2Sam 6:1-11). Why? He should have known from Numbers 3:30-31, 7:8-9 that the ark was to be born on the Kohathite's shoulders and specifically not to be put on a cart. There were

Levites available at that time. Whenever we can follow His law, we should!

Thank you again for your very good questions! May the Eternal bless you as you continue to study His word.

—Norman S. Edwards

Acts 15:10: What is the "Heavy Load" or "Yoke"?

LETTER: March 13, 1995
To: Friends of the Brethren,

A friend passed on a copy of your recent mailing. It was interesting but a major question exists relating to Acts 15:10 when it came to 'shooting down *the old law is done away with theory*'. I don't think this is talking about circumcision. I would really appreciate your input by fax as to just what was this '*heavy load*' that was being put around the necks of the '*non-Jewish brothers*'.

Thanks in advance for your help.
A friend,

—J.H., California

RESPONSE: I am aware of the frequent comparison between the "yoke" mentioned in Acts 15:10 and the yoke mentioned in Matt 11:29-30. The yoke of the law (meaning the Old Testament) is termed unbearable and replaced with a new yoke from Christ. This comparison might have validity in the sense that many Jewish leaders thought they had eternal life simply by adhering to the scriptures (John 5:39-40). Since they could not keep the law perfectly, this was an unworkable (and unbearable) attempt to obtain salvation.

However, if we attempt to understand these scriptures from a Jewish perspective (the conference was composed of Jews talking about Jewish issues), then the meaning becomes very clear. Acts 15:1 states the problem: "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" The issue here is not just circumcision, but how the circumcision is performed. Many Middle-eastern people are circumcised, but only Jews are circumcised "according to the custom of Moses." The Bible says very little about how to perform a circumcision. The references here to the "custom of Moses" and to the "law of Moses" in verse five include both the "written law" (the Hebrew Scriptures) and the "oral law."

According to Jewish history and tradition, the "oral law" are those instructions

given by the Eternal to Moses that were not written down. Also, when new situations arose, elders made decisions and added them to this body of oral law, which was finally written down late in the second century AD and known as the *Mishna*. The *Mishna* contains quite a bit of information about the exact method of circumcision. It also contains an incredible amount of additional do's and don'ts not found in the Bible (it is over half the size of the Bible). Most of these things are not contrary to the Bible, and many serve as a reminder of some righteous principle. However, many are very tedious. The Scribes and Pharisees added many more traditions in their day, some of them contrary to the written law. The Messiah admonished them for their hypocrisy and bad traditions in Matt 15 and 23. They must have listened a little bit since some of the bad traditions mentioned in the Gospels had been discarded by the time the *Mishna* was written..

The Jewish word commonly used for circumcision is *brit-milah*, which means "circumcision covenant." The act of a Mosaic circumcision was a covenant to keep the whole law—both oral and written (Gal 5:3). This is indeed a burden that neither "our fathers nor we were able to bear." The issue at this conference is: "should Gentiles be circumcised according to the Oral law and take on all of those traditions? (i.e., Should they become Jews?) The same issue occurred again in Acts 21:21 where Paul was accused of teaching "...all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." Again, we are dealing with the oral law of Moses and customs, not the written word of the Eternal. All we need to do is see what Paul said later in Acts 24:14: "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are **written in the Law** and in the Prophets."

Paul did not think the law was "done away," neither do we!

—Norman S. Edwards

95% of Letter O.K., but No "Bottom Up" Government

LETTER: March 15, 1995
Dear Friends of the Brethren,

I received your letter and have read it from one end to the other. It is a very good letter overall, but I really
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do not get the point of what you are trying to say to us. I agree with you that the Law is still in force and with most of the points that you make that are based on the Holy Bible.

RESPONSE: A number of people that read our letter asked the same questions: "What is the point?" "What do you want me to do?" Our purpose was primarily to help people look to the Eternal and realize that He has his Church and there is work for us to do regardless of which church groups may come and go—we are responsible for working out our own salvation. We do not have any prepackaged formula (i.e. we don't say: contribute or attend with us and you will be "saved" or "go to a place of safety"). Since you already understand these concepts, much of our letter was not "news" to you.

LETTER: I also agree with you that we do work out our own salvation. As we read in Ezekiel 14:20, "Though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." And I also agree that for many people, myself included, we have put too much emphasis on an organization in the past.

Before I start to criticize your paper, let me just say that I agree with 95% of what you have written and believe that your intent is good, but since I am not totally clear on what your intent is, I will reserve judgment on that subject until a later date. Certainly, these are trying times for all Christians, and we cannot read anything with the childlike mind that we used to.

My first major criticism is the example you use of Moses to demonstrate government from the "bottom up." In Deuteronomy 1:13 we read (your example), "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." The top made them the rulers, not the bottom. Also, in verse 14 we read, "So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you,..." This demonstrates government from the top down. Also, note verse 16, "And I charged your judges at that time,..." Finally, notice verse 18, "And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do." What the children of Israel did was to just recommend people for a job, they had no authority to select people to do the job. It is clearly not a case of government from the "bottom

up," but a case of authority from the top down. Also, read Exodus 18:25.

RESPONSE: We made a mistake! Our reference to "from the bottom up" is only accurate as far as the initial recommendations. Since the Bible says both the people (Deut 1:13) and Moses (Ex 18:25) chose them, both must have been involved in the process. It seems probable that the people made recommendations and then Moses did the final choosing. The entire government **was not** "from the bottom up." Moses was not responsible to some council of people, he was given his job from the Eternal and was responsible to Him to do it (Ex 3:10,17-18). The people were responsible for obeying Moses and the judges as long as they were within the law.

While the expression "bottom-up government" is inaccurate, Moses was not instituting a classical "top-down government" either. The people still had access to Moses (Deut 1:17). In a classical top-down government, the leader appoints his top managers, who appoint middle managers, who appoint lower managers, who manage people that have no voice and must "obey or else." No authority was given to the "middle" leaders to replace the local leaders with their own friends. The Eternal gave his people a system where there was enough authority to accomplish His purposes, but not so much that His people would have to suffer under the all-to-frequently-occurring corrupt leader.

LETTER: My second major problem with your paper is one that you admit to be a problem yourself or at least a statement of fact. I quote from page 3, "before modern transportation and communication, regular fellowship was possible only at a local level; cassette tape and booklet programs were not invented yet." You need to get out of the first and second centuries and join the real world. Since these things do exist and are here for man to use, not just for the church, I think that we as a church (notice I use the term "church" and not a leader or a group name) should use these as a means of getting the Gospel to the world as a witness. Don't you think we should? Your letter made it seem like these things were somehow bad.

RESPONSE: We should use whatever means our Father makes available to preach the Gospel. It can be done with 10,000 people all helping one spirit-filled man so his voice can be transmitted electronically all over the country. It can also be done with 10 people each helping 1000

Continued on next page

spirit-filled men so their voices can be heard locally in 1000 different places. Both approaches or other approaches can be used. Any one of these methods is probably superior to doing nothing at all.

I think it is a mistake to say that the only way the Gospel can reach the world is through one specific program. Especially when we have evidence such as the over 120,000 current members of the Churches of God 7th Day. It appears that the "tortoise" has overtaken the "hare." While Herbert Armstrong started a fast growing work with a huge media budget, its over-dependence on central leadership has caused it to dwindle, now being smaller than the 7th Day churches which grew primarily by word-of-mouth and a much smaller publishing effort.

LETTER: Finally, I would like to state that your letter gave me the impression that organized religion is of itself bad. An organization is nothing more than a tool to use to get a job done. If men misuse the organization, it makes them bad, not the organizational structure. After all, individually we could not have done what was done through God's servant, Mr. Armstrong (I am assuming you know who he was and what he did, because I do not find him mentioned in your letter.). Mr. Armstrong certainly used an organization to complete a very important part of the work of God, and I can only hope that another man will rise to the occasion.

RESPONSE: I think it is a mistake to say that Mr. Armstrong's work could be done **only** with the kind of organizational structure he used. Nevertheless, I am thankful that the Eternal did work through it and that I was able to learn much truth through it. Unfortunately, people came to believe (unbiblically) that there is only one true church corporation, that "God only works through one man," and that you are responsible to follow the "government of God" (your minister or superior) no matter what you may understand from the scriptures. These teachings are causing tens of thousands of people to tolerate or whole-heartedly endorse the very doctrines which they heard Herbert Armstrong and his successors preach against when they first became interested in his message.

LETTER: You see there are many of us who want to be the ones that do the sending out. As Acts 17:10 shows, "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews." There are many examples of people being sent by God or by other

people in the Bible, I just quoted one to make a point. I was glad to send Mr. Armstrong to world leaders and via radio and television to the world. I hope that there is another man who rises up that I can, and will, support to preach the Gospel. Just because one man misuses the responsibility is no reason in my mind to say that we should not use that method anymore.

RESPONSE: I agree with your Bible understanding about "sending" a servant to others. I feel every converted person should be involved in either "sending" or "going." If the holy spirit shows you through your study and prayer that you should be sending a man to speak via radio and TV, then I think you should do it. But I see nothing less righteous in being one of 10 people sending a man to speak at a local public Bible lecture with 30 people attending. When Herbert Armstrong began, he did the same thing. Today, there are thousands of men with the holy spirit, the understanding and the ability to go and teach.

In conclusion let me say this: Your message is right in the things that it says about us working out our own salvation and not depending on a man or organization to get us into the kingdom. All organizations can be good or bad as far as how they are used and it is up to the individual to look into the Bible to determine if he should support that organization in the job that it is doing. And yes, I believe that a person can be a good Christian even if he does not support any of them if the conditions are right, but at this time I believe that there are several groups that are doing it right, and a Christian has an obligation to support the group/work that he believes to be doing God's work. If he is not doing that then he is robbing God of tithes and offerings. To borrow some meaning from a scripture in Luke 17:10, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Is your letter preaching that we are to be the unprofitable servant by doing only that which is commanded of us, or should we go above and beyond to unite together to get the warning to the world as a witness so that the end might come?

Sincerely,

—L.K., Texas

RESPONSE: We all need to be working wherever we can, and I see no great disadvantage to multiple organizations. Matthew 10:23, John 15:20, Matthew 24:9-10, the

persecutions recorded in Acts, and the lessons of the 1979 church receivership provide strong evidence that the Church will not be primarily one central corporation at the time of the end. It would be very easy for the national government to stop the work of a single organization. (The only reasons the California Attorney General did not succeed in this was because critical business activities were moved outside his jurisdiction to Arizona.) Right now, we are relatively free of persecution. "... the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

—Norman S. Edwards

Elijah Work Yet to Begin?

LETTER: March 22, 1995
Dear Friends of the Brethren,

Thank you for a lot of scriptural reminders in your letter to me. I don't believe for one moment that specifically the Sabbath command is "Old Covenant rules." If this is the case then so are the other nine commands, but no minister of the Worldwide Church of God is going to get up and say we can commit adultery, lie, steal, etc. However, it is surprising how some see a difference between the Sabbath and the other commands of the **TEN**.

As the Bible says, unlike most in society who are not chosen we are "without excuse." I feel there are more days ahead that Worldwide Church of God will see regarding God's denial of blessings because some leaders are straying from His true Way. It is hard to understand what has gotten into some people.

But the Elijah work may not have even started yet. So this is something to look forward to. If we remember Elijah's commission, he is to restore the truth. I hope that God is merciful and the Elijah work is still on the horizon.

Sometimes the answer is God holding up a mirror which tells us that WE are the problem. We can either accept or reject God's response. At this point in time some in the Church refuse to accept that they could be in error.

Sincerely,

—M.G., Wisconsin

RESPONSE: We appreciate your comments. Most Americans never heard of Herbert Armstrong and have no idea of the prophesied events about to befall them. Most other countries are even less informed. Others have contacted us and hope than an Elijah work may soon begin!

—Norman S. Edwards

"You shall be judged." from page 1 tains an excellent message for how we should live if we hope to be judged favorably for what we do now. The Messiah was addressing his disciples as well as a huge group of people. The whole chapter is excellent reading, but we will quote parts most relevant to the topic of personal judgment.

"...Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 12:1-3) We should think of these verses whenever we say something like "what they don't know won't hurt them." We are responsible even when no one else knows that a problem is our fault.

"And He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; not about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.... And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you' (Luke 12:22-23, 29-31).

There is nothing wrong with material things—they are promised here as a reward to the faithful. But do these things consume our lives? Are we constantly talking about our quality of food, clothing, housing or entertainment? Is our religion limited to a certain amount of prayer, study, and financial contributions? Are we growing personally and being a light to others?

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat,

and will come and serve them.... Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:35-37,40). We are to be a light to others, they should be able to see our works. We are to be serving, doing the work until the end. Our Messiah and the apostles endured life-threatening events to preach the Gospel. Will they be satisfied if we tell them "the Church corporation that had the most money went astray, so we couldn't preach the Gospel?"

"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has'" (Luke 12:41-44). Peter wondered who the Messiah was talking to here, just the disciples, or to everyone? The answer was He was talking to whoever it would be that was doing the work—there is no emphasis on apostleship or some other rank, but on being a faithful servant.

"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 22:45-46). Some of us expected the Messiah to return many years ago, but He did not. Some "leaders" of the brethren are spending their energies attacking their fellow servants.

"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48). Whether these

are physical or spiritual stripes is a topic for another article. **Anyone that has ever been beaten knows that it hurts—it is something to be avoided.** It was our merciful saviour that felt so strongly about this issue that he used this graphic terminology. What category of person are you and I? Do we know our master's will or do we not? Do we have an understanding of the Truth? Are we a living example of it? Do we know that it was through the preaching of other men that we heard the Gospel? Can we prove that there are no more to be called and chosen? What are we doing about it?

"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Luke 12:51-53). The context of these verses is still the same as above: doing the Master's will when he returns. We can expect divisions among His servants, even among families. The Master is judging His servants, he wants to know who is seeking him and who is going along for the ride (1Cor 11:19).

Judge Ourselves Now

"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1Cor 11:31-32).

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and Godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?" (2Pet 3:10-12.)

—Norman S. Edwards, 3/1995

"For with the judgment..." from page 1 ural thing; "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11). There is a tendency to condemn others for their sin and a desire to expose it. There is also the less noble motivation of feeling we are better because others have sins that we do not have. Nevertheless, the scriptures are clear, we are not to judge and condemn people when we are not asked to give a judgment.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:37-38).

"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" (Jms 4:11-12.)

Although it may seem like an obvious point, it seems to be one of the most ignored. We should avoid making any kind of judgment in our own minds unless we have heard both sides of the story. "The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him" (Prov 18:17). "Does our law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" (John 7:51.)

But what should we do when we see a brother involved in a doctrinal error? If it is a leader trying to make us believe something false, then we need to follow the principles outlined in the last section of this article. But most troublesome incidents are fellow-members doing things that we think they should not do. Our role is to gently help (not condemn) if we can—being careful that *we* do not sin (Gal 6:1). When the holy spirit is present and errors are not disastrous, Paul shows us that we can live in peace with our differences in Romans 14:1-4:

"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all

things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let no one who eats despise him who does not eat, and let no one who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."

We must realize that people are not guided into all truth all at once. The original 12 apostles had to be told they were not ready for some truth. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (John 16:12). This concept of learning truth a little at a time is found elsewhere in the scrip-

We must realize that people are not guided into all truth all at once.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." —John 16:12

tures (Mark 4:33, 1Cor 3:1-2, Heb 5:11-14). We must not judge or despise people that are growing, but cannot yet bear all of the teaching that we can.

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt 18:6).

If we believe someone else is sinning, we can reach out to help without judgment or trying to be righteous for him. "Brethren, if any man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted....But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load" (Gal 6:1,4,5).

Judgments We Should Make Now

While the Bible teaches that we should not take it upon ourselves to judge our brother, sometimes we are

asked to make judgments.

We are in training to become kings and priests and reign with the Messiah at his return (Rev 1:6, 5:10, 2Tim 2:12, 1Pet 2:9). Micah 4:1-4 shows that the laws and judgments will go forth from Jerusalem. "For all people walk each in the name of his god [Hebrew *Eloim*—those saints that have overcome and have been changed to spirit], But we will walk in the name of the Lord [Hebrew *YHWH*] our God forever and ever" (Mic 4:5). As opportunity permits, we must be learning to make righteous judgments based on the law [the Hebrew *torah* refers specifically to the first five books, but more generally refers to all scripture].

The first half of I Corinthians 6 explains that brethren should judge cases among themselves rather than go to civil courts. In ancient Israel, the people were commanded to choose judges that would judge righteously (Deut 1:13, 16:18). These judges were not a "police force" roaming around looking for the sins of others, but rendered judgments when people came to them (Ex 18:16, Deut 25:1). Also, there were specific situations where people were specifically commanded to go to the judges (Deut 21:1-2, Ex 21:6,22, 22:9, et al.).

As the Eternal is now dealing directly with his converted people, rather than through a civil government, Matthew 18:15-20 is the specific procedure given for His people to make judgments. "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." Each person with the Holy Spirit has access to Divine guidance and the Eternal's law. We should be able to resolve difficulties among ourselves. Indeed, we are given a chance to judge ourselves.

However, there are tares (unconverted) among the good seed (Matt 13:30). Even those that are converted are not yet perfect. There will be times when brethren cannot use the law to resolve their differences. "But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word

may be established” (Mat 18:16). These witnesses are people familiar with the problem and are, as all people, responsible for living by every word of the Eternal (Deut 8:3). Hopefully, when faced with the testimony of more than one, the person at fault will see his error and repent of it. But if he does not, the Eternal does not leave judgment in the hands of the friends of one of the parties.

“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church [Greek *ekklesia*]. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matt 18:17). The Greek *ekklesia* means assembly or “body of called-out ones.” It does not specifically mean “ministry,” though it would include all baptized members of the congregation.

When a case is brought to the *ekklesia*, it is a time for the members to make a just judgment based on the law of the Eternal. As Deuteronomy 17:8-13 commanded the death penalty for those that would not heed the judgment given by the highest courts, so the Messiah commands that a person be cast out of the congregation if he will not heed the judgment of his brethren. This is serious business! “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt 18:18).

How much of the congregation is required to render a judgment? Every member? Will one wise man do? The next verses answer: “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Mt 18:19-20). Two, preferably three members **in agreement** are needed to render a judgment. In major matters affecting many people, the entire congregation could be involved (Acts 15:22).

When we are asked by our brothers to judge an issue, we must take it seriously. These judgments are public—they will be known by others and affect the lives of others. As the title of this article and numerous other

scriptures indicate, we will be judged by the way we judge others.

In case the question should arise, we should not get involved judging those outside of the Church. When “one from the crowd” asked the Messiah to make his brother divide his inheritance, He did not get involved. As we too well know, the civil process of judgment can take an incredible amount of time. The Messiah had a message to preach and a mission to accomplish and he could not get involved in a task which belonged to the civil government of that day.

Judging the Teachings of Leaders

The scriptures tell us that we must individually judge whether or not teachers are teaching truth. One of the most often quoted scriptures about leaders is 1 Corinthians 11:1, KJV: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Obviously, it is the job of the member to determine which leaders are “following Christ.” If it were the job of the leader, we would be required to follow every “Christian” leader. Numerous other scriptures show this principle:

You shall not listen to the words of that [false] prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut 13:3).

For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you (1Cor 11:18).

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us (2Thes 3:6).

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, ... who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself (1Tim 6:3,5).

And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars (Rev 2:2).

These scriptures say nothing about convicting, accusing, or attempting to stop false teachers; they simply command us to note them and avoid them. Indeed, the Eternal uses false teachers to test others (Deut 13:3). While we must avoid their errant ways and teach the truth to those that will hear it, we have not been called to pronounce judgment or condemnation upon them.

This concludes our study about judging others. Remember, “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matt 7:2).

—Norman S. Edwards, 3/1995

WANTED: Basic Literature to Be Shared

Many different groups and some individuals are making commendable efforts to preach the Gospel to the world. One of their greatest needs is a good set of basic literature or a correspondence course to give to interested people that want to study more. Topics could include the law, the Sabbath, God, Jesus, Satan, the nature of Man, the holy spirit, Bible study, baptism, salvation, prophecy, holidays, holydays, marriage, family, clean meats, etc.

It makes more sense for many groups to share their efforts than for each to write everything themselves. We hope to establish a body of such literature that will bear the author's name and address in small print, and contain a large open space for a local group to stamp or print their own name and address. There will be some doctrinal differences, so not every group will use every piece of literature, but most of them can use most of it.

If you are interested in writing such literature, or making existing literature available, please contact us at address on page 2. Friends of the Brethren can do the layout and printing for you if necessary. 

We want to send this newsletter only to people that want it! If you are not interested, please send us a postcard or give us a call: 501-872-1003, fax: 501-872-1004, eMail: 75260.1603@Compuserve.com

Literature List

Friends of the Brethren is in the process of making a wide range of literature available from a variety of sources. We have already had dozens of items submitted to us which we have not yet been able to read and arrange for publication. Our list for the next issue should be much longer.

We would like to classify this literature as "basic" and "mature." **Basic literature** is intended to teach the truth to new people and should not contain references to current church problems and traditions of which the reader might not be aware. There are too many cases of new people giving up on our present day organizations because those organizations seemed far more interested in dealing with their own problems than in teaching basic scriptural truth. **Mature literature** is for the converted and those with a background of church attendance. We accept literature that does not attack individuals and organizations, does not hold up one group as superior to all others, and contains no obvious Biblical or logical errors. Please write or call about your ideas.

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine and we often take it for granted.

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman Edwards, 12 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Valuable lessons we can learn *for today* from Revelation 2 and 3.

Friends of the Brethren Statement of Income and Expenses, 2 pages. (Automatically sent to contributors)

The Heart of the Matter by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman Edwards, 34 pages. An analysis of leadership in the Bible and how it can be applied today.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

Please do find ... a way to bind ... if you don't mind.

In order to reduce the cost of envelopes and postage, we have attached these loose-leaf pages with a sticker. Please remove the sticker and use the binding of your choice: 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip. Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people as want it at the lowest practical cost. If your issue is damaged in the mail, please let us know. We hope to improve the paper and print quality at some time in the future.

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FIRST CLASS

